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Date

Donna Ehrlich Ph.D., Chair

Adam Greteman, Ph.D., Committee Member

Gail Jensen, Ph.D., Committee Member/Dean

Jennifer Moss Breen, Ph.D., Program Director
Abstract

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand how the lived experiences of an openly gay male elected official living in the Midwest impacted his journey in running for public office. The aim of this study was to explore how sexual orientation impacted the journey to become a leader. Methodology in this case study included robust interviews with the participant and his colleagues other Iowa State Senators.

Observations of the participant took place on the Iowa Senate Floor, speaking at a non-gay specific event, and speaking and attending a gay specific event. Finally, collection of secondary data artifacts such as books, newspapers, and articles occurred in the methodology. Senator Matthew McCoy, the participant in this case, was influenced early in his childhood by his parents’ values and the Boy Scouts of America. This influence instilled leadership skills that led him to seek leadership opportunities starting in his childhood but also throughout his life. McCoy experienced misery from being closeted. He finally came out of the closet and continued to serve as an openly gay elected official and developed resiliency. Resiliency might look different for each person, as shown in this case, he was able to come full circle and champion the cause he feared the most, which forms this resilient leadership style. This journey of overcoming adversity including coming out, living authentically, serving as an openly gay elected official and championing the movement that contributes to resilient leadership.

*Keywords*: Openly-Gay Elected Official, Resilient Leadership, Gay Leadership
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the “journeys” that have come before us as well as the journeys that could never happen due to homophobia, discrimination, and oppression.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee for their guidance, encouragement, and contributions to this research. An extended thank you to the entire Creighton University faculty and staff in the Interdisciplinary Doctorate of Education in Leadership program. Special thank you to my peers, especially in Cohort 10.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Equality for the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) community has made significant strides throughout the Midwest, United States, and world within the last twenty-five years (Rodriguez & Blumell, 2014). However, these strides are complicated and limited in certain locations by the ideological perspectives of that location whether it is conservative, progressive, religious, or secular, which impacts equality for LGBTQ individuals in that location. The progress the community has made toward equality has allowed, and many times encouraged, gay and lesbian individuals to run for public office and win elections. Laws and public policy have changed to allow same-sex couples to be married in specific locations, protection from discrimination in specific locations, and adopt children in specific locations. Societal perceptions toward the gay community have significantly changed as well to allow their voices in public office as evident by the increase in gay and lesbians being elected into public office.

While the LGBTQ community or gay community include different gender identities, sexual orientations, gender expressions, and many terms or definitions, the gay community was used to describe the community the participant identifies with for the sake of this research. The United States has gone from four openly gay elected candidates winning elections in 1992 to 107 openly gay elected candidates winning elections in 2011 (Page, 2011). Societal perception and electing gay candidates improving has been true especially in the Midwestern states of the United States, which include North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio (United States Census Bureau, 2015).
The Midwest is usually not the first place within the United States that individuals think of as progressive toward the gay community. It is also not thought of where individuals are trailblazers in leading the cause for gay equality, historically known as the gay rights movement. Historically, individuals think of New York City, San Francisco, or Los Angeles as geographic locations that started gay liberation. These were locations that achieved many of the firsts for openly gay individuals, including success and attaining leadership in positions of power (West, 2014). Contrary to public perception of the gay movement, the Midwest has been a location for progress toward equality for the gay community, and a place where trailblazers have achieved success in public office. The Midwest had three states that were early in legalizing same-sex marriage including Iowa as the third state in the United States to do so (Wolf, 2014). Although the gay community has made progress in the Midwest, openly gay elected officials are still a very contemporary issue that truly only started within the last century.

In 1924, the first human rights group focused on gay rights was formed in Illinois. Illinois first eliminated the Sodomy Law in 1962, the University of Missouri had the first openly gay NCAA football player, and Iowa had the first openly gay man to run for a seat in Congress (Council Bluffs Community Alliance, 2015; WGBH Educational Foundation, 2013). The idea of openly gay men serving in public office has been a modern-day concept that first began in 1974 when Minnesota State Senator, Allan Spear, came out as gay (Grant, 2009). He was the first man to come out, which was one year after the first two open lesbians in public office came out in Michigan, a Midwestern state (Grant, 2009). When this research first began, there were 162 openly gay male elected officials in the United States (Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute, 2013). This included
federal and state, legislative and judicial, and all political parties including Democrat and Republican Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute, 2013).

Harvey Milk, one of the more prolific gay elected officials was elected in 1977 to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He was instrumental in encouraging gays and lesbians to come out with the belief that the more people who knew a gay person, the more likely they would become tolerant. He was assassinated in 1978 by another board member. Because of his assassination, he is one that many think of when they think of gay pioneers who were elected to public office, even though he was not the first to do so (Foley, 2015).

Iowa provides two current examples of openly gay elected officials serving in the Midwest. State Senator Matt McCoy and Iowa House of Representative Daniel Lundby are both openly gay and have served as elected officials in the state of Iowa. Both of these openly gay elected officials in Iowa have followed through significantly different paths to becoming elected officials. Representative Lundby ran for public office as an openly gay candidate but had name recognition from his mother, Mary Lundby, who previously served in the Iowa House of Representatives as a Republican. Senator McCoy, in contrast, came out as gay after he was elected. Representative Daniel Lundby did not win re-election and is no longer in public office.

The theory of public service motivation provides a description of how individuals move through the process toward running for public office. Motivation to run for public office can be described in four components including sociohistorical context, motivational context, individual characteristics, and behavior (Perry, 2000). For openly gay men elected officials, sociohistorical context includes their experiences of coming
out and living as a gay man. Motivational context includes their ideology, beliefs, values, and environment. Individual characteristics include their concept of themselves and their competencies. Finally, their behavior is their feeling of obligation or choice to run for public office. Understanding how the journey of running for public office applies to openly gay elected officials was imperative to adding to the current literature on gay leadership and openly gay elected officials (Perry, 2000).

When initially beginning this research, the intention was to pull in queer theory to determine its impact on this case and if it impacts the openly gay elected official’s motivation to run for public office or journey as a whole. After conducting the research, collecting the data, and going back to review the literature, it was clear that queer theory and motivation were not the focus anymore but rather the journey the participant went through of coming out, living openly, and serving as an openly gay male elected official in the Midwest.

This research was designed to explore if sexual orientation plays a role in the journey of openly gay elected officials. After collecting the data, the research required a new design, which was to explore sexual orientation and the role of the coming out process or journey in an openly gay male elected official. Determination of the level of heteronormative or bicultural use within leadership traits occurred through interviewing the openly gay elected official. It was critical to determine if electability was dependent on a heteronormative act of façade by the openly gay male elected official (Whitlock, 2010). In addition, it was important to uncover the lived experiences of the coming out process and potential feelings of marginalization, oppression, and discrimination to determine leadership traits of the openly gay elected official. Although contributions of
individuals of all gender identities and sexual orientations have been important especially in understanding the gay rights movement, this research is focused specifically on those who identify as gay males who seek public office.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand how the lived experiences of an openly gay male elected official living in the Midwest impacted his journey in running for public office. Unfortunately, there are limited amounts of research on openly gay elected officials, but there is adequate literature on the gay movement within the United States. This study assists in contributing to the gap in academic research on gay leadership and adds to the academic research on openly gay elected officials.

**Research Question**

Research question:

Does sexual orientation impact the journey to run for public office within an openly gay male elected official living in the Midwest? This research question has changed to asking about the journey of the participant rather than his motivation to run for public office.

Understanding how sexual orientation and living openly gay impacts an individual’s journey of running for public office in the Midwest is important because the Midwest was the first geographic region in the United States to have openly gay elected officials, which were two lesbians in the state of Michigan (Grant, 2009). This research explored how sexual orientation impacted an individual’s journey in becoming a leader and in the case of this research, seek public office as an elected official. The research also
uncovered the circumstances openly gay men experience that impact his reason for wanting to become an elected official.

**Method Overview**

Case study methodology includes research that studies a case bounded by time and place, real-life setting, and comprehensive research strategy. A case study is most appropriate for this research because it examines a real-life, contemporary bound system of how the lived experiences of an openly gay male elected official impacts his journey in running for public office. An intrinsic case study researches one individual or small group of individuals, which in this case is an openly gay male elected official. It also is intended to illustrate the unique case through description and detail. Conclusions were formed based on themes developed from the data analysis (Creswell, 2013).

The lived experiences can be bounded by time because they occurred as lived experiences of the participants. Although the lived experiences occurred in the past, they impact the journey of running for public office, which is occurring presently. This case was also bounded by a place since the study occurs with an openly gay male elected official and his lived experiences of living within the United States. Since the lived experiences of openly gay men are unique, it offers an opportunity to conduct a case study on the experience and how it impacts the journey of running for public office. Their experiences are unique because they still experience discrimination, homophobia, and sometimes rejection by family members. Although they experience these things, many gay elected officials experience privilege in other areas of their life or identity.

Patricia Hill Collins (2002) introduced the matrix of domination to explain the intersectionality of how privilege and oppression impact individuals in a variety of ways
through their identities. The matrix of domination illustrates how there is always dominance and oppression related to each identity (Collins, 2002). Although someone might experience dominance or privilege in one aspect of their life such as their race or gender, they may experience oppression or are penalized in another identity such as sexual orientation (Collins, 2002). Dominance or privilege plays a role in becoming elected because as Collins (2002) describes, they have dominance or power.

When thinking about other elected officials, the majority are white men who have lived with privilege and do not understand what it means to have barriers, oppression, or discrimination in their lives (McIntosh & Wellesley Coll., 1988). This specific case is an openly gay white cisgender male elected official living in the Midwest and his journey of running for public office. Although this case experiences dominance or privilege as a white, cisgender male that has had the opportunity to be educated and raised in a middle class home, he does experience oppression or is penalized from his sexual orientation since he came out as gay (Collins, 2002). Since he only experiences oppression in one facet of his life, it may contribute to the limitations of this research but is not discounted in understanding the journey of this openly gay elected official.

Initially this research set out interested in motivation, however, upon engaging this particular case, it became clear that engaging the journey of one openly gay politician whose time as an elected politician helps illustrate changes and continued challenges that sexual minorities face in seeking and holding public office. The journey to run for office is currently in progress for the openly gay elected official, which is impacted by the past-lived experiences. The bounded beginning and ending points were the lived experiences in the openly gay male elected officials’ childhood and coming out experiences. The
research incorporated the interpretative phase of learning about the case and the lessons learned from them (Creswell, 2013).

**Definition of Relevant Terms**

Throughout this study, terms are used to describe the gay community and research conducted. The gay community includes individuals who identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning. Specifically, these are the terms defined within the gay community:

- **Bisexual** – Individuals attracted to both men and women. An identity that individuals self-define.
- **Cisgender** – Individuals whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Gay** – Men who are attracted to other men or women who are attracted to other women. An identity that individuals self-define
- **Lesbian** - Women who are attracted to women. An identity that these women self-define.
- **LGBTQ** – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning community. Sometimes known as LGBTQ, GLBT, LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA2, or other terms to describe individuals who make up the entire community of those who identify outside the societal norm regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
- **Transgender** – Individuals whose gender identity is not the same as their biological sex assigned at birth.
- Queer – Individuals who do not identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual, but would rather identity under the realm of queer, which can be on a spectrum. Can also include individuals who are gender fluid or against labels and feel that queer are a broad term that can represent all individuals within the LGBTQ and ally community (Warner, 1993).
- Questioning – individuals who are questioning how they identity within their sexual orientation, gender identity, or both.
- Straight or heterosexual – Individuals who are attracted to others of the opposite sex or gender identity.

There are other terms that must be defined for the purpose of this study, which include:
- Coming out – a process individuals come out as LGBTQ to individuals they choose to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Outed – a term used to describe disclosing someone’s sexual orientation without their permission or not in their terms. Mainstream media has been used to “out” celebrities or politicians, preventing the individual wanting to coming out on their terms, if at all (Allen, 1999).
- Gay movement – the movement that has worked toward full equality and acceptance of gay and lesbians, which was launched into the spotlight by the Stonewall riots in New York City, but not started by the Stonewall Riots.
- Heteronormative – When it is assumed that all situations and individuals involve people who identify as straight or heterosexual and not inclusive of
the gay community or individuals who do not identity as heterosexual or straight or are not cisgender (Warner, 1993).

**Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations and limitations occurred within this case study. The sample size of the interviews within the study were not representative of all openly gay male elected officials. Since a case study was chosen, it inherently becomes a limitation because the research is limited to this one case. This research methodology was chosen to start with one case in order to begin research on gay leadership and set up future research opportunities in this area. In addition, since the research includes interviews, the self-reporting and attestation of lived experiences have limits and may not always be the most accurate or could incorporate bias. This might occur especially if the participant does not want to disclose anything negative that might impact his campaign or depict homosexuality in a negative viewpoint.

The individual case is limiting for the overall research as well. In this case, the participant is an openly gay, white, cisgender male, living in Des Moines, IA. He grew up in a middle-class, Christian family that were business owners and were well known in the community. His ability to become elected, even as a gay man might be different compared to another individual who has experienced marginalization, oppression, and discrimination from their identities such as class, race/ethnicity, or religion (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Bias from the researcher could occur, especially since the researcher is an openly gay man. It was important for the researcher to recognize the bias and attempt to limit it as much as possible. This occurred through bracketing. A researcher cannot look at all
secondary data, so some information was not included in the research due to time and lack of access to the information. In addition, this study only examined an openly gay elected official, even though there are some gay elected officials who are not open about their sexual orientation (Schmucker, 2007). This case study methodology was chosen over the other methodologies in order to get to the essence of the specific openly gay elected official and his unique experiences in running for public office.

**Significance of the Study**

After an exhaustive search of the literature, it was difficult to find any previous research related to running for public office, leadership, and openly gay men. There is some including memoirs on Senator Barney Frank, a film on the life of Harvey Milk, and other books on openly gay elected officials, but not a vast amount of literature. Conducting this research contributes and illustrates additional understanding of how and if the sexual orientation of an elected official impacts his journey to be a leader in his community. In addition to understanding what journey of the openly gay individual to run for public office and become a leader, this research examined the lived experiences through his childhood to present day and how it impacts his leadership traits or abilities to become a leader.

**Aim of Study**

The aim of this study was to explore how sexual orientation impacts the journey to become a leader.

**Summary**

The purpose of this case study was to understand how the lived experiences of an openly gay male elected official in the Midwest impact his journey in running for public
office and ultimately becoming a leader in his community. Midwestern states have not been historically known as the trailblazers for the LGBTQ community, but they have rich history of being more progressive than many think, especially being among the first states to elect openly lesbian individuals to public, which was in Michigan (Grant, 2009). Some of the Midwestern states have also been some of the first to legalize same-sex marriage (Wolf, 2014). Iowa was 3rd, Minnesota, 12th, and Illinois 15th out of the 50 states (Wolf, 2014). This research is important as a case study to best understand how his lived experiences contributes to his journey of running for public office and how he legislates to create or adopt public policy to positively impact the platforms he cares about. These lived experiences include going through the coming out process, coming out, living as an openly gay individual, running as an openly gay candidate or a candidate who happens to be gay, and navigating the government as a minority.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Currently there are 162 openly gay male elected officials in the United States (Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute, 2013). Iowa provides two examples of openly gay elected officials currently serving. State Senator Matt McCoy and Iowa House of Representative Daniel Lundby are both openly gay and serving as elected officials in the state of Iowa. Matt McCoy was first elected living as a straight man married to a woman who also had a child together (Bolonsky, 2010). After a life experience that included alcoholism, McCoy ultimately decided to come out of the closet and was reelected with higher support from his constituents to serve as the first openly gay elected official in the state of Iowa (Bolonsky 2010). Representative Lundby ran as an openly gay candidate and was the first openly gay person elected prior to being elected into office in Iowa. He has since been defeated in the 2014 general election by 6.2% to a challenger (Iowa Secretary of State, 2014). This research incorporated the journey as part of the study to assist in exploring how lived experiences specific to an openly gay male elected official impact his reasoning to run for public office.

Some openly gay elected officials were elected while in the closet and came out after becoming elected into office (Zadronzy, 2013). Other openly gay elected officials came out prior to becoming elected into office. Regardless of when the openly gay elected officials specifically came out of the closet, all of them encountered the inner struggle of determining how and when to do so. This inner struggle could play a role in shaping the journey of running for public office within openly gay male elected officials. Understanding the journey in general and how it applies to openly gay elected officials
were imperative to the research in locating what lived experiences with an openly gay elected officials impact his reasoning for running for public office.

There are different types of candidates within this community. Two of these types include gay candidates and candidates who happen to be gay. Gay candidates run to represent the prominent or significant gay community within their constituency. These candidates run on a platform with gay rights and equality at the forefront of their purpose for running. Candidates who happen to be gay are individuals running in a community that may not predominantly or significantly gay but rather a constituency of the general population that includes gay constituents. These candidates run on a platform that is more general in terms to benefit the whole community, although they can be and often are passionate about gay rights and equality. Candidates who happen to be gay are often first successful representing the general population, and some able to run as gay candidates representing the gay community. Some candidates who happen to be gay also take gay issues as one of their platforms while others stay away from gay issues to keep show they are more than just their sexual orientation (Yeager, 1999).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand how the lived experiences of an openly gay male elected official living in the Midwest impacted his journey of running for public office and becoming a leader in his community.

Unfortunately, there are limited amounts of research on openly gay elected officials, but there is adequate literature on the gay movement within the United States. This study assisted in contributing to the academic research on gay leadership and openly gay elected officials in the Midwest.
Aim of Study

The aim of this study was to explore how sexual orientation impacts the journey to become a leader.

Themes

Gay Movement History

Within the theory of public service motivation, institutions make up components to the motivational context (Perry, 2000). Understanding how the gay movement have impacted the participant’s beliefs, values, and ideology were important to show reasons for running for public office and how the gay movement impacts this, which incorporates the behavior component to the theory of public service motivation (Perry, 2000).

History of the Gay Community

The gay community is considered a culture that has diversity within diversity. Not only are there individuals comprised of sexuality minorities, but there are also other diverse, minority communities included of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, income levels, educational levels, religious backgrounds, geographic location, and many others. In addition to the complexity of describing the gay community, it is difficult to determine the demographics of the individuals who make up the community since many data sources do not ask the question and not everyone is out or wants to disclose their sexual orientation (Schmucker, 2007).

Although the gay movement in the United States was noticed and remembered from riots and a variety of other gay organizations, the most prolific is the Stonewall riots that happened in New York City in 1969. Stonewall is a prominent gay bar in New York City that police raided often and harassed patrons. Finally in 1969, the patrons had
enough and the gay community, including drag queens and the transgender community fought back. This is when the first pride parade occurred and is considered to be one of the critical, but not the first event, to assist in spearheading the gay movement (The Leadership Conference, 2009).

Progress toward full equality has continued to be expedited with more states allowing same sex marriage and more politicians, including the current President of the United States, supporting gay marriage and equal protection such as housing and employment. Public perception and support surrounding same-sex marriage and overall equality for the gay community continues to improve through each Gallup poll. This poll asked respondents questions regarding their position on marriage equality for same sex couples (Avery, Chase, Johansson, Litvak, Montero, & Wydra, 2007).

Historically, hostility toward the gay community or a negative climate has contributed to a variety of health indicators (Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009). Harassment has a two-fold impact on the gay community by either forcing the individual to suppress their sexuality or gender identity or live with other potential negative consequences once they come out (Kosciw et al., 2009). In addition to facing bullying and other negative climates, especially in gay youth, adults and other religious institutions create hostile environments. Some Christian individuals and other religious institutions frame their argument by saying homosexuality and same sex marriage is wrong because the Bible says it is, which creates animosity and internal struggles within the gay community attempting to comprehend their sexuality (Macgillivray, 2008).

Health care including healthcare providers contributes to the overall health and wellbeing of gay individuals. Oppression, marginalization, and discrimination contribute
to lack of access, lower insurance coverage, and lower socioeconomic status for gay individuals, which also impacts the wellbeing of gay individuals. If a healthcare facility or healthcare provider does not present themselves as gay friendly, it may negatively impact the health and care of the gay patient by not allowing the provider to address health risks such as suicide, substance abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases (Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, 2006). Fear of homophobia is a reason for gay individuals to not come out to their healthcare provider. Stigmatization still occurs within the healthcare setting when treating gay individuals, including the focus on human immunodeficiency virus infection / acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (Dean, Meyer, Robinson, Sell, Sember, Silenzio, Bowen, Bradford, Rothblum, Scout, White, Dunn, Lawrence, Wolfe, & Xavier, 2000).

**Motivation to Run for Public Office**

Although the research was intended to examine the motivation of the openly gay elected official to run for public office and has transition to examining the journey and how that contributes to leadership, it is still important to review motivation since it plays a role in the journey. Understanding platforms for running for public office reveals the ideas a candidate has incorporated into their campaign and how it relates to sexual orientation. In this section, it was important to understand the individuals’ characteristics such as self-efficacy of the participants and how it relates to the public service motivation (Perry, 2000).

As of 2014, there are 162 openly gay male elected officials in the United States (Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, 2014). Openly gay men have been elected into public office since 1974 when Allan Spear came out as gay and was reelected into the
Minnesota Senate (Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, 2014). It can be argued that the openly gay elected officials are following the heteronormative culture (Warner, 1993). As stated in the definitions for this research, heteronomativity is defined as the assumption that all situations and individuals involve people who identify as straight or heterosexual and not inclusive of the gay community or individuals who do not identity as heterosexual or straight or are not cisgender (Warner, 1993). If the openly gay elected officials does not attempt to make his image fit the heteronormative culture, a primarily heterosexual population probably would not elect him into public office while others like Tim Brown do not seek office after being outed as gay (Gay, 2002; Schmucker, 2007). Tim Brown was a Republican Ohioan commissioner who decided to not run for congress after being outed (Gay, 2002; Schmucker, 2007). Brown has since run four public office in 2013 and was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives (Jacobson, 2014). On the other side of the argument, the openly gay elected official might be living true to his identity and not identify as gay or with the gay community (Whitlock, 2010).

As an openly gay male elected official and leader, he is put in a tough situation living and working bi-culturally (Fassinger, Shullman, & Stevenson, 2010). Not only does he need to be “gay” enough for his community, he needs to act in a heteronormative manner in order to please his constituencies. Progress for the gay community might not occur without some heteronormative practices of openly gay male elected officials. There are three types of leaders in the gay community according to Fassinger et al. (2010):

1. Out gay leaders of a gay organization.
2. Out gay leaders of a non-gay organization or primarily non-gay constituency.
3. In the closet gay leaders.

Many gay professionals choose not to disclose that they are gay due to the fear of discrimination (Fassinger et al., 2010). Fassinger et al. (2010) discussed the fact that regular occurring discrimination in the workplace causes gay professionals to hesitate in coming out. Self-identity also plays a significant role in gay professionals (Fassinger et al., 2010). Self-identity, public perception, and the openness required to be an elected official plays a significant role in the desire to run or not run for public office as an openly gay elected official.

DeLeon and Brunner (2013) discussed a variety of areas that impact gay leadership. The gay community is unique in the fact that they have usually lived in the closet as a heterosexual and also as an openly gay individual (DeLeon & Brunner, 2013). Hetero-privilege plays a role in the lack of leadership development within the gay community or the openness of the individual in the workplace (DeLeon & Brunner, 2013). These unique lived experiences have allowed members of the gay community to understand how it feels to be marginalized and in many cases use these experiences in their leadership (DeLeon & Brunner, 2013).

**Grassroots Leadership in the Gay Community**

Leadership within the gay community has been centered around grassroots efforts on a community level. Like many marginalized communities, the gay community faces a variety of forms of discrimination including marriage, workplace, violence, housing, and health care among others (Fassinger et al., 2010). Throughout its history, the gay community has used grassroots efforts to move progress forward in an extended time period, one that is still currently in progress. There is not one prolific individual who is
well known in the gay community like Susan B. Anthony is for women’s voting rights, what Martin Luther King Jr. is for the African American civil rights, Cesar Chavez is for the Latino farmworker’s rights, or Crazy Horse is for the Native American resistance (Fassinger et al., 2010). Harvey Milk is prolific now across the mainstream, especially with the Oscar winning film Milk released a few years ago, but there have not been any national initiatives to get Milk or any other gay leader to be recognized in a manner like the others listed previously. While this might be the case, during this research President Barack Obama did proclaim June 2015 to be National LGBT Pride Month, which illustrates this may be changing (The White House, 2015).

Some of the early grassroots efforts from the gay community centered around the first Gay Pride marches and solidarity for the HIV/AIDS community fighting for their lives (Rand, 2012). Gay Pride marches provided avenues for the gay community to promote “pride” rather than live in fear and hide their true identities (Rand, 2012). ACT UP is an example of grassroots leadership within the gay community. This coalition was established to fight for the rights of the HIV/AIDS community (Rand, 2012). They were instrumental in leading the efforts to make the Food and Drug Administration approve drugs for AIDS more quickly, and in the overall treatment of AIDS patients with medicine (Rand, 2012). In marginalized communities such as the HIV/AIDS specifically, they needed to stand up for their rights since no one else at that point in time (Rand, 2012). It is generally the marginalized community that must lead the efforts spark conversations and then identify allies to further the movement.

Grassroots efforts in the gay community still play a significant role. Marriage equality and other forms of discrimination have been targeted by gay community-based
organizations, which have organized at the grassroots level to fight against local discrimination and societal views (Herrick, 2009). When attempting to solve complex issues, it is difficult to pinpoint one specific component within the gay community to target with the purpose of advancing the movement. Having the ability to tap into an entire community helps alleviate the stress placed upon one specific person, but there is still provides some pressure on the openly gay elected officials. Understanding the perceived pressures openly gay elected officials face were incorporated into the study as well as identifying if grassroots gay involvement played a role in developing the leadership traits of the openly gay elected officials.

Although grassroots efforts have played significant role in the mainstream gay movement, organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign and The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, among others have given significant amounts of funding to advance this work such as getting gay individuals elected as well.

**Social Justice Leadership**

Social justice plays a role in leadership within many marginalized populations including sexual identity minorities such as openly gay male elected officials. Leadership through resiliency and adversity has allowed many groups to overcome struggles with civil rights. Patterson & Kelleher (2007) determined six strengths of resilient school leaders that could be applied in social justice leadership. These six strengths include:

1. Accurately assess past and current reality
2. Be positive about future possibilities
3. Remain true to personal values
4. Maintain strong sense of personal efficacy
5. Invest personal energy wisely
6. Act on courage of personal convictions

It is evident that gay leadership alone cannot advance the gay movement. As Larrabee & Morehead (2010) found, heteronormative education plays a role in social justice leadership for gay students. Allies of the gay community have assisted in advancing the gay movement and without the heteronormative inclusion, there would not be marriage equality in every state or the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Having a reason to fight plays a large role in social justice work and especially in social justice leadership (Lalas & Valle, 2007). Just as in all cases of social justice, gay leaders fight for their rights due to inequality or discrimination.

Through the research interviews, an openly gay elected official was questioned on his social justice leadership traits. He was questioned to determine if he has a social justice undertone to his leadership that has an emphasis on or at least inclusion of advancing the gay movement. Herrick (2009) determined that openly gay elected officials do have strong ideology and promotion of policies that impact the gay community but it does not determine the leadership traits of the elected officials. It is evident that there cannot be the identification of one specific advancement in the gay movement but an accumulation of items that contribute to the advancement. Determining the adversity an openly gay elected official experienced and the resilience he has shown played a role in his leadership development traits. The six strengths of leaders identified by Patterson & Kelleher (2007) are incorporated in the research interviews of openly gay elected officials.
Empowerment

Empowerment, especially within youth development, plays a larger role in leadership and how individuals live than most individuals realize or acknowledge (Christens, & Peterson, 2012). Traumatic lived experiences such as abuse, alcoholism, or other related scenarios create an environment for an individual to potentially develop a different view of self-efficacy, and this is where empowerment comes into play (Christens, & Peterson, 2012). Empowerment occurs when an individual is confident in the outcome based on their own capacity of living through specific experiences (Christens, & Peterson, 2012). In many cases of openly gay elected officials, the fact that they lived through coming out of the closet may poise them to develop leadership traits that allow them to run for office or stay in office based on constituency support.

Gay and lesbian adolescents have the opportunity to engage in social justice causes through their school’s organized gay/straight alliance or equivalent group, if their school has such a group (Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, & Laub 2009). Through empowerment of their sexual identity and coming out, they have the opportunity to engage in a cause that focuses on social and sexual justice (Russell et al., 2009). Similarly to gay youth leadership development and activism, counselors encourage individuals coming out to participate at the local level with gay and lesbian specific groups or coalitions (Savage, Harley, & Nowak, 2005). Through this adult process, counselors assist the individuals to empower who they really are as a gay or lesbian individual which establishes a foundation for empowerment (Savage et al., 2005). The whole purpose of counseling the individuals is to assist them in developing skills of empowerment. For elected officials who are out of the closet before running for office,
these lived experiences and opportunities to participate at a young age on causes that impact their lives not only assist in developing leadership traits, but also empower them to run for office, potentially. Empowerment can be associated with leadership and might impact the leadership traits of gay elected officials (Gay, 2001).

Some of the first forms of empowerment efforts within the gay community center around the Gay Pride marches and the HIV/AIDS community fighting for their lives (Rand, 2012). Gay Pride marches provided avenues for the gay community to promote pride rather than live in fear and hide their true identity (Rand, 2012). ACT UP is an example of empowerment within the gay community (Shepard & Hayduk, 2002). This coalition was created by and for the HIV/AIDS community from within to fight the FDA (Rand, 2012). It is generally the marginalized community that must lead the efforts through empowerment and resiliency at first to spark conversations and then achieve allies to further the movement (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). This history of empowerment and resiliency within the gay community shows that leadership traits can be developed specific to the gay community on a grassroots level or broader spectrum.

Resiliency

After completing the data collection and going back through to read the literature review, it was evident that resiliency was a key component to this particular case which included the journey of coming out and serving as an openly gay elected official. It was important to define resiliency and trace it back to its roots to better understand how it contributes to this research.

In order to exhibit characteristics of resiliency, adversity must occur. The definition of adversity is “a difficult situation or condition, misfortune or tragedy”
RESILIENT LEADERSHIP: A GAY MAN'S JOURNEY

(Merriam-Webster, 2015). Resiliency can be defined as “the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens” (Merriam-Webster, 2015). In this case, the words “something bad” can be changed with the word adversity. Coming out is the situation in which the participant experienced adversity. Since coming out is usually positive and not bad, the definition of resiliency for this research entails, “the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after experiencing adversity” (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

Leadership through resiliency and adversity has allowed many groups to overcome struggles with civil rights. Patterson & Kelleher (2007) determined six strengths of resilient school leaders that could be applied in social justice leadership which include: accurately assess past and current reality, be positive about future possibilities, remain true to personal values, maintain strong sense of personal efficacy, invest personal energy wisely, and act on courage of personal convictions. Resiliency in leadership is evident in all leaders regardless of sexual orientation, but can be incorporated into openly gay elected officials more prevalently. Not only do openly gay elected officials have to be resilient in coming out of the closet, but also encountering the daily struggles of living as an openly gay elected official in public.

Determining the adversity and resiliency an openly gay elected official has gone through played a role in his leadership development traits. The six strengths of leaders identified by Patterson & Kelleher (2007) are incorporated in the research interview of an openly gay elected official. Although Patterson and Kelleher (2007) examined school leaders, their description of resilient leadership can be used and applied for this case to better understand resilient leadership. The six strengths: accurate assessment of the past
and current reality, positive views of the future, true commitment to personal values, strong sense of personal efficacy, wise investment of personal energy, and courage to act on convictions were examined and analyzed through the lived experiences of the participant (Patterson & Kelleher, 2007).

Resiliency can be viewed across a spectrum. The Kuhai Longitudinal Study followed children across decades. These individuals experienced significant trauma in their lives and found some were able to overcome these traumatic events of vulnerability through resiliency. In this case, the participant experiences trauma and vulnerability through the coming out process and overcoming alcoholism, which is quite different than the traumatic events thee children face. Although they are different and cannot be applied to this case, this research was groundbreaking in understanding how the resilient youth developed self-efficacy, which can be translated to this case in the understanding (Werner, 1993).

Resilient leadership in the literature can be described through traumatic or stressful experiences of leaders and how these leaders overcame the experience through resiliency. Bartone (2006) described how the stressful experiences of the military and how the hardiness of the individual impacts their resilience in overcoming these stressful situations. The military is known for their strategies of utilizing this type of forced model during their training by putting individuals in stressful situations and forcing them to develop hardiness skills through resiliency (Bartone, 2006).

While this is not an exhaustive description of resiliency or resilient leadership, the literature helps to understand resiliency as it applies to this case. In this case, the participant went through a stressful or traumatic event, which was coming out as gay.
The research set out to explore how this journey contributes to his running for public office after coming out as gay and living openly.

Other researchers have described resiliency from a leadership standpoint in a minority group. Toohey (2013) examined young women specifically and how they overcame adversity to achieve resiliency. This research explored how the participants went through the adversity to achieve resiliency by scoring their participants through the Resilience Scale™ (Wagnild, 2013).

**Elections and Gay Candidates**

Throughout the history of the United States of America’s electoral system, white straight men have always enjoyed advantage in election for public office (McIntosh & Wellesley Coll., 1988). Even today, white straight men of privilege outnumber women and other minority groups including openly gay men as elected officials. Throughout the civil rights history, white men have always held leadership roles or privilege including the right to vote or become elected into office. Today more minority groups such as women, African Americans, Latin Americans, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, Native Americans, and LGBTQ individuals, among others, are running for and becoming elected into public office representing their constituency. Minority candidates running for office and becoming elected are becoming more prevalent within the United States. Ultimately, minority groups are changing government and how government operates (Matland, 2005). Likeminded or constituencies that have similar lived experiences as the candidates are electing these minority groups, but this is not always the case for them to be elected (Button, Wald, & Rienzo, 1999).
Some of the current 162 openly gay male elected officials serving within the United States have been elected as an openly gay candidate while others have been incumbent candidates who were in the closet when elected but then came out as gay after becoming elected into office (Zadronzy, 2013). Iowa provides two examples of openly gay elected officials currently serving in the Iowa legislature. State Senator Matt McCoy and Iowa House of Representative Daniel Lundby are both openly gay and serving as elected officials in the state of Iowa (Bleeding Heartland, 2012). They are great examples of comparing the incumbent to the openly gay candidate.

**Incumbent Candidates after Coming Out**

Incumbency has played a role in politics in recent history. It is one of the reasons minority groups have had a harder time of becoming elected, especially women (Schwindt-Bayer, 2005). Although openly gay men are included in the minority group that has a harder time due to incumbency, elected officials who come out after they are elected into public office may not adhere to this theory (Schwindt-Bayer, 2005). White gay men have the privilege of straight men that are elected into public office while in the closet. Throughout the gay movement within the United States, there have always been elected officials who continue to come out of the closet as openly gay after they are elected although more and more openly elected officials come out prior to their election today (Button, et al., 2013; Zadronzy, 2013).

Matt McCoy was the first elected to the Iowa House of Representatives living as a straight man married to a woman who also had a child together (Bolonsky, 2010). After a life experience that included alcoholism, McCoy ultimately decided to come out of the closet and was reelected as an incumbent with higher support from his constituents to
serve as the first openly gay elected official in the state of Iowa (Bolonsky 2010). Today he serves as State Senator in Iowa and has continued to be reelected with high rates even with changing office and a different district due to realignment (Bleeding Heartland, 2012; Bolonsky, 2010)

**Openly Gay Candidates**

The incumbent openly gay elected officials have made a pathway for other openly gay male individuals to run for and become elected into public office. In the state of Iowa, Daniel Lundby ran as an openly gay candidate for the House of Representatives. He was the first openly gay person to be elected that was not an incumbent candidate or with no prior public office experience (Bleeding Heartland, 2012). In today’s day and age, especially after having the first African American President become elected in 2008, constituencies are seeking diverse candidates according to public opinion (Streb, Burrell, Frederick, & Genovese, 2008). The desire to have openly gay elected officials occurs in areas that are more progressive or where according to public opinion have higher acceptance rates (Streb et al., 2008). These public opinion polls may be misleading due to the stigma of not wanting to be viewed upon as a person that discriminates (Streb et al., 2008). Many times when individuals are asked a question for a survey that is hypothetical as in this case, they answer with an academic mindset rather than basing the opinion on their feelings or emotions (Streb et al., 2008).

**Constituency**

Having a gay constituency is important for an openly gay candidate to be elected into public office, but is not required (Button et al., 1999). It is argued that the larger gay constituency encouraged leadership from a candidate internally which motivated this
individual to run for higher office in order to make a larger impact on the gay community and greater community as a whole. More and more openly gay individuals are running for public office, which is increasing the chances for openly gay candidates to win elections. Although white gay male candidates might be more successful in becoming elected, especially if they are an incumbent who came out as gay after their election, the gay community faces more difficulty in becoming elected compared to other minority groups (Button et al., 1999). Gay candidates today must still be more prepared compared to other candidates, because as Milita, Ryan, & Simas (2014) stated, they have to be. Gay Republican candidates face an even harder road to becoming elected due to the Republican platform’s view on gay issues (Peoples, 2014)

**Leadership Styles**

There are many types, styles, characteristics, and traits that make up a leader. Bass (1996) discussed four types specifically which include transactional, authentic, charismatic, and transformational. This is not an exhaustive list of the type of leadership styles, but most leaders fall within at least one or a combination of some of these types of styles. Some leaders possess multiple styles while others naturally embody only one or exemplify one specifically. Although there is not one best style, many leaders have found success utilizing one or a combination of some leadership styles. Leadership styles are best utilized when they provide whatever the team, project, or idea needs. In addition to the four described, other styles developed include servant leadership, among others (Bass, 1991; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

Leadership differs from management when it comes to the efforts of those in office. Leadership is forward thinking with the future in mind whereas management is
focused on the day-to-day tasks at hand. Both are necessary for success but in order to create sustainability for the future, leadership is much more necessary. Some styles such as transactional leadership are thought to embody more of a management style rather than leadership style, but that is still up for interpretation. Styles for this research are described within transactional, charismatic, authentic, transformational, and servant leadership (Bass, 1991; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

**Transactional**

Transactional leadership is focused more on the management of a process, person, or group of individuals. It is argued that the transactional leadership style isn’t necessarily focused on leadership, but rather management since it is focused on the task at hand and not necessarily about the future or vision. Transactional is a give and take relationship that focuses on getting something accomplished regardless of how that makes the other parities involved feel. There is no inspiring of the person as to why they should be successful but rather the employee is told to do a specific task so that they can be successful when used as the primary leadership style. This style can be seen as authoritative and exemplifies the term micromanagement because of the level of detail they focus on to accomplish the goal. They may focus more on the task rather than the reasoning for the task. Specifically, they want to improve the process without necessarily thinking about how that might impact the future or how it can be sustainable for the future. Transactional leadership can be tied to other styles and is generally used in many cases by all leaders but has been closely associated with transformational leadership (Bass, 1991; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).
Charismatic

Charismatic leadership is a style that utilizes an individual’s ability to motivate others to get behind their vision for the future or reason for the individual to participate in whatever activity or future the leader is guiding. Charismatic leaders are what come to mind when thinking of a stereotypical leader who inspires others through their communicative and inspirational leadership, usually when they speak to groups of people. This might be viewed as manipulative in some cases, but when thinking about leadership, it is viewed as a positive. The leader motivates these individuals to believe in what they are saying and respond in a way that spreads throughout the organization or to other people. Charismatic leaders possess significant self-confidence, conviction, and assertiveness. They help instill pride in others through their leadership where the individuals included feel a sense of mission in order to carry out the duties. This motivation crosses over into their followers and the followers feel the need to live out these duties through their own actions, which leads to additional charismatic leaders (Bass, 1991; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Klein & House, 1995).

Authentic

Authentic leadership style emphasizes the understanding and reflection of one’s self as it relates to leadership. Authentic leaders truly understand their strengths, weaknesses, and personality and then are able to effectively apply their assessments to better lead their team, project, or idea. These individuals are not only “in tune” with themselves, but have an accurate understanding of who they are and what they have to offer as a leader. Authentic leaders are also viewed to have high ethical standards that are responded to by others with their sincerity of how they are leading because they have
such transparency. In essence, authentic leaders are self-aware and able to make individuals that work with them self-aware allowing for realistic and sincere relationships. These relationships work to build on each other’s strengths in a manner that is ethical and leads to success (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

**Transformational**

Transformational leadership is sometimes thought of as the best form of leadership, although as stated earlier there is not truly one superlative leadership style. Although there is not one best leadership style, transformational leadership is a style that could be used effectively most generally if it is unclear of what the team, project, or idea needs. There are usually components of charismatic and authentic leadership incorporated into transformational leadership and it can also be tied closed with transactional leadership, but transformational leadership is different than both of these styles. The component used from charismatic leadership is the ability to understand the desires of others and motivate them through this understanding while the component of authentic leadership is the utilization of moral and ethical practices. This is also relevant for describing servant leadership. Transformational leadership must utilize aspects of transactional leadership from time to time in order to be successful.

A transformational leader has the ability to create a vision that others can understand and get behind. Through the leader’s vision and communication, they are transformed and able to articulate this vision to others while carrying out the duties. Within transformational leadership, both the leader and the subordinates are equal and keep each other accountable. This is quite different than the other styles and truly incorporates a more democratic approach to get the buy-in of all parties involved. A
democratic approach incorporates the views and thoughts from the entire group into the
decision to be made in order to acquire as many viewpoints as possible to make the best
decision. This even inspires the parties to go above and beyond what is expected which
leads to improved productivity (Bass, 1991; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

**Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership is a form of leadership that focuses on the mission of the
organization or individual and keeps the cause in mind when leading or making
decisions. This often exists in non-profit organizations that usually have a mission to
serve a specific group of individuals for a specific reason. Servant leadership has been
tied to transformational leadership due to their similarities but there is one contrast
between the two styles. Transformational leadership still holds the organization as the
end goal for success while servant leadership wants the individuals they are serving to
succeed, which then leads to the success of the organization. Servant leaders are only a
means to an end. They do not view themselves as key in the process but rather a
facilitator that is bringing together the voices of others involved to make the future how
they see it to be successful (Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).

**Motivation**

Motivation by definition is giving of reason to act, enthusiasm, reason, or forces
determining behavior. When describing motivation related to running for public office,
essentially it is why this individual has chosen to run for public office. There is an end
point for motivation when running for public office. This could include being in power,
having the opportunity to make changes that impact a community the individual cares
about, or representing a community or group of individuals. For public officials this
motivation can also stem from wanting to do good for others (Andersen, Jørgensen, Kjeldsen, Pedersen, & Vrangbæk, 2013).

**Summary**

The gay community has gone through some significant changes throughout history, especially within the last few years. We now have openly gay individuals running for public office and winning elections. Candidates run as either gay candidates or candidates who happen to be gay. The lived experiences of the gay individuals have impacted their lives and through their efforts, many times grassroots, they have been successful in changing laws as well as the public perception of what it means to be gay.

Leadership styles are evident in all leaders. Transactional leadership is used in process improvement. Transformational leadership exists when the followers embody the leader’s vision. Charismatic leadership happens when followers get behind the leader. Authentic leadership exists when the leader is self-aware and able to be their true self. Servant leadership puts the needs of the followers in front of the organization or entity’s (Bass, 1991; Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Case study methodology includes research that studies a case that is bounded by a time and place, real-life setting, and comprehensive research strategy. A case study is most appropriate for this research because it examined a real life, contemporary bound system of how the lived experiences of an openly gay male elected official impacted his journey of running for public office. An intrinsic case study researches one individual or a small group of individuals, which in this case is an openly gay male elected official. It also is intended to illustrate the unique case through description and detail. Conclusions were formed based on themes developed from the data analysis (Creswell, 2013).

The lived experiences are bound by time because they occurred as lived experiences of the participant. Although the lived experiences occurred in the past, they impact the journey of running for public office, which is occurring presently. This case is also bounded by a place since the study occurs with an openly gay male elected official and their lived experiences of living within the United States. Since the lived experiences of openly gay men are unique, it offers an opportunity to conduct a case study on the experience and how it impacts the journey of running for public office. The specific case is an openly gay male elected official living in the United States and their journey of running for public office. Creswell (2013) suggested focusing on real-life cases that are in progress so the data gathered is as accurate as possible. The journey of running for office is currently in progress for the openly gay elected official, which is impacted by the past-lived experiences. The bounded beginning and ending points were the lived experiences in the openly gay male elected official’s childhood and coming out experiences. The
research incorporated the interpretative phase of learning about the case and the lessons learned from them (Creswell, 2013).

**Data Collection**

Data collection within a case study included a variety of sources including interviews, observations, audiovisual material, documents, and reports as recommended by Creswell (2013). This study incorporated interviews and other documents to research surrounding the lived experiences of an openly gay male elected official in the Midwest, specifically Iowa, and how that impacts his journey in running for public office and become a leader.

**Interviews**

An openly gay male official in the United States who came out at some point while running for office was the direct participant interviewed and observed in this study. One participant or case was interviewed in-depth for this study. Less in-depth interviews took place with the participant’s colleagues including staff members and other elected officials. Only individuals above the age of nineteen participated in the interviews for their protection. In addition, informed consent was given to each participant and they were given the opportunity to recuse themselves from participating at any time throughout the process. Participants were provided with additional information regarding the study when requested without necessarily disclosing or skewing results in order to attract them to participate in an interview (Creswell, 2013).

One extensive interview occurred with the participant. This robust interview took place in his office. The participant’s office is located near the Western Gate Park in Des Moines. It is off a major road in a cement building. His office is located on the second
floor of the building and overlooks another business from a loft viewpoint. The floor plan is open and there are not necessarily offices, but open offices with contemporary designs. There is a conference table in the middle of the open floor plan and that is where the interview took place. The participant sat diagonally opposite from the researcher during the interview. At one point, the participant went to the refrigerator to fetch a soda and offered the researcher refreshment.

Questions were asked in a conversation to make the participant feel comfortable. The interview was recorded with permission from the participant. It was not necessary to conduct additional or follow-up interviews with the participant, especially since multiple observations occurred out in the community to allow for impromptu interactions with the participant. There were additional emails and correspondence with the participant after the completion of the interview to set up observations. The researcher already knew the participant which creating the informal environment for the participant to feel comfortable.

Interviews also took place with the participant’s colleagues. Colleagues included two staff members who work very closely with the openly gay male elected official. One was done informally after sitting with him during the observation at the state house. While observing the participant in action, the researcher asked this colleague questions regarding the participant. The other colleague was set up with assistance from the participant since this staff member has around ten years of experience working with the participant. This interview took place in a conference room within the building where the participant’s offices are located. The conference room had a small table with chairs surrounding it and glass doors for anyone to see who is meeting in the room. At one
point, the interview was interrupted by another colleague who needed a signature from the colleague being interviewed. The colleague sat directly across the researcher at the table. Questions were again asked conversationally to make the colleague comfortable.

Other interviews were with two other state elected officials in Iowa who have experience working with the participant as state elected officials. These interviews were done via the telephone. After greeting the elected officials, discussing logistics, and beginning the recording, the interviews were conducted.

Additional state elected officials were emailed or called, but these were the two that responded and agreed to participate. Two participants were interviewed in-person while the other two were interviewed via telephone. Interviews with colleagues ranged from fifteen minutes to forty-five minutes. There were not follow-up interviews with the two who worked with the participant since they were not necessary. One follow-up email was sent to the other elected officials who were interviewed with two specific questions in the email. These questions were thought of after completing the interviews. Both individuals responded. Questions were asked in a conversation to make participants feel comfortable. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants. Transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants to review to make sure it captured what they said correctly.

**Observations**

Three observations occurred with the participant speaking and interacting out in the public. Observations occurred on the statehouse, at an Interfaith Alliance of Iowa event at Plymouth United Church of Christ, and Gay (Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender) and Gray in the Midwest: Senior Summit. The observation at the statehouse
allowed for the participant to be viewed in a professional setting with peers as a formal Iowa State Senator. The event sponsored by Interfaith Alliance allowed for observations to occur with the general population. Although this was with the general population, the demographics that participate in the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa events are known to be progressive. Finally the Gay and Gray in the Midwest: Senior Summit allowed for an observation to occur within a gay setting. The gay event took place at Grand View University and had participants from the gay community as well as allied organization in attendance. Most of the participants were older.

**Secondary Source Artifacts**

Secondary source artifacts such as local newspaper articles were also collected to add value to and reinforce the interview data collected, specifically for the purpose of triangulation including validating data to achieve saturation (Creswell, 2013). One of the biggest secondary data source artifacts examined was the book the participant and one of his colleagues wrote titled, *McCoy, You’re Going Straight to Hell*. Other sources such as articles or media related items were included in the data collection such as constituency demographic data, educational and career artifacts, primary and general election data, and voting records of the participant.

**Data Collection Strategies**

The Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute (2013) works with openly LGBTQ candidates and elected officials on providing training, resources, and technical assistance when running for public office. There is also a directory of the openly LGBTQ elected officials across the world that can be searched based on geographic location, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and level of office. Of the 162 openly gay male elected
officials in the United States, not all came out of the closet as gay prior to running for public office, making the pool to choose from smaller (Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute, 2013). Working with the Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute was imperative to gather a sample of openly gay elected officials who are openly gay and identify an individual who was willing to participate in this case study. Ultimately, a participant was chosen whom the researcher had a prior professional relationship.

Open-ended interview questions were asked with each participant. Each interview was set up with an intended time slot to have enough time to answer the specific questions developed in addition to other questions that arise organically in the interview. Informal interviews took place. These interviews were shorter in length but had the same set up of having a time bound but also have the opportunity for the researcher to asked additional questions during the interview organically. Questions for his colleagues were different than the questions for the participants to gain as much additional information about the participants from a different perspective as possible. Artifacts gathered were researched to add to the understanding of how the lived experiences of the openly gay male elected official impacts his journey of running for public office.

**Data Collection Procedures**

In this case study of an openly gay elected official, data was collected through interviews, observations, and other artifact collection. The researcher was able to establish rapport with the elected official prior to the in-person interaction with him. Prior to this research, the researcher has known the participant since 2007. In 2007, the researcher interviewed the participant for a class project. Since 2007, the researcher has interacted with the participant out in the community at political, gay, and other
community events. The openly gay elected official was interviewed in-person for roughly an hour in his office. Four of his colleagues were interviewed in shorter timeframes of about fifteen to forty-five minutes. These colleagues included two staff members and two other Iowa State Senators.

Observations of the elected official occurred on the Senate floor, at a gay event, and at a non-gay event. The observation on the Iowa State Senate floor was over an afternoon totaling around three hours. He was observed at an interfaith event where he spoke for about an hour and a half and observed at a gay event on a college campus focused on the aging LGBT community for roughly six hours. Local artifacts were collected to contribute to the research and included as secondary data. Data was collected between May and August 2015. The data was collected on the Iowa State Senate floor through observation of the elected official in action and interviews with him and his colleagues.

This data collection process almost seemed like community-participatory research due to the researcher’s rapport with the participant and the gay community. This might be interesting to examine for future implications of research on openly gay elected officials or other gay leaders.
Table 1: Data Collection by Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Data Collection</th>
<th>Time Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview with participant</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with colleague #1</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with colleague #2</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with colleague #3</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with colleague #4</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation at Iowa State Senate Floor</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation at non-gay event</td>
<td>1 hour 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation at gay event</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Time Spent</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.25 hours</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Time Spent Interviewing/Observing Participant</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.5 hours</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis Plan

Data collected was coded into categories with the purpose of identifying trends. Dedoose was the software utilized to assist because of its ability to read and review text, categorization process, and analysis features (Creswell, 2013; Dedoose, 2015). A coding process was utilized that entailed and incorporated describing areas in terms or phrases. These terms and phrases were then grouped that were similar. One of the benefits about qualitative research is the freedom the researcher has, which is also one of the disadvantages because it does not provide structure or best practice at times. Validating the data was utilized through triangulation. Triangulation of all data sets including the interviews, observations, and secondary data was utilized to determine trends, validation, and saturation of the data gathered.
Quality and Verification

Triangulation of the data was utilized to determine quality and provide validation. This quality and verification check determined that there were trends across all data sets and provided a checks and balance to validate the data. Data collected including the interviews, observations, and artifact compendium resulted in the determination that there was a saturation of results found across all data sets. Colleagues validated what Senator McCoy disclosed during his interview as well as provided additional supporting information that McCoy may not have recognized through his own personal reflections because this is what the others observed of him. The other artifacts found validated Senator McCoy’s responses and added additional details or specific information regarding his lived experiences as an openly gay male elected official (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical implications were imperative for this case study with the openly gay male elected official. Gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board was required but also allowed for the study to occur. Anonymity was not established for the case study participant, since he is an openly gay public official. Everything that was observed was in a public setting, and everything discussed was already discussed in the media or other documents such as the book he just authored. He received informed consent and was able to recuse himself at any point and review transcriptions as requested.

It was important to keep the other interviewees information anonymous. Informed consent and forms documenting the informed consent were critical to make the participants more comfortable participating in the study while not forcing or pressuring them to participate. Sharing with the participants the purpose of the study was crucial.
Disclosing the sexual orientation of the researcher was important to show that there was not be any bias toward the opposition of homosexuality and was important in gaining trust and establishing rapport with the participant; especially since the issue being addressed could be viewed as sensitive to some individuals. Interviewing in a neutral site that gives permission was utilized and important as Creswell (2013) suggested. As discussed before, understanding internal bias and keeping it addressed was important. This was done by bracketing internal biases or perceptions and reporting on the data and not only reporting on positive aspects of the findings. Providing the results to the participants and paying it forward was an important aspect to add to the literature within gay studies.

It was also critical for the researcher to bracket his beliefs, values, and personal experiences as an openly gay male in order to collect, analyze, and present the data in an unbiased manner. This was done through asking questions in the same manner with all interviews, documenting and capturing data collected without adding personal commentary, and presenting results based on the research collected.

**Summary**

Data collected included interviews with the case, which in this case is the openly gay male elected official, as well as two colleagues who work with him closely and two other elected officials in the Iowa statehouse. Observations occurred through public events, which included the statehouse, a non-gay event, and a gay event. Other artifacts regarding the case were identified to add to and validate the data collected. Data analysis was conducted through coding of responses and interpretations from the interviews and observations. From the coding of these interviews and observations, trends were
developed. Trends were used to explain the data with the assistance of triangulation, which helped to validate the data and show a saturation of the findings across all sets of data collected.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND THE EVIDENCE-BASED FINDINGS

Introduction

In addition to the purpose and aim of the study, this chapter presents findings from the data collected. Data collected presented in these sections include Senator McCoy’s interview, interviews with his colleagues, observations, and then finally secondary data collected from artifacts and other news articles. A finding is presented based on the discoveries from the research collected.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand how the lived experiences of a openly gay male elected official living in the Midwest impacts his journey of running for public office. Unfortunately, there are limited amounts of research on openly gay elected officials, but there is adequate literature on the gay movement within the United States. This study assists in addressing the gap in academic research on gay leadership and openly gay elected officials in the Midwest.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore how sexual orientation impacts the journey to become a leader.

Summary and Presentation of the Findings

Senator McCoy Interview

Childhood

Senator McCoy was born on March 29, 1966 in Des Moines, IA to Bill and Mary Ann McCoy, a middle class, blue collar, progressive, democratic family. He grew up on the south side of Des Moines just a few blocks from his family’s business, Seller’s
Hardware. McCoy stated, “It [the business] was actually three blocks from my house and … the business … the business … kind of served as the center of our universe because it was open you know 60 hours a week and … and that’s where dad was so … all the kids grew up in a family of 5 children.” It was through the family business that helped start his understanding of what it takes to work hard and learn the values instilled by his parents (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

The values instilled in him as a child from his family, his experience in the Boy Scouts of America, and his experience running and serving in office have led him to develop the skills to be where he is today. Specifically, he learned skills of preparing for meetings, leading others, and the understanding of showing up is half the battle. After graduating from college, he had the perfect life on paper, but had one big secret that limited his ability to live an authentic life, which started negatively impacting his life in all realms and caused him to lean on alcohol. After coming to terms with his sexuality, he publicly came out of the closet as a gay man and became Iowa’s first openly gay elected official in the statehouse. These experiences have shaped who he is today and have guided his motivation to run for public office (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Matt grew up as the middle child with four other siblings who all have led successful lives and careers. “My … brother Pat is … in New York City and he’s the … bond relations manager for the New York Transmit authority and then my sister Molly is … a teacher and vice principal … the downtown school in Des Moines here and my sister Katie … lives in Cedar Rapids and … her husband’s an engineer at Rockwell and … that’s my family,” said McCoy (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).
Both of his parents were politically active in progressive, Democratic causes. Bill McCoy was a strong advocate for the poor. McCoy said, “My dad’s issues his whole issue was the poor and he just had … I think my dad was poor growing up my dad was very poor and his dad died when he was in high school and my grandmother had 8 children and had to go back to work and … she didn’t have much education.” Senator McCoy went on to say, “I would say that my parents always instilled the values of thinking of others and of taking strong positions on issues that … that people needed and advocate for and being a standup guy for underdogs” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Senator McCoy attended parochial schools throughout his entire career from kindergarten and even through his college career. He graduated from Dowling High School in West Des Moines in 1984 and also graduated from Briar Cliff University in 1988 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and political science (McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Throughout his childhood, Matt participated in the Boy Scouts of America and earned the Eagle Scout rank in 1981. Senator McCoy credits the Boy Scouts of America to helping shape his motivation to become a leader. “I think scouting had a huge impact on my life as a child,” said McCoy. When discussing the development of leadership he said, “It was very formative in the development years because that’s when I was really developing my sense of self my sense of confidence and my sense of optimism,” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Senator McCoy has been drawn to leadership and serving in a leadership role since he was a child. His parents instilled values in him that he still lives by today and it
was they who introduced him to politics as a young boy. He talked fondly of his experience with the Boy Scouts of America and how it taught him leadership skills including being prepared and showing up at the table, even if you were not invited. He said, “I became an Eagle Scout before I was 15…that taught me a lot about leadership … and I led our troop of boys as a boy leader.” Matt went on to say, “I think just knowing that scouting helped teach me to show up on time with my agenda and with a plan to move forward…so I think that program was a wonderful program for teaching boys to become men.” McCoy demonstrated at a young age public service motivation. Values and platforms instilled in him as a young child contributed to the motivation or altruism, which led him to continue to pursue public office and serve as an openly gay elected official (Perry, 2000).

**Running for Office**

Running for office and becoming politically active began early for Matt. He said, “I was vice president of the student body and … active at Dowling in student government and student affairs and in college I was president of the student body … at uh at the college I was at.” He also became politically active in high school as the high school coordinator for the Mondale campaign. By discussing how he got involved he started, “And then I had … I had pursued a position in high school I was a student coordinator for all the high schools in the metro for Mondale and I went out and spoke to student groups at the high school level to bring in volunteers to come in and work for Mondale who was running for president” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015). This shows his commitment at a young age to be politically involved as a Democrat and continue his public service motivation (Perry, 2000).
This carried on into college and his young adulthood. He described this involvement continuing by stating, “And then in college … I worked for Biden in Sioux City and then when he dropped out of the race I went to work for Bruce Babbitt.” “And so I was always I was always engaged in politics and … then in after college I took a role … on the Polk County Conservation Board, which I was on for five and a half years and that was a volunteer appointed position. I was appointed by Polk County Supervisor Clark Rasmussen.” This sparked his interest in furthering his public service which led him to run for House of Representatives and ultimately the Iowa Senate (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Once McCoy was involved in politics as a teen, he got even more involved throughout his college years and ultimately decided to seek public office himself. Although none of his family was holding seats in public office, McCoy was motivated to run for public office. The path of being involved in politics and ultimately holding public office stems from the altruism instilled in him as a child by his family. McCoy also talked at length about being the best and committing himself to this in an attempt to distract himself from his true feelings toward the same-sex. He was overcompensating with these activities in order to hide from the fears and attempt to live normally. His definition of normal included living life as a straight man (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Professional Career

Senator McCoy joined the Des Moines Community Partnership’s Downtown Community Alliance as Vice President of Community Development in 2003. In 2009, he left that position, with an associate, to start his own consulting business called Resource
Development Consultants. Resource Development Consultants provides executive search, organizational development, training, and fundraising consulting services. Even his professional career, although mostly tied to business, is focused on the community, which relates to the public services motivation. These positions are focused on building or improving the community he is serving (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015; Perry, 2000).

**Family and Life in the Closet**

In the 1990’s, Senator McCoy married and soon had the picket fence life. He had a wife, son, successful career, was an elected official, and had just built his dream home. There was only one problem; he was an in-the-closet gay man who was overcoming his internalized homophobia by resorting to alcohol. Senator McCoy discussed how he would feel if he was still in the closet and how living with the secret impacted his life by stating, “Horrible, I would have never, I would have never been able to go the distance … you know keeping that secret is an exhausting process.” He went on by saying, “More so than anything else that that your burdened with and … it because just a heavy burden and I would equate it to how good of a legislator could I have been if I … if I … if my own personal financial house was not in order and I was on the verge of bankruptcy and I was defaulting on credit cards and the burden of that kind heavy load would have would have destroyed me” (M. McCoy personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Although today it is much different for individuals to come out of the closet, when McCoy was going through this the political climate and public perception of homosexuality was different. McCoy and many others did not come out due to homophobia and many times, just as McCoy did, attempted to live a heterosexual life in
order to cater to heteronormativity (Warner, 1993). Coming out during this time was difficult for many, and especially for many living in the Midwest.

McCoy felt many things and although he was more than just his sexual orientation, the energy it took to hide his secret was overwhelming. He talked about the lies he had to continue, which was overwhelming. Not only was he living a lie to everyone but attempting to have a romantic relationship with his wife. He felt feelings of hopelessness, fear, anxiety, and loneliness, which led to depression and alcoholism (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

**Coming out of the Closet**

Senator McCoy remembers in adolescence feeling different about his sexual orientation. He stated, “I was a child and it was it was an adolescent age. It was under 12 you know kind of you know I talked to guys that say they knew when they were 3 or 4 … and I just just kind of made a decision and came to terms with it as a teenager and said I’m going to come to terms with and I’m going to accept to but I’m going to overcome it as I … you know as I was taught I could do with most things in life that challenge me.” He went on to say, “That you know you just set your mind to it and become something different than what you are and that works for a while…it can work a while.” Although he knew at a young age, he never really came to terms with it until he was well into adulthood. He always believed he could cure himself or at least over-compensate by being successful in order to overshadow this one thing (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

McCoy finally came out to himself, or as he states, “surrendered to it” during the time of his alcoholism. He said, “I would say it was it was during … the battle with my
alcoholism.” McCoy went onto say, “And I would say that would have been around 35 when I first when I first said out loud you know I’ve got I’ve got this same sex attraction that I can’t … that I can’t overcome and I don’t know how to overcome it … and it’s consuming me to the point where it causes me to want to drink and that’s the only way through self-medication that I can that I can handle it.” He was getting to a place where something had to give in his life and he needed to determine how to come out or beouted involuntary by a reporter and others who were watching him (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Alcoholism is a disease that impacts the gay community at higher rates (Williamson, 2000). Historically, the gay community spent a lot of time in gay bars surrounded by alcohol because this was one of the few places gay people could go and feel safe, find others like them, and find a potential partner. The gay community is not necessarily more at risk to becoming an alcoholic, but it is because of societal homophobia and the fear of living openly in certain locations or during specific time period made gay bars a place for them to feel safe. Many in the gay community also turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism to living in the closet, coming out, or losing family or friends because they came out of the closet as gay (Williamson, 2000). Senator McCoy experienced these emotions. Although he did not go to the gay bar to find a safe space, he did use alcohol as a way to self-medicate for depression caused by the feelings of living in the closet and fear of coming out in a time and place that was not as accepting as it is today (Kus, 1988).

This was quite a difficult time to maneuver since Matt was still married to his wife at the time. He first came out to close friends and family and even went through
counseling with his wife during the transition. This forced him to go through some reflections where he discussed, “And I would say that would have been around thirty-five when I first said out loud you know I’ve got I’ve got this same sex attraction that I can’t ... that I can’t overcome and I don’t know how to overcome it ... and it’s consuming me to the point where it causes me to want to drink and that’s the only way through self medication that I can that I can handle it.” McCoy was experiencing feelings and described that process by saying, “And I would say that would have been around 35 when I first said out loud you know I’ve got I’ve got this same sex attraction that I can’t uh that I can’t overcome and I don’t know how to overcome it ... and it’s consuming me to the point where it causes me to want to drink and that’s the only way through self-medication that I can that I can handle it” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

He had pressures to come out because it was getting harder and harder to live in the closet as it was becoming less of a secret. One night after attending a birthday celebration at The Garden, a gay bar in Des Moines, McCoy remembers getting a call from a Des Moines Register reporter asking about the previous night. Something had to give yet again, so Matt made the choice to come out publicly in his way, rather than be outing or held for ransom for some newsworthy story (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Matt first came out to Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal. He remembers Gronstal stating, “Well these are the conversations that being a leader these kinds of conversations you don’t want to have with your members.” McCoy responded by saying, “Well you know I understand that and I said uh that I would ... within the next few days I
would I would take it upon myself to meet … with my colleagues and talk to them one on one and I would also visit with the governor which at the time was Vilsack.” Word spread like wildfire throughout the statehouse and in Iowa. The message was hard to keep under control and Senator McCoy was overwhelmed with how fast it got out. He stated, “and I felt for a period of my life that’s all I was doing … you know I felt that all I was doing was coming out.” He experienced many emotions during this time where he described, “It was draining but also liberating. And the liberating was you know finally getting honest about who I was and what I was coming to terms with and how I got to that position and so from you know that perspective it got easier with it got easier with every conversation” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

The fear of being outed was a valid feeling. We have a history of outing politicians before they are ready to come out because they may be having same-sex relationships in secret, but speaking negatively or vitriolically about homosexuality and the rights of the gay community. There have been many individuals who have been outed in this manner, who then ultimately come out and some even change his stance like Tim Brown a state represented in Ohio. The hypocrisy is what leads to the outing. Although McCoy was not speaking negatively about the community, he did vote for DOMA (Gay, 2002; Schmucker, 2007).

There were individuals who asked him to resign or asked when he was going to resign. This brought out a feeling for Matt which he described as, “Obviously a disappointing reaction because you know … the fact was that you know being honest I was I was exposing all my vulnerable most personal and intimate secrets about myself.” He talked about the pride he felt and said, “It wasn’t something I felt that I should be
ashamed of and these people obviously these colleagues in the house thought it was something I should be ashamed of and so that was disappointing.” This inspired him to continue serving in the Iowa Senate and ultimately become a more vocal champion for LGBTQ equality and other topics (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

**Leadership**

Senator McCoy exemplifies the values his family instilled in him growing up. His parents taught him about caring about people and demonstrated their commitment to progressive democratic causes through their actions, donations, and communication. The Boy Scouts of America taught him many lessons in life including showing up prepared and helped him develop a sense of self and self-confidence. Although he had passion for doing what was right for Iowans and human rights in general, it was the coming out process and now living openly as a gay man that has created a new passion for life and leading. He also looked at other openly gay elected officials and even met with individuals like Barney Frank (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

McCoy now feels freedom to be his true authentic self and discussed how the coming out process was liberating by stating, “I think it has been a liberating process that authenticity that I received … as a result of coming out … connected with voters in a way that most people don’t have … that kind of a relationship with their constituents.” This has also allowed him to be transparent and authentic with his constituents because of the vulnerability he shows by discussing, “I deal with in politics the fact that that I am truly authentic and transparent person that has you know come to terms with … with the most intimate aspects of my life and shared them with people that vote for me uh and stood elections and gone through gone through some of the gay anti-gay campaigns that I went
through.” This is evident from his reflections in that constituents see he is responding to them when he said, “I’ve heard constituents who say they never have that kind of insight into the people they were electing” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

**Topics and Platforms**

Senator McCoy has had vested interest in a variety of topics and platforms throughout his life. From having his parents instill helping others and cheering for the underdog to now living as an openly gay man and championing gay causes like marriage equality, HIV laws, and conversion therapy legislation, Matt has platforms that he cares about and inspire him. Matt has worked on topics and platforms; many include non-gay specific activities that impact the entire community including the gay community, which he says are values he always carries including education, health care, and jobs. When asked about his platforms, McCoy stated, “That’s an interesting question because some people have said well you know are you a really state senator for us or do you just care about gay issues?” He went on to reflect saying, “And because I’m always quoted on gay issues I think people have a misconception that that’s all I do is sit around and think about … equality issues but reality is reality is that you think about everything you’ve always thought about its just that when the media needs a spokesperson on that subject they go to you so you are consistent voice on issues of equality” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

When it comes to gay issues, Senator McCoy has played a significant role just by being an openly gay elected official. Matt recognizes it but also sees how it has helped him and the community where he reflected, “From the stand point of the impact I’ve had I think being out and being visible and being vocal has been good for … it’s been good
for me but it’s also been good for the … the gay community.” It is evident the community values Matt’s voice and he often hears from them when out in the community. He stated, “I hear that from everyone when I’m out at a gay event or a gay bar or doing something with advocates I hear people you know say thanks for carrying the message thanks for what you do thanks for being vocal thanks for being visible … I hear those comments and I you know I have to tell you that’s a that’s very rewarding” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

He has helped put a face to the cause with his colleagues. When asked if he feels pressure to be a gay champion Matt stated, “I think it’s been a positive role for the community because I’ve helped often some of the public opinion around marriage equality and I’ve softened some the opposition’s arguments as it related to anti-bullying and adoption of the … civil rights act, which included sexual orientation transgender issues” (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Responses from Colleagues

Leadership

Two colleagues that are elected officials discussed how Senator McCoy’s sexual orientation actually helped him be a better leader and allowed him to be able to advocate and talk on specific issues that brought them to life and allowed for others to have a face to the cause. After being asked if McCoy’s sexual orientation impacts his ability to lead one stated “No actually I think it works to his advantage, yeah I’m talking in confidentiality, I think it works the same with minorities to their advantage” This colleague went on to say, “I mean there’s things that he can say and will do knows he’s not going to get push back because he is gay” (personal communication, June 23, 2015).
This shows McCoy’s ability to be looked upon as the person who can speak with authority on gay issues. It also illustrates the stereotype and stigmatization that just because McCoy is gay, he can either get away with more or that he speaks on behalf of the entire gay community. When he talked about McCoy getting away with more, he meant that he can say and do things that straight, white, cisgender men cannot. McCoy is able to wield some of this power as it enables him to push the envelope when working on issues related to the gay community (personal communication, June 23, 2015).

Another colleague responded and stated, “I don’t really know. I think it probably gives him more authority to uh speak on certain topics, like the HIV transmission bill and the … conversion bill that he introduced last year.” This colleague went on to say, “So from that standpoint I think it has an impact on his … I guess just his authority to speak on certain issues.” They also stated this regarding McCoy, “It may … give him a greater ability to lead people within his own caucus or within the legislature because … because of that I guess increased enhanced authority to talk about those issues” (personal communication, July 31, 2015).

Both of these respondents are white, cisgender men, and identify as straight or heterosexual. When asked if they believe their sexual orientation has impacted their journey in running or even their candidacy when they did run, both responded with “no”. Both men discussed their professional and working relationship with Matt as positive. They have either worked on committees together or sponsored legislation together so they have both experienced working fairly closely with Senator McCoy. One remembered a time when Senator Dennis Guth spoke on the Senate floor and talked
about the gay community in a derogatory manner. This respondent remembers Senator McCoy stepping up to talk right after this to address the derogatory remarks and how he told Senator McCoy, “Hey just so you know, he doesn’t speak for me and for anybody as far as I’m concerned” (personal communication, June 23, 2015; personal communication, July 31, 2015).

One of his staff members described Senator McCoy’s leadership by saying, “From the stand point that he is more open, that he is more direct and he can provide stronger leadership without being afraid of being outed or afraid of any type of blackmail or anything like that…it makes him a much stronger leader and a more passionate leader.” He then described him as a loud voice that wouldn’t back down from a fight. He said:

“Matt’s Matt…he’s very comfortable with himself. He doesn’t yield to a lot of pressure. In fact, when I worked with him on the Senate and he was maybe speaking too loud, which is obviously for other people to hear. I wouldn’t dare say Matt, be quiet. Because when I did, his voice just goes louder. It’s like pouring gas onto the fire. I knew you know I don’t tug on his sleeve and you know…He’d do just opposite of what I’d ask him.”

The participant said this jokingly by half-laughing while making the statement, but there was a lot of truth to his comments. These comments show how McCoy is very comfortable and confident in his own skin now that he is out. This participant went on to say other things regarding Matt’s leadership including:

“Now, he becomes spokesperson for them but he never runs as a gay
Senator...you know...elect me because I’m going to represent the gay community, that isn’t it. He represents every constituent. And he happens to be gay. His, he’s not so much running on promoting gay issues, he’s promoting human rights and human justice issues and it’s much broader of a picture than that. And I think he’s kind of been a defender of the underdog along the line. Whether it’s somebody in prison uh whether it’s supporting the homeless, whether it’s supporting immigrants. I think that theme is supporting maybe the unrepresented or underrepresented and the underdog. I think...I really think he’s altruistic in terms of how he approaches, approaches his work” (personal communication, July 2, 2015).

This individual talked about how McCoy represents everyone regardless of if they live in his district or not. He even responds to individuals who use homophobic comments or complain about the job he is doing as their Senator or people outside his district asking questions or advocating for a topic they care about or a bill. This also demonstrates McCoy’s confidence in his abilities and willingness to take a stand on issues regardless of the repercussions it may have in his district or across the state.

**Topics and Platforms**

These colleagues also describe Senator McCoy’s ability to speak on gay topics with a lot of authority, expertise, and respect. He is asked to speak on these topics to help bring them to light and provide a platform to make them personal for others voting on this issue. One colleague stated, “I think he’s viewed as a senator, a very tenured senator and someone that again he is not afraid to stick up for gay rights but I don’t think he overplays the card but he’s not afraid to play.” Another stated, “I think it probably gives
him more authority to uh speak on certain topics, like the HIV transmission bill and the … conversion bill that he introduced last year” (personal communication, June 23, 2015; personal communication, July 31, 2015).

Observations

Senator McCoy is a force to be reckoned with. Whenever he is around or walks in the door, he commands attention. McCoy is tall, handsome, and well dressed. He’s not an overbearing presence or high-energy presence, but exudes a consistent confidence that people are attracted to. Observations included time spent on the Iowa Senate Floor, Senator McCoy speaking at a lunch and learn put on by Interfaith Alliance of Iowa, and at the Gay and Gray in the Midwest conference as their keynote speaker. These observations included him acting as a legislator, one non-gay event in his district, and a gay event outside of his district but still in Des Moines at Grand View University (observation, May 14, 2015; observation, July 17, 2015; observation, August 1, 2015).

When observed on the Senate floor, McCoy began with conversations with some heavy hitters including Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal and other senior Senators like Robert Dvorsky. He was not just friendly and communicating with Democrats but even went over to the Republican side of the Senate and spoke with a few Republican Senators. Everyone seemed welcoming and friendly with Matt. They smiled at him shook his hand, and came up to him and started conversations. When the Senate came in session, Senator McCoy drew people to him including Senator Dick Dearden coming over and sitting down with Matt as well as Senator Steve Sodders turning around and joking or Senator Liz Mathis dropping off documents. At one point, the germaneness of a
bill was challenged and key Democrats went up to the Senate President including Senator McCoy to discuss in detail (observation, May 14, 2015).

The senate appeared to be the boys club. Even one of the participants interviewed discussed how the senate is the “good ole boys club”. McCoy was part of this boys club and was surrounded by the leadership of the senate including the majority leader and other senior Senators. He seemed to have enough confidence to join the boys club without an invitation but this invitation could have been given prior to the observation because it seemed that all of the men in this group just showed up together without verbally communicating. This shows that McCoy has acclimated well to the Senate even after coming out as gay, but it could be because he has other privileges such as being a white cisgender male.

Senator Matt McCoy spoke at Crossroads, the first Friday lunch and learn event for Interfaith Alliance of Iowa. They hold their events every month at Plymouth United Church of Christ church. Roughly seventy attendees came to hear Matt speak and from talking with other attendees, this was a huge turnout for the summer months. In attendance were mostly retired central Iowans, a few other individuals in their twenties, thirties, or forties, but most were in their fifties or above. Many prominent current and former business leaders, education leaders, political activists, and clergy were in attendance (observation, July 17, 2015).

Senator McCoy talked for roughly forty minutes before opening it up for questions. He spoke mainly about his book and talked about a few stories, passages, and what he went through. He talked about his coming out experience, what he experienced from his peers after coming out, and life in general for him now as a gay man. He
introduced his mother and partner. He mentioned that life before coming out was horrible, but after, his life got so much better. He talked about the fifteen years of him grappling with his sexual orientation and the wasted feelings and time focused on covering it up, living a lie, and darkness that could have been spent in ways that are more positive. He discussed his focus now is trying to make up for that lost positive time and trying to make a better world. Positive time is what he described as time that would benefit others rather than negative time, which was when he was living in the closet. Alcoholism and coming out has given him thick skin but also helped him develop empathy for others going through tough situations (observation, July 17, 2015).

One attendee that knew him before he came out said, “He was a jerk and an asshole when he was in the closet.” They went on to say, “After coming out, he has changed dramatically and is approachable, understanding, etc.” Everyone was engaged when he spoke and many stayed after to buy his book (observation, July 17, 2015).

Senator McCoy spoke as the morning keynote speaker at the Gay and Gray in the Midwest’s – LGBTQ Aging conference put on by One Iowa. Senator McCoy seemed more relaxed and at ease with this crowd of LGBTQ community members, LGBTQ serving organizations, and allies. He joked and had a couple of funny slides that were more LGBTQ or gay specific. Everyone was very engaged and greeted him warmly and a loud round of applause followed. There were around 150 participants from the LGBTQ community including allies, many who were over the age of 50 (observation, August 1, 2015).

He talked about his parents and how he lost his dad and the importance of planning ahead with your loved ones. He celebrated the fact that we can be married to
who we love without worrying about where we live, how great it was to be at the conference and how wonderful the speaker line-up was. Senator McCoy stayed the whole day at the conference, conversed with everyone that walked by, and sold/signed books. The media interviewed Senator McCoy as well (observation, August 1, 2015).

**Secondary Data Results**

Senator Matt McCoy and his associate Jim Ferguson founded Resource Development Consultants. They work together in this company and have recently worked together to publish a book. The book is titled *McCoy, You’re Going Straight to Hell*. In the book, Matt and Jim go back and forth discussing Senator McCoy’s experiences as an openly gay Senator in the state of Iowa. Each of them brings their own perspectives and takes on things that Matt experiences. The book details Matt’s life before getting into specific details of correspondences he receives from constituencies and non-constituencies about issues going on at the time or about Matt’s sexual orientation. McCoy on his own personal lived experiences, emails received, and how worked through specific situations while Ferguson discussed his view of McCoy going through these lived experiences. They go back and forth writing chapters from their perspective. There are many emails sent to McCoy that are provided in the book and they each discuss Matt’s responses to these emails and what he was thinking at the time to generate his response (McCoy & Ferguson, 2014).

The fact that he wrote this book is an example of how confident he is in himself and living life as an openly gay male elected official. The book stems from one specific email he received from an individual telling him he is going straight to hell. He is showing a lot of vulnerability with the writing this book, although he is able to censor
some things from the public by not including them in the book. The book also
demonstrates his commitment to advance the gay movement and speak with authority on
his experiences as a gay man serving in the Iowa State Senate.

**Professional Career**

Matt has had a successful business career since he graduated from Briar Cliff
University in 1988. He worked for Ruan Transportation Management Systems for ten
years and ended as the Vice President and then six years at the Downtown Des Moines
Community Alliance where he was Vice President of Community Development. He now
owns a consulting business called Resource Development Consultants, which focuses on
providing consulting services regarding fundraising, training, organizational
development, and executive search. He works with an associate, Jim Ferguson who also
co-authored the book with him this past year (McCoy & Ferguson, 2014).

**Honors**

Senator McCoy has been honored and won numerous awards throughout his
career. These awards and honors include: “2014 Des Moines Convention & Visitors
Bureau Civic Champion Award, the 2014 Community HIV/Hepatitis Advocates of Iowa
award for his efforts on their behalf, the Ducks Unlimited Public Policy Award for 2013-
14, the Iowa Corn Growers Association 2014 award, the Autism Society of Iowa’s
Hometown Hero Award, and the Outstanding Service Award by the Iowa Health Care
Association & Iowa Center for Assisted Living for his efforts to protect Iowa’s elderly”
(McCoy, M. n.d.). “He’s also been honored by the Easter Seals of Iowa, Tai Dam
Village, Iowa Federation of the Blind, and Central Iowa Shelter & Services” (McCoy, M.
n.d.). Additionally, McCoy was also honored in the 2000 Des Moines Business Record’s
Forty Under 40 class (Business Record, 2015). The Des Moines Business Record’s Forty Under 40 recognizes forty central Iowa leaders forty years of age or less for their civic involvement and professional success (Business Record, 2015). McCoy’s distinguished career has been honored from his public service as an elected official. Although McCoy does not seem to be focused on winning awards, it appears he enjoys to be recognized for the work he does for his community and allows for the community to see him positively as an openly gay man.

**Elections and Running for Office**

After his experience as a Polk County Supervisor, McCoy then decided to run for Iowa House of Representatives in 1992. McCoy has never lost an election to date, even since grade school. He has won primaries and general elections by significant margins. Even after coming out, McCoy won by double-figures. That year was his worst showing in any of his elections, but still got more than fifty-six percent of the vote. Since then, he has held steady at over sixty-five percent of the vote when running against another candidate. In half of his general elections, he has run unopposed which credits the strength of his candidacy and known success in winning elections (McCoy & Ferguson, 2015; Our Campaigns, 2015). McCoy’s success even after coming out as gay shows how the times have changed since he has come out and his constituents either are not impacted by his sexual orientation or are supportive.
Table 2: Primary and General Election Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year &amp; House/Senate</th>
<th>Primary or General Election</th>
<th>Senator McCoy Votes/Percentage of Vote</th>
<th>Opponents Votes/Percentage of Vote</th>
<th>Margin of Victory to 2nd Place Finisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014* Senate</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>17,828/97.21%</td>
<td>512/2.79%</td>
<td>94.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Senate</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>13,149/65.17%</td>
<td>7,028/34.83%</td>
<td>30.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010* Senate</td>
<td>Primary Election</td>
<td>1,968/79.48%</td>
<td>508/20.52%</td>
<td>58.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Senate</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>13,147/65.58%</td>
<td>6,899/34.42%</td>
<td>31.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Senate</td>
<td>Primary Election</td>
<td>4,522/76.98%</td>
<td>1,352/23.02%</td>
<td>53.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 Senate</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>12,004/56.42%</td>
<td>9,272/43.58%</td>
<td>13.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000* Senate</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>16,398/98.62%</td>
<td>230/1.38%</td>
<td>97.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Senate</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>13,262/68.39%</td>
<td>6,131/31.61%</td>
<td>36.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994* House</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>6,945/98.61%</td>
<td>98/1.39%</td>
<td>97.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992* House</td>
<td>General Election</td>
<td>9,480/98.78%</td>
<td>117/1.22%</td>
<td>97.56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Elections run unopposed. Opponent votes/percentage of votes are write-in candidates.

Topics and Platforms

Senator McCoy has been a vocal support of gay causes. When he was in the closet, he voted for the Defense of Marriage Act to be passed as a union between one man and one woman. In the book he described the constituency of his district and that his vote did not necessarily impact the outcome because it was going to pass anyway, but he also discussed how the south side of Des Moines had a large Italian Catholic community that may have scared him into this vote as well (McCoy & Ferguson, 2015). This response may have been an attempt to hide his own internalized homophobia as well.
McCoy has served on local boards such as the Central Iowa Shelter and Services nonprofit organization, which provides services to homeless individuals living in the Des Moines metro area. He has also introduced a large number of non-gay related bills, much more compared to the gay bills he has sponsored.

**Analysis and Synthesis of Findings**

Senator Matt McCoy grew up in a household devoted to causes. His parents instilled values in him that he still lives today, which include caring for the homeless and advocating for the underdog. His involvement with Boy Scouts of America helped him develop leadership skills that he still uses today. This involvement helped him find his leadership voice. He has always been politically involved because of his parents, and that translated into political involvement in high school, college, and then finally serving as a public official after college. Matt was involved in a variety of activities, which he says was a way for him to take his mind off dealing with his sexual orientation. He described it as overcompensating for being gay to distract not only himself but also others from knowing his true identity as a gay man.

Although McCoy was motivated to be a leader from a young age, it is determined that sexual orientation plays a role in continuing to serve in public office. While it may not be the sole factor in the motivation to run for public office within an openly gay male elected official, it does play a role in developing leadership characteristics, reasoning for running to support a cause, and obligation based on the community serve. Senator McCoy exhibited the transactional leadership style while in the closet and reflected on negative feelings such as feeling alone and fear, which resulted in him self-medicating with alcohol.
Once Senator McCoy came out of the closet, he had a sense of release including freedom. This freedom allowed him to be more willing to support and champion gay causes. Since he was sharing the most vulnerable part of his life, nothing seemed too difficult for him to overcome. This allowed him to develop a sense of pride in which he was a man, which translated into his leadership as an elected official. He now had the experience to talk about gay issues but maintained a balanced approach to not seem like a gay candidate, but rather a candidate who happened to be gay. Although he says sexual orientation is not his motivation to run for public office, it has played a role because of the impact it has allowed him to make in his community and to continue the legacy of making progress on gay issues. This translates into many styles of leadership including transformational, authentic, charismatic, servant, and others that are emerging from this research cannot be described from previous developed styles.

The data presented through triangulation shows the findings in all aspects of the collection methods. McCoy demonstrated his leadership style through his interview, while being observed, and in the artifacts found. This demonstrates the saturation of Matt’s leadership style, how his sexual orientation and lived experiences have impacted him, and how it formed his journey to become a leader through becoming an elected official in the state of Iowa. His resiliency through all of these experiences of adversity has allowed him to demonstrate a new type of leader. Adversity has provided a foundational leadership style that is demonstrated from this research.

McCoy demonstrates social justice leadership (Patterson & Kelleher, 2007):

1. Accurately assess past and current reality
2. Be positive about future possibilities
3. Remain true to personal values
4. Maintain strong sense of personal efficacy
5. Invest personal energy wisely
6. Act on courage of personal convictions

He was able to reflect on his lived experiences and finally come out of the closet by assessing his past and current reality. By coming out, McCoy was able to think positively about what could happen after coming out. He remained true to his personal values after coming out by remaining steadfast in the values that were instilled in him as a child. His self-efficacy was developed when he not only came out showing his vulnerability, but also then lived a true and authentic life. McCoy invested his personal energy by becoming a champion of the gay rights movement, which also demonstrates his courage and personal convictions. Although the social justice leadership model describes McCoy, it pertains does not focus on McCoy’s personal lived experiences. Resilient leadership uses components of social justice leadership but focuses specifically on the lived experiences of McCoy and how it impacted his journey to become a leader (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015; Patterson & Kelleher, 2007)

Proposed Solution

Although the research was not able to determine McCoy’s motivation or reason for running for public office since there are many factors that contribute to this motivation, but the research did explore how sexual orientation plays a role in the journey of coming out and running for public office. An individual’s marginalization, oppression, or lived experiences may impact an individual’s journey to become a leader or indirectly become a leader within his community. Senator McCoy was not necessarily a champion
of gay rights prior to coming out, having voted against marriage equality in 1998. Now that he is out, he is a leader within Iowa on gay rights through living out and open as a gay man (McCoy & Ferguson, 2015).

Through this analysis, a new leadership style appears to have emerged alongside of transformational, transactional, authentic, charismatic, and servant leadership. In this case study, McCoy exhibited a combination of all these characteristics, but also demonstrated them because of his lived experiences through adversity, which could be described in a new style called resilient leadership. The adversity he experienced included the coming out process, which in turn from his internal homophobia and societal pressures resulted in him self-medicating and becoming an alcoholic. Through the triumph of coming out and successfully winning elections, it has allowed him to lead through this adversity and achieve resiliency by becoming a champion of the underdog including the gay community resulting in the new type of leadership called resilient leadership.

Resilient leadership is in the literature but is usually referencing an organization’s experience of exemplifying resilient leadership or describing an individual’s resilience of overcoming traumatic events in their childhood (Werner, 1993). These experiences describe an organization that has experienced failure or a setback and how they got through this experience and became successful. Werner (1993) does discuss individual resiliency and how they overcame a traumatic event, which can be related to McCoy but they do not go further to describe how this impacts the individual’s journey to become a leader. Literature identified also referred to resilient leadership to describe how the leader would navigate the organization through difficult times (Patterson, Goens, & Reed,
2009). There was some research found on the individual level that focused specific characteristics like gender of the leader to determine how they utilized resilient leadership (Christman & McClellan, 2012). This too is different than the new form identified in this research because this research shows how the lived experiences of coming out shaped the participant to become a leader within his community.

**Support for the Solution from Data Collected**

Resilient leadership can be described from the data collected as leadership style that combines authentic, charismatic, transformational, transactional, and servant leadership. Coming out as gay and living openly as an elected official requires additional authenticity and vulnerability to be shared compared to other candidates who happen to identify as straight or heterosexual. This goes beyond what is evident for others in his leadership style and allows the openly gay person to have the freedom to be who he truly is.

Senator McCoy demonstrated charismatic leadership while out on the Senate floor or out in public with constituents and the gay community. Transformational leadership was exhibited through his ability to make progress on legislation he was working on or championing. Transactional leadership was utilized when making specific progress through the legislative process on bills he advocated for or introduced. Servant leadership was exemplified through his willingness to be the voice for change when it comes to marriage equality, HIV decriminalization, gay non-discrimination, and conversion therapy that impact the gay community (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015; observation, May 14, 2015; observation, July 17, 2015; observation, August 1, 2015).
These all intertwined and intersected with his personal experiences of adversity. Adversity he experience was through alcoholism, which was from living in the closet. Additional adversity was also shown when he finally came out and was living open, honest, and transparent. This creates a new form of leadership from the personal lived experiences over overcoming the adversity. This style cannot necessarily be pinpointed to one specifically or just the combination of many, but it must incorporate the specific lived experiences of coming out and now living openly as a gay male leader with the need to carry on the legacy of the gay movement, even if it is not the only issue this person focuses on for his platform. Even though he considers himself a candidate who happens to be gay, Senator McCoy demonstrates resilient leadership through the lived experiences of coming out, alcoholism, and living as a successful openly gay elected official in the Iowa Senate (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015; personal communication, July 2, 2015).

**Existing Support Structure and Resources**

There are many gay individuals living in the world. If all of the gay individuals who came out had their own experiences with resiliency, they would all be leaders if this proposed solution is true. The resiliency factor goes beyond just coming out and gets into the journey of becoming a leader to help foster and continue the progress made for his community. Not every gay individual is vocal about advocating for his community. There may need to be an additional component to the lived experiences to help explain the resiliency factor in the new resilient leadership style. In this case, McCoy not only came out but also did so in such a public manner while also overcoming alcoholism (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015; McCoy & Ferguson, 2015).
When looking at history, there are many groups of marginalized communities that have made progress, such as the gay community achieving gay marriage, women and African American individuals getting the right to vote, and interracial marriage among others. These communities have made progress because they made the action happen through raising awareness, becoming vocal, and placing others with similar qualities into positions of power. While the loudest voice may rise to the top at times, the inspirational leader or terms like the new phrase, resilient leader, rises to action as the leader of his community. This can be described as social justice leadership (Patterson & Kelleher, 2007).

Profound adversity can sometimes be too much for some. For others who have overcome it, they may feel the need to pay it forward. This is why inspirational individuals specifically in the gay community like Michael Sam, Robin Roberts, Harvey Milk, and others have been well known. They have risen through adversity, achieved resilient leadership, and through this have been viewed as inspirational.

**Policies Influenced/Influencing the Proposed Solution**

*(and Proposed New Policies to Ease Implementation)*

Not everyone will experience adversity to the level it might take to demonstrate resilient leadership patterns. When adverse experiences do occur, organizations should have policies or practices in place to help them overcome these through resilient leadership. Not all organizations will experience traumatic adverse experiences and may not need to rely on resilient leadership, but having policies in place as a precaution would be recommended. Policies in place that would allow for resilient leadership to occur would include specific components on incident reporting, transparency and
communication, process for overcoming change or challenges, and protocols on hiring. Additionally, the organization could have values or service standards that incorporate a standard for excellence, asking for feedback, and acknowledging obstacles. The organizational values could include transparency, diversity and inclusivity, and openness and respect. When these things occur, it creates an environment that welcomes resilient leadership if an adverse experience occurs (Werner, 1993).

In order to achieve success through resilient leadership and have these policies, protocols, and values implemented, the board of directors and leadership need to be on board and supportive. He also must be willing to show his vulnerability to others and admit defeat when it occurs. This could allow for him to overcome through resilient leadership and show others how he can get through adverse experiences.

**Potential Barriers and Obstacles to Proposed Solution**

Change is hard. Acknowledging mistakes and owning up to them can be hard. Egos might become a barrier in the way of instilling the policy, protocols, and values that would create an environment that would be open to resilient leadership. Some organizations want to forget about their past mistakes and not make them public in order to reduce negative press or to show weakness. Although many organizations value transparency, there is a limit to what they are willing to be transparent regarding. Sometimes showing failures could result in the loss of accreditation, loss of funding, and a loss of support. This overall impacts the bottom line of the organization. It is proven to be effective for leaders to be transparent not only for the overall impact it has on the organization, but also for the perceived confidence they exude for their employees. This openness allows others to see the leader with authenticity and vulnerability (Norman,
Avolio, & Luthans, 2010). This was true with McCoy after he came out of the closet showing his own vulnerability and then serving with authenticity and transparency with his own constituents (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Financial/Budget Issues Related to Proposed Solution

One of the ultimate criterions is what allows for organizations to continue providing the service or continuing honoring the mission of the organization. If the organization admits to failure and loses funding or support, which could lead to a loss of donations, it impacts their bottom line. In contrast, when failures are not disclosed, it could lead to this anyway due to loss of accreditation for not disclosing deficiencies or a loss of funding for not disclosing areas of inadequacy. Leaders who are open to acknowledging failure in the right way are able to create environments of learning and growing to lead the deficiency to success, rather than perpetuate an environment of failure. This allows leaders and their employees to be creative and innovative without worrying about thinking specifically about the failures, but having a process to learn and grow from these experiences (Farson & Keyes, 2006).

A resilient leader can acknowledge the change occurring or be upfront about areas of deficiency and communicate the importance of disclosing information immediately rather than waiting and having it potentially hinder their accreditation or receipt of funds due to the deficiency not being addressed soon enough or the perception of impropriety by not disclosing the deficiency.

Legal Issues Related to Proposed Solution

Although this research does not specifically work directly in health care, McCoy does work on health care issues. For the sake of looking at legal issues, it is easy to relate
these issues with this case. When working in a health care industry or in an area where information must remain confidential, obviously transparency needs to be censored. If transparency occurred in all realms of the organization, it could lead to a breech in policy related to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) or confidentially, which would have legal ramifications and liabilities. There is also information that is proprietary such as the dissolvent of a program or addition of a new service line, which could be pejorative if competition were to hear about the information before implementation (Fetterley, 2014).

A leader can address this by making sure training in these matters is required of all employees and create a policy related to HIPAA and confidential information as necessary. The leader must also adhere to the policy and keep employees accountable but also emphasize the need for transparency and vulnerability when appropriate for the organization in compliance with all policies and standards of conduct. Vulnerability was shown to be necessary in Senator McCoy’s case in the development of resilient leadership and his reelection to public office (M. McCoy, personal communication, June 9, 2015)

**Change Theory**

The change theory is related to this topic because resiliency in its essence is being able to go through change in a positive manner, and in the case of a resilient leadership, the change is adversity. When thinking about Lewin’s change theory of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, this really does apply to this case and helps better understand resilient leadership. Unfreezing occurs when the individual or organization actual goes through the adversity. Change occurs when the individual or organization recognizes that
a change must occur, which in this case was coming out as gay. Refreezing occurs when the resiliency factor comes into play and the individual or organization is leading based on their adverse experiences to make a positive impact on others (Schein, 1999).

**Internal/External Issues Related to Proposed Solution**

Having resilient leadership utilized will create a platform for the leader to be inspirational for others that are like him. Within the gay community, if there is a resilient leader, they might be more likely to get behind a person that has exhibited vulnerability or has gone through the coming out process or other adverse experience where they can relate. This can be the occurrence with other communities or groups of individuals. If a community or group of individuals can relate to that leader based on a common adverse experience, it can create a larger movement as seen in the gay movement (Werner, 1993). When resilient leadership is exemplified, it allows for the leader to feel a sense of freedom and not have pent up emotions such as fear that could lead to depression or other health related outcomes. Relatability can garner more support, which could benefit any kind of leader but especially an elected official or candidate seeking election. This may be limited to the gay candidate or elected official to live within the constraints of heteronormativity (Warner, 1993).

**Summary**

Data collected in this research included an interview with Senator Matt McCoy, the case in the study as well as observations of him on the Senate floor, speaking and attending a non-gay event, and speaking and attending a gay event. Interviews with two staff members and two other elected officials as colleagues were completed. Additional
artifacts and news articles were compiled as secondary data to assist in the triangulation of the data analysis.

Senator McCoy has had an eventful life. Starting with his childhood and living with parents who were progressive allowed him to rectify values that continue to lead him personally today. Boy Scouts of America have played a significant role in shaping who he is today as a leader. He has always been active in politics starting in grade school and leading all the way through high school, college, and into adulthood.

Although he knew he was gay at a young age, he attempted to hide and overcome his sexual orientation. He overcompensated by building the perfect life, which in the end was a façade to cover up his true secret and fear of others knowing he was gay. This resulted in him turning to alcohol. Finally when he hit rock bottom, he was able to come out while continuing to serve as an elected official. Others have seen this journey of adversity and notice the change in him. This change has been positive because now he has the platform to speak on and for gay issues, although he wants to be known for leading in other areas as well. He is a much happier person, and his demonstration of resilient leadership shows how he overcame adversity to be a positive leader and the need to continue this legacy of advancing the gay movement.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In this final chapter, a summary of this case study is provided. This entails a review of the purpose, aim, methodology, and findings. Findings include an analysis of Senator Matthew McCoy and his lived experiences that have been researched for this instrumental case study to determine if sexual orientation impacted his journey of running for public office and become a leader. Findings show that his lived experiences in the closet, coming out as gay, going through a public coming out process, living authentically with vulnerability, and finally leading with success create a new style of leadership called resilient leadership specific to this case.

Summary of the Study

This research intended to determine whether or not sexual orientation impacted a gay man’s journey in running for public office and ultimately becoming a leader in his community. Essentially, it was conducted to determine if being gay contributes to the journey to be a leader. An instrumental case study was chosen as the methodology since there is limited number of openly gay elected officials in the Midwest and currently only one in the state of Iowa. Iowa State Senator Matthew McCoy is the case in this research. Data collected were through interviews, observations, and other artifact collections. An extensive interview with Senator McCoy took place as well as other interviews with two of his current and previous staff members and two of his colleagues who are current elected officials. Observations of Senator McCoy took place on the Iowa State Senate floor, at a non-gay event, and at a gay event. Other artifacts identified were collected from newspapers, articles, and books.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand how the lived experiences of an openly gay male elected official living in the Midwest impact his journey of running for public office. Unfortunately, there are limited amounts of research on openly gay elected officials, but there is adequate literature on the gay movement within the United States. This study assists in addressing the gap in academic research on gay leadership and openly gay elected officials in the Midwest.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore how sexual orientation impacts the journey to become a leader.

Methodology

Methodology in this research included an instrumental case study. Data collected included an extensive interview with the participant, shorter interviews with the participant’s colleagues who were his staff members and other elected officials, observation of the participant on the Senate Floor, observation of the participant at a non-gay event, observation of the participant at a gay event, and other artifact gatherings such as books and newspaper periodicals.

Major Findings

Childhood

Senator McCoy had a progressive childhood with parents who were politically involved. They were instrumental in forming his values that he still has today. He was active in Boy Scouts of America and public office at a young age, which contributed to his desire to want to be a leader. This also allowed him to stay busy and keep his mind off
one thing he couldn’t necessarily control, which was his attraction to other men. Ever
since high school, he has held public office and as he has grown in age, the larger the
office he has held. Not only have his parents had an impact on Senator McCoy becoming
a leader, but also all of his siblings have been successful in their own career paths.

**Coming Out**

Since a young age, Senator McCoy has had same-sex attractions. He remembers
in grade school coming to terms with his attractions and committing to suppressing these
feelings because it went against what he was supposed to do, which was grow up to have
a wife and kids and live the heteronormativity fairytale life of what society expected of
him (Warner, 1993). It was not until later in his young adulthood that he could not
suppress these feelings anymore, which resulted in him self-medicating to deal with the
feelings of despair, loneliness, fear, and the exhaustion of covering up the façade which
was his life. This realization was not until after he had married his wife at the time and
had a child. He was living the fairytale life as an executive, Iowa State Senator, wife and
child, and building their dream house. Rather than be “outed” by the media, Senator
McCoy decided to come out of the closet as a gay man. He first came out to his wife and
family and then to colleagues. Word traveled like wildfire and he had to come out
publicly a lot sooner than he had anticipated. This scrutiny was instrumental in his
motivation to continue to serve in public office.

Although times have significantly changed to be more supportive of the gay
community, when McCoy came out in 2003, the political climate and public opinion
were different. Majority of Iowans favored marriage between a man and woman.
Democrats held the majority in the state of Iowa but George W. Bush was President of
the United States. Today things are different. We are seeing more and more public officials and people in the spotlight come out as gay without making controversy. This shows that although McCoy experienced privilege as a white, cisgender man, he did go through adversity of coming out in this specific environment (McCoy & Ferguson, 2015).

Leadership

Throughout his career, Senator McCoy has been an advocate for the underdog and focused on helping the homeless among others, which was one of his father’s areas of focus. Prior to coming out, Senator McCoy utilized more a transactional leadership style and was viewed as unhappy by outsiders looking in. Once he came out of the closet as gay, he has blossomed into an authentic, transformational, and servant leader. His vulnerability and overcoming the adversity of coming out while in public office has contributed to this leadership style. The process of going through misery while in the closet, adversity of coming out as a public official, living as an openly gay man authentically, and finally resiliency while leading with authenticity, transformational, and servant leadership. Although he demonstrates social justice leadership, there is not a leadership style focused on the personal lived experiences, which is how this case creates a new form of leadership called resilient leadership.

Evidence-Based Finding

Resilient leadership is the style of leadership identified in this case. Senator McCoy went through a sequence of events that formed to create the resilient leadership style. In his case, McCoy went through misery, adversity, authenticity, and finally resiliency, which lead to the resilient leadership style.
Resilient Leadership from Case Study

1. Misery – McCoy was miserable with living in the closet. Even though he had the perfect life on the surface including a marriage to a successful woman, son, executive position, and building the dream home, he expressed many negative feelings of loneliness, fear, and depression, which led him to utilize alcohol to make him feel normal. In order to overcome the misery, McCoy needed to come out of the closet.

2. Adversity – The coming out process was a time of adversity for McCoy. While coming out can be complex for many individuals who happen to be gay, McCoy was also a public figure and had additional scrutiny on his life. The adversity included coming out to himself, his wife and family, colleagues, and then ultimately the public. He experienced a wide range of reactions and faced additional adversity seeking reelection as an openly gay candidate.

3. Authenticity – Through the coming out experience, McCoy was able to finally be his true whole self. Prior to coming out, McCoy exuded a different personality and was viewed as a jerk and unhappy by those around him. Since he had to come out and disclose some of the most personal experiences with the world, he showed vulnerability, which allowed him to finally live an authentic life, which translated into the work he did as a leader and an Iowa State Senator.
4. Resiliency – In this case, the resiliency was demonstrated when McCoy not only came out and lived an authentic life, but then when he exuded a combination of authentic, transformational, and servant leadership styles. He was able to not only come out as gay but also become a champion for the gay community coming full circle in the specific component of his life that was creating misery when he was living in the closet.

5. Resilient Leadership - Although McCoy did not want to be limited to being known as the openly gay Iowa Senator and championed many general causes, coming out as gay allowed McCoy to generate a new sense of passion for the gay community and finally had the gusto and authority to take on gay issues or at least speak on them on the Senate floor, in the community, and with the media.

Figure 2. Resilient Leadership from Case Study: Misery to Resiliency Chart
In the figure above, the lived experiences across the bottom align with the level of misery or resiliency. In this case, as Senator McCoy went through the sequence of lived experiences listed on the bottom, the level of resiliency increased to where he finally was able to exude resilient leadership. Living in the closet in this case is the first step to overcome toward resiliency. McCoy describes his life as horrible and experiences other negative feelings while living in the closet, which shows why it is marked closer to misery on the scale. Coming out of the closet is the next step in this sequence. McCoy experienced adversity in coming out as gay. He had to overcome some negative responses from colleagues and the public, which is why it is still closer to misery, but moving closer to resiliency on the scale. Living an authentic life is the next step in the sequence and in this case, it is where McCoy lived his true authentic self while also successfully winning reelection. Since these are positive feelings and experiences, it is closer to resiliency on this scale because McCoy is demonstrating components of resiliency in his lived experiences. Championing of a cause is the final step in the sequence to resilient leadership. It is the final step because McCoy not only demonstrated authenticity through his lived experiences as an openly gay Senator, but also through his leadership. McCoy championed gay rights and was able to speak with authority on the topic, which is full circle to where he was at on the scale while living in the closet. This is when he finally gets to the point of resilient leadership because he exudes authentic, transformational, and servant leadership by championing the gay cause.

For McCoy and others that go through lived experiences of living in the closet, coming out, living authentically as a gay man, and ultimately get to resiliency, his journey is probably not a straight line to resiliency. Instead, this experience most likely
has ups and downs and potential maybe even relapse back to misery or a stage before prior to moving on to resiliency. This line will vary based on the person and his lived experiences. One example that might be more realistic could look like the figure below.

![Resiliency vs. Misery Chart](image)

**Figure 4. Realistic Resilient Leadership from Case Study: Misery to Resiliency Chart**

**Implementation of Finding Processes and Considerations**

Resilient leadership and the process it takes to exude resilient leadership could be applied to other individuals who have gone through a similar sequence or series of events, although further research to check validity and accuracy would be encouraged. Specifically, this could apply to individuals who have experienced oppression, marginalization, or discrimination. The process could also be used with individuals who have experienced some sort of traumatic event. This process can be best described by revisiting the steps in addition to the misery to resiliency chart.
Resilient Leadership

Figure 3. Resilient Leadership Process

1. Misery – In general terms individuals who have a major or traumatic experience that contributes to significant negative feelings is the first step in the process. Misery could be the feeling because of what has happened to him that is outside of his control and leads to oppression, marginalization, or discrimination. Examples of the misery could include but are not limited to an individual who experienced sexual assault, woman of color who has experienced institutionalized racism, Jewish person who experienced anti-Semitism, or an individual who recently was in a car accident and is now living with a brain injury.

2. Adversity – The adversity these individuals face in overcoming whatever traumatic event, obstacle, barrier, or act of oppression is the next step in the process. This could be any of these individuals addressing whatever the act of misery head on and not succumbing to the negativity it has caused him in the past.

3. Authenticity – Once the individual has overcome the misery, he can now live an authentic life. This could be any of these individuals talking publicly about his experiences or living with authenticity in who he is in his community. It could also be demonstrated through his willingness to have transparency about his situation and show his vulnerability.
4. Resiliency – In a general case, the resiliency is demonstrated when the individual overcomes his misery through adversity and lives an authentic life, but also when he exude a combination of authentic, transformational, and servant leadership styles. The individual then becomes a champion for the cause that he overcame, showing him coming full circle.

5. Resilient Leadership – This style of leadership occurs when the individual generates a new sense of passion for the misery he overcame through adversity, authenticity, and resiliency. The individual demonstrates his gusto and authority to take on this issue or at least speak on it as an expert in his community.

Figure 4. Resilient Leadership: Misery to Resiliency Chart

In the figure above, the general lived experiences across the bottom align with the level of misery or resiliency. Generally the sequence of lived experiences listed on the
bottom, the level of resiliency increased to when they finally are able to exude resilient leadership. Addressing the negative experience that is causing misery is the first step to overcome toward resiliency. Overcoming the negative experience that is causing misery is the next step in this sequence. Living a life with authenticity is the next step in the sequence toward resiliency. Championing of a cause is the final step in the sequence to resilient leadership. It is the final step the leader not only demonstrates authenticity through his lived experiences, but also through his leadership. The leader champions the cause of his misery and is able to speak with authority on the topic, which is full circle to where he was at on the scale while living in with the misery. This is when he finally gets to the point of resilient leadership because he exuded authentic, transformational, and servant leadership by championing the cause of his misery.

**Personal Resiliency and Resilient Leadership**

If resilient leadership were to be applied to people who came out of the closet as gay, that would mean each person would be a leader in his community or chosen discipline. This is not the case. In fact, as the literature has shown, there are not many openly gay elected officials in the United States in comparison to the overall general population. While individuals who do come out as gay experience the same steps as shows above, they experience personal resiliency or the resiliency Werner (1993) described in the Kuhai longitudinal study and the resiliency stops there. When an underlying motivation to be a leader is a variable in the situation, it increases the chance this individual will develop resilient leadership and become a leader in his chosen discipline. This is the case with Senator Matthew McCoy. He has experienced a variety of things throughout his life that have contributed to his desire to be a leader which
started in his youth with the Boy Scouts of America and continued in secondary school, high school, college, local, and now state public office.

Shown below is a chart that demonstrates the difference between personal resiliency and resilient leadership. Personal resiliency is achieved once the individual is living a true and authentic life. While the resilient leader achieves this as well and then moves to the next stop, he exudes the underlying desire to become a leader shown in the variable dotted line. As shown in this case, the desire could still be related to sexual orientation due to the passion McCoy felt although this was not his sole reason for becoming a leader in his community.

Figure 5. Personal Resiliency Versus Resilient Leadership Chart
Roles and Responsibilities of Key Players in Implementation

Key players in situations like this case include his family and friends, colleagues, and specific to this case the public and media. In order for the individual to be able to get through each of the steps in the resilient leadership process, he needs support from the key players. Support to come out, support to live his true and authentic self, and support to become the leader within the community.

Leader’s Role in Implementing Proposed Finding

The responsibility is within the individual person who has experienced the misery to overcome it through adversity, authenticity, and resiliency if he chooses to lead a life with resiliency rather than misery. He can choose to overcome the misery with just the first step, first and second, or none of the steps. This occurs every day. Not every individual will achieve resiliency or ultimately resilient leadership, but he can live happier lives by overcoming his misery. In order to achieve resilient leadership, there needs to be the motivation to become a leader through the champion of a topic.

Evaluation and Timeline for Implementation and Assessment

As shown in the resilient leadership process, there are stages within the process that the individual must get through in order to achieve resilient leadership. Individuals may take as long as they need in each of the processes or not go through any of the processes; it is ultimately up to them how they decide to proceed through the resilient leadership process. It is quite possible each individual who comes out as gay goes through the misery, adversity, and authenticity phase. Many gay individuals become advocates for gay rights, but not all achieve authentic, transformational, and servant
leadership by becoming public officials like Senator Matt McCoy, but they can have other iterations of resilient leadership with a different impact.

**Convincing Others to Support the Proposed Finding**

Resistance to resilient leadership could come from stakeholders who do not believe gay individuals deserve equality or believe it is a sin or an abomination to be gay. Others who would be potential obstacles are individuals who have never experienced trauma, oppression, marginalization, discrimination, or what it feels like to come out as gay. If he cannot understand the misery of living in the closet or living through oppression, he may not be able to see the significance of overcoming the adversity through authenticity and ultimately resilient leadership. A leader can best help these individuals understand by relating these experiences to an experience the individual may have encountered that could allow them to feel empathy even if they cannot understand the specific feelings resilient leaders feel that go through this process. A leader must also be confident enough to know that he may not be able to convince everyone about resilient leadership.

**Summary of the Study**

In this case study, Senator Matthew McCoy, an openly gay male elected official was researched to determine if his sexual orientation impacted his journey to be a leader. Although he was in public office before coming out, he has since won multiple reelectations to be Iowa’s only openly gay elected official. Primary data collected in this study included intensive interviews with the participant as well as two other staff members and two other colleagues. The participant was also observed in three settings, which included on the Iowa Senator floor, at a non-gay event, and at a gay event.
Additionally, secondary data was captured through books, newspapers, and other periodicals to assist in the triangulation analysis. It was found that sexual orientation does impact the journey to become a leader, although it is not the only variable that contributes to the motivation to run for public office. The coming out experience, specifically going through the process of misery, adversity, authenticity, and resiliency leads to a new style of leadership called resilient leadership. This style combines authentic, transformational, and servant leadership and requires the individual to become a champion of the cause he overcame.

Implications for Action/Recommendations for Further Research

To determine the significance of this research, critical pieces needed for implementation and assessment include additional research related to the validity and accuracy of resilient leadership on additional openly gay leaders and others who have experienced misery, adversity, authenticity, resiliency, and then ultimately resilient leadership. A mixed-methods study would be encouraged to allow for quantitative data gathered from a large sample coupled with qualitative data to add to the depths of the study. Additional research with women, people of color, and other groups of individuals who have experienced oppression, marginalization, discrimination, and forms of trauma would be the next step. Once this additional research is conducted, an analysis of these studies would be used to then determine if there are similarities in these lived experiences and if in the end it leads to resilient leadership.

Summary

In this instrumental case study, Senator Matthew McCoy an Iowa State Senator is the participant. Through this research, it was intended to determine if sexual orientation
impacts an individual’s journey to become an elected official or leader in his community. Primary data collected included interviews with the participant and his colleagues. Observations of McCoy on the Senator floor and out in the community were conducted. Secondary data was also identified through artifacts such as newspaper articles and other periodicals. Coding of the interviews, observations, and artifacts were captured through Dedoose and were sectioned to assist in identifying trends. Triangulation of the data was used to determine validity of the data collected. It was determined that the research identified a new style of leadership called resilient leadership specific case to this case based on the journey of the participant. This new style follows a sequence of events or journey the participant went through which included living in the closet, coming out, living authentically, and leading in his community focusing on a specific topic. This research contributes to the greater good and the professional field of leadership by showing how sexual orientation impacts leadership. It also contributes to research on the gay community and other minority groups and how his lived experiences impact leadership.
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Appendix A

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.

2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.

3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.

4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.

5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.

6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.

7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.

8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
   a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
   b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.
Research Questions

Research Questions for the Participant

*Research Question:*

Does sexual orientation impact the journey in running for public office within an openly gay male elected official?

*Research Sub-Questions:*

1. Tell me about your coming out story.
   a. How old were you?
   b. Who did you first tell you were gay?
   c. How did you tell your family, friends, and colleagues you were gay?
   d. How has coming out as gay has shaped who you are today?
   e. How has coming out as gay shaped you as a leader?

2. Tell me how you feel knowing that you are running or serving as an openly gay candidate.
   a. When you came out, did you consider not doing this and staying in the closet?
      i. If so, what are the emotions you went through during the coming out process?
      ii. Tell me how you would feel if there were not other openly gay elected officials serving with you or before you.
   b. Has there been anyone who has shaped you as an openly gay official?
      i. If so, can you tell me why and how this person shaped you?

3. Tell me about what issues excite you.
a. Where do LGBTQ issues fall in your priorities?

b. Explain your platform for running for public office.

c. Has living openly gay shaped and formed these platforms?
   i. If so, how?

4. Take me back to what you know and remember about the gay movement.
   a. What is your first recollection of the gay movement and knowing what gay meant?
   b. Did your family guide this understanding of the gay movement?
      i. If so, how?
   c. What about your friends and community?

5. Tell me about your experiences out campaigning with your constituents.
   a. Did any of them bring up your sexual orientation?
   b. Did you ever bring it up?
   c. Did you face any homophobia when running for public office?
   d. How did you generate support in your constituency during your campaign?
   e. Explain some of the constituents’ needs and how that impacted your motivation to run.

**Research Questions for Colleagues**

*Research Question:*

Does sexual orientation impact the journey in running for public office within an openly gay male elected official?

*Research Sub-Questions:*
1. Tell me about your professional relationship with Senator Matt McCoy
   a. Did you know he was gay prior to being elected or working with him?
   b. Did he come out to you as gay?
   c. How did you hear he was gay and what was your reaction?
   d. Have you ever had a conversation with him about him being gay?

2. Do you think his sexual orientation impacts him as a leader, a legislature?
   a. Do you think senator McCoy's sexual orientation impacts his ability to lead others?
   b. How do you think he would be as a leader if he was still in the closet?
   c. Do you think Senator McCoy's sexual orientation has improved his ability to become reelected or has that impacted his candidacy at all?

3. Do you have any prior experience with the gay community?

The two other elected officials were followed-up with two additional questions through email communication. Additional questions included:

1. Do you identify as straight or heterosexual?

2. Has your sexual orientation impacted your motivation to run for public office?

These were questions the researcher thought of after the interviews had already taken place and were critical to understanding if sexual orientation impacts others and not just gay elected officials.