Career anchors and paths: The case of Gay, Lesbian, & Bisexual workers

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

This paper develops a framework for understanding the career experiences and decisions of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual (GLB) workers. An important conceptual contribution of this paper is the focus on the self-disclosure of someone’s GLB identity as an antecedent rather than an outcome in regard to that person’s career. Specifically, the decision of a GLB worker to be visible/out of the closet or invisible/closeted promotes the development of need-based career anchors (security and stability, lifestyle, and autonomy and independence) and these direct their subsequent career paths. Understanding the role of stigma in the lives of GLB workers helps to explain how an individual may be boundaryless but not protean and vice versa. In addition to developing propositions for understanding the careers of GLB workers, the paper also discusses implications for organizations and individuals with other diversity characteristics.

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1. Introduction

In a perfect world, one free of discrimination and stigma, Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual (GLB) workers would be expected to pursue careers no differently than anyone else. Unfortunately, this is not a perfect world and GLB workers must make career decisions in an environment characterized by the potential for discrimination (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2007; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007; Tejeda, 2006) and stigmatization (Beatty & Kirby, 2006; Croteau, Anderson, & VanderWal, 2008; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Shore et al., 2009). Tangible aspects of this include a vulnerability to harassment and being fired (House, 2004; Snyder, 2003), lower pay rates (Shore et al., 2009), and lack of benefits coverage for dependents. Even when not the target of harassment or discrimination, they can still be negatively affected simply by witnessing such behavior (Giacalone & Promislo, 2010; Glomb et al., 1997; O’Leary-Kelly, Tiedt, & Bowes-Sperry, 2004; Ragins, 2008). Therefore, GLB workers are expected to make career decisions that minimize this potential, because similar to other stigmatized groups identity management is a central concern for them (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005).

By attempting to mitigate or eliminate the potential for negative outcomes, GLB workers will find their career options limited. Having limited options does not mean that someone will not find all types of careers among members of the GLB community. But on an individual basis, the options for individuals will be constrained. Specifically, this paper will explain that how individuals manage their sexual identity impacts their careers. An examination of factors that direct and constrain the careers of GLB workers provides an opportunity to better understand why people develop specific career anchors (Schein, 1990) and pursue a boundaryless (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), protean (Briscoe & Hall, 2006) or traditional career path. This extends existing research which has considered the role of other demographic factors (i.e., age and gender) in regard to the pursuit of a particular career path (Segers, Inceoglu, Vloetberghs, Bartram, & Henderickx, 2008; Sullivan, Carden, & Martin, 1998). By focusing on the careers of GLB workers, this paper addresses the need to further expand our understanding of diversity issues in career theory and also explores why individuals...
pursue a protean, boundaryless, or even a traditional one (Baruch, 2006; Creed, 2004; Gedro, 2009; Hall, 2008). In doing so, this paper develops a framework for understanding why GLB workers make the career decisions they do and in the process outlines the relationships between career anchors and boundaryless, protean, and traditional careers.

2. Types of careers

The introduction of this paper focuses on three career theories that are particularly relevant to the lives of GLB workers: boundaryless, protean, and career anchors. The oldest of these is the theory of career anchors developed by Schein (1978) during the era of the traditional career. The traditional career is one focused around an organization where the psychological contract is based on loyalty and security, and success is measured through extrinsic rewards. (Granrose & Baccili, 2006). Although many people still pursue traditional careers (Dowd & Kaplan, 2005; Sullivan et al., 1998), boundaryless and protean career theories reflect changes in the employment relationship and how individuals perceive and manage their careers.

Careers are identified as protean based on the degree they are self-directed or values-driven (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall, D.T. and Associates, 1996; Segers et al., 2008). Each dimension is distinct and one does not require the presence of the other. A self-directed career is one that is proactively managed by the individual rather than relying on a particular employer for direction and development. A values-driven career is one where a person intentionally makes career decisions such that employment opportunities align with personal values. Individuals who are neither self-directed nor values-driven are considered to be pursuing a traditional career.

Similarly, there are multiple dimensions to boundaryless careers (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Segers et al., 2008). A career can be either physically or psychologically boundaryless. A physically boundaryless career manifests itself through voluntary mobility with the boundaryless individual pursuing the prospect for growth wherever it may lead. Yet even if a person never changes employers he or she can still be psychologically boundaryless. That is because being boundaryless represents an orientation/openness to change and growth which for some can be satisfied even if they never engage in turnover (Inkson, 2006; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Individuals who prefer security and stability in their careers are considered to have more boundaried/traditional careers.

Although there are similarities between protean and boundaryless careers, they do represent distinct constructs (Baruch, 2006; Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Inkson, 2006). The cases of GLB careers help make these distinctions salient. This results in large part from the threat of discrimination and harassment. One way that GLB workers can adapt to these threats is to be boundaryless which affords them a safety-valve in the case of discrimination and harassment. Another option is for them to focus on finding a safe haven free of these threats which is consistent with a more protean orientation. Further, the case of GLB workers will show how someone can be boundaryless but not protean and vice versa (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006).

The inclusion of career anchors is useful for understanding the relationship between the disclosure of one’s GLB identity and his or her career path. Career anchors refers to a person’s self-concept and encompasses his or her talents, needs, and values (Schein, 1990). It takes time for a career anchor to develop, but once it does a career anchor is relatively stable and people seek congruence between them and their employment situation (Schein, 1990). Although Schein (1990) usually talks about people having a single anchor, it has been argued that some individuals may exhibit more than one career anchor (Feldman & Bolino, 1996) or experience a shift in relation to a major life change (Derr, 1988). Schein (1996) further notes, that as times and people change, new anchors may emerge. Currently, eight career anchors are commonly identified: autonomy and independence, security and stability, lifestyle, technical and functional competence, managerial competence, entrepreneurship and creativity, service and dedication, and pure challenge (Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Schein, 1990; Wils, Wils, & Tremblay, 2010). Further, these can be categorized into talent-based, need-based, and value-based anchors (Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Wils et al., 2010).

Autonomy and independence, security and stability, and lifestyle are all examples of need-based anchors (Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Wils et al., 2010). Individuals with a security and stability anchor desire an employment situation that provides a sense of safety and is consistent with what most people would describe as a traditional career. Individuals with a lifestyle anchor are motivated to find an organization with the right attitude that allows them to integrate the needs of their personal lives with their career. The values-driven dimension of protean careers is most congruent with this anchor. The final need-based anchor is autonomy and independence. The relevant aspects of this anchor, which will be discussed in the paper, are consistent with individuals who pursue boundaryless careers.

The main reason that this paper is focusing on the need-based career anchors is that the life experiences of GLB individuals, both personal and professional, are such that they are expected to develop need-based anchors over talent-based and value-based anchors. Specifically, the development of a security and stability, lifestyle, or autonomy and independence anchor will be related to whether someone manages his or her sexual identity and this choice will impact the subsequent pursuit of a boundaryless, protean, or traditional career.

3. Being GLB and stigma

The proposition that how GLB workers manage their careers is impacted by how they manage their sexual identity is the product of two key factors, stigma and visibility. Regarding stigma, Goffman (1963) repeatedly used homosexuality as an example of a stigmatized group in his seminal work. At the time, homosexual acts were criminal in much of country and homosexuality was considered a psychiatric disorder. Additionally, homosexuals were the focus of religious condemnation. Consequently, being GLB represented a blemish of character and as such was a discreditable characteristic that if known would stigmatize the individual (Goffman, 1963). This is similar to what Jones et al. (1984) refer to as a markable person (Stone, Stone, & Dipboye, 1992). Certainly things have improved today, being GLB is no longer considered a psychiatric disorder and adult consensual relations are no longer illegal. Further, there is also growing acceptance and inclusion within the religious community.
There are several factors that contribute to explaining this change in stigmatization. Jones et al. (1984) noted that the number of people who are visibly gay and the opportunities for people to interact with them have served to destigmatize homosexuality. While certain personal factors such as the desire for authenticity among GLB individuals (Clair et al., 2005) can explain part of this process, it is also important to note that how society views being GLB has also changed. Origin/controllability and peril/threat are two key dimensions of stigmatized identities (Jones et al., 1984; Ragins, 2008; Stone, Stone, & Dipboye) where there has been a societal change regarding sexual orientation. Regarding origin/controllability, there is a growing acceptance that being GLB is not a choice. Similarly, society has steadily rejected the notion that being GLB represents a peril/threat to others.

Just as 20 years after Goffman when Jones et al. recognized that being GLB remained a markable identity despite changes in society, scholars continue to identify the GLB community as a minority group that experiences stigma (Beatty & Kirby, 2006; Croteau et al., 2008; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Shore et al., 2009). So why is stigma still a relevant construct for individuals who are GLB? A characteristic of those with a discreditable identity, one that is not self-evident but would stigmatize if known, as is the case for members of the GLB community, is the attempt by certain members of that group to pass as part of the majority (Goffman, 1963; Ragins, 2008). This particular aspect of a stigmatized identity is central to how being GLB impacts a person’s career. Another method for managing the stigma of being GLB noted by both Goffman (1963) and Jones et al. (1984) was the move to locations where there was greater acceptance (e.g., San Francisco). Similarly, within the world of work, GLB workers gravitate to organizations that are known to be GLB-friendly (Chung, 1995; Creed & Scully, 2000; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Shore et al., 2009).

Also of particular relevance to employment situations is that GLB employees are treated as second-class citizens. For example, discrimination against someone for being GLB is legal in a majority of the United States (see Appendix A for more information), they earn less than their heterosexual colleagues (Shore et al., 2009), and the lack of legal recognition of their relationships denies their partners and depends a variety of benefits. Even when living in a state where their marriage is legally recognized there are questions of whether it is appropriate to refer to a spouse as a wife or a husband. These relate to the fear of being fired and uncertainty by co-workers as to what to say which Jones et al. (1984) noted among the effects of stigma on occupational relationships.

Visibility is another important characteristic of GLB identity that impacts career experiences and which generally differentiates sexual orientation from more commonly researched diversity characteristics such as sex and race (Clair et al., 2005). If a GLB employee chooses to follow the moniker of the love that dare not speak its name, it is often possible for that individual to pass as heterosexual. Passing refers to the conscious decision and supporting behavior of the member of a disadvantaged group to assert the identity of the dominant or privileged group (Button, 2004; Chung, 2001; Croteau et al., 2008; DeJordy, 2008; Fassinger, 1996; House, 2004; Prince, 1995). In the case of GLB workers this is achieved by creating the impression of being heterosexual. Passing as heterosexual includes a wide variety of behaviors from shunning conversations involving personal issues, avoiding gendered terms (i.e., his/her) when discussing relationships, to introducing an opposite sex friend to colleagues as a romantic partner. Although being GLB is a form of invisible diversity not everyone with an invisible identity is GLB. For example, religious affiliation is another important identity factor that is commonly considered to be invisible (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2008) and can have implications for career experiences and outcomes. Therefore, the framework developed in this paper may also have implications for individuals with other categories of invisible diversity.

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4.1. Out or closeted

Terms for visibility in the GLB community reference the metaphor of the closet. Individuals who self-disclose their sexual orientation, and hence give visibility to this aspect of their identity, are referred to as being out, as in out of the closet. Those individuals who engage in passing behaviors in the hope of remaining invisible are referred to as being in the closet or more commonly closeted. However not everyone is successful in keeping their sexual orientation a secret, when someone has his or her sexual orientation involuntarily made visible (e.g., office gossip) they are said to have been outed.

Although being out sounds like a binary term, this is the case only in terms of a specific dyad and this can complicate the issue from a research perspective. For example, some GLB employees consider themselves out to everyone within their organization, whereas others choose to selectively come out to only a subset of co-workers (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2007). Even people who already consider themselves fully out at work may find themselves in a position where it is news (Williams, Giuffre, & Dellinger, 2009). This often occurs when the GLB employee does not conform to stereotypes, the other individual is out of the loop, or is a new co-worker. Recognizing the complexity of the issue and that there exists a continuum of visibility in regard to being

2 Although based in the context of the United States, there is still applicability to those outside of its borders as much of the model is not reliant on this context and discrimination and harassment occurs even when legally protected.
GLB, the paper will focus on the ends of the spectrum. The term out will be used to describe those individuals who believe they have made their sexual orientation generally known, inclusive of both management and co-workers. Similarly, the term closeted will refer to those individuals who have attempted to keep their sexual orientation private from managers/supervisors and the majority of co-workers even if they have shared that information with a small number of friends within their organizations.

5. Career implications of GLB visibility/disclosure

Whether someone is out or closeted has important implications for his or her career. It impacts the way GLB employees behave within an organization and with colleagues and how they assess needs and evaluate opportunities. The combination of professional and personal factors is expected to channel the development of need-based career anchors and the subsequent career paths that they pursue. The general framework for this is outlined in Fig. 1 and provides a basic structure for the remainder of this paper.

Positing that the type of career an individual pursues is contingent on whether the person is out or closeted distinguishes this paper from past research on GLB workers. Often this prior work has treated the decision to disclose one's sexual identity as an outcome variable and focused on its antecedents (Croteau et al., 2008; Driscoll, Kelley, & Fassinger, 1996; King, Reilly, & Hebl, 2008; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Rostosky & Riggle, 2002; Tejeda, 2006). Although some researchers have examined the relationship between disclosure and workplace perceptions and attitudes (Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Ragins et al., 2007; Tejeda, 2006), they did not extend their work to include career management. For example, Tejeda (2006) suggested a relationship between turnover intentions and someone's disclosure status but he did not fully develop this part of his model. In another study, Ragins et al. (2007) found differences involving individual fears regarding the costs of disclosure based on a person's level of visibility, whereas this paper will argue that it functions as an antecedent to career anchors and paths.

6. GLB visibility and the development of career anchors

As individuals gain life experience, they come to understand what is important to their lives and develop their career identity. These life experiences anchors a person's career and is expected to influence decisions they make regarding it (Schein, 1990). Anchors are significant not only in the sense that they represent a key factor by which people make career decisions but also in that they are persistent. It takes time for a career anchor to develop, but once it does it should be relatively stable and resistant to change (Schein, 1990). One area of disagreement is whether people develop a single anchor or if they have multiple ones (Feldman & Bolino, 1996). Even Schein (1996) concedes that people may orient their careers in such a way where it is difficult to discern their ultimate anchor. Therefore, this paper will focus on the need-based anchors for GLB workers and argue that these are critical to understanding their careers, but it does not assert exclusivity.

Whereas autonomy and independence, security and stability, and lifestyle are all need-based career anchors, they can be further divided (Wils et al., 2010). Wils et al. (2010) found empirical support for separating all eight career anchors into different categories based on four values (Conservation, Openness to Change, Self-Enhancement, and Self-Transcendence). Specifically, security and stability and lifestyle are mapped onto Conservation whereas autonomy and independence is mapped onto Openness to Change. This categorization is useful in understanding the differences between the career anchors of out and closeted workers and for explaining how these relate to their subsequent career paths. For example, Openness to Change is synonymous with a boundaryless orientation whereas lifestyle and conservation are consistent with a more boundaried approach to one's career (Dowd & Kaplan, 2005).

Starting with those who are closeted, the demands and consequences of non-disclosure influence the development of an autonomy and independence anchor. Those who remain in the closet are only protected from discrimination and harassment as long as they are able to maintain the secrecy of their sexual identity. This is facilitated by finding employment situations which require a low degree of interdependence. In positions where an individual can work autonomously or independently there will be less need to develop interpersonal relationships which will make it easier to remain closeted. Further, in the event the person is outed or otherwise finds it necessary to leave he or she would be expected to be less embedded within the organization which makes it easier to leave.

Career Paths of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Workers as a Function of Visibility

![Fig. 1. Career paths of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual workers as a function of visibility.](image-url)
The need to maintain the secrecy of their sexual identity would also seem to preclude other anchors. Most prominently would be the other need-based anchors. If a closeted individual needs to prepare for potential career disruptions, then by definition they are precluded from a security and stability anchor. Similarly, it would be difficult for someone who is closeted to develop a lifestyle anchor. This is best explained by a short example. Consider the situation where a supervisor assumes that an employee is single and/or heterosexual. It would be problematic for that employee to ask to take time off to care for a same-sex partner. Further, this inability to communicate such needs is one of the reasons that closeted employees experience greater stress (Tuten & August, 2006). Even for individuals without familial obligations, the process of staying closeted and/or passing increases stress levels because of the additional time and energy it takes to manage their identity (Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest, & Ketzenberger, 1986; Dunkle, 1996; Fassinger, 1995; Mobley & Slaney, 1996; Morrow, Gore, & Campbell, 1996) which could inhibit the development of non-need-based anchors. This greater stress is particularly relevant because one way employees have been found to cope with such stress is by remaining mobile (Boyar, Maertz, Pearson, & Keough, 2003; Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000; Chung, 2001).

**Proposition 1.** GLB workers who are closeted/invisible are more likely to develop an autonomy and independence career anchor.

Needs are also expected to be dominant in the formation of the career anchors for out workers, but are expected to work in the opposite direction. Someone who is out and identifiably GLB can easily become the target of harassment or victim of discrimination. Consequently, out GLB workers need to be choosier about employment opportunities. Let’s return to the situation where an employee has a same-sex partner who is sick and in need of care. At the very least, the GLB employee would want to work for an employer that would not summarily discriminate against him or her because he or she needed to take time off to care for the partner. It would also seem logical that such employees would also desire that their health insurance cover their loved ones. Although there is an increasing number of organizations that protect GLB workers and extend benefits, they are far from universal. Because it can’t be assumed that any particular employer will be inclusive and supportive of GLB workers and their families, it is an important factor in making employment decisions (Chung, 1995; Creed & Scully, 2000; Day & Schoenrade, 1997). These circumstances favor the development of a lifestyle anchor.

Whereas familial obligations are expected to be a strong influence in the development of a career anchor, it is not the only aspect of an out identity that would do so. Although someone who is out no longer experiences the pressures associated with passing, there are still stresses associated with being out. For example, a consequence of the presumption of heterosexuality is that even GLB individuals who consider themselves out are constantly put in the position of having to disclose their sexual identity or else allow themselves to be invisible (Button, 2004; Colgan et al., 2007; Creed & Scully, 2000; Williams et al., 2009). Because of the emotional fatigue that can result from having to come out over and over again, many visible GLB employees seek stability in employment so that it becomes unnecessary to do so (Colgan et al., 2007; Fassinger, 1996; Morrow et al., 1996). This is consistent with a security and stability anchor.

**Proposition 2.** GLB workers who are out/visible are more likely to develop either a lifestyle or security and stability career anchor.

7. Professional and personal experiences of closeted GLB workers

A central reason that people who choose not to make their identity visible are said to be closeted, is that a closet is a convenient place to keep something out of sight and secret. However, as most kids learned when playing hide and seek, once someone opens that door you lose. This holds true for closeted adults, except that the stakes have been raised from a game to a career. So to avoid losing at the game of life, closeted GLB workers must adopt strategies which minimize their potential losses. This explains why, as indicated in Fig. 1 closeted GLB workers are first expected to develop autonomy and independence career anchors and then pursue a boundaryless career path. Although one might expect that they should also be protean, stressors associated with being closeted make this a difficult option for them to pursue.

The main explanatory factor for a closeted person’s career anchor and subsequent choice of career path is the fear of what would happen if people in the employing organization were to find out that the individual was GLB. Specifically, closeted employees are concerned that disclosure will result in discrimination and require that they find a new job (House, 2004; Snyder, 2003). This threat is both real and legal in a majority of the United States (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2007; Tejeda, 2006), see Appendix A for a list of states. Even those who are employed in a state or organization that does include sexual orientation as part of its non-discrimination code may still not be safe from harassment and/or discrimination (Bowring & Brewis, 2009). The caseload of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission testifies as to the continuing discrimination of legally protected groups.

Although it may seem counter-intuitive, employees who are closeted may also be more susceptible to discrimination, as compared to out GLB workers, even when covered by a non-discrimination code. This occurs when the employee’s sexual identity is learned surreptitiously by a homophbic colleague or supervisor who then can use his or her influence against the individual which makes the closeted person vulnerable (Ragins, 2008). An organization would also have the advantage of plausible deniability because unlike someone with a protected and visible characteristic (e.g., sex and race) a closeted person by definition has not disclosed the very information that would protect him or her. Further, it is more likely that an individual who is closeted at work is also closeted in his or her personal life (Rostosky & Riggle, 2002). Consequently, closeted individuals may be less likely to sue their employers because this would necessitate disclosure of their sexual identity to individuals in their personal lives. So even when protected de jure, a closeted employee may not be protected de facto.

In addition to being fired, there are other forms of discrimination and harassment that discourage GLB employees from disclosing their sexual identity in the workplace (Day & Schoenrade, 2000; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Just
because someone retains his or her job after being *outed* doesn’t mean that he or she will not experience negative career outcomes. For example, promotion opportunities may cease to be attainable or the employee may experience sub-standard wage increases (House, 2004). Such stunting of career progress would encourage many people to begin looking for alternative employment (Kaplan, Wiley, & Maertz, 2011).

As for fear of harassment, one of the reasons that someone remains in the closet is to avoid the stigma of being GLB (Boatwright et al., 1996) and the associated potential of being harassed. If an individual starts to experience harassment for being GLB, which can be either new to the individual or additional depending on other diversity characteristics, this will have the effect of causing that person to consider other employment opportunities (Snyder, 2003). Combined, these factors facilitate the pursuit of boundaryless careers, both physically and psychologically (Inkson, 2006; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) by closeted workers.

**Proposition 3.** The potential for discrimination and harassment cause closeted/invisible GLB workers to be more likely to develop autonomy and independence career anchors and favor boundaryless careers.

There are also important interpersonal repercussions for someone who chooses to remain closeted. While the closet is no longer a literal place, it is a psychological location where individuals keep their secret about being GLB. Keeping secrets, especially about something that is so important and central to one’s life, is going to hinder the development of interpersonal relationships because it undermines the establishment of trust between people (Clair et al., 2005; Creed & Scully, 2000; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; DeJordy, 2008; Rumens, 2011). This explains why closeted employees are expected to have difficulty in developing more important long-term strategic relationships (Beatty & Kirby, 2006) and thereby have smaller, weaker, or more external networks than people who are *out* (Church, 2012; Clair et al., 2005; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Fassinger, 1995; House, 2004; Nauta, Saucier, & Woodard, 2001). Unfortunately for these *closeted* workers, the size and strength of a person’s developmental networks plays an important role in the levels of success within organizations (Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy, & Kram, 2012; Higgins & Kram, 2001) in the form of fewer promotions and access to other career opportunities. Combining this with a propensity to develop external mentoring relationships and networks (Boatwright et al., 1996), GLB employees should be less likely to engage in organizationally-oriented careers.

**Proposition 4.** Closeted/invisible GLB employees are expected to have weaker/smaller organizational network relationships than out/visible GLB employees which discourages the pursuit of traditionally boundaryless careers.

Although closeted workers are expected to be boundaryless, they are also expected to be more traditional when it comes to protean careers. The demands of being closeted are proposed to inhibit the pursuit of a protean career. One reason is that individuals who are busy managing their sexual identity will have less mental time and emotional energy to manage their careers (Boatwright et al., 1996; Cable & Kay, 2012; Dunkle, 1996; Fassinger, 1995; Mobley & Slaney, 1996; Morrow et al., 1996). Time that could be spent exploring and developing career opportunities is instead allocated to passing as heterosexual (Button, 2004; Chung, 2001; DeJordy, 2008; Fassinger, 1996; House, 2004; Prince, 1995). Which explains why closeted workers experience higher levels of stress (Boatwright et al., 1996; Driscoll, Kelley, & Fassinger, 1996; Rostosky & Riggle, 2002). This can be particularly problematic when someone is just entering the workforce or a particular organization. It is this stress and preoccupation with passing that inhibits their ability to be protean.

Some individuals will also have difficulty being protean because they are engaged in occupations or employed in organizations that are not supportive of a GLB identity. One reason for this is that a *closeted* individual may have chosen such an occupation or organization as part of an overall passing strategy. The job itself may act as cover because it dispels stereotypes and/or insulates the individual from potential GLB colleagues which could stigmatize by association (Church, 2012). So by passing these people have bypassed developing a lifestyle career anchor and are therefore less likely to be protean.

**Proposition 5.** Issues related with the identity development and management of closeted/invisible GLB workers interferes with their ability to pursue protean careers.

Then there is the special case of individuals who identify as GLB later in their lives. These individuals may find that they are now employed occupations or organizations that are inhospitable to their newly acknowledged sexual identity (Dunkle, 1996; Gedro, 2009). For example, they are more likely to be employed by an organization that does not have supportive GLB policies as this was not a relevant criterion when they accepted the job. Also, despite clichés and stereotypes, GLB individuals have been found to favor certain occupational environments (Chung & Harmon, 1994; Mobley & Slaney, 1996). As someone comes to terms with being GLB, he or she may determine that their current employment is no-longer fulfilling which would necessitate reevaluating their occupational choices (Derr, 1988; Gedro, 2009; Morrow et al., 1996). Because being GLB is invisible, these individuals would initially be considered *closeted* until, if ever, they choose to engage in self-disclosure. Although this may result in a realignment of career anchors and/or paths, these should be consistent with the rest of the proposed model as the individual gains self-awareness/acceptance.

**8. Professional and personal experiences of out GLB workers**

Whereas closeted GLB employees have a propensity for developing autonomy and independence career anchors and pursuing boundaryless but non-protean career paths, the opposite is proposed for those who are *out*. In terms of career anchors, the need-based anchors are still relevant but, instead of autonomy and independence which reflects an openness to change, there is an emphasis on conservation which is represented by both the lifestyle and the security and stability career anchors (Wils et al.,
Although neither of those anchors are predicted to favor a boundaryless path for GLB workers, individuals with a lifestyle anchor are expected to pursue a protean path compared to an overall traditional path for individuals with a security and stability anchor, which is consistent with related research (Sullivan et al., 1998).

GLB workers are attracted to organizations that have a reputation for being inclusive and supportive (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins, 2008). Once there, they are expected to engage in lower levels of voluntary turnover (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Snyder, 2003). This occurs for both psychosocial and economic reasons which promote the development of either a security and stability career anchor or a lifestyle one. Further, the factors that promote the need-based career anchors and reduce mobility explain why out workers are not expected to be physically boundaryless. As for being protean, the distinction here is between those who have a lifestyle anchor and those with a security and stability anchor, with the former being protean and the latter traditional.

8.1. Security and stability anchors and traditional paths

When GLB workers are looking for a job, they are often interested in more than just the starting salary when weighing the economic benefits and security of a particular employer. Among these is an inclusive non-discrimination policy because without one an out individual is vulnerable to discrimination which would undermine any notion of economic security. Also, any GLB individual who is partnered, or hopes to be one day, would be expected to be interested in health coverage for partners and dependents. These represent important considerations because they are not universally available. As such, they lay the foundation for the development of security and stability anchor. Further, the inclusiveness of organizational benefits is expected to promote employee retention (Badgett & King, 1997) and as such discourages someone from being physically boundaryless.

Another attraction of an organization that has a critical mass of visibly GLB employees and/or supportive policies is that other GLB workers feel encouraged to be open about their sexual identity (Ragins, Cornwell, & Miller, 2003). Given that the null state for people with a GLB identity is invisibility, individuals must consciously come out in a new work environment even if they already consider themselves to be open about their sexual identity (Creed & Scully, 2000; Williams et al., 2009). Although the psychic costs of coming out are less for someone who is already comfortable with his or her sexual identity, the process still requires an expenditure of effort and energy and as such discourages individuals from being mobile. For this reason, someone who is out would be expected to prefer stability in his or her employment which results in reduced boundarylessness.

Once out, an employee initiates two processes that can also discourage mobility. Interpersonally, there is a positive trust cycle that helps build relationships (Clair et al., 2005; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins, 2008). This decreases the need for external sources of psychosocial support and increases the number and/or depth of relationships among colleagues. Economically, employees who expect to have a long-term employment relationship which can be rewarded have an incentive to develop firm-specific human capital (Becker, 1975). Combined these factors encourage out employees to become more embedded (Lee, Mitchell, Sablynski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004; Mallol, Holtom, & Lee, 2007; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001) within their organizations and increases the costs to leave the organization (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Maertz & Griffith, 2004). As such, these cycles contribute to the development of security and stability career anchors and a traditional career path.

Proposition 6. The economic and psychosocial costs associated with leaving an inclusive and supportive organization increase the likelihood of fostering the development of a security and stability career anchor for an out employee and subsequent discourages the pursuit of a traditional career path.

8.2. Lifestyle anchors and protean paths

The explanation for why an out individual would develop a security and stability anchor is also part of the explanation for why someone would develop a lifestyle anchor, however, it represents only the first step in the story. Just because someone knows that he or she won’t be fired for being GLB isn’t the same as knowing that it is okay to be GLB. The ability to lead an authentic existence where one can be open and honest about one’s life is an important consideration for many GLB workers (Mobley & Slaney, 1996). Further, being authentic means more than just self-disclosure (Cable & Kay, 2012). For example, self-disclosure is telling people that you are GLB, whereas authenticity is having a picture of your partner on your desk or taking him or her with you to company receptions and social outings.

Although someone does not need to be partnered in order to have a lifestyle career anchor, a partner provides a useful means to understand it. For example, having a partner, particularly one who is out, is an important motivator for self-disclosure (Rostosky & Riggle, 2002) which in the proposed framework is vital to the development of a lifestyle anchor. The usage of health benefits provides another useful example. First, access to such benefits requires self-disclosure. Health benefits also represent an important component of compensation and provide a basis for economic security. But what happens when a person needs more than just the coverage of services? Does the organization facilitate work–life balance? The ability to take time off to care for a partner, assistance from colleagues to make sure that work is covered, and emotional support are factors important to someone with a lifestyle anchor. They are also not factors that one can take for granted, especially when considering that the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) does not apply to same-sex partners unless the person lives and works in a marriage equality state. Specific recommendations to support GLB employees will be provided in the discussion.

All this helps to explain why there is a strong relationship between being out, positive workplace relationships, and organizational policies (Colgan et al., 2007; Day & Schoenrade, 1997, 2000; Ragins et al., 2003; Rostosky & Riggle, 2002; Tejeda, 2006). Such policies also create a positive environment that facilitates the relational nature of protean careers (Louis, 1996;
They also promote work-life balance which is an important concern for many GLB workers (Chung & Harmon, 1994; Trau & Hartel, 2004) and underscores why someone who is out is more likely to pursue employment based on the value of an organization being GLB-friendly (Chung, 1995; Creed & Scully, 2000; Day & Schoenrade, 1997). These are all consistent with having a lifestyle anchor and pursuing a protean career path.

As for being boundaryless, a lifestyle anchor would seem to constrain the ability of out GLB workers to be mobile. As a starting point, there are the factors consistent with a security and stability anchor. In addition, the lack of alternative employment is even greater for people with a lifestyle anchor. Not only do these people need to find an employer that provides benefits but within that group they are limited to the subset that promotes a healthy work-life balance. Consequently, the ability to be physically boundaryless is limited.

**Proposition 7.** The need for authenticity and work-life balance distinguish out GLB workers with a lifestyle anchor from those with a security and stability one and explains why they may be more likely to enact a career that is protean but not boundaryless.

### 9. Discussion

The framework developed in this paper describes a relationship between career anchors and the subsequent pursuit of a boundaryless, protean, or traditional career by focusing on the careers of GLB workers. The example of GLB workers shows how these employees have limited options which influences the development of their career anchors and consequently constrains their career paths. Although the model developed in this paper focused on GLB workers, its relevance is not limited to them. One logical extension is to individuals who are transgender. Often individuals who are transgender are included with GLBs because of commonalities in their experiences and because of these they should face similar career issues and constraints. However, the larger Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender community was not the focus of this paper because despite these commonalities there are important differences in contextual factors such as legal protections.

Further, the proposed model provides insights for the careers of more than just those who are members of sexual minority group. Whenever someone has a salient invisible identity he or she will need to go through comparable mental calculations as GLB workers and should experience similar career implications (Ragins, 2008). Briefly consider the example of deeply religious individuals. If open about their religious beliefs they would be expected to look for a supportive organization as this would facilitate accommodation needs and decrease levels of personal discomfort which would facilitate the development of a lifestyle career anchor. Further, the need to find such an organization demonstrates how their careers are valued driven, but this would also likely decrease the number of inter-organizational opportunities resulting in a boundaried but protean career, similar to out GLB workers with a lifestyle anchor. Even though identity salience may be less of an issue for visible minority groups, their career experiences are expected to be similar to out GLB workers as there is the potential for discrimination and harassment (even if it is illegal). As such, the model provides insight into why minority employees continue to pursue traditional careers despite the opportunities offered by being boundaryless or protean (Hall, 2008; Thomas & Higgins, 1996). Consequently, the constraints on career choices outlined in this paper are not expected to be limited to GLB workers.

Organizational managers should consider ways to fully support and integrate employees of all backgrounds. Cultures that make individuals comfortable with being open about their sexual orientation enable their employees to become more fully integrated which increases productivity, satisfaction, and commitment (Beatty & Kirby, 2006; Colgan et al., 2007; Creed & Scully, 2000; Day & Schoenrade, 1997, 2000; Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005; Rostosky & Riggle, 2002; Tejeda, 2006; Trau & Hartel, 2004). By contrast organizations where employees feel that they must keep significant parts of their lives hidden, or lie if they choose to engage in a passing strategy, create environments that are not favorably established trust. By inhibiting the establishment of trust and subsequent interpersonal relationships these cultures undermine team and organizational effectiveness (Dejordy, 2008).

Cultures that are not supportive of diversity also undermine organizational effectiveness by encouraging employee turnover (Kaplan et al., 2011). Minority employees in these organizations have a powerful incentive to look for alternative employment. This represents a problem for organizations, besides the obvious traditional costs associated with higher levels of voluntary turnover, there are additional ones that are associated with these workers. This results from the focus of these workers on seeking new employment. Therefore, they must discount the potential of continued long-term job security, causing them to avoid developing specific human capital when given the opportunity because they can only enjoy the benefits of accumulating specific human capital as long as they remain employed by the same organization (Becker, 1975). This reduction in specific human capital investment will both limit the prospects for these workers to be promoted and their effectiveness within the organization and has been noted as a potential downside of boundaryless careers (Hirsch & Shanley, 1996). Such implications of the model presented in this paper contribute to our growing understanding; shows the need for continued exploration, of diversity and careers; and explains why organizations should be interested in how their GLB employees manage their sexual identity.

#### 9.1. Directions for future research

The framework developed in this study provides numerous avenues for future research that have the potential to make important contributions in the areas of diversity and careers. Given the theoretical nature of this paper, one area for future research is to empirically test its propositions. It will also be important to explore the primacy of sexual identity to other factors that could promote a boundaryless or protean path. Regarding people with other stigmatized identities, it would be valuable to investigate the generalizability of this paper’s propositions as suggested by the discussion. Further, how different are these relationships for those without a stigmatized identity? Also, scholars should consider other possible linkages between career...
anchors and paths. Finally, by focusing on the career experiences of GLB workers, an important contribution of this paper is the emphasis on someone’s decision to be out or closeted as an antecedent rather than an outcome. Conceptualizing someone’s disclosure status in this way will hopefully inspire new research questions as scholars seek to understand the career experiences and implications for GLB and other stigmatized workers.

9.2. Specific recommendations for employers to support GLB diversity

Although the social and legal environment for GLB employees is evolving, members of the community still face significant challenges and there is an increasing expectation of what organizations are expected to do to create a climate that attracts and retain them. For example, an important first step is for an organization to expand their non-discrimination policies and health insurance coverage to be inclusive of GLB employees and their dependents. However, as more organizations do that they cease to differentiate and signal an inclusive culture. This becomes an even truer statement when there is marriage equality and benefits are legally required to be provided. Yet, it is important to remember that, particularly in the case of health benefits, an employee cannot take advantage of them if he or she is not out. Further, just because your organization provides benefits does not guarantee that your GLB employees will come out (Colgan et al., 2007). Therefore, organizations will need to look at additional steps they can take to demonstrate that they are a GLB inclusive and supportive employer.

A case in point to understand the evolution of GLB workers is provided by the United States military. For many years, being GLB was grounds for a dishonorable discharge. Then a compromise was reached, Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. This created a system where someone could still be discharged but only if he or she was out. Eventually, the government and military determined to do away with the policy and allow people to serve openly. Interestingly, many of the arguments that were debated then are echoed in this paper. But the ability to self-disclose is still not enough, the existence of the Defense of Marriage Act which prevents the extension of benefits and privileges to the spouses of GLB service members remains problematic for many in the military community.

So how does a particular organization compare to the military and competitors in terms of creating an inclusive and supportive climate for GLB employees? One way to assess and benchmark this for an organization is with the Human Rights Campaign Equality Index (CEI) (2007). The CEI can also be used by individuals to compare organizations which facilitates employment decisions and by scholars conducting research (Newbury, Gardberg, Hudson, & Feffer, 2012). Organizationally, the CEI is useful because it provides an overview of best practices for creating an inclusive environment for GLB employees. Table 1 provides a list of items which are measured by the CEI that organizations should consider implementing if they are interested in recruiting and retaining GLB employees. Further, Table 1 provides additional information for these items in regard to the legal environment. While the table refers to items as being necessary, this is merely in relation to the legal environment. All employers are encouraged to have policies and practices in place that demonstrate their commitment to non-discrimination and support of their GLB employees.

Although the items listed in Table 1 are important, organizations should also think of GLB issues as part of their more general diversity efforts. For example, diversity training is one of the most basic ways that organizations can create an inclusive environment. However, there is a big difference in diversity training between simple stand-alone sessions focused on compliance versus one that is integrated as part of a larger on-going diversity training program focused on dispelling stereotypes and inclusion. Aside from training, organizations that are serious need to make employees accountable and include commitment to, and support of, diversity initiatives a part of performance evaluations.

9.3. Persistence of constrained careers

Despite these improvements in the environment for GLB employees, the propositions laid out in this paper will continue to be relevant for years to come. Discrimination against GLB employees remains legal in the majority of the United States and that is not likely to change in the near future. Even when the law changes, the experience of other protected groups show that legal protections do not end discrimination. The need to decide whether to be out or closeted will persist, which is both a symptom and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations for creating a GLB inclusive organization.</th>
<th>Necessary in states without workforce protections</th>
<th>Necessary in states without civil unions or marriage equality</th>
<th>Necessary in states without marriage equality</th>
<th>Not impacted by legal environment, but is encouraged for all organizations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non-discrimination policy inclusive of GLB employees</td>
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<td>Health and related benefits provided to the partners of GLB employees</td>
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<td>Reimbursement for tax penalty from receiving health benefits for partners</td>
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<td>FMLA-equivalent leave policies</td>
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<td>GLB inclusive employee surveys</td>
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<td>Support of and involvement in GLB causes and events</td>
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Note: Necessity is merely in relation to the legal environment. All employers are encouraged to have policies and practices in place that demonstrate their commitment to non-discrimination and support of their GLB employees.
evidence of continued stigmatization. Finally, Schein (1990) points out that career anchors are developed over time and as such are persistent. So the current GLB workforce that has developed autonomy and independence, lifestyle, or security and stability anchors will continue to feel the effects of those for years to come and therefore will continue to experience constrained careers.

Appendix A

Legal environment for GLB employees by state
(as of August 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>No employment protections</th>
<th>GLB inclusive non-discrimination laws</th>
<th>Civil unions/domestic partnerships</th>
<th>Full marriage equality</th>
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Source: www.hrc.org/statelaws.

References


