LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors' Experiences of Negotiating Their Personal and Professional Identities in Second-Level Schools in Ireland

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Declaration

The author hereby declares that this thesis is entirely his/her own work. No element of the work described in this dissertation has been previously submitted for any degree in University of Limerick, or in any other institution.

Signature ______________________________________
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Abstract

The main aim for the current study is to investigate ‘how LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors navigate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools’. Schools have had a long and uncomfortable relationship with LGBTQI identifications (Youdell 2005). LGBTQI professionals report struggling with boundaries and managing their visibility within their profession (Einarsdottir, Hoel & Lewis 2016; Rumens & Broomfield 2012). The concept of the ‘pastoral care’ role of a regular teacher is a fundamental part of their professionalism (Teaching Council 2011; Best et al., 1980). There is an extra pressure on Guidance Counsellors to provide not only vocational and educational, but also emotional and personal support (Kidd 2006; Nathan & Hill 2006).

This research draws on qualitative research with three self-identified LGBTQI Irish Guidance Counsellors along side a scoping review of empirical international literature of LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors/Psychotherapists experiences. Findings suggested three main themes that were evident across the scoping review and interviews with three Irish Guidance Counsellors; heteronormativity and its Restrictions for LGBTQI Teachers and Guidance Counsellors, coming out and its implications, and being a role model. This study argues that the complexities that Irish LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors face in managing their personal and professional identities have an effect on the students that they see on a one-to-one basis and also on their view of professionalism.
Chapter 1: Introduction

This section outlines the topic of exploring the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors managing their personal and professional identities. The study has unique perspective in that it contains a scoping review of literature of empirical research with LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors, and it also provides an in-depth insight into the lived experiences of three Irish LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. The section provides a description of the aims and objectives of the researcher, justification for the study, the researchers’ position of the study and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Context and Justification of the Study

The main aim for the current study is to investigate ‘how LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors navigate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools’. Schools have had a long and uncomfortable relationship with LGBTQI identifications (Youdell 2005). LGBTQI professionals report struggling with boundaries and managing their visibility within their profession (Einarsdottir, Hoel & Lewis 2016; Rumens & Broomfield 2012). Research with LGBTQI teachers has shown that there are challenges that they must face in their work environments and in their everyday lives. Teachers describe that their everyday struggles include heteronormative public/private and personal/professional dichotomies (Neary 2013; Gray 2013). The concept of the ‘pastoral care’ role of a regular teacher is a fundamental part of their professionalism (Teaching Council 2011; Best et al., 1980). The pastoral care supports and the ‘duty of care’ that teachers use to support students who are at risk is a critical resource in second-level education. There is an extra pressure on Guidance Counsellors to provide not only vocational and educational, but also emotional and personal support (Kidd 2006; Nathan & Hill 2006), as the Institute of Guidance Counsellors define the role of a Guidance Counsellor as ‘the role of the Guidance Counsellor is to engage in personal, educational, and vocational counselling with clients throughout the lifespan, in the particular circumstances of their life’ (IGC 2012, p.3). The study aims to bring to light new and innovative data to the literature corpus.

A significant amount has been written about how LGBTQI teachers in Ireland and internationally, negotiate their personal and professional identities (Neary 2013). Key themes emerging from this are heteronormativity in school culture, religious and cultural constraints, and leading separate lives. There has been little research offered in the area of the issues and experiences faced by LGBTQI
counsellors (Moore & Jenkins 2012), and LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. However, much less has been researched about the particular experiences of Guidance Counsellors, who have a unique role. This study will highlight the negotiations between the personal and professional identities for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors with particular insight into their unique relations with students and the concept of professionalism for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors.

1.2 Use of LGBTQI Acronym
The acronym LGBT is broadly understood to stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/transsexual individuals, which is intended to highlight and celebrate the diversity of sexually and gender based identifications and may be extended to individuals who identify as non-heterosexual (Shankle 2006). QI was added to the acronym to include individuals who may be questioning or identify as queer, and intersex people, to include a wide and broad range of gender and sexuality identifications. Therefore, the acronym of LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, queer/questioning, and intersex) was used in the current study to address groups (Vega et al., 2012) of a broad spectrum. There is a controversy that exists around the term ‘queer’, as many older people regard it as a negative and derogatory term used against them (Atkins 1998; Armstrong 2002). However, many young people regard the term ‘queer’ to have a stronger more political connotation to it (Armstrong 2002; Halpin 2004). In the current study queer was included in the acronym as an umbrella term to refer to all gender and sexual groups and as a political approach that challenges the negative discourse often attached to these groups (Wahlert & Fiester 2012). The Irish Guidance Counsellors in the current study identified as either lesbian or gay. The scoping study included participants who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. However, I wanted to include the terms of queer and intersex into the scoping review study, and to be as inclusive as I could when recruiting possible participants.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives
The primary research question of the current study was:

How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools?

Additionally, the objectives of the current study were:

1. How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors' schools approach LGBTQI identities?
2. How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate relations with their colleagues?
3. How are LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiating their relations with their students?
1.4 Methodology

The methodological design of this study is of a qualitative nature making use of interpretive methods to study phenomena as they occur in their natural settings. There were two strands of data collection. Firstly, I conducted a scoping review of empirical research on the experiences of LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors worldwide in order to ‘determine what sorts of studies . . . have been carried out, where they are published . . . what sorts of outcomes they have assessed, and in which populations’ (Petticrew & Roberts 2006, p. 48). Only empirical studies that generated results based on primary observations rather than conceptual theorising were included (Doyle 2011; Harcup 2014). Key meta-themes from across this body of work with teachers and Guidance Counsellors were constructed. Secondly, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors working in second-level schools were conducted. Only three participants responded to the research. While three interviews are minimal it allowed for in-depth engagement with the information being provided. The participant pool of LGBTQI individuals in Ireland is quite small and seeking specifically LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors was even smaller. It also allowed for the possibility to conduct a scoping review and for a fair review and investigation of the themes that arose for both LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors. The transcripts of these interviews were coded and analysed interpretively arriving at primary themes that were subsequently explored alongside the themes that emerged from the scoping review.

1.5 Positionality of Researcher

Thomas (2013) refers to the ‘positionality’ or the ‘situated knowledge’ of the researcher, which is an important part of the current study. It is important for a researcher to recognise and acknowledge their own position and assumptions around the topic, in addition to their own role within the research topic (Cohen et al., 2011). As a trainee Guidance Counsellor, I am interested in the wellbeing and self-care provision for the profession. As a female and the sister of an LGBTQI teacher, I am very passionate about the rights and equal treatment of minority groups. I have a personal interest in the topic, and have strong opinions about equal rights and opportunities. Therefore, reflexivity is critical to ensure validity in the current research (Loxley & Seery 2008).

1.6 Structure of Thesis

A brief overview of the structure of the thesis and its chapters follows below:
Chapter 2: Literature Review
This chapter provides a detailed review of the research topic. It synthesises the previous literature corpus with the findings of the current study. It is divided into three sections, the theoretical framework of Queer Theory, which is employed by the researcher, the intersections of sexuality and education and its influences on LGBTQI staff, and finally, literature regarding Guidance Counsellors and how LGBTQI identification can affect them.

Chapter 3: Methodology
The methodology chapter outlines the ontological and epistemological frameworks employed in this research. It provides a justification for the chosen methodologies and the processes of data collection and analysis and ethical issues that may have arisen.

Chapter 4: Findings
The findings chapter presents the data from the scoping study in the form of a table and also narrative format, presenting four main themes that emerged after analysis. The findings from the primary data from interviews with three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors are also presented in thematic narrative format, presenting three main themes in detail.

Chapter 5: Discussion
This chapter provides a critical discussion of the overall findings of the scoping review and primary research data of interviews of three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in the context of the primary research question and objectives drawing in relevant literature alongside the findings.

Chapter 6: Conclusion
The closing chapter provides the conclusions resulting from the findings of this study. It outlines the implications for future practice in the education and Guidance Counselling sector. The strengths and limitations of the research are described and possible future research questions are proposed.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction
This chapter will provide a critical investigation of previous research relating to the topic of the experiences LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors. In the first section, I will discuss my theoretical framework for approaching the literature and further findings. Queer theory will be reviewed as the theoretical framework underpinning this project. The next section will examine key literature of heteronormativity in education, both internationally and nationally, with a brief a discussion of LGBTQI teachers. The final section will consider guidance counselling in general and key aspects of LGBTQI research within guidance counselling and psychotherapy.

2.1 Queer Theory
Queer theory is the theoretical framework that I used to interpret and analyse the literature and data in the current study. A theoretical framework facilitates understanding around concepts and variables according to definitions within the framework. Queer theory is a post-structuralist critical theory, emerging from post-structural feminism. Within feminist post-structural theory, queer theory challenges the notion of normality of genders, sexual activities, and identities in a modern society (Jagose 1996), and their socially constructed nature. The concepts of gender, sexuality, and sexual identities are constructed and bound to the society in which we live. The ideas for what we think is ‘normal’, in terms of gender and sexuality is determined by what is ‘normal’ for that society, and therefore, these are socially constructed concepts that queer theory aims to challenge. Heteronormative discourse suggests that individuals fit into distinct binaries of male and female identification. Social organisations and policies often reinforce heteronormative thinking and reproduce the belief of assuming individuals are heterosexual and that sex and gender are black and white categories (DeFrancisco 2014), thus, resulting in a heterosexual privilege. There are many ways in which queer theory can be interpreted and applied, however, queer theory is about deconstructing and breaking the social norms of a heteronormative discourse, and the institutions in which there is a heterosexual privilege (Cohen 1997).

Queer theory, when used as a framework can be utilised to understand the concepts of oppression, privilege, and power rather than identity. The term queer does not only refer to individuals who identify as non-heterosexual, but it can also be used to describe those who feel marginalised as a result of social homogeneity (Giffeny 2004; Halperin 1995). The foundations of queer theory are an
innovative way to understand the personal and professional identities of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland. For post-structuralism and queer theory, meaning is mediated through language, which is in turn constructed within cultural, social, political, and historical contexts (Numer & Gahagan 2009). It suggests that individuals’ own thoughts and actions are shaped by and reflect the power relations seen in wider society (Doering 1992). This suggests that as queer theory considers identity as unstable, and consists of numerous variables. In line with social constructivism, queer theory hypothesises that the identity of the individual is constructed through personal multiple, complex social relations at a specific time and space of their own environment, and based on the current conception of a category of identity (Green 2007).

The broader notions of queer theory suggest an understanding of the extensive ways in which concepts of sexuality and gender impact individuals in everyday life (Sullivan 2006). It is a theory about gender, and new ways of understanding and questioning gender stereotypes (Blaise & Taylor 2012). The aim of queer theory is to disrupt normative understandings of masculinity and femininity as they intertwine with sexualities and to normalise ‘othered’ identities (Jagose; Sedgwick 1985). ‘Otherness’ and ‘other’ are often terms that are associated with sexualities and identities that are non-confirmative with the culturally accepted ‘norm’. Queer theory and post-structuralist feminist theories are employed to provide direct insight into the ‘other’ sexualities that operate on an everyday basis in our society.

2.2 Sexuality and Education
The field of LGBTQI studies in a worldwide context has had a significant impact on basic social traditions such as family, marriage, and work (Bernstein, Marshall, & Barclay 2009). Society still operates within a heterosexual environment (Butler 1990), where heterosexuality is presumed and ingrained into everyday life (Epstein & Johnson 1994). The relationship between sexuality and schooling has been ‘uncomfortable’ (Youdell 2005, p. 251). Epstein and Johnson (1998) argue that both schools and sexualities are essentially constructed discreetly and in turn, the students and staff who inhabit schools are therefore, seen as non-sexual, yet heterosexuality sits constantly in the backdrop therefore, schools are simultaneously de-sexualised and heterosexualised. Schools remain critical in the conforming of existing power structures of society (DePalma & Atkinson 2009). The Irish education system mirrors wider societal norms and has played a significant role in producing and re-producing heterosexual norms, often through teachings of suppressing, not acknowledging and misunderstanding of ‘other’ sexualities, that has an effect on both students and teachers. (O’Carroll and Szalacha 2000; Lodge and Lynch 2004; O’Higgins-Norman 2004, 2009; O’Higgins-
Sexuality is intimately linked and interlocked with identity and therefore, sexuality is important not only for LGBTQI teachers, but also for LGBTQI students, parents and relatives (Gowran 2004). There is a significant dearth in research pertaining to issues of sexuality in Irish education (Lynch & Lodge 2002), particularly LGBTQI issues, and this is reflective of the silences and secrecy surrounding these issues in the Irish education system (Fahie 2016; Neary et al., 2016; Gowran 2004). Schools often rely on discipline and surveillance in order to regulate individuals and standardise learning. However, this also includes the standardisation of gender, sex, sexuality, and gender where, the concept of two sexes that fall into the binary of masculinity and femininity, male and female is reproduced (Wolley 2017). Foucault (1998) argues that attempting to establish a definition of sexuality is in itself an act of control and authority. The practice of dividing students by gender and biological sex has been deeply ingrained into the education system (Connell 1996; Ferguson 2001; Goodwin 2006). The school space is socially constructed and therefore gendered and sexualised, and more often heterosexualised (Bell & Valentine 1995; Massey 1994).

Warner (1993) created the term heteronormativity to describe the standardising process that support heterosexuality. As a result of this, it is common for gay and lesbian sexualities to be unclassified or remain as ‘other’ while, heterosexuality has been normalised and requires no justification (Jackson 1999). Heteronormativity is a culmination of a multitude of discourses. It is a belief that suggests that being different is not easily accepted in schools. Heteronormativity does not represent accurately the only normal relationships and it limits the understanding that others have of LGBTQI students and staff and possibilities. Heteronormativity is a large part of the schooling system and operates through panoptic schemas (Foucault 1977; 1992). The education system often tends to fuel heterosexism through its production and reproduction of heterosexist fundamental teachings. Heteronormativity is often implicit and is entrenched into society, and it therefore, has a significant impact on the shaping of sexual identities in schools.

### 2.3 Irish schools

The Catholic Church heavily influenced sexuality in the Irish education system, by shaping what is considered to be ‘normal’ (Inglis 1998). Diorio (1985) stated sex education literature frequently reduced the concept of sex to heterosexual procreation, which diminishes the richness of the full meaning and practice. As a result of this, the practices and the ‘complications’ that sex education programmes are designed to reduce are strengthened (Kiely 2005). Expanding on Fine (1988) and Diorio (1985), various other contributors have commented on the possibility of how sex education
curricula could be explored in terms of being less anti-oppressive and experiencing different ways of sexually being in the world (Epstein & Johnson 1998; Willig 1999; Mayo 2004). It is also acknowledged that traditionally, teachers were not entrusted with the responsibility of sex education (Epstein & Johnson 1998; Inglis 1998; Kehily 2002). The Catholic Church has long since influenced what is taught about sexuality and many generations of teachers have experienced this influence and it may be possible that they have embodied the perceived silence surrounding sexuality and in turn passed it on to the students they teach (Inglis 1998).

In addition to this, the Catholic Church holds immense power in equal employment laws in Ireland. Recognising that 92% of primary schools (Coolahan, Hussey, & Kifeather 2012) and 52% of second-level schools (Darmody & Smith 2013) still remain under Catholic investment has resulted in additional stresses of LGBT staff that are employed in these schools. (Neary 2013). However, the power that the Catholic Church holds has waned in recent years (Donnelly & Inglis 2010). Nevertheless, this does not mean that the diminishing power of the Church has resulted in a new sexually progressive Ireland (Neary et al., 2016).

Firstly, the ‘ethos’ of an institution refers to a distinctive set of values and beliefs, which define the philosophical underpinnings or atmosphere of an organisation (Darmody et al. 2012). The key values of the Education Act (Government of Ireland 1998, 15(2) (e)), encourages the respect of varied values, beliefs, languages, and traditions in Irish society. Both The Employment Equality Act (1998, 2004) and the Equal Status Act (2000, 2004) include sexual orientation as one of the nine grounds of discrimination to protect workers against discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in employment (Fahie 2016). However, in Ireland, the Equal Employment Equality Acts 1998-2011 included an item known as Section 37(1), which allows for dismissal on the grounds of non-compliance with the ethos of the institution (Neary 2013). Section 37(1) indicated that organisations, which have an obvious denominational ethos (including schools, hospitals, and nursing homes), are allowed to take ‘reasonable action’ to safeguard their ethos. Section 37(1) is a concern for LGBT staff in Ireland, under Catholic ethos, as many religious teachings have regarded LGBT status as illegitimate and ‘morally disordered’ (Ratzinger 1986). There is a silencing around the discussion of alternatives to heterosexuality in schools (Lodge 2013; Lodge et al. 2008). The continued existence of Section 37(1) lingered as a concern for many gay rights groups and trade unions and continue to do so even as amendments have been ratified. The Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) contend that the existence of Section 37(1) resulted in a ‘chill factor’ amongst Irish LGBT teachers, which impacted negatively on their willingness to be open about their sexuality with their school
The amendments to Section 37(1) now specifically prohibit discrimination against sexual orientation (Fahie 2016).

Irish education often is central to the regulating and replicating the norms of heterosexuality through practices of suppressing and misrepresentation of both teachers and students (O’Higgins-Norman 2004, 2009; O’Higgins-Norman, Galvin and McNamara 2006; Minton et al., 2008). Schools, both primary and second-level are a microcosm of societal values and attitudes in general and aim to reproduce social and heterosexual hierarchies of society (Redman 1994). A significant amount of what young people learn about gender and sexuality at school occurs through ‘unofficial cultures’, which may provide young people with the most powerful and pertinent knowledge about sexuality (Allen 2013). There has been an attempt made to address the issue of sexuality in Irish schools. In 1995, The Department of Education and Skills initiated the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme as part of the Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) subject. The aim of the RSE programme was to encourage an in depth understanding about sexuality while promoting positive attitudes towards one’s own sexuality (S.P.H.E. Support Service 2011). However, the RSE programme does not explicitly make reference to LGBTQI issues. The RSE programme remains at the discretion of the individual school’s ethos (Department of Education and Skills 2012).

It is also important to note that the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) published guidelines surrounding homophobic bullying policies in school and creating an inclusive environment for LGB people (GLEN 2012). However, schools are still considered to be failing at delivering and addressing the issues of sex and sexuality in Ireland (Higgins et al. 2016). Regardless of the efforts made to date, there appears to be disengagement between policy and its implementation of everyday practices in Irish schools, with 90% of school policies on anti-bullying not clearly citing homophobic bullying (Higgins et al. 2016). Minton et al., (2013) identified that approaches for explicit references to homophobic bullying in school anti-bullying policies, as well as adopting a whole school approach to negotiate a zero tolerance homophobic slurs, would need to be supported by pre-service and in-service training for staff.

For teachers, ‘coming out’ can be described as becoming aware of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity and starting to divulge it to others. Coming out is a process, which takes place over time, and can sometimes take years and is a lifelong process (Bochenek & Brown 2001, p. xiii; Grace & Benson 2000). However, while clear definitions of coming out exist, they often neglect to see the difficulties of dealing with these issues within the environment of schooling and sexuality (Rasmussen 2004). There are a number of different motivations that may exist for people, they may
come out within their organisation due to: (a) honesty and integrity, (b) aspiration for more intimate relationships with colleagues, (c) desire to educate or advocate for LGB issues (Gusmano 2008). It is often necessary for LGB individuals to consider how they might manage their disclosure of sexual identity (Button 2004; Croteau et al. 2008). Queer theoretical approaches have informed the theory of coming out in school environments (Rasmussen 2004; Youdell 2004, 2005). Rasmussen (2004) suggests that by coming out could be seen as an act of valour and in turn may result in giving a privileged status to LGB staff who are ‘out’. Rasmussen (2004) also argues that there are a range of private factors, such as age and race, may complicate the coming out process, and for educators it may be further complicated by other professional factors such as the wider community, the ethos of the institution, and the management team of the school. It is an important factor to consider the factors that influence coming out or disclosing sexual orientation in the workplace and to what degree is it a positive choice around privacy or is not coming out a protective method for anti-gay biases experienced (GLEN 2014).

There has been a number of studies both international and Irish, conducted concerned with the experiences of LGBT teachers in school environments, and strategies of identity management (Gowran 2004; Khayatt 1992; Ferfolja 2008, 2009). It is important to note the impact of anti-lesbian and anti-gay teacher harassment has a negative effect on teachers’ health, professional, and personal growth, and has been widely researched at an international level (Kissen 1993; Clarke 1996; Ferfolja 1998; 2005). Negotiating professional and private identities are an important factor for most people, however for LGBT staff within a school, negotiating between private and professional identities is a major concern, due to the silencing of LGB identities through heteronormative discourses and professional practices that govern school culture (DePalma & Atkinson 2009; Endo et al. 2010; Epstein & Johnson 1998; Ferfolja 2009).

While the sexuality of staff may not be considered to be appropriate for discussion within the school environment, it is comparatively informal for heterosexual staff to refer to their opposite sex partner and in turn indirectly make a statement about their sexuality (Gray 2013). Heterosexuality is a standardised and straightforward part of the school culture, whereas, LGBT identities may require further, more complicated explanation, if individuals choose to disclose (Gray 2013). It is common for schools to deny the presence of the heteronormative discourses and gender regime practices (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli 2005); and in turn, this has a significant influence on the staff within educational institutions whose identity does not fit with predominant heteronormative archetypes, and therefore, LGBT staff must negotiate their private and professional worlds with more complexity (Gray 2013). In addition to this, schools can often expect concurrent demands from its staff, asking
them to publically discuss sexuality to a society that ‘needs to know’, as well as restricting the
discussion of sexuality to a private realm (Sedgwick 1990).

It is clear that fear and danger surround the decision of disclosure; with many Irish people choosing
not to ‘come out’ in the Irish workplace as they feel it would be dangerous to them (GLEN 2014).
Similar to international studies (Connell 2015; Gastic & Johnson 2009; Riggs et al., 2011), Irish
LGBT teachers were found to be unwilling to divulge their sexuality in fear of the reaction from
parents and pupils (Fahie 2016). In contrast, to the anxiety and vulnerability associated with
disclosure, some LGB employees report that coming out has had a positive effect on their career.
There are a number of possible benefits that may be associated to coming out in the workplace
including the relief and autonomy to be oneself, increased self-esteem, being part of structural and
social change (Chung, Chang & Rose 2015). The role of the workplace culture is to promote an
atmosphere in which LGB individuals are free to make their own choices regarding disclosure
without the fear of negative impact on their career (GLEN 2014).

2.4 Guidance Counselling
Second-level guidance counselling services often incorporate a holistic approach including personal
and social, educational, and vocational aspects (NCGE 2004). ‘The role of the Guidance Counsellor
is to engage in personal, educational, and vocational counselling with clients throughout the lifespan,
in the particular circumstances of the life’ (IGC 2012, p. 3). Holley (2008) suggests that school
counsellors are essential to the school community as they aid in helping a diverse student population
through supporting for their needs, inspiring them in various circumstances, and encouraging all
students to accomplish their best. In addition to this, Guerra (1998) considers the need for
counsellors to be role models and agents of change within the school, and this is more easily
achieved when they are viewed in a leadership role in the school. Guidance Counsellors have a
unique whole school approach perspective to serving the needs of every student and in turn,
counsellors can be excellent candidates as advocates for all students (Paisley & Hayes 2003). The
influence and power of a Guidance Counsellor being described as a human relations expert has the
potential to change the attitudes and beliefs of educational stakeholders (Stone & Clarke 2001).
Friesenhahn-Soliz, Bain, and Maxwell (2015), conducted their study around rural Hispanic
counsellor roles in secondary education, results found that the ambiguous role of school Guidance
Counsellor can be advantageous as it allows for a certain amount of flexibility in their efforts to
improve minority students’ right and pursuit of equality and fairness in education, and a similar
minority status can be applied to LGBTQI staff and students.
One-to-one interviews alongside group work and presentations are supported by guidance activities (Reid & Fielding 2007) are integral to the work of Guidance Counsellors. Therefore, Guidance Counsellors not only make use of counselling skills, but they also may work with issues where understanding of counselling models is necessary (Reid 2016). The work of Carl Rogers (1951) suggests that a ‘client-centred’ approach should be used by a therapist to listen, reflect, and restate clients’ words in order for the client to achieve personal growth via increased awareness and understanding of their own attitudes, feeling, and behaviours (Reid 2016). The core value system of a person centred approach is that the client is an expert in their own situation, they are held at the centre of the work (Rogers 1961), and they are responsible for their own behaviours (Reid 2016). Core conditions of empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard are used to develop a trusting and safe environment (Reid 2016). Gatongi (2007) stated that the three conditions of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard were essential to developing a good relationship. This produces a relationship where the student feels a sense of well-being and value and their views are respected, young people should also be viewed as experts of their own lives (Gatongi, 2007).

In an Irish context, both NCGE (2004) and DES (2005) highlighted that the role of a Guidance Counsellor in a second-level Irish school was fundamental to the overall provision to the service and to the pastoral care system of the institution. The Guidance Counsellor’s role in the school is often referred to as ‘loco parentis’, wherein a duty of care must be offered to the students when they are under their care (Hearne & Galvin 2015). Research suggests that lesbian and gay clients do prefer their counsellor to self-disclose their sexual orientation before counselling sessions begin (Satterly 2006). As a result, if the role of a Guidance Counsellor is so significant within the school environment and for the development of young people, there must be a space for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors to self-disclose and to provide a greater role model status to the students and possible to allow the whole school to become more accepting of LGBTQI members of their institution.

Guidance Counsellors are often the individuals who students choose to tell if they want to come out as LGBTQI (GLEN 2016). When a student has a positive experience of coming out to others is essential to protecting a young person’s mental health and wellbeing, in addition to reducing their fears around coming out to others (Mayock et al., 2009). Due to the training that Guidance Counsellors receive they are in a unique position to provide LGBTQI young people with the support that they need (Roe 2013). Some Guidance Counsellors feel that they do not have enough training in this area to deal with a student coming out to them as LGBTQI, it is recommended that the use of experiences of the LGBTQI are used to drive the counselling session (GLEN 2016). It is also
recognised that there is a lack of research around how LGBTQI recognise their Guidance Counsellor as being supportive of them. Roe (2013) found that students in America felt that Guidance Counsellors should, as part of their job title, be supportive and being accepting of all students is part of their responsibilities. It is important for Guidance Counsellors to be careful around self-disclosure with students. Students may use this disclosure to seek support or discuss it with other students (Roe 2013).

2.5 The Current Study
A small body of research international and national Gowran (2004), Neary (2013; 2017), Neary et al. (2016; 2017), Mayock et al. (2009), and Fahie (2012; 2014; 2016), has been published addressing LGBTQI lives in the education environment. However, there has been even less exploration into the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors, and the current study aims to address this discrepancy. Guidance Counsellors in second-level schools in Ireland have a unique and important role in the Irish education system, and worldwide. Guidance Counsellors offer students an opportunity to engage with their personal, educational, and vocational development on a personal level. The Guidance Counsellor must be empathetic, genuine, and display unconditional positive regard, in order to ensure a trusting relationship. Working on this level may, for Guidance Counsellors, provide difficulties when negotiating their personal and professional identities within a school context. Rather than review literature related to LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors internationally and in Ireland in this chapter. One strand of this project is a scoping review, due to the field of research being so small and Guidance Counsellors is even small, the findings of this research will be presented in Findings chapter part A. Therefore, the current study aims to address this gap in research and explore the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors working in Irish second-level schools and to explore if the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors are different to those of LGBTQI classroom teachers.

2.6 Conclusion
This section has outlined the theoretical framework of queer theory, in which this research is positioned and rooted. It has also synopsised the key literature surrounding the context of sexuality and education, with emphasis on the Irish setting and a brief overview of LGBTQI teacher research. Finally, it addressed the literature that focuses on guidance counselling and research on LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors and psychotherapists. The following section will focus, in more detail the methodology used in the current research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction
The current chapter aims to outline the methodologies and methods utilised in the current research. The primary research questions along with the secondary research questions that are the framework of this study are presented. In addition, the rationale for choosing the methods of data collection and analysis are presented under an overarching philosophy.

3.1 Purpose
Thomas (2013) suggests that methodology refers to the ‘study of a method’ wherein; it is not simply the presentation of a method but discussion for its purpose and reasons for its selection for the inquiry. Following the previous Literature Review chapter, wherein queer theory, heteronormativity in education and Guidance Counselling was discussed, there is a necessity to inquire into and map the experiences of LGBTQI teachers alongside LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors/psychotherapists in order to inquire into the specificity of the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland. The purpose of the proposed current study is to develop an understanding about the experiences of Irish LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors’ personal and professional identities in an Irish context.

3.2 Ontology and Epistemology
Concepts and notions of a philosophical nature are often hidden within research (Slife & Williams 1995), however; they have a significant influence on the practice of research. Ontology refers to a form of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of social reality. There are a variety of expectations within ontology that may be useful for understanding the nature of social inquiry (Blaikie 2007). I have found Blaikie’s (2007) categorisations of ontological categories to be the most useful for my research questions, and for me it is an idealist ontology that comes to the forefront. Idealist ontology suggests that the external world exists as a result of representations created by individuals’ minds (Blaikie 2007). It is the concept of what is real, is only real because we think it is real. Social reality exists due to shared interpretations that individuals constantly produce and reproduce as they live their everyday lives (Blaikie 2007).
Guba and Lincoln (1990) suggest that the social world must be studied differently to the natural or physical world. Social constructivism is an approach that is often linked to qualitative research (Creswell 2009), although, more than that, it is an approach in which I adhere to. There is a distinction made between social constructivism and social constructionism (Crotty 1998). Social constructivism focuses on the individual’s creation of knowledge and reality through interaction with a group. While social constructionism suggests that the production of knowledge and reality are as a result of a collective construction through discourse or conversation. The premise of social construction is that what is real is real in its consequences (Patton 2015), meaning that the implications of multiple realities created by different groups, on the lives of people and their interactions with others. The assumption of social constructivists is one that puts emphasis on that the meaning of knowledge is constructed and not discovered, where the observer plays an active role in its creation (Blaikie 2007). Knowledge creation is formed as a result of individuals making sense of the physical world and interacting with other people (Blaikie 2007). People develop subjective meanings regarding their individual experiences, as a result of this complex and multiple meanings are created (Creswell 2009). Meanings are typically formed through interactions with others, in addition to historical and cultural norms within individuals’ lives (Creswell 2009). Groups of people can allocate meaning to phenomenon. However, the meaning is then evident within the group and not the phenomenon. Therefore, constructivists study the multiple realities constructed by individuals or by various groups and the implications of their constructions on their lives, as what is perceived to be real by an individual is also real in its consequences (Patton 2015). It is important for researchers to recognise how their interpretations from others influenced by their own personal, historical, and cultural experiences, an enquirer is “engaged in social construction as opposed to objectively depicting reality” (Patton 2015, p.122). Through engaging with texts I have come to understand my own ontological and epistemological approaches. Within constructivist epistemologies produce relative knowledge, meaning that there is no one truth but a multiple of truths associated with different individual’s constructions of realities (Blaikie 2007). Researchers only provide one perspective and participants contribute to further perspectives, as they bring an alternative views to the topic being studied and they bring their own assumptions, beliefs, and biases (Patton 2015).

“Views of reality are socially constructed and culturally embedded” (Patton 2015, p. 127). Dominant views at any time or place often are there to serve the interests and perspectives of those in power in a particular culture, and they maintain power by controlling language and in turn realities (Patton 2015). Language is a social and cultural construction, which can shape, distort and structure the perceptions of realities (Patton 2015). As Guba (1990) states if realities exist only in individuals’ minds then subjective interactions are the only possible way to access them. The researcher believes
that individuals create their own realities through interactions with the society in which they live. We can attempt and experience others’ experience of reality by conversing with them about their own experience. However, it is important to recognize that the language that people use to describe their experiences is also influenced by their society.

3.2.1 Epistemologies; Feminist theory
A research paradigm is a belief system or theory that allows us to make sense of the social world. For the current research, feminism is a paradigm that provides understanding and insight into the phenomenon of the current study. Harding (1991) defines epistemology as a theory of knowledge that considers the nature and scope of knowledge. The researcher is personally interested in issues surrounding social change and social justice, particularly for women and other marginalised groups in society. This is what feminist epistemology aims to enlighten, research that promotes social justice and social change (Hesse-Bieber & Leavy 2007). “Feminists are particularly concerned with getting at experiences that are often hidden” (Hesse-Bieber & Leavy 2007, p. 118); taking this understanding, access to voices that are often ostracised can be heard.

Three main feminist epistemological perspectives have provided various perspectives on feminist approaches to research. Firstly, feminist empiricism is concerned with the combination of positivist empiricism and feminism. It is a movement that suggests that all knowledge can be obtained through scientific research. Secondly, feminist standpoint theory proposes an understanding of the world from the perspectives of marginalised groups, that differ from less dominant groups. This approach focused a great deal on a dichotomy of women and men. Finally, feminist post-structural theory focuses on the diversity of unique human experiences; wherein, none of which can claim absolute knowledge.

For the current research a post-modern approach was more appropriate as part of the approach Judith Butler suggests that gender is a social construction. Feminist post-structural theory presented a theory of resistance to the power relations evident in a patriarchal society (Weedon 1987). Furthermore, queer theory has offered a more sophisticated approach to gay and lesbian studies by moving beyond the binary representations of sexual orientation and moving toward deconstructing heterosexuality and the concept of the ‘other’ (Numer & Gahagan 2009). Feminist post-structural and queer theories aim to deconstruct power dominance in patriarchal societies by disassembling the norm and prompting the concept of change (Numer & Gahagan 2009). Deconstruction refers to a post-structuralist concept of Derrida (1978), postulating that there are multiple layers of language that are ever changing and being replicated. This is important to note for the current research as the
power relations in society manipulate language and this needs to be recognised when qualitative interviews are used as a data collection method. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that their experiences must be understood in terms of the society in which they live. EP Thompson (1963) discussed the meaning of experience in ‘Making of the English Working Class’. Thompson suggested that experiences were the same as “social being”, meaning that the lived phenomenons of social life, such as family, religion, and the figurative aspect of expression, all have an influence on how an individual experiences their world. However, individuals do not only encounter their experiences as ideas but also as ‘feeling’; (Thompson 1972, p. 171). This emphasizes the importance of psychological factors of experience. Thompson discussed his concept of experiences in terms of working-class. Scott (1991), states that the working-class ‘experience’ that Thompson advocated for, is not the ontological framework of working-class identity, politics, and history. Scott (1991) also suggests that this same foundational status of the working-class can be applied to ‘homosexual’ or ‘lesbian’ experience. For the current research this form of ‘experience’ of taking the psychological and social influences into account for people forming experiences is acknowledged.

Butler (2004) challenges dominant structures by questioning the constructions as ‘performativity’ situated in a specific time and place. The concept of performativity is at the centre of Butlers work. It suggests that the very notion of identity is created through actions and discourse of language and behaviour. Feminist theories seek to promote changes in society that advocates for equality in society not only for women, but also for the society of a whole (Weedon 1987). Weedon (1987) also suggests that gender differences in power relations are a significant influence on everyday lives of individuals. In a similar fashion to social constructivism, post-structural theory can be described as how knowledge and knowledge systems are constructed and reproduced (Doering 1992). In addition to this, meaning and subjectivity are created through the use of language framed around cultural, social, political, and historical contexts (Numer & Gahagan 2009). Meanings are produced through the limited availability of speaking (discourse) in a particular place and time (Numer & Gahagan 2009). Doering (1992) stated that an individual’s thoughts and actions are created by and replicate power relations in that society. This reflects the post-structural belief that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon; wherein the knowledge produced in this project is seen to be influenced by the power of heteronormative society.

3.2.2 Queer theory
Queer theory is the theoretical framework used by me to interpret and analyse the data that is gathered. Theoretical framework facilitates understanding around concepts and variables according to definitions within the framework. The foundations of queer theory were discussed in chapter 2
Literature Review. The use of queer theory in this research is an innovative way to understand the personal and professional identities of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland.

3.3 Identifying research questions

Blaikie (2007) suggests that social enquiry requires approaching research problems, which both informs about the phenomenon that will be studied but also the limitations that the study does not have the scope to cover. According to Bryman (2007) framing research questions are a difficult yet critical element of research design. Research questions underpin all research and they allow for the research phenomenon to be researchable (Blaikie 2007). It is maintained by De Vaus (2001) that research design is essential to guarantee that the research is answering the initial question.

3.4 Research Design Frame;

3.4.1 Primary Research Question

The role of Guidance Counsellors in second-level educational settings are often required to attend to the pastoral requirements of their students, and they play a key role in assisting individuals in becoming more self-confident, self-reliant, help identify strategies of building self-esteem, and expanding coping mechanisms (IGC 2012). Schools have traditionally had uncomfortable relationships LGBTQI identification (Youdell 2005). We know that LGBTQI teachers experience boundaries issues and difficulties in managing their visibility within their profession. (Einarsdottir, Hoel & Lewis 2016; Rumens & Broomfield 2012), but much less is known about LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. The primary research question for the current research is ‘How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools?’ This research aims to investigate the perspectives of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors about what it is like for them to identify as LGBTQI in second-level schools.

3.4.2 Secondary Research Questions

Secondary research questions seek to further analyse the date collected for the primary research question, in an attempt to answer questions, separate to that of the one the data was primarily collected for (Hewson 2006).

1. How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors' schools approach LGBTQI identities?
2. How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate relations with their colleagues?
3. How are LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiating their relations with their students?
3.4.3 Ethical issues

It was not anticipated that this study would pose any significant risks. Ethical considerations were at the forefront of the research study. There were a number of ethical considerations that were acknowledged before engaging in the proposed research. Both confidentiality and anonymity were key elements of the current research, as interviews involved minority group members of the LGBTQI community. The participants were asked to speak about their sexuality identification and as a result may have brought up sensitive topics of past or present. However, the possibility of this was minimal, as the participants volunteered themselves to take part in this study, which suggested that they are willing to speak to these aspects of their lives. In order to protect the participants of the study their anonymity was ensured through the use of pseudonyms of both the participants and their affiliated institutions, which they were involved in (Thomas, 2013). Data protection was also considered, the Data Protection Legislation was abided by and followed closely. An opting-in consent was employed, meaning that participants were offered an invitation to join the research and had an active decision regarding their participation in the research. The cost/benefit relationship is a “fundamental concept expressing the primary ethical dilemma in social research” (Cohen et al. 2011., p.75). It was also critical that the duty of care IGC (2012) Constitution and Code of Ethics and the NCGE (2008) Research Code of Ethics were followed.

3.5 Accesses and Sampling

A sample is described as the number of individuals who are drawn from the total population who actually participate in the study (McLeod 2003; Thomas 2013). It can often be difficult to access a sample where sensitive research is sought (Fahie & Devine 2012). Lived experiences are frequently based around small samples, obtained through purposeful sampling based on the research question (Patton 2015). For the current study mixed gender, LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors working in second-level schools was the population sought out. The current study recruited three Post Primary School Guidance Counsellors, one male and two female. Purposeful sampling (Merriam 2009) was used as a recruitment method, in order to ensure that participants fit the criteria of the study. Purposeful sampling can be defined as “selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated” (Patton 2015, p. 264). Purposeful sampling is a logical and powerful paradigm through selecting information-rich candidates that will provide in-depth data. In this case, I felt that the use of purposeful sampling was the most beneficial, as it aligns with the purpose of the inquiry is, the primary and secondary research questions, and the data being collected (Patton 2015). In addition to purposeful sampling, snowball sampling was used as a back up recruiting mechanism (Merriam 2009). Similar to purposeful sampling, snowball or chain sampling is useful for identifying information-rich
significant participants (Patton 2015). Through asking interviewees for suggestions about individuals who may have similar perspectives, by doing this it can lead to a resource of participants who know people who know people who may be a useful source of information (Patton 2015).

A gatekeeper controls the invitations sent to potential participants and provide necessary information to the researcher, gatekeepers require to know about the project (Savin-Baden & Major 2012). In order to gain access to the sample the president of The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) is recognised as the gatekeeper and they were contacted via email. The president was sent an informational letter, consent form and recruitment poster (See Appendix A, C, D). The gatekeeper then replied agreeing that it would be possible to circulate information regarding the study to their registered members. In addition to accessing the sample through the IGC, I also sent a recruitment poster (See Appendix D) for inclusion in relevant newsletters, magazines, and websites via networks of organisations; GLEN, TUI, and ASTI LGBT teachers’ groups. However, I did not receive any responses from these organisations. Participants were informed in the information document that they can withdraw from this research at any time with no personal consequence. They will also be informed that, if requested, all data collected will be deleted.

3.5.1 Ethical considerations for access and sampling
The letter explained what would be entailed in the research and the aims and objectives. The email will also inform that it is a voluntary study and there is no compulsion to participate and that all results will remain anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used for participants while any identifying information will be omitted from the write up. A subject information sheet and consent form will also be provided to the gatekeeper, requesting permission to recruit participants through their membership. Informed consent will be obtained, through each potential participant being given an information sheet (See Appendix B).

3.6 Methodological Approach
Qualitative research is a method of research where the researcher is makes use of interpretive methods to study phenomena in their natural settings, and interpreting the meanings individuals give to phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Reflecting my post-structural epistemological approach, individuals form their own view of knowledge and reality through interaction with their society. The primary and secondary research questions focus on a particular groups individual experiences, therefore, it is important to make use of methods that will accurately describe the experiences of these individuals. Qualitative research is based on the belief that reality is socially constructed.
Qualitative data encompasses descriptions based on language from the participant and is recorded by the researcher, aimed at understanding the individuals in their social environments (Polgar & Thomas 2013). The aim of the researcher is to acquire rich and illustrative narrative material that could potentially be extremely sensitive and complex. Merriam (2009, p.15) advocates that the researcher is the ‘primary instrument’ within qualitative research, but as a result of this there are limitations and biases that may impact on the study.

A paradigm in this context refers to a basic belief system including ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln 1994). Elements of both phenomenological and narrative inquiry were employed in order to provide an in depth investigation into the phenomenon of how LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that narrative inquiry is a method used to understand lived experiences. Central to narrative theory is the belief that stories provide meanings within people’s lives, and that this is the framework for the qualitative data for analysis, as stories are socially constructed (Ellett 2011). Phenomenological approaches emphasise the concept of ‘multiple realities’, meaning that different people experience the world in various ways (Polgar & Thomas 2011). Phenomenological research will be utilised as part of the methodology of this study, as phenomenological study involves the meaning of lived experiences of several individuals, in relation to their experience of a phenomenon (Creswell 2009), in this case the experience of managing identities of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. It is also acknowledged that while multiple realities are captured through the findings of the scoping review, while individual narratives are collected from the three individual Irish Guidance Counsellors, with a focus on the individuals own story in their own contexts (Creswell 2009). Therefore, to appreciate the meanings in people’s lives, we must view things from their perspective through the use of empathy (Polgar & Thomas 2013). Making use of these methods two phases of data collection were employed. The first strand was a scoping review of journal articles arising from empirical research with LGBTQI second-level teachers, Guidance Counsellors and psychotherapists nationally and internationally. Strand two involved semi-structured interviews with three self-identifying LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in the Irish context.

3.6.1 Strand 1: Scoping Review
Scoping reviews are used as a form of combining knowledge which include a range of study designs in order to summarise and integrate evidence and therefore, aiming to inform future practice, programs and policy and in turn directing future research (Colquhoun, Levac, & O’Brien et al., 2014). The main aim of scoping studies is to rapidly map the key concepts that provide the
foundations of the research area (Mays et al., 2001). “The extent to which a scoping study seeks to provide in-depth coverage of available literature depends on the purpose of the review itself” (Arksey & O’Malley 2005, p. 6). In the current study the aim of the scoping review is to summarise the key findings across all journal articles arising from empirical studies previously conducted with LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors, teachers, counsellors or psychotherapists. In addition to this, another aim of using a scoping study in the current study is to identify any research gaps that may exist in existing literature. In order to achieve the central research question of ‘How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools?’ I employed a strategy that involved searching for relevant evidence via sources of databases and reference lists. Searches were made on databases of Scopus, Web of Science and Ebscohost, and the number of hits produced varied significantly between databases. Key terms of ‘LGBTQI’, ‘homosexual’, or ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ were paired with ‘Guidance Counsellor’, ‘careers advisor’, ‘school counsellor’, and ‘teacher’ and ‘psychotherapist’. As this form of searching may result in missing significant articles (Papaioannou et al., 2010) therefore, additional significant articles were acquired through searching reference lists and citations of the studies found during the scoping review (Hastie et al., 2011; Wallhead & O’Sullivan 2005). Once relevant articles were found on the various databases I created lists for each database and each search. All gathered data was analysed and their content was methodically coded (Breuning 2011) in regards to country of origin, focus of the study, participants recruited, methods used, and nature of analysis. It should be acknowledged that the focus of this scoping study was to identify the consistent and various content generated by the literature (Davies 2004) and also to recognise the limitations and gaps in the current literature (Armstrong et al 2011). By conducting this scoping review and placing LGBTQI teacher research alongside LGBTQI Guidance Counselling research it allows for a direct comparison between the experiences. This allows for investigation into the primary and secondary research questions. All efforts were made to fully engage with the literature, however, this was a large scale scoping review there is a potential that some articles were unclear or had ‘hidden’ elements to them may have been missed or overlooked (Sperka & Enright 2017).

3.6.2 Strand 2: In-depth Interviews

Life experiences of marginalised groups are useful as starting points for research and as generators of information (Swigonski 1994). Therefore, research must begin with experiences and not concepts as ‘life experience structures one’s understanding of life’ (Swigonski 1994, p. 390). In-depth interviews provide an opportunity to focus on a particular area of an individual’s life, and therefore, led me to the decision on qualitative in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews seek to understand the lived experiences and understanding what an individual brings to a situation. Which directly, reflects a
feminist post-structuralist theory that experiences are socially constructed. The research design made use of one-to-one, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, each approximately lasting for one hour (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Interviews were considered to be an optimal research method for the current topic as they provide the space for a discussion of issues, attitudes, and opinions (Thomas 2013). Interviews are also a beneficial method of research as it is a form of personal contact with the interviewee, which, in turn allows the interviewer to relate to the participant and fully understand them in their language and gestures used throughout the interview (Thomas 2013). In-depth interviews will be conducted and thematic analysis done across the experiences recounted by participants. Narrative research has a particular emphasis on the stories told by individuals (Polkinghorne 1995). The data collection of narrative research is often through a small number of individuals’ stories about their individual experiences (Creswell 2009).

Qualitative face-to-face interviews are seen as “involving the construction or reconstruction of knowledge more than the excavation of it” (Mason 2002, p.3). This suggests that qualitative interviews are bidirectional communication relationships between the interviewee and interviewer. Interviews are involved with allowing people to tell their story, which creates new knowledge from the perspective of the individual, rather than trying to extract the data from information being provided. Interviews have also been described as putting an emphasis on the notion “of human interaction for knowledge production” (Kvale 1996, cited in Cohen et al 2011 p. 409). With the philosophical underpinnings outlined previously, face-to-face interviews allow for the belief of multiple meaning constructions. Semi-structured interviews involve the researcher conducting these interviews in person. The interviews were structured through an interview guide, for semi-structured interviews the guide included the outline of topics to be covered and suggested questions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Broad, open-ended questions are used to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell 2009 p.181). Furthermore, techniques such as establishing trust early on with the participant, active listening skills, empathy, and a non-judgemental approach, were also used to generate rich data. The questions should be designed with regards to thematic and dynamic dimensions. Thematically, the questions should aim to produce knowledge and dynamically promoting good interview relationship and interactions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

In-depth interviews were conducted, where the discussion was mainly lead by the interviewee in terms of pace and content, as it is the participants story and their choice regarding what they chose to or chose not to say (Anderson & Kirkpatrick 2016). Broad and open questions were used to allow the most scope for the interviewees to respond to and to ensure that they could relate their experiences to the questions being asked of them. There are a number of skills that are required of a narrative
interviewer that are necessary to elicit rich data from the participants. Through using techniques such as establishing rapport with the participant, good active listening skills throughout the interview, and empathy were all used to generate valuable data. Once all data had been collected they were transcribed verbatim and then analysing the data set to identify major themes and stories evident within the data.

3.6.3 Data collection: Semi-structured interviews
After each interview, I transcribed the interviews verbatim and alongside this I reflected on my time with each participant and reflected on aspects of the interviews that went well and what needed to be improved upon. The strength of semi-structured interviews with an interview guide lies with the increase in systematic direction for participants while also maintaining a conversational tone (Cohen et al 2011; Thomas 2013). However, the limitations of semi-structured interviews are that significant information may be missed or omitted due to the structuring (Cohen et al 2011). As a result of this, a necessary amount of open-ended questions were included in order to allow for respondents to fully express their opinions, experiences, and feelings (Merriam 2009) around their experiences of being an LGBTQI Guidance Counsellor and negotiating their personal and professional identities.

3.7 Data Analysis
Thematic analysis (Patton 1990; Miles & Huberman 1994) was used to interpret the collected data from interviews. Each interview was played back and transcribed by myself. Once transcribed, I engaged with the data and line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph analysis was conducted and therefore, leading to the generation of responses into codes. Codes refer to an analytic theme, idea, variable, or category that attempts to describe particular sections of text data. Codes are short, immediate, and define the experience of the interviewee (Charmaz 2005). The ultimate aim of coding is to capture the extensiveness of the experiences described (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that coding entailed attaching one or more keywords to an interview transcript, in order to break down the text to manageable segments and to also allow for later retrieval of the section. Therefore, the term ‘coding’ refers to the connection that the research makes between a grouping and a passage of text by marking the text with the category, and in turn, the marked text can be compiled for comparison and review. Through examining each of the codes for similarities or differences they were reorganised into clusters to form categories, and in turn from these categories the main themes emerged that related to the central research question.
Analysis of the data was informed by the primary and secondary research questions. Mainly, an interpretivist approach was undertaken throughout the study as it is concerned with gaining a meaningful insight into the lives of the participants, mirroring feminist post-structuralist phenomenology. Analytic strategies of narrative research were used to explore the data, in which, descriptions of themes that are evident across numerous stories are created (Polkinghorne 1995). Active collaboration with participants will also be employed, in that negotiation regarding the meaning of stories and checking and validating meanings with individuals (Creswell & Miller 2000). The description involves what and how the individuals experienced the particular phenomenon (Moustakas 1994). The collected data and interview transcriptions are reviewed and the most important statements or quotes are used to provide meaning and understanding to how that individual experienced the concept (Creswell 2009). Following this, the significant statements are brought together into clusters and themes are developed from these. It is from these themes that are used to provide descriptions of how and what the individual experienced the phenomenon. Constructivist paradigms suggest that there are multiple realities experienced by individuals, and that groups can have similar lived experiences of concepts. Therefore, checking with participants, and developing themes around particular experiences reflects a feminist post-structural and queer theory epistemology.

3.7.1 Strand 1 analysis: Scoping Review
For this analysis I had to consider my focus and what I deemed to be appropriate studies for my scoping literature review (Sperka & Enright 2017). Overall, I applied a broad research question, inclusion and exclusion criteria were identified and adapted throughout the process, and the results were summarised and reported. The inclusion and exclusion criteria that were applied were that only empirical studies, focusing overtly on the experiences of LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors/Psychotherapists, were included. This was to ensure that measurable data was reviewed and to provide consistent results were found. The analysis of scoping reviews there is no specific or particular assessment of the quality of the results, but integral understanding of the results emphases ‘determining the consistent and variable messages that are generated by this body of work’ (Davies 2004, p. 21), to recognise gaps in the research (Armstrong et al., 2011). As a result of this, the following findings and discussions based on these are based solely on the 54 articles included in the scoping review.
3.7.2 Strand 2 analysis: Interviews

In order to analyse the empirical data collected, grounded theory was employed. The collected data was reviewed and analysed, particular elements and concepts came to the forefront. These elements were then established into codes. Grounded theory was used to decipher the communications throughout the interviews and thematic analysis was also used to code and interpret the data into themes to enable meaning interpretation and further analysis. The current study is inspired by Foucault’s concepts of knowledge and power, where power relations are reflected in language used (Hewitt 2009). The use of Foucault analysis often results in the presentation of the discourses in their field and analysis in terms of the power relations uncovered and therefore, can result in valued perceptions (Hajer 1995; Richardson 2000). Similar to constructivist epistemologies, Foucaultian discourse suggests that truth in established within a discourse and as a result is interactive with the knowledge and practices of that discourse (Hewitt 2009). Therefore, this nature of truth suggests that the methodological choices made for the current study are driven by the central research question.

3.8 Validity & Reliability of qualitative research

The reliability and validity of research is integral to the credibility and trustworthiness to the integrity of the final results (Noble & Smith 2015). Qualitative research is often criticised for its lack of scientific rigour, as there is no accepted consensus or standard for which to judge results on (Rolfe 2006). The quantitative methods of assessing reliability and validity, through means of statistical measures, cannot be employed for qualitative research, and therefore raises the issue of whether the concepts of reliability and validity are appropriate for qualitative research (Long & Johnson 2000). However, there are a number of alternative strategies that can aid in the insurance of validity and reliability in qualitative research (Noble & Smith 2015). A wide range of these strategies will be utilised within the current proposed study including; accounting for personal bias and researcher positionality, through engaging with my peers and principal investigator to reduce bias, through refining themes and discussing potential development of the project. Acknowledging and being aware of sampling by engaging with ongoing critical reflection was also beneficial to the current study. Meticulous record keeping is essential to the reliability and validity of a qualitative study in order to guarantee a decision making trail and also to ensure consistent interpretation of data. Record keeping ensures a record of the data collected is available for later retrieval and to enable checking of context throughout the analysis phase. Accurate representations of perspectives were guaranteed through giving the participants an opportunity to elaborate on experiences and cross check the transcripts. Verbatim transcripts of participants’ accounts were conducted and in addition to this, respondent validation was employed. Wherein, participants were asked if the interview themes and concepts adequately reflect the phenomenon being investigated, and if the transcripts accurately
depicted their experiences. Finally, triangulation, the use of different methods and perspectives to allow for more comprehensive findings were applied (Noble & Smith 2015). Triangulation allows for a more in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). As described earlier, idealist ontology suggests that the external world only exists to the individual as they believe it to be true, therefore, ‘objective reality can never be captured’ and we can only know it through ‘representations’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2011, p. 5). Therefore, the combination of using in-depth qualitative interviews, thematic analysis, and a scoping review was a strategy used to add consistency, richness, and depth to inquiry (Flick 2002; 2007), but claims are not being made that these data are representative of one true reality.

3.8.1 Reflexivity and positionality of researcher
Reflexivity refers to the process of continuous self-reflection that researchers often engage in, in order to raise awareness about their actions, feelings, and perceptions (Anderson 2008; Hughes 2014). Reflexivity is not only employed when reporting finding, but throughout the research process including: designing, collecting and analysing data and reporting findings (Gilgun 2006). Reflexivity is a useful tool to both guide the research and also to limit researcher bias (Jootun et al., 2009; McCabe & Holmes 2009; Lambert et al., 2010). Positionality of the researcher suggests the researcher’s worldview and its influence on the research (Foote & Bartell 2011; Savin-Baden & Howell Major 2013). Thomas (2013) describes positionality as “the researcher has an undeniable position and this position effects the nature of the observations and the interpretations that they make” (Thomas 2013, p. 110). The researchers position or reflexivity is effected by values and beliefs, which may be culturally assigned, while others may be associated with personal experiences that may be subjective and contextual (Chiseri-Strater 1996). Reflexivity can help the researcher acknowledge multiple stories, in addition to their own (Boylorn 2011). Methodological reflexivity encourages questions around theoretical, ontological and epistemological assumptions (Pillow 2015), which I believe that I have engaged with and been reflexive about. It was important for me to be able to engage and relate with the participants’ stories, while also, accounting for my own personal bias. While it is a subject I feel passionately about I had to ensure that I remained non-judgemental and grounded throughout the interviewing process, and to reflect on each interview after it was complete.

3.9 Conclusion
This chapter has outlined the research and methodologies employed throughout the current study. The research design frame is in-depth interviews with three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors followed by a scoping study of existing literature to investigate the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. A qualitative approach hinged on social constructivist and post-modern
feminist values. The following chapter will present the data analysis and findings from in-depth interviews, along with the findings from the scoping review.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to consider and discuss the main finding from Part A and Part B of the findings, the scoping review and the interview, respectively. A number of themes and sub themes emerged from both parts of the findings. The themes that were developed reflect the research questions of the current study. The main research question of ‘How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools?’ The chapter will first discuss the findings from the scoping study and is organised into themes that emerged from the research, in the form of a narrative description. Finally, the themes that surfaced from the interviews with three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland are discussed.

A critical scoping study of empirical work on LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors/psychotherapists was conducted in the current research to investigate ‘summarise and disseminate research findings’, ‘to identify gaps in the existing literature’ (Arksey & O’Malley 2005), and also to inform future studies. The collected studies include 50 LGBTQI teacher studies. Content analysis of the 50 empirical studies was initiated to identify country of origin, study focus, participants recruited and data sources. Similarly, content analysis was conducted on 4 collected studies around LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors and psychotherapists, under the same headings. Further analysis of the collected articles was undertaken and organised into themes. Four main themes emerged from the analysis; invisibility/Heteronormativity, coming out, resistance, and supports and protection. Each of these will be discussed in further detail.
### Part A: Scoping Review of Empirical Studies with LGBTQI Teachers and Guidance Counsellors Worldwide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Number</th>
<th>Author, (year), Country</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lineback, S, Allender, M, Gaines, R. (2016). USA</td>
<td>Identifying the demands LG teachers face in their schools due to their sexuality</td>
<td>11 LG teachers</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>McKenna-Buchanan, T. Munz, S, Rudnick J. (2015) USA</td>
<td>LGQ teachers’ dilemma of disclosing or not in classrooms.</td>
<td>29 LGQ college teachers</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hayes, C. (2014) USA</td>
<td>Intersections of race &amp; sexuality impact themes within their teaching</td>
<td>3 gay teachers (1 black, 2 latinos)</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year, Location</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Sample</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Endo, H., Reece-Miller, P.C., &amp; Santavicca, N.</td>
<td>2010, USA</td>
<td>Personal &amp; professional identity separations</td>
<td>6 gay &amp; lesbian teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jackson, J.M.</td>
<td>2009, USA</td>
<td>How to use queer identities and connect it to their classroom</td>
<td>9 k-12 teachers self-identified gay or lesbian</td>
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<td>Gust, SW.</td>
<td>2007, USA</td>
<td>Choice for a teacher to be out in the classroom has consequences identity between gay man &amp; teacher.</td>
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<td>2007, USA</td>
<td>Classroom practices of gay teachers. Main issues faced</td>
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<td>Jackson, M.</td>
<td>2006, USA</td>
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<td>9 K-12 gay &amp; lesbian teachers</td>
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<td>2003, USA</td>
<td>Impact of heteronormativity on lesbian teachers.</td>
<td>9 lesbian teachers</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Country</td>
<td>Research Summary</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>McCarthy, L. (2003)</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>Transgender teachers are isolated, hidden, &amp; silent about their identities. Issues addressed: gender dynamics, relationships, with students sexual orientation &amp; gender ID &amp; discrimination</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Bliss, GK, Harris, MB.</td>
<td>(1998)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Teachers were more likely to disclose their sexuality to other teachers than principal and to women over men</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>5th grade teacher comes out as a lesbian &amp; makes a positive difference in the classroom - creating a safe environment what difference does lesbianism make in the classroom and Identity management</td>
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<td>Openly gay and lesbian teachers describe their experiences of homophobia in education</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>Explores issues of importance to gay &amp; lesbian teachers. Damaging effects of homophobia on the lives of gay teachers, &amp; all teachers &amp; students</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>Self-reflective report on 2 gay teachers in Canada- importance of putting emphasis on being gay</td>
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<td>Callaghan, TD.</td>
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<td>Treatment &amp; attitude towards LGBTQ teachers in public Catholic schools in Canada</td>
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<td>Meyer, EJ, Taylor C, Peter T</td>
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<td>LGBTQI issues in schools significant differences between LGBT educators experiences perspectives vs hetero counterparts</td>
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<td>Russell, V. T.</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>How queer teachers are seen as role models but the influence of queers as a threat on innocent children still exists. Navigating being a role model &amp; visible in the school.</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<td>Litton EF. (1999)</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Catholic elementary school LB teachers. Oppression of working felt there was a benefit to coming out to students, but did not feel safe believed they had to work harder than their colleagues so dismissal was harder</td>
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<td>Gray EM, Harris A., Jones T. (2016)</td>
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<td>Ferfolja, T &amp; Hopkins L, (2013)</td>
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<td>Microcultures &amp; systematic practices of schools affecting working lives</td>
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<td>Coming out decisions- 3 choices that dominate</td>
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<td>Hardie, A (2012)</td>
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<td>Dilemmas facing lesbian teachers &amp; students being out in school environments</td>
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<td>&amp; impacting their daily operations</td>
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<td>Irwin, J.</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Lundin, M.</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Remains hard to be open in schools, what it means to be a</td>
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<td>homo-/bisexual teacher</td>
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**Sweden**

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<td>36</td>
<td>Lundin, M.</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Remains hard to be open in schools, what it means to be a</td>
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<td>Rudoe N. (2017)</td>
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<td>Lesbian &amp; gay teachers experiences of policies &amp; personal experiences of sexuality in schools</td>
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<td>Lesbian teachers negotiations of public/private identities in a heterosexualised space.</td>
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<td>Barnfield, D., &amp; Humberstone, B. (2008)</td>
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<td>LG outdoor education teacher’s voices are often silenced in outdoor heterosexist environments. Concealing their identities &amp; effects of managing identities.</td>
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<td>Fahie, D.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Experiences of LGB teachers working in Catholic schools who are religious but are uncomfortable with the language used by the Church against sexual minorities</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Neary A.</td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
<td>LGBTQ teacher experiences with boundaries, legislative &amp; political changes &amp; relations to parents &amp; students while entering into civil partnerships.</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>Neary A., Gray B., &amp; O’Sullivan M.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>LGBTQ rights pitted against religion. How politics of sexuality are (re) negotiated across discourses of religion and sexuality.</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Fahie, D</td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Irish experiences of negotiating private/professional identities influence of Church &amp; EU Law.</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>Neary, A., Gray, B., &amp; O’ Sullivan, M.</td>
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<td>Highlights everyday feelings &amp; politics of emotions between sexuality &amp; schooling.</td>
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<td>How non-recognition and silencing of non-heteronormative identities in schools and the impact of this on LGBT individuals</td>
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<td>Gowran (2004)</td>
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**LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors/Psychotherapists**

**USA**

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<th>Impact of counsellor self-disclosure of sexual orientation on heterosexual clients</th>
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<td>Carroll, L., Gauler, AA., Relph, J, Hutchinson, KS. (2011), USA</td>
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<th>Experiences of a gay therapist effects of therapeutic characteristics on the therapeutic process</th>
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<th>Auto-ethnographic</th>
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<td>Haldeman D.C. (2010) USA</td>
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<th>Orientation of the counsellor may be less salient when therapy is not sexual in nature.</th>
<th>40 gay men, 40 lesbian women</th>
<th>Rating scales</th>
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<td>Moran, MR. USA (1992)</td>
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**UK**

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th>Experiences of lesbian &amp; gay therapists disclosing sexual orientation to heterosexual clients. Factors that Influences-effects for themselves clients &amp; relationship</th>
<th>8 lesbian &amp; gay therapists</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Moore, J., &amp; Jenkins P. (2012). UK</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Scoping Review of Empirical studies with LGBTQI Teachers and Guidance Counsellors Worldwide
4.2 Part A: Themes Arising From Scoping Review of Empirical Studies with LGBTQI Teachers and Guidance Counsellors

4.2.1 Heteronormativity/Invisibility

Considering that sexual identities can be shaped in a school, it can be common for sexualities to be silenced or made invisible within schools. There remains an approach of invisibility to homosexuality or non-heterosexual obedience in schools. Meaning that participants who identified as non-heterosexual are silenced, through ensuring that their sexuality remains invisible. The effects of this invisibility can lead to consequences of the lack of desire to remain in that context and the enthusiasm for their role. It was also common in these articles for teacher to self-silence as a coping strategy, which can lead to a form of internalised homophobia, which is the belief in the hetero dominant society, and the acceptance of its ideas.

The belief in a hetero dominant society is also supported by a heteronormative culture often produced and reproduced in schools. Participants discussed their own experiences of being gay in a heteronormative society and their efforts to bridge both their LGBTQI identities and their experiences in a normative society. The language that is used in schools is also a way that heteronormativity can be reproduced in schools. The use of homophobic language, often by the students but they are not disciplines for their use. LGBTQI staffs often do not attempt to challenge the language due to the fear of exposing themselves. Schools remain in the ‘closet’ while society changes around them, which suggests that more needs to be done to improve trust and reliance on each other’s supports. It is clear that schools sustain and recreates heterosexuality through language usage and the fear of being outed.

4.2.2 Coming Out

The concept of coming out was one that was alluded to in a majority of the reviewed articles. The decision to come out in a school is a complex one that has many influences on participants’ professional lives. Participants often face dilemmas surrounding the decision to come out in school or how out they will be, as it can
be difficult for LGBTQI educators to disclose their sexuality, as every teacher’s sexuality is present in the classroom. Coming out was influenced through various discourses that the educators involved in the empirical studies described. Many of the participants were concerned about if they came out that there would be a negative impact on their students. Teachers worried that if they came out that it would have a negative impact on their role as a teacher, and the ability to build relationships with parents and students. There is a fear around the risks of coming out to students, and while they want to help students the perceived risk of beingouted is too great. These articles allude to the high risks that LGBTQI educators take to come out, the educators acknowledge the benefits of coming out to students and they wish that they did not have to hide their sexuality from their students, yet they mostly decided to stay closeted, due to the risk of beingouted.

Many of the studies suggested that other factors also influence educators to not to come out in school. Significant consequences often impact the educators decisions to come out, consequences that entail fear of others and how they will be perceived by other people, fear of losing their jobs, and also the risk of being misunderstood for their motives for coming out. Throughout the studies it is clear that a major concern for LGBTQI educators is the effect of their disclosure of sexual orientation on their students, their colleagues and the wider influence on the school community. These results were mirrored in the current study, wherein the participants were concerned about the effect their disclosure would have on their students and their status in the school community.

In order to avoid or avert attention from their own sexuality, it is interesting to note that educators who identified as LGBTQI often felt that they were required to conform and fit into the gender roles or representations of what was expected of them. Specifically, the articles described the participants as acting or ‘passing’ as heterosexual in order to avoid any discussion of sexuality and as a result protecting their own sexuality. For LGBTQI educators there is an importance to looking and conforming to gender stereotypes, or accepted forms of femininity or masculinity. This is important for LGBTQI staff because it reduces the risk of beingouted. In an Irish context, as a result of the influence of the Church there remains a fear around coming out for Irish educators, a fear of losing their jobs. However,
studies have shown a relief and elation after disclosure of sexual orientation for teachers. Another significant theme evident across the reviewed articles was the notion that school microcultures have an influence on how LGBTQI teachers negotiate their identities and that schools impact and shape sexual identities. Important factors including what the individual believes to be entailed in what it means to them to be LGBTQI and also what being a ‘good teacher’ means. It is from these discourses that sexual identity and a professional identity are formed within a school.

4.2.3 Resistance

Many of the reviewed articles described participants who often made attempts to challenge heteronormativity in their own ways and environments. Some of the participants discussed the use of queer teaching in their classrooms, the use of their own ‘othered’ experiences to challenge binary thinking. Breaking gender norms through coming out to their students, and through reporting can all be seen as actions to reject the heteronormative disposition of the education system. While heteronormativity is prominent within the education system, schools are also seen as the frontline to eradicate heterosexism and genderisms. Looking at an Irish framework, in addition, schools can be acknowledged as an agent of change, and provide resilient and resourceful ways to disrupt homophobia and Heteronormativity and to teach about sexual diversity and provide young people with LGBTQI role models. With the passing of the referendum, the now everyday negotiations of entering civil partnerships has begun to dissolve the power of heteronormativity seen in schools.

4.2.4 Supports and Protection

The articles also discussed the social supports that LGBTQI teachers required in order to feel comfortable in their contexts, within these supports policy was a key protection for these teachers. Social supports received from colleagues, administration staff, the school and partners were seen as a crucial coping resource for
LGBTQI teachers. Participants in the reviewed articles were often felt more comfortable to select a few colleagues to come out to meaning that the supports provided to LGBTQI staff from these colleagues is an essential support. Organisations can also provide structural support to LGBTQI educators and also provide strong policy as an additional support. If a school culture promotes a positive and supportive environment for issues of diversity, this may create a difference in the lives of LGBTQI teachers and students alike. Policy should be recognised as a starting point for understanding basic rights. In an Irish context, tensions have been noted between national policy in terms of homophobic and transphobic bullying and inclusion and diversity within sexual education and upholding the schools’ ethos and values. As a result of this, LGBTQI teachers face a dilemma of being insider-outsiders, they simultaneously support and also challenge the schools ethos.

4.2.5 LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors and Psychotherapists

It is clear from the articles included in the scoping review in Table 1, that there is a dearth of literature and knowledge surrounding the experiences and perspectives of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors and Therapists specifically. Not only is there a lack of literature in relation to the topic, from what literature is published there are inconsistencies within the findings. The majority of LGBTQI counsellors must address the decision to disclose their sexuality to their clients on a daily basis. Many of the fears and prejudices associated with coming out to clients for counsellors are dependant on the counsellors own biases and assumptions. This suggests that for counsellors who are LGBTQI and consider coming out to their clients, their own biases and assumptions of how they will be perceived were what determined if they made that decision. The potential benefits and role of therapist self-disclosure to clients remains controversial (Hill & Knox 2002). The research literature that does exist on the topic of therapist self-disclosure of orientation (TSDO) is contradictory. Farber (2006) suggests that counsellors must remain discreet and mindful of what they disclose to clients as this information could possibly redirect the focus away from the client. Jeffrey and Austin (2007) refer to Strean (1997), restating that sexual orientation is not appropriate for a counsellor to disclose to their client. It has been suggested that clients may benefit positively from therapist-client matching on sexual
orientation, and that therapists who did not disclose their sexual orientation to clients were rated lower than those who did (Liddle 1996). This suggests that by therapists not revealing their sexual orientation could be less beneficial to clients. Mahalik et al., (2000) suggests that self-disclosure of sexual identity may provide positive experiences for the client if they share a minority sexual orientation or a view that is reinforced by others (Cabaj 1996; Frommer 2003).

Hill and Knox (2002) understand that counsellor self-disclosure may prove to be an important intervention that may prove significantly influential on treatment outcome of clients, including immediate improvement in therapeutic relationships. Rogers (1957) states that one of the core conditions of being a counsellor was genuineness; which is the quality of being real and honest in the therapeutic relationship. Considering this, the act of a counsellor withholding their truthful sexual orientation and full disclosure to their clients raises the question of if they are being completely genuine? Therefore, will the therapeutic relationship be successful even while it lacks one of the core conditions required? For heterosexual therapist’s sexual self-disclosure often occurs without much consideration, through the use of everyday, other sex-specific language. However, for LGBT counsellors must engage in more explicit conscious language to communicate their sexual orientation. Research has found that fully disclosing gay and lesbian counsellors were recognised to be more trustworthy by their clients when compared to their peers who did not self-disclose (Carroll, Gauler, Relph & Hutchinson 2011). Results of surveys have found that many LGB clients believe that the most important factor for them is that the counsellor is LGB affirmative (Burckell & Goldfried 2006; Liddle 1996).

One reviewed study proposed that LGBTQI counsellors can offer an enhanced sensitivity to their clients, particularly if they have had experiences with socially traumatic events. Coming out for these counsellors offered a possibility of creating credibility and honesty with their clients, otherwise they felt that they were withholding information from their clients. Finally, the notion of trustworthiness was a common theme among the literature of LGBTQI psychotherapists and counsellors. Moran (1992), established that ‘membership group similarity’, including sexual orientation does not have a significant effect on counsellor attractiveness, expertness and trustworthiness. However, a more recent study, Carroll et al., (2011) suggested
that participants viewed self-disclosing counsellors as more trustworthy than their non-disclosing lesbian and gay counterparts. In addition to this, Moore & Jenkins (2012) recommended that therapist self-disclosure should only be used if it is in the best interest of the client, where it could be used to strengthen the therapeutic relationship and provide an opportunity to be real with the client.

As a result of reviewing the content analysis of the 54 articles, it is evident that a great deal of research has been conducted in terms of LGBTQI education staff. There is a considerable amount of factors that have an influence on the management of private and professional identities of LGBTQI educators’ everyday lives. The main themes that emerged from the empirical scoping review were heteronormativity, coming out, resistance, supports and protection, and management. These themes were discussed individually and in relation to the research questions of the current study. However, the content analysis of the research involving Guidance Counsellors and psychotherapists, it is clear that there is a considerable dearth in the research literature. It is acknowledged that there may be benefits in revealing sexual orientation to clients, as it may enhance therapists’ sensitivity to their clients. In addition to this, it is also suggested that trustworthiness of therapists increases once they self-disclose their sexual orientation, and only if it is in the best interest of the client.

The reviewed articles do not consider the choice of LGBTQI therapists working with LGBTQI clients, and the concept of professionalism. Particularly, professionalism in the area of guidance counselling, and what it means to be professional when and LGBTQI counsellor is presented with an LGBTQI student. In the subsequent part B of the Findings Chapter, the experiences of three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors working in Irish second-level schools will be discussed. The knowledge of these Guidance Counsellors will provide a unique an interesting perspective of what it is like to be an LGBTQI Guidance Counsellor in Ireland. While the participants are all from an Irish context guidance counselling is an important aspect of the education system in many countries. The experiences of these Guidance Counsellors is specific to the Irish context but is also transferrable to other contexts and so contributes to the dearth of international literature in this area.
4.3 Part B: The Experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland

4.3.1 Introduction
This section outlines the experiences of three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors Ruth, Greg and Lisa — and their negotiations of their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland. The themes presented and the details that are entailed within the themes have an interconnected sense to them, suggesting that the themes are built on and related to each other. This is representative of the complexity of the role that Guidance Counsellors play in schools on an everyday basis. The following sections will explore the themes that emerged from the data. Firstly, the participants involved in the study will be described in their own contexts. Secondly, the main themes and sub themes that emerged will be discussed.

4.3.2 Participants

Ruth
Ruth is a full time Guidance Counsellor working in a mixed gender DEIS disadvantaged urban band 1 school in a large city in Ireland. The patronage of the school is unknown. Ruth has been a Guidance Counsellor in her current school for five years. Ruth has a background in theology and began a teaching career as a religion teacher before turning to guidance counselling. Ruth identifies as a lesbian and is open to a few close colleagues in her school.

Greg
Greg is working as a part time Guidance Counsellor in a mixed gender DEIS band 1 school in a large city in Ireland. The patronage of the school is unknown. Greg completed a Masters in Leadership and Management, and through writing his thesis decided to undertake a Post Grad in Guidance and Counselling. Previously, he had taught in an all male secondary school for 13 years. Greg identifies openly as a gay man in his current school.
Lisa

Lisa is a part time Guidance Counsellor in a single-sex boys Secondary School, under Catholic patronage school in a large city in Ireland. Lisa is also working as a Spanish and History teacher in the same school. She has been teaching for roughly 9 years. Lisa identifies as a lesbian and is out to her colleagues in school.

4.3.3 School culture

All participants articulated a genuinely overall positive experience of being an LGBTQI Guidance Counsellor within an Irish second-level school. All participants reported having a few close friends on the staff that they could confide in, in regards to all aspects of their lives: ‘I’d be able to tell them anything you know and they would equally tell me anything’ (Ruth). For the participants it was important for them to have a few close friends on the staff, it allowed them to feel more comfortable in their work environment. ‘I suppose I’m becoming more comfortable being gay in school. I was less comfortable at the start’ (Lisa). In addition to feeling more comfortable, it also allowed the participants to feel safer and for identifying as LGBTQI to be normal in the workplace. While there were a number of colleagues that they were comfortable with and could be open and confide in, all participants discussed difficulties in disclosing their sexuality to other staff members or their students. One participant articulated that he felt it was ‘important for a lot of them to understand’ about his sexuality and yet he described that he ‘wasn’t necessarily comfortable with it’ (Greg), referring to other staff members knowing his sexuality. It is clear that having people know he was gay was important for him, as it allowed him to be himself within the working environment, however, there was still a feeling of distress around disclosing his sexuality to some people on the staff.

Participants all have had experiences with heteronormativity within a school setting. Participants felt that identifying as LGBTQI also meant that they felt and experienced difficulties in ‘things that heterosexuals take for granted’ (Greg). Which directly reflects the feelings on the participants in study 42 of the scoping review. All participants mentioned their own experiences with heteronormativity and how it affects both their professional and personal lives. One participant experienced it blatantly when a co-worker told her ‘you’ll meet a nice man yet and to keep her
sexuality under wraps’ (Ruth), this emphasised that not only that having an ‘other’ sexuality was not accepted in the school but also that ‘everyone just assumes you’re straight’ (Lisa). This has lead to the belief that being anything other than heterosexual was inappropriate and often non-existent for some people. ‘It’s like you don’t have a sexuality’ (Lisa).

One participant felt that the teachers in her school were: ‘all kind of homogenous, so any difference is a bit, that person is a little different, that’s strange’ (Lisa). All teachers being homogenous and finding any difference in people as strange highlights the distress that can come with recognising themselves as ‘other’ and the consequences that are perceived to come with ‘coming out’. It is clear that identifying outside of the heterosexual norm then there is no conversation around sexuality, or that it is avoided completely until the individual who is LGBTQI brings it up themselves. It is clear that this is not the same for heterosexual staff, as one participant mentioned that the chaplain of her school ‘she’d have the pictures of her kids up on the wall, and it would come into her counselling’ (Ruth) that the chaplain would make reference to her kids and in turn her heterosexual orientation, while as a Guidance Counsellor being unable to bring in any part of their lives, due to their ‘other’ sexualities. Evidently, for the three participants involved, that there were some supportive relations with some colleagues, but overall there remains a heteronormative culture with in second-level schools.

4.3.4 Coming Out

‘Coming out’ was a decision that the participants had to make themselves, either to identify openly in the school or to a select number of close colleagues to ‘come out’ to. All participants were uncomfortable with the idea of all staff knowing their sexual orientation and being identified in the school as the ‘gay teacher’. The participants felt that being recognised as the ‘gay teacher’, that was what formed their identity. Meaning that the defining factor of their identity as a teacher was their sexuality, and that was not who they wanted to be seen as in a professional capacity. One participant found that she found it easier to come out in situations when other staff members were open to ‘other’ sexualities and by addressing it directly ‘she was like have you got a boyfriend or a girlfriend? And that just made it really easy then’ (Lisa). This was
easier for Lisa to come out to an individual colleague in this situation because her colleague addressed being LGBTQI as a normative identification.

Two of the participants felt that ‘teachers [would have been] a little bit more open-minded’ (Greg), or that in their experiences ‘that teachers tend to be a little more conservative’ (Ruth). Teachers are seen to uphold a strong voice in society and to be a non-judgemental presence for young people to look up to. However, from the experiences of LGBTQI staff, teachers are seen to be less accommodating and accepting of ‘other’ sexualities. For heterosexual staff, developing relationships with others depends on interactions of everyday life. However, it is more difficult for LGBTQI staff, as heterosexual staff seem to ‘just talk to you in a different manner’ (Lisa), ‘people won’t ask you the same questions they’d ask’ (Lisa) heterosexual people, a ‘partner is just a friend’, ‘whether you were out at the weekend’, or ‘if you’re seeing anybody’ (Lisa), are all common questions to be asked as a heterosexual person in the staffroom, yet the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors, these questions are not asked and therefore, it can be more difficult to form relationships among the staff. In order to disrupt this heterosexual norm, LGBTQI staff often have to repeat themselves and keep coming out over and over again. One participant discussed that she often has to ‘double think what you’re saying to people’ and ‘tailor it to the people that you’re talking to’ (Lisa). It is common for LGBTQI staff to ‘have to keep saying it [that you’re gay] over and over again’ as again people assume the heterosexual norm.

Overall, participants described a fairly positive experience of being a LGBTQI Guidance Counsellor in second-level schools. They recognised the importance of being open about their sexuality in their school, but often felt held back by the traditional norms inflicted on them through society and the education system that they work for.

4.3.5 Security of employment

The supports of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Irish schools is an aspect that all participants discussed and some compared their life in school to the life of others in different professions. LGBTQI staffs in industries other than education were
described to have the freedom to join or start LGBT support groups within their workplace: ‘it’s all so different in private industry’ (Ruth), and how it was difficult in schools to express their sexualities openly in this way. ‘I would have found it’s my experience that teacher’s kind of tend to be a little bit more maybe conservative’ (Ruth). From Ruth’s experience there was an expectation that teachers would be more open to differences, and that it would have been easier to be open with them about her sexuality. Similar to Ruth, Greg felt that as a quality of being a teacher that they would be ‘open-minded’ and accepting people for who they are and letting them express themselves. It is clear that LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors felt that through being employed within the education sector, and schools in particular, they were being repressed in regards to their sexuality. ‘I just do feel vulnerable sometimes’, ‘as a gay man in the education system you do, I certainly feel vulnerable’ (Greg). For Greg, this suggested that as a gay man working in a school he felt that there was an underlying sense that, due to his sexuality he felt unsafe in the workplace. This reflects the feeling that as an LGBTQI member of staff there is a sense of ‘always being a little bit more on edge than my heterosexual counterparts’ (Greg). That they feel ‘more vulnerable and susceptible to somebody deciding that they’re going to out me or do something’ (Greg).

There were a number of elements to feeling secure in their position of employment. One Guidance Counsellor mentioned that being offered a ‘contract of indefinite duration’ was something that they felt lead to ‘I think you feel a little safer’ (Ruth), meaning that until a contract of indefinite duration was obtained there was a sense of unease and lack of security. A contract of indefinite duration is equal to the status of a permanent teacher. There was a sense that some people who identified as LGBTQI working in schools and did not hold permanency or a contract of indefinite duration, that they could be let go on grounds that may have been associated with their sexual orientation. Ruth talked about a position that was made permanent and she was not given it and as a result she felt: ‘manoeuvred out of the school’ and that there ‘was no never any problem or anything said to me about my work, and you know there was like a bit of a question as to whether it was down to the sexuality’. This emphasised to the participant that her sexuality had an impact on her achieving permanency in a school, and that identifying within the non-heteronormative sphere could lead to negative impacts on her career. This feeling of unease was emphasised through
further experiences of other Irish LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors like Greg’s vulnerability as gay man in the education system.

This participant went on further to explain that he could not describe why specifically he felt more vulnerable than his heterosexual counterparts, but it effects how he felt that he could conduct himself in school. He felt that as a gay man working as a Guidance Counsellor, there was a fear of being ‘outed’ by the students or staff. This is a serious concern that restricted him. He also discussed a concern about being in one-to-one sessions with students, which is a necessary duty of a Guidance Counsellor. There was a fear around the students knowing he was gay, and also what other people or society would think of him, this suggests that the fear Greg feels comes from the assumption that due to his sexuality, he will have a profound influence on his students. Yet, it is the one-to-one sessions, which makes the role of Guidance Counsellors unique in a school. It is clear that there is a conflict between the unique role of a Guidance Counsellor as being on a one-to-one basis, and the fear of being seen to have to influence his students.

One participant, in particular actively tries to avoid any situations with students that may provide an opportunity or an opening that would put them in jeopardy. ‘I do personally feel that there’s a little bit of awkwardness around me taking LGBTQI students’ (Ruth). This suggests that the participants opted not to take LGBTQI students for guidance sessions due to the stigma attached to the gay teacher, a fear of the assumption that they would make the students gay. She was concerned that if they let a student too close that the student would expose them and their sexuality to the school. Yet the participants felt like sort of ‘a role model’ (Greg), for students, even though they rarely came out explicitly to them. One of the participants discussed coming out to a student, as a teacher, because the student was ‘in a very dark place and he could see no kind of future’ (Greg), the student was bullied severely and Greg came out to him to tell him that ‘there’s hope at the other end you know I’ve been there’ (Greg). However, as a Guidance Counsellor now Greg feels that he ‘was holding himself back on a student’. Another participant has had many experiences with students where she ‘wanted to tell him [a student] I’ve been in your situation’ (Lisa), but she felt that she ‘shouldn’t really be telling the kids anything about my personal life’. Some of the students knew that the participants identified as LGBTQI
and the students saw them as ‘a role model’. The idea of having an LGBTQI staff member and adult on the students’ level would be beneficial, ‘I think if students know that there’s a teacher whose gay I think it does help them that they actually have an adult ally who’s the same as them’ (Greg), yet, the participants were still concerned about being placed in a situation where they felt more vulnerable compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

4.3.6 Conflicting understandings of guidance counselling professionalism

All of the Guidance Counsellors who participated in this research made it clear that the most important aspect of working with LGBTQI students is to: ‘remain professional’ (Ruth). ‘Professionalism’ is considered to be, in this case, keeping a respectful distance between private and professional identities. They each articulated an innate desire to ‘comfort’ and tell them: ‘look I’ve been there and you’ll get through it, but then you have to keep your distance’ (Lisa). While it was important to the participants to remain at a distance from the students, but also to provide the appropriate care and support for their students. It is clear that as Guidance Counsellors the participants felt a conflict between their professional role to help students and their desire to help students, through counselling and caring for the students on an empathetic and personal level. There was also a conflict between the inclination to inform the students of their own sexuality in order to, in a way use themselves as an example that you can lead a normal life and be LGBTQI, and their professional role of not enforcing their own opinions and ideas onto the students. All of the participants felt that there was a required ‘level of professionalism to deal with a child’ and felt that it was inappropriate to ‘talk about your own stuff in a counselling situation anyway’ (Ruth). One to one individual counselling sessions with LGBTQI students were described as difficult:

There’s been a couple of moments when that has happened in my guidance training, when students have come out or talked about their sexuality and I’ve really found myself going ‘no I can’t share my own experiences, this is about them not me’ (Greg)

Personal life should be separate from work’ (Lisa), this can be a difficult dichotomy for any professional, and however, for LGBTQI professionals in a school, particularly
Guidance Counsellors working with students on such a personal level, it can be a significant decision to make. The Guidance Counsellors felt that exposing themselves on a personal level to students was inappropriate and it should be avoided. Nevertheless, it is common for heterosexual Guidance Counsellors and chaplains to allow their heterosexuality to slip into their everyday work ‘the chaplain she’d talk, she’d have the picture of her kids up on the wall, it would come into her counselling’ (Ruth). It would seem that there are separate rules for discussing sexuality for heterosexual and homosexual staff and these rules can be even more potent for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors due to the personal nature of one-to-one sessions with students.

The role of a Guidance Counsellor in a second-level school in Ireland is one of a dual role for most, meaning that they not only teach students they also act as the school Guidance Counsellor. This has shown difficulties for some Guidance Counsellors as there can be difficulties in transitioning between both roles. One Guidance Counsellor claimed that ‘there’s no difference, I don’t think to being an LGBT teacher’ (Ruth), while another felt that ‘it’s very different from being a teacher’ (Lisa). This emphasises the dual role that Guidance Counsellors must play within the school. Guidance Counsellors must be capable of being in a disciplinary role of a teacher and to quickly shift to a caring role. The ‘mentality shift’ (Lisa) of being in a personal counselling session with a student and having to shift quickly into a teaching role is a difficult switch to manoeuvre.

It is clear that the participants in the study were extremely empathetic and concerned for students in need, and in their role of Guidance Counsellor, it is their role to care for individual students in all elements of personal, educational, and vocational aspects of their lives. One participant explained that there ‘would probably be no harm to have a Guidance Counsellor who has also gone through that process’ (Lisa) of coming out. However, as a result of their sexual orientation many of the participants felt that there was more ‘awkwardness around me taking LGBT students’ (Ruth). While acknowledging the fact that their identification impacted their choice and avoidance to take on the LGBT students, some of the participants felt that ‘using my own experiences has helped and it has made me kind of appreciate you know, it’s not easy’ (Greg) for the students to come out or come to terms with their sexuality. For the
students it can be beneficial to know that there is an LGBTQI staff member that they can discuss sexual orientation exploration and to know that there is an adult who has gone through their process. ‘A lot of the time the Guidance Counsellor sometimes is the only person that a young person can go up to first’ (Greg), therefore, the role of a Guidance Counsellor requires the preparation for being the one adult in a young person’s life and ‘if students know that there’s a teacher whose gay, I think it does help them that they actually have an adult ally who’s the same as them’ (Greg).
4.3.7 Identity

The participants acknowledged that through identifying as part of the LGBTQI community they felt that they were seen as ‘pushing an agenda’ (Lisa). All participants were concerned about being seen as ‘pushing my own agenda’ (Ruth), as this could effect the relationship between students and staff with Guidance Counsellors. They were aware that being acknowledged as being LGBTQI that they may also be seen as pushing their own LGBTQI agenda on the students, staff, and whole school. This suggests that the participants did not want to be perceived as influencing the students by disclosing their sexuality. One participant noted that they did not want to be seen as ‘the gay teacher who invited the gay club to talk about gay things’ (Lisa). It is clear that, for these three Guidance Counsellors, there was a real concern that they do not want to be recognised as forcing their own agenda on their students or on the school as a whole. They also do not wish for their identification to control their identity within the school, that being part of the LGBTQI community did not necessarily or directly influence their identity as a teacher or Guidance Counsellor. One participant described that being an LGBTQI Guidance Counsellor is ‘strange’ because, the role of a Guidance Counsellor ‘is to push equality on everything and you feel like you’re pushing your own agenda a little bit’. (Lisa). Therefore, an integral part of being a Guidance Counsellor comes from advocating for vulnerable and at risk populations, however, by advocating for LGBTQI students and equality in schools there is also a concern for being seen as forcing their own agenda because they, as LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors may be promoting LGBTQI equality within their school.

This also extended to LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors not wanting to participate in or with any LGBTQI groups set up within the school. ‘I wouldn’t want to be attached to the group cause it’d be like if they found out I was gay, then it’d be like I’m sort of pushing my own agenda’ (Ruth). Furthermore, this implies that the counsellors felt that by campaigning for LGBTQI equality in their school that they were forcing their sexual identity upon the school and they did not ‘want to be seen as pushing an agenda’ (Lisa). The participants could see the benefits of having LGBTQI groups in the workplace, from other industries, but also the benefits for the students, however,
the negative effects of being part of this group and the impact it could have on their own feeling of acceptance in the school.

Greg felt that in his experiences there was a societal ‘confusion among people, that paedophilia is the same as homosexuality’. He felt that as a gay man working in an all boys school that he was being judged ‘because I was there for the wrong reasons’ and ‘that all gay men are predators and are out for sex’ (Greg). This echoes similar experiences of the teachers in studies 16, 27, and 37. There was a fear of misinterpretation of their motives for coming out. Greg said that he is now in a mixed school of male and female students and that he does not feel the same judgement from society. This influenced the hindrance and reluctance to be openly part of the LGBTQI community in a school.

This highlights the effect of heteronormativity on school life, which impacts how an LGBTQI member of staff should hide their identity, while it is nearly expected of heterosexual staff to discuss their personal life during their daily routine. It can be more difficult for non-heteronormative staff to let their personal life slip into their work identities, and in turn, can lead to the expectation of heterosexuality being the norm in school. Therefore, it is common for LGBTQI staff to separate their personal and professional lives, by ensuring that they do not ‘reference anything to do with my knowledge of the gay world’ (Ruth).

There is a constant awareness around having to ‘keep myself in check, that I don’t impose my own kind of beliefs or my own views, or my own experiences on them’ (Greg). All participants showed awareness around giving away too much about their ‘knowledge of something gay related’ (Ruth). This is a personal strategy used by the participants in order to negotiate their personal positioning within the school environment.
4.4  Conclusion

This chapter presented an investigation into the findings from the two phases of data collection; three in-depth semi-structured interviews and the scoping review. The analysis is demonstrated through the use of themes and sub-themes and highlights issues that are central to the research topic. The following chapter will examine the findings in relation to previous research.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction
The primary research question guiding this study was ‘How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools?’ This chapter will discuss the central themes that emerged from both the scoping review and from the qualitative interviews with three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. The three most prevalent themes of heteronormativity in education, coming out, and being role models will be discussed. Within each theme both empirical evidence from the scoping review and evidence from the experiences of three Irish Guidance Counsellors will be provided.

5.1 Heteronormativity: Restrictions for LGBTQI Teachers and Guidance Counsellors
In this section, I will discuss heteronormativity and the restrictive consequences it has for LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors as revealed in the themes arising from the scoping review and my study with Irish LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors (outlined in Chapter 4: Findings). The impacts of heteronormativity include binary thinking, collegial supports, possible pastoral responsibilities, and gender norms will be discussed drawing upon literature synthesised in Chapter 2: Literature Review and Chapter 4: Findings.

Jackson (2006, p. 108), outlines how heteronormativity is ‘widely used as shorthand for the numerous ways in which heterosexual privilege is woven into the fabric of social life, pervasively and insidiously ordering everyday existence’. Society revolves around and is underpinned by heterosexuality (Butler 1990); it is assumed and embedded into everyday life (Epstein & Johnson 1994). Schools are often places where heteronormativity is produced and reproduced (Wolley 2017; Redman 1994), and refines binary thinking (Allan 2009; Hills & Croston 2012; Renold 2010). As a result of this binary thinking, non-heterosexual individuals are often silenced, which can have various negative results on LGBTQI teachers (Ferfolja 2008). The three Irish Guidance Counsellors included in this study all experienced some form of binary
thinking in their schools. It was expected from the Guidance Counsellors that the teachers in their schools would be more open to differences and accepting of diversity. Lisa mentioned that she felt that all of the teachers in her school were ‘homogenous’ and that anyone who displayed any difference was peculiar. This is mirrored in Endo et al., (2010, p. 1027), ‘that being “different” is not easily accepted in the educational environment’. Showing difference in the education system often results in LGBTQI staff taking extra precautions to ensure their professionalism. This reinforces the concept that heteronormativity does not just effect LGBTQI relationships but it also has an influence on any ‘other’ identity. The problem with heteronormativity is not heterosexuality, but the fact that heterosexual relationships were seen as the only normal option. LGBTQI relationships were not the only relationships in danger, but any ‘other’ relationships (Melillo 2003). The existence of heterosexual privilege in education systems, can often lead to it being taken for granted (Sparkes 1994), which is something that emerged in both the scoping review my study with LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland.

Collegial support is important for LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors, but heteronormativity is often restrictive of these relationships. Heteronormativity can have a multitude of implications on teachers and Guidance Counsellors. The influence of a heterosexual matrix, may limit heterosexual teachers’ understanding of their LGBTQI colleagues, which has a further impact on their professional and interpersonal relationships (Ferfolja 2007b). This emphasis on collegial support structures was strongly reflected in many studies in the scoping review. Supports received from colleagues, administration, the school, and partners were seen as a fundamental coping mechanism for LGBTQI teachers and for improving their lives (Linebeck et al., 2016, Lundin 2016). Reflecting this, it was important for the LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland to have significant interpersonal relationships with one or more members of staff in their school communities. This was a strong and essential support in the participants’ school lives, but there remains a heteronormative privilege in schools. The Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study described that having a few close friends on the staff that made them feel more comfortable in the school. Yet they did feel that they were not necessarily comfortable with everybody on the staff knowing their sexual identity. Due to the fact that they identified as non-heterosexual they felt that they were restricted from
forming relationships with everybody on the staff. And so it is clear that LGBTQI teacher and Guidance Counsellor relationships with colleagues are restricted by heteronormativity.

In an Irish context the participants in the study mentioned the passing of the Thirty-fourth Amendment of the Constitution (Marriage Equality) Act 2015, which was passed at referendum. The participants acknowledged that the passing of this referendum ‘started the conversation’ (Greg), meaning that it was a beginning for the public to recognise the needs of LGBTQI people for equality and respect and acknowledgement in society. While a ‘large majority voted for equal rights’ (Lisa), of 62%, ‘there was 800 and something thousand people that voted no’ (Greg), therefore, while the referendum was passed it is still important to acknowledge that there were people that voted no. That LGBTQI people can still be discriminated against and they have to protect themselves by being silent about their identification to some colleagues, in their workplace. However, the implication of the referendum on society ‘normalised everything a lot more’ and that its ‘one in ten’ (Lisa) people in the population that identify within the LGBTQI community. Overall, the passing of the Marriage Equality Act has lead to society understanding and creating awareness about LGBTQI people in the Irish society, and due to this it has lead to a normalisation and beginning to accept that LGBTQI people are on staffs and that their needs also need to be met. It is clear that the referendum was the beginning for Irish people to recognise the need to disrupt heteronormativity in society. Equally, the pastoral care possibilities for LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors are also limited by heteronormativity.

The pastoral care role is a significant part of teacher professionalism, and is a recognised professional value in the ‘Teaching Council Act 2001’ and the 2011 ‘Code of Professional Values’. The Teaching Council describes the role of a teacher as “positive, caring, fair, and committed to the best interests of their pupils/students entrusted to their care” (Teaching Council 2011, p. 7). However, these pastoral relationships that teachers form with their students are affected by heteronormativity (Neary 2017). Regular classroom teachers must take into account for personal boundaries with students, to protect their personal life. Most teachers use techniques to manage boundaries with students, for LGBTQI teachers, these techniques are used
in particular ways that will create stronger boundaries and minimise any possibility of students asking inappropriate questions (Neary 2017). Regardless of creating boundaries with student’s heteronormative discourses allow heterosexual teachers to draw upon their personal experiences and use them in school contexts but for LGBTQI teachers, this is just not accepted and the possible knowledge and experiences that they have had can not be used to help students (Valentine 2002). While the concept of pastoral care is important to the role and professionalism of a regular teacher, pastoral care has particular implications for a Guidance Counsellor, which will be discussed in further detail in the professionalism section.

Another core aspect of heteronormativity that arose across the scoping review and my study with LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland is the regulatory force of gender norms and the intersections between gender and sexuality. For many of the teachers included in the scoping review a major influence of heteronormativity on them personally was the importance of gender conformity (McKenna-Buchanan et al., 2015; Jackson 2006; McCarthy 2003; Lundin 2016). For heterosexual people their sexuality is constantly communicated and reveal without any specific notice given to it. However, for LGBTQI individuals, sexuality is repressed and they must take explicit precautions to comply with the accepted norm (Lundin 2016). ‘Gender presentation’ can be understood as the self-presentation of an individual to diverge or converge with gender expectations (McCarthy 2003, p. 171). Gender appearances often can elicit homophobic reactions, regardless of the person’s sexual identity. Two of the Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study felt strongly about their gender presentation. Ruth said that people would know that she was gay because of the way that she looked and dressed, yet people would never ask her about her personal life. Ruth felt that because of her non-conformity to look like a woman she was restricted about what she could talk to others about. She said that people knew she was gay because of the way that she looked and because of that people tended to avoid talking about her personal life because of their gender-normative binary thinking. Greg, on the other hand, discussed that his appearance was very important to him. He was proud of the fact that he dressed in a unique way and that his appearance was as he said ‘an extension of [his] sexuality’. Greg used his appearance to disclose his sexuality and he was comfortable with how he presented himself in a school context.
He felt that while he did not conform to traditional male gender presentation he embraced his appearance and used it as a method to come out.

Our understandings of ourselves as gendered individuals are a constantly developing structure (Jackson & Scott 2001), which is limited to the cultural binary of gender presentation (McCarthy 2003). In Jackson’s (2006) study, participants felt more comfortable being an LGBT teacher when they ‘resembled gender expectations’ of masculinity and femininity (p. 36). This was often used as a management strategy to help individuals either disclose or hide their identities. Neary et al., (2016) discuss that LGBTQI teachers employ ‘self-surveillance work in the careful monitoring of their clothing, mannerisms and behaviour at school.’ (p. 8). Schools are built on a foundation of ‘effortless’ heteronormativity, authority regulation, and regulation (Bolton 2007), and in Neary et al. (2016), the participants felt that they were required to ‘butch it up’ in order to present themselves as an authoritative figure in the school. For the three Irish Guidance Counsellors in the current study, there was not an explicit feeling that they had to comply with gendered norms of how they should look. Both Ruth and Greg used their clothing as an expression of themselves in schools.

As confirmed by the findings from the scoping review and my study with LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors outlined in the previous chapter, heteronormativity is alive and well in schooling contexts. For LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors this heteronormative thinking is restrictive and bianaristic, in terms of curtailing the relationships with colleagues and pastoral relationships with students. They also restrict LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors from helping LGBTQI students as they often refused to take them for one to one counselling sessions, in addition to, the tension surrounding what constitutes as professionalism and being a ‘good’ role model, which will be discussed in the role model section. The next section moves to discuss another significant theme that emerged across the scoping review and my study: the politics of disclosure or ‘coming out’ as LGBTQI.

5.2 Coming Out

Coming out is a process that the LGBTQI teachers and Irish Guidance Counsellors in the scoping review and the Irish Guidance Counsellors in my study revealed that they
must navigate on an everyday basis. As the findings chapter revealed, there is a difference between coming out to adults and coming out to children. The relationship between and intersections of sexuality and education have a significant influence on one’s decision to come out (Youdell 2004; Neary et al., 2017; Fahie 2016), particularly the perspectives and approaches of the school. In this section, I discuss the interactions between sexuality and education, moving on to coming out to adults and specifically therapists’ decisions to come out to their clients. I then move on to discussing the implications of coming out to children and making use of queer pedagogies in education and pastoral relationships.

For the three Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study, coming out to students was very difficult and only one of the three had been openly out to some students. There was an insecurity surrounding coming out to their students, all of them were uncomfortable with their students knowing their sexuality, for fear of that the ‘gay agenda’ will recruit youth into homosexuality (DePalma & Atkinson 2009). Both Ruth and Lisa felt that they should not get too close to their students, particularly the students who identified as LGBTQI. They felt a desire to help and provide support for these students, yet actively avoided any one to one sessions with them. Mirroring Lance et al. (2010) and Fahie (2016) many teachers were unwilling to discuss issues of sexuality in their classrooms. This reluctance created a level of tension between the professional responsibilities as teachers (Devine et al., 2013) and their own need to safeguard their private lives. They were fearful that if LGBTQI students got too close to her than they would expose their sexuality. Reflecting McCarthy (2003) that if themes of sexuality were brought into the classroom, there was a fear around the conversation turning on them. Ruth would therefore, ask the other Guidance Counsellor to take the students who presented LGBTQI issues. They were afraid of beingouted and of being perceived by disclosing their sexuality would be misinterpreted. Litton (1999) argues that teachers do not feel like it is ‘safe’ to come out to students and that there was a desire that they did not have to hide their identities in school. Many of these fears, related to coming out to their students stemmed from the fear of recruiting for the gay agenda (DePalma & Atkinson 2009), a fear of beingouted (Connell 2012); and fear of losing their jobs (McCarthy 2003; Callaghan 2015). Greg, who was the one participant who disclosed his sexuality to a select few of his students, did so in order to help his students through times of difficulty and to come to
terms with their own sexuality. One student was being severely bullied and Greg came out to him to show the normalcy of identifying as LGBTQI and that there was an adult in the school that has experienced the same things, who could help and he could provide them with a positive outlook for people who identify as LGBTQI. Greg wanted to show the student that he could confide in him and that there was hope that he could get through his difficulties.

Self-disclosure or ‘coming out’ involves revealing unknown knowledge about one’s individuality, which poses some level of risk (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, and Margulis 1993). LGBTQI teachers must make decisions around how ‘out’ or at all, they will be about their sexuality in their school context (Hardie 2012). There are many reasons that may influence an individual’s decision to come out including; their particular context of their school situation of employment, attitudes of the school and its personnel, and the individual’s personal conditions (Hardie 2012). Schools can be seen as places that establish the meeting of public and private identities and limitations (Nias 1996). Heterosexuality is often normalised and straightforward in a school environment, whereas, ‘other’ sexualities require further clarifications if teachers wish to be out (Gray 2013). Sexuality can often be deemed as an inappropriate subject for the classroom (Gray 2013), however, Gust (2007) and Hardie (2012), propose that regardless of orientation, sexuality is brought into the classroom whether they choose to bring it in or not. Furthermore, Endo et al., (2010) this idea is reinforced by asking if it is possible for LGBTQI teachers to completely reject or disguise who they really are. This makes the boundaries of private and professional identities difficult to navigate for LGBTQI teachers. Making the decision to come out to adults can be complex, particularly for LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors.

Self-disclosure or coming out can be complex for teachers who identify as LGBTQI, as coming out has a possibility of being seen as negative by colleagues, pupils or administration staff (Russ, Simonds, & Hunt, 2002). There are a number of anxieties that LGBTQI teachers have around the decision-making process to ‘come out’ in their school, even when they chose not to disclose their sexual orientation (Lineback et al. 2016). Managing this personal/professional divide has been challenging for LGBTQI teachers, who often employ various management strategies to limit and maintain these
boundaries. The main challenge faced by LGBTQI teachers and the personal/professional divide is difficulty faced by managing a legitimate professional capacity and also being genuine about their sexual orientation (Neary 2013), wherein a fundamental objective is to achieve a ‘normal’ and conventional professional lifestyle (Neary 2017). Mirroring the vast majority of empirical studies in the scoping review, the Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study felt it was difficult to come out to their colleagues. They felt safer coming out to a select few of close colleagues with whom they could be completely open. The Irish Guidance Counsellors included in this study were uncomfortable with the whole staff knowing their sexual orientation because they did not want to be seen as just the gay teacher, they did not want their sexual orientation to be the defining factor in their identity, considering that sexual identity is only one part of identity formation.

For a significant number of LGBTQI teachers there is an anxiety that exists revolving around students and parents (DePalma and Atkinson 2009; Ferfolja 2009; Neary 2013; Russell 2010). Researchers maintain that the decision to come out is not the only genuine choice for LGBTQI teachers (Ferfolja 2009; Rasmussen 2004). Ferfolja (2009) maintains that by considering coming out to be essential for LG teachers it can lead to a loss of power and agency for the teacher. Many LGBTQI teachers decide not to come out for a multitude of imperative reasons including; keeping relationships and social networks, staying financially established (Rasmussen 2004), and to use and increase power in their jobs (Ferfolja 2014). Others may also not disclose, as they do not identify within the constraints of the structural categories of sexual orientation (Neary 2013). Two of the three Irish Guidance Counsellors were recently or soon to be married, and this had a huge impact on how they wanted their partners to be seen. They made efforts to ensure and correct people if they assumed the incorrect gender of their partners and made a conscious decision to refer to their partner by name. Coming out to adults is often different to making the decision to come out to children, or students in the case of LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors.

LGBTQI teachers who come out do not guarantee a change in negative attitudes of others nor is it always seen as a positive to come out (Rudoe 2010). Some researchers have suggested that there were positive outcomes associated with being open about their sexual orientation compared to remaining closeted (Lineback et al. 2016). In
Juul’s (1994) study, teachers who were more open about their sexual orientation were found to be more content with their jobs, and also experienced less stress than those who did not disclose. It was also found that as a result of feeling supported around their sexual orientation, LGBTQI teachers felt genuinely happy in their workplace and the personal and psychological ‘costs of silence’ from not disclosing their sexual orientation were recognised (Rudoe 2010, p. 32). Regardless of the possible negative effects coming out has, LGBTQI teachers predicted that by being open about their sexuality it could drastically affect ‘their very ability to do their jobs well, to keep students in their classes, to build relationships with students and parents, and to impart academic content’ (Lineback et al., 2016, p. 602).

Coming out is not only a difficult process for LGBTQI teachers, but also for LGBTQI therapists and Guidance Counsellors, and the effects that it can have on the therapeutic relationship. Coming out for therapists is a complex and difficult process. Some researchers suggest that clients who have had experiences with a counsellor who came out to them, rated them as more trustworthy than counsellors who did not disclose their sexuality (Carroll et al., 2011). Liddle (1996) proposed that there might be a significant benefit for clients from client-therapist matching on sexual orientation. However, it is important to note that the importance of the therapeutic relationship should be highlighted and similar group membership between client and therapists was not necessary for therapeutic success (Liddle 1996; Moran 1992). It is also recommended that therapists only disclose their sexual orientation if it is in the best interests of the clients, an opportunity for the therapist to be real and strengthen the therapeutic relationship, as there may be severe negative consequences if sexual orientation is disclosed inappropriately (Moore & Jenkins 2012). Halderman (2010) advocated that as a gay male psychotherapist, he often feels that gay patients often have had similar experiences with issues to him. As a result, Halderman (2010) firstly suggests that due to his diversity he has an ‘enhanced sensitivity’ to clients who have experienced pain around socially traumatic events and secondly, there was an acknowledged ‘enhanced sensitivity’ in regards to how the clients see themselves.

LGBTQI teachers have expressed fears around others’ reactions to their disclosure (Neary 2013; Atkinson 2002), guilt for not coming out (Ferfolja 2009), and a pressure to simultaneously disclose their sexual orientation but also to remain in the closet.
(Gray 2013; Neary 2013). This results in personal and psychological costs in hiding their identity from students (Rudoe 2010), including silencing a part of one’s identity and social life (Paechter 1998). Some LGBTQI teachers face difficulty in a desire to help and support LGBTQI students but the risk of themselves being outing is too high (Epstein & Johnson 1994). Coming out to students can be extremely difficult, and sometimes LGBTQI experiences can be integrated into the philosophies of a teacher.

Some recognition has been given to the importance of using personal experiences and knowledge and their effects on their teaching and establishing relationships with students (Kissen 1996). Participants in Jackson’s (2009) study utilised their ‘othered’ experiences in their teachings. They made use of their queer experiences of not fitting in, being ostracized, and questioning power structures in society to become comfortable with their own identity and also to enhance the learning and teaching of all students. By making use of alternative experiences it allows LGBTQI teachers to bridge the gap (between two cultures of LGBTQI and normative society), which allows them to connect themselves and their students and to further connect students with the curriculum (Jackson 2009). Through the use of queer pedagogies, by creating safe spaces for students with non-conforming identities compared to the norm in their school (Jackson 2009). Participants who were out, aspired to challenge their students’ binary thinking through presenting them with a broader sense of themselves (Jackson 2009). The results of embodying queer pedagogies to challenge stereotypes had positive results in students. Using queer theory in education was not limited to challenging the assumptions of the students, but it also had an effect on their own expectations as teachers; through creating an anti-oppressive pedagogy for all teachers to make use of (Kumashiro 2002).

There is something important and significant in making use of personal experiences in teaching and forming relationships with students needs to be recognised (Kissen 1996). Teachers’ coming out has an effect on the formed relationships between teachers and students. Melillo (2003) states that in their study, lesbian teachers who have had experiences of living within a heteronormative society were more sensitive to the needs of their students compared to their counterparts. Sensitivity is an important value for all teachers to possess. However, for the lesbian teachers in Melillo’s (2003) study, they felt that they had a particularly strong sensitivity to reach
students on a personal level, when many other teachers could not fully comprehend the experiences of the students.

Coming out is a challenging decision to make with numerous facets to consider. For Irish Guidance Counsellors there was safety in having a few close friends in their school. They felt that coming out would define them as who they were, and that they avoided situations where students could get too close to them, including one to one sessions. There has been evidence that a therapist who is honest and genuine about their sexual identity can have a positive effect on the therapeutic relationship. While theses benefits were acknowledged most Irish Guidance Counsellors felt that it was inappropriate to self-disclose to their students. There may be subtler benefits that result from coming out in school. Being a good role model is an aspect of working with children that teachers and Guidance Counsellors feel is essential. The next section will discuss in more detail the effects of being a positive role model by self-disclosing.

5.3 Being a Role Model

Being a positive role model is an important aspect of working closely with children, particularly for LGBTQI teachers and Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study. There are a number of reasons that are associated with being a positive role model for students. In this section, I will discuss the reasons that individuals may choose to come out and be a role model, and the effects of being a positive role has on students. I will also explore being a role model for Guidance Counsellors and the tensions around the concept of professionalism of Guidance Counselling and being a positive role model.

It is interesting to note that the three Irish Guidance Counsellors in the current study did not exhibit strong feelings around being a role model to their students. Greg mentioned that he felt that as a gay Guidance Counsellors he would be a role model to his students, that they would know that they had an ally on an adult level to help them. While the literature stated that being with the student on a personal level has shown to improve the lives of LGBTQI youth, the Irish Guidance Counsellors were reluctant to portray themselves as role models for their students by being openly out
in their school. The Irish Guidance Counsellors explicitly attempted not to be associated with LGBTQI students or issues for fear that they would be seen to advocating their own ideas or recruiting for the gay agenda. As a result of this, there appears to be a tension surrounding the concept of professionalism for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors and being a positive role model for their students.

‘We all have responsibility for the development of future generations that includes the promotion of a socially just world’ (Ferfolja 2009, p. 391). There is a question within the research around whether an LGBTQI teacher who comes out automatically becomes a role model for their students (Hardie 2012). A role model is defined by Khayatt (1997, p. 136-7), as ‘an ideal of some behaviour, identity or possibility’. However, identity is particularly unpredictable and open to change and therefore, role modeling based on identity can be difficult. In this sense it is important to inquire into what ‘role’ LGBTQI teachers are modeling. In Russell’s (2015) study one consequence of being out in a school was that there was an inescapable “burden of representation” (p. 151). Teachers are often motivated to come out in classrooms to not only be a role model to their students, but also to allow students to reach out and confide in someone who has had the same sexual identity experience (McKenna-Buchanan et al., 2015). It is undeniably accurate that teachers are seen as critical role models for their students (Snelbecker 1994), and for LGBTQI teachers to come out at school, they may serve as good role models for LGBTQI youth (Evans, 1999; Rofes, 1999). There is an aspiration among teachers to be open and genuine with their students so as to provide their students with a good and positive role model (Edwards 2016). Some teachers felt that by coming out it allowed them to produce a genuine relationship with their students based on honesty, which they expected to be symbiotic in nature (Snelbecker 1994).

Snelbecker (1994) stated that teachers wish to present as a good role model for their students in order to offer them with the support and affirmation that they themselves wished they received when they were younger. LGBTQI teachers who have a strong sense of their own identity often results in portraying LGBTQI existences as positive experiences, however this does not guarantee a change in attitude (Rudoe 2010). While teachers may have good intentions of being a good role model around coming out, there remains a risk of misinterpretation and misunderstanding around the
message that they are giving (Hardie 2012). Having a lack of role models can result in feelings of isolation for those who are questioning their own sexuality (Rudoe 2010). The belief that sexuality is not significant in teaching may inform the ‘qualities that make gay people critical as educators’ (Rolf 1999, p. 92). LGBTQI students seek out positive role models who they feel are similar to them, yet LGBTQI teachers often do not come out as a result of (re)producing heteronormativity within schools. This has a result of teachers not being able to provide queer students with their knowledge and understanding of LGBTQI issues and therefore, the students in need are often left lonely and troubled (Snelbecker 1994). It is clear that there are number of positive results of teachers coming out in their schools, but there are also negative consequences to consider.

The American School Counselor Association’s (ASCA) Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2010) states that Guidance Counsellors have an ethical responsibility to ensure that all students are being provided with sufficient services in regards to their own particular educational, personal and vocational requirements that they need, including LGBTQI needs (Roe 2013). All Guidance Counsellors who offer their support not only in a vocational and educational capacity but also in a personal capacity have been shown to lower discrimination and suicide rates of LGBTQI youth (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer 2006).

Vocational and educational issues may be the primary reason for many students to meet with a Guidance Counsellor, however, interpersonal issues often arise during one to one sessions and often times the presenting issues are used to mask deeper more emotional issues (Kidd 2006; Nathan & Hill 2006). ‘Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their potential and contribute to the development of a better society’ (National Guidance Forum, 2007, p.6). The Irish Guidance Counsellors in the current study felt that they wanted to help struggling LGBTQI students yet, as Guidance Counsellors it was important to them to avoid any discussion of their personal lives with their students. All participants felt that they had to maintain a certain level of professionalism within their role as a Guidance Counsellor. Moving between these roles can produce a divergence between the role of a teacher and the role of a Guidance Counsellor, in particular when the guidance
session is one of a deep personal nature, is a difficult transition for both student and staff. It can be difficult to navigate for staff, as in their role as a Guidance Counsellor they must ensure the personal, vocational, and educational needs of the students are met at all levels and quickly shift to an authoritative role. This contradiction within statements of Guidance Counsellors suggests a discrepancy between the roles that a Guidance Counsellor is required to take up in a second-level school.

5.4 Conclusion: A Personal/Professional Conundrum for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors

There is a tension between professionalism for LGBTQI Guidance Counselling and being a positive role model. In order to ensure that a proficient amount of support is given to students, the question of what constitutes as professionalism in guidance, warrants further attention. There is a lack of consensus on the definition of professionalism (Evans 2008). The degree to which Guidance Counsellors are viewed as a ‘professional’ is a disputed concept, which has caused recent debate in the UK (Hughes 2013; Neary 2014; Neary & Hutchinson 2009). ‘The concept which describes how we perceive ourselves within our occupational context and how we communicate this to others’ (Neary 2014b, p. 14). There are a number of influences that have had an impact on changing the perception of ‘professionalism’ in Guidance Counselling including; policy, distribution, new job roles, and altering professional contexts (Harrison, Edwards, & Brown, 2001).

The need for professionalism here involves boundaries between things that belong in a private as opposed to a public space. For West (2001), professionalism in Guidance Counselling refers to ‘the capacity to work empathetically, reflexively and creatively with diverse clients, often in difficult circumstances’ (Reid & West 2011, p. 400). The Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study felt that it would be inappropriate to discuss any part of their personal lives with their students and that there should be a distinct discrepancy between their LGBTQI identities and their identities as professionals. However, by definition Guidance Counselling involves working on a personal level with clients and the therapeutic relationship is built upon genuineness of the counsellor (Rogers 1957). There is a clear desire for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors wanting to come out to their students in order to provide them with a positive
LGBTQI role model and to be completely honest in their relationship with them to improve the therapeutic relationship. Although, there is then a conflict between remaining ‘professional’ and being distant with their students and the desire to provide them with the appropriate duty of care and responsibility to make them feel safe in the school environment.

This section discussed the main themes that arose as a result of a scoping review of 54 articles, in regards to LGBTQI Teachers and Guidance Counsellors Worldwide, and interviews with three LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors working in Irish second-level schools. The issues that arose were reviewed and examined in relation to the primary findings of the research and critical engagement with relevant literature. There is a strong sense of the issue of heteronormativity in the education setting among both teachers and Guidance Counsellors in the literature and in the research findings. Heteronormativity tended to be restrictive and binaristic in many ways for LGBTQI Irish Guidance Counsellors and teachers, it was limiting in the relationships individuals could have with colleagues and students. Coming Out had different implications for coming out to adults and children for LGBTQI teachers, Counsellors and Irish Guidance Counsellors. Being a role model for students was of clear importance for the teachers and Guidance Counsellors and it is clear that it could provide students with a positive view on LGBTQI lives and experiences. The next section presents the overall conclusions for the current research, implications for practice and possible future research questions.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction
This section will provide a conclusion that brings together the primary research question of ‘How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools?’ The secondary research questions will also be discussed in terms of the findings of the current study. This section will also investigate a number of limitations of the current study along with possible implications for future practice in the education field. In addition to this, the section also proposes possible future research questions for further research on the topic.

6.1 Summary of Research
The primary research question guiding this study was ‘How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate their personal and professional identities in Irish second-level schools?’ In addition to this question, there were a number of secondary research questions of;

1. How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors’ schools approach LGBTQI identities?
2. How do LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiate relations with their colleagues?
3. How are LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors negotiating their relations with their students?

The first three secondary research questions were approached through evidence found in the scoping review and interviews with three LGBTQI Irish Guidance Counsellors. The final secondary research question was approached through exploring the findings from the scoping review and placing the findings in line with the interviews with the three LGBTQI Irish Guidance Counsellors. The first strand of this study involved conducting a scoping review guided by a broad question of ‘what are the experiences of LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors/Psychotherapists?’ This yielded 54
empirical studies with LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors worldwide. A meta-analysis of the findings of these studies produced meta-themes emerging from this body of work. These themes included: the place of heteronormativity in the education system and the severe effects that had on silencing ‘other’ identities. This resulted in teachers having to completely separate their private and professional lives. Coming out was another theme that emerged, and the dilemmas that teachers often face and the factors and implications that influenced them to self-disclose. The management and ethos of the school played an important part in the experiences of LGBTQI teachers was the attempt to disrupt heteronormativity in their own various ways, by using their ‘othered’ experiences in their classrooms. Finally, the supports and protections that are in place for LGBTQI teachers had a significant effect on their experiences, particularly the tensions between policy and attitudes of schools. For LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors/Psychotherapists the main findings showed a dichotomy between the decision to self-disclose to clients and the benefit that it can have on the therapeutic relationship.

Secondly, three qualitative interviews with LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Ireland were conducted. Each interview transcript was coded systematically and interpretively analysed, producing key themes. The key themes that emerged were the experiences of heteronormative discourses in second-level schools and the heterosexual privilege. Deciding to come out in their workplaces was a difficult decision that the Guidance Counsellors had to consider. They acknowledged the benefits that disclosing could have yet they often held back due to normative discourses. Another significant theme that emerged was the security of employment. The Irish Guidance Counsellors felt that they were not safe in their professional position until they received a permanent contract. The Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study were conscious of the fact that they did not want to be seen to be pushing their own agenda and recruiting for homosexuality.

The themes emerging from both strands of this study were outlined in Chapter 4: Findings and brought together in a critical discussion of three meta-themes in Chapter 5: Discussion. Heteronormativity was seen to be restrictive for both LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors. Collegial supports were an important support for both groups, for improving everyday experiences. Gender norms were also evident for
both LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors, in terms of gender presentation. However, the Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study did not comply with their expected gender representation and used it as an expression of their identity. Both groups discussed coming out as an everyday decision. The Irish Guidance Counsellors were concerned about coming out to students as they felt in their role; their decision to self-disclose could be misinterpreted. Which lead to a separation of private and professional identities for Irish Guidance Counsellors. Finally, the concept of being a positive role model was important for both LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors. Irish Guidance Counsellors struggled with the decision to come out and be a positive role model while also maintaining a high level of professionalism with their students. The notion of professionalism within Guidance Counselling was a significant finding of this study. The Irish Guidance Counsellors in this study discussed the tensions between being a good professional, by being empathetic and genuine with their students, and keeping their distance from their students to protect their LGBTQI identity.

6.2 Implications for Future Practice

Schools should be seen as safe places for all of its stakeholders and through creating an environment that rejects heteronormative thinking, there is a possibility that this have ripple effects within the wider community. It is within the role of a teacher to have a duty of care for their students (Pendleton Jimenez 2009) and it is also their responsibility to ensure that the classroom is a safe space for all of their students (Rensenbrink 1996). Therefore, the education of teachers themselves must be seen as a critical point in reforming heteronormative thinking in schools. Informing student teachers about issues of heteronormativity and increasing awareness around these issues will provide them with the skills and resources needed to address such issues in their professional practice classrooms (Jennings 2010; Larrabee & Morehead 2010; Robinson & Ferfolja 2002; Schieble 2012). Ferfolja (2008) suggests that schools have a responsibility to address the issues of homophobia and one way to combat the reproduction of heteronormativity in schools is to educate and about sexual diversity and discrimination through a whole school approach to reduce prejudices. The curriculum should be more inclusive of non-heterosexual discourses and through promoting and putting emphasis on anti-homophobic education should enhance
students’ understandings of equality, social justice, and diversity (Ferfolja 2007; Ferfolja 1998). Rudoe (2017) is in support of Ferfolja, that homophobia is still an issue in schools and better sex and relationships education is required if improvements in homophobic bullying and policies are to be seen, alongside improvements surrounding learning about gender and sexuality. Edwards et al. (2016) notes that if improvements are to be seen in schools then it should be recognised that heteronormativity has a significant effect on all teachers, regardless of sexuality (Allen, 2011; Jackson, 2006; Larsson et al. 2011). Therefore, if heteronormativity is to be disrupted then heterosexual teachers must play their part.

LGBTQI educators may sometimes feel limited in their power to directly address issues around LGBTQI or heteronormativity, out of fear for the conversation turning to their own sexuality and feelings of being unsafe about their own ‘agenda’ (McCarthy 2003; Evans 1999; Griffin 1992). It is as a result of these reasons that it is essential that heterosexual teachers bear the responsibility of educating about these issues (McCarthy 2003). Allen (2011) suggests that a way to interrupt heteronormative thinking is to allow heterosexual teachers to disclose their sexuality, which may seem unnecessary, but remaining silent about heterosexuality can reinforce binary thinking and heterosexuality continues to be the ‘norm’. Neary (2017) proposes that teachers entering into civil partnerships brought a new visibility into LGBTQI teachers’ lives. Entering into a civil partnership, did allow some disruption of heteronormativity by creating alternative discourses. Civil partnerships brought some teachers a confidence in regards to its legitimacy in the law, to allow them to become more resourceful and resilient when attempting to interrupt the lines of heteronormativity (Neary 2017). Civil partnership is not the only way for LGBTQI staff to disrupt heteronormativity, but it is a way that some teachers found to be useful for their own personal reasons. Heteronormativity is sustained in many ways in the school system. Evidence of producing and reproductive heteronormative thinking is seen within the curriculum, language used, and beliefs of the staff and students. Heteronormative discourses can be interrupted through a multitude of approaches, including heterosexual staff.
6.3 Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of the current study include that it addressed a significant gap in the research literature regarding the experiences of LGBTQI Irish Guidance Counsellors and their management of private and professional identities. The current study included a scoping review of previous empirical research on the experiences of LGBTQI teachers and psychotherapists and counsellors internationally and nationally. This provides a timely and necessary review of international empirical work with LGBTQI teachers and signals how little is known about the engagements of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. This study is the first research of its kind to investigate and explore the complex relationships that Guidance Counsellors have with their private and professional identities and the pastoral relationship they have with their students. It also brought the lack of consensus of what professionalism means for a Guidance Counsellor, and in particular an LGBTQI Guidance Counsellor.

It is also acknowledged that as part of the scoping review, that only empirical studies were included. This was due to the aspiration to include first hand evidence of the experiences of LGBTQI teachers and psychotherapists worldwide. Empirical evidence is based on direct observations and measurements of phenomena, therefore, providing a clear and concise interpretation of LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors experiences.

Another strength that should be acknowledged is the fact that qualitative research was used and the researcher conducted the coding, and theme analysis herself. The three in-depth interviews with Irish Guidance Counsellors provided highly rich detail about the real experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. Deep insights about everyday life and experiences were brought to the forefront and explored.

A limitation of the study is that the sample group of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors working in second-level schools was a very small sample. It is recognised that only three participants responded to the research. However, this may be a result of schools being representative of the heteronormative thinking in Irish society. Schools are microcosms of wider societal beliefs, and they often reproduce dominant thinking. In this case, as LGBTQI issues are not discussed publically, it may have influenced the number of participants who responded to the current research. I was not able to access
possible participants who not comfortable coming forward for this research and this may have provided representation of a difference in opinions.

6.4 Future Research Questions

The current research emphasises the significant lack of studies and knowledge around the topic of the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors working in second-level education settings. Arising from the findings and discussion of this study were a number of possible future research questions and recommendations, for further investigation into this topic.

1. There is a necessary demand for a bigger sample size, to further explore and investigate the same topic that has been brought to light from the current study.

2. A more in-depth investigation into the specific nature of the professional therapeutic relationship between LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors and their students.

3. What is the specific, direct effect, if any, of a Guidance Counsellor self-disclosing sexual orientation to a student of same group affiliation?

4. Further exploration of the gendered dimension of second-level schools and their influence on LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors?
6.5 Conclusion

This study begins a discussion around a topic that has a severe lack of understanding and research surrounding it. Firstly, this study provides a much needed and timely review of empirical investigation into to the experiences of LGBTQI teachers and Guidance Counsellors/Psychotherapists on a national and international level. Secondly, this study highlights the severe lack of research conducted on the engagements of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors. This study introduces a discussion around the resistance or reluctance of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors to take on LGBTQI students for one to one Guidance Counselling sessions. Socially constructed norms, such as herternormativity restrict LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors from coming out, due to the fear of their intentions for self-disclose being misinterpreted by others. As a final note, the concept of what constitutes as professionalism for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors was recognised. LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors faced challenges with regards to deciding whether to disclose their sexual orientation, when appropriate, with their students in order to improve the therapeutic relationship or to remain at a ‘professional’ distance to protect themselves. This is a new phenomenon brought forward by this research and further exploration into this topic needs to be continued for better understandings.
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Roe, S. (2013). Put it out there that you are willing to talk about anything: The role of school counsellors in providing support to gay and lesbian youth. *ASCA Professional School Counselling, 17*(1), pp. 153-162. [online], available [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B84rr9VqDEtuWXZ5ZWhuZTNwN1U](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B84rr9VqDEtuWXZ5ZWhuZTNwN1U) [accessed 26 September 2017].


Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter to President of IGC

Recruitment Letter to Gatekeeper/President of IGC

EHS REC no. 2017_02_24_EHS
Date:

Research title: LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors' experiences of negotiating their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland.

Dear President of IGC,

I am currently a student of the MA Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development course with the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Dr. Aoife Neary, Lecturer in Sociology of Education. As part of my studies I have to complete a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling.

The title of my study is LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors' experiences of negotiating their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland. This study will explore the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors of negotiating their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland. Participants are being invited to partake in a one to one interview for approximately 60 minutes. The research will take place at a location that is agreeable to the participant.

The benefits of this project will include:
• Provide insights into the perspectives of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Irish Secondary Schools.
• Identify any challenges or opportunities faced by LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors.
• To inform the IGC of particular needs and education of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors.

It is not envisioned that this study will pose any significant risks. However, the topics of LGBTQI might prove to be sensitive for some people.

The participant will be anonymous within the final report. All identifying information will be given.
Pseudonyms. Any information you give will be represented in the final report in such a way as to ensure confidentiality. Audio recordings will be deleted upon transcribing. All transcribed data will be encrypted and stored in a password-protected computer. Participation is voluntary. If participants agree to join in this study, but later change their mind, they may withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If requested by them, all data collected will be deleted. If they wish to withdraw, please contact the researcher (details below).

If they’d like to participate or if there are any further questions, please contact one of the following:

**Researcher: Nicola Brennan**  
UL Email address: [15066525@studentmail.ul.ie](mailto:15066525@studentmail.ul.ie)

**PI: Dr. Aoife Neary**  
Phone: 061-202075  
UL Email address: [aoife.neary@ul.ie](mailto:aoife.neary@ul.ie)

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2017_02_24_EHS). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
EHS Faculty Office University of Limerick  
Tel (061) 234101  
[ehsresearchethics@ul.ie](mailto:ehsresearchethics@ul.ie)
Appendix B: Subject Information Sheet (Volunteers)

Research title: LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors’ experiences of negotiating their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland.

What is this study about?
This study will explore the experiences of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors of negotiating their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland.

What am I being invited to do?
You are being invited to participate in a one to one interview for approximately 60 minutes.

Where will the research take place?
The research will take place at a location that is agreeable to you.

What are the benefits of this research?
This project will:
- Provide insights into the perspectives of LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors in Irish Secondary Schools.
- Identify any challenges or opportunities faced by LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors.
- To inform the IGC of particular needs and education of Guidance Counsellors.

Are there any risks?
It is not envisioned that this study will pose any significant risks. However, the topics of LGBTQI might prove to be sensitive for some people.

What happens to the information?
You will be anonymous within the final report. All identifying information will be given pseudonyms. Any information you give will be represented in the final report in such a way as to ensure confidentiality. Audio recordings will be deleted upon transcribing. All transcribed data will be encrypted and stored in a password-protected computer.

What if I do not want to take part?
Participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate in this study, but later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If requested by you, all data collected will be deleted. If you wish to withdraw, please contact the researcher (details below).

What if I’d like to participate or if I have any questions?
If you’d like to participate or if you have any questions, please contact one of the following:

**Researcher: Nicola Brennan**
UL Email address: [15066525@studentmail.ul.ie](mailto:15066525@studentmail.ul.ie)
Mobile Phone Number: 0857889163

**PI: Dr. Aoife Neary**
Phone: 061-202075
UL Email address: [aoife.neary@ul.ie](mailto:aoife.neary@ul.ie)

*What if I have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent?*
This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2017_02_24_EHS). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**
EHS Faculty Office University of Limerick
Tel (061) 234101
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix C: Volunteer Consent Form

Volunteer Informed Consent Form

EHS REC no. 2017_02_24_EHS

Research title: LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors' experiences of negotiating their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland.

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- I understand the nature of this research project, my role in it, and how the results will be used.
- I am fully aware of the procedures and of the risks and the benefits of the study.
- I am fully aware that the recording of the interview, personal details, and the data generated from it will be kept confidential and anonymous.
- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study.
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason.
- I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (audio). However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed.

Consent to audio-recording

I hereby agree to take part in this study:

Signature:_____________________________________
Printed Name:________________________________
Signature of Researcher:_______________________
Date:_________________________________________
Appendix D: Recruitment Poster for Magazines/Newsletters

LGBTQI guidance counsellors' experiences of negotiating their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland.

What is this study about?
This study will explore the experiences of LGBTQI guidance counsellors of negotiating their personal and professional identities in second-level schools in Ireland.

What are you being invited to do?
You are being invited to participate in a one to one interview for approximately 60 minutes.

Where will the research take place?
The research will take place at a location that is agreeable to you.

What are the benefits of this research?
- Provide insights into the perspectives of LGBTQI guidance counsellors in Irish Secondary Schools
- Identify on-going challenges and opportunities faced by LGBTQI guidance counsellors
- Contribute to the body of knowledge and understanding of guidance counsellors

What happens to the information?
You will be anonymous within the final report. All identifying information will be given pseudonyms. Any information you give will be represented in the final report in such a way as to ensure confidentiality.

What if I do not want to take part?
Participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate in this study, but later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If requested by you, all data collected will be deleted. If you want to withdraw, please contact the researcher (details below).

If you'd like to participate or if you have any questions please contact one of the following:

Researcher: Nicola Brennan
UL Email address: 15066525@studentmail.ul.ie

Principal Investigator: Dr. Aoife Neary
Phone: 061-202075
UL Email address: aoife.neary@ul.ie

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (quote approval number).
## Appendix E: Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Opening Questions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Prompts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your current role in the school?</td>
<td>• How long have you been there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What does it involve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How did you get there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your experience of being a Guidance Counsellor?</td>
<td>• What has it been like for you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>School Climate/Approaches/WSA</strong></th>
<th><strong>Prompts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does your school approach LGBTQI issues?</td>
<td>• Policy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum? SPHE? RSE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the life of and LGBT student like in your school do you think?</td>
<td>• Are there supports for LGBT students? Why/not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about the life of an LGBT staff member?</td>
<td>• Is there anything that has been put into place to support you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Colleagues</strong></th>
<th><strong>Prompts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How have your experiences been with your co-workers?</td>
<td>• Have you been open with them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What has that been like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Where they supportive? In what way?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Relation with students/Individual</strong></th>
<th><strong>Prompts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you been faced with any challenges?</td>
<td>• Dealing with students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What sort of interactions have you had?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have you had students confide in you about their sexuality? What was that like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is it like for you working with LGBTQI students?</td>
<td>• How do you find being a Guidance Counsellor and identifying as LGBTQI?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you feel like you’re a role model to your students? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary/Closing</td>
<td>Prompts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How would you summarise your experiences of being an LGBTQI Guidance Counsellor to date? | - What is the most important bit to you?  
- Any specific moment/incident within your practice?                                                                                                                                               |
| What would be your ideal situation for LGBTQI Guidance Counsellors?            | - If you could have an ideal situation, what would it look like? What would be different?                                                                                                                |
| Is there anything else you would like to add/expand on?                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |