

A KALEIDOSCOPE: PERFORMING IDENTITIES OF LGBTQ+ EDUCATORS
IN K-12 CLASSROOMS

By Carissa Marie Lynch

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
in Educational Leadership

Northern Arizona University

December 2023

Approved:

Frances Julia Riemer, Ph.D., Chair

Ijeoma Eugene Ononuju, Ph.D.

Adama Sallu, Ed.D.

Joseph Wegwert, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

A KALEIDOSCOPE: PERFORMING IDENTITIES OF LGBTQ+ EDUCATORS

IN K-12 CLASSROOMS

CARISSA MARIE LYNCH

In the last couple of years, the political climate in the United States has brought more of a focus on LGBTQ+ people, educators, students, literature, and banned books in K-12 schools. The qualitative approach for the study was the narrative inquiry method. This study used semi-structured, open-ended interviews asking 11 LGBTQ+ educators to share their personal stories and experiences as educators. This narrative inquiry method recorded each participant's life experiences as an LGBTQ+ person and an educator. This study asked LGBTQ+ educators to reflect, capture, and contribute their experiences and the influences of their sexual and teacher identity of whether they negotiate their performance of their sexual identities in their school district(s), school site(s), peers, students, and their families.

Participants shared their past and present experiences and their future aspirations. Their detailed narrative stories were analyzed from the outcome of the educator's interviews by "restorying" their stories, applying conceptions of themes, and coding the narratives, roles, plotlines, characterizations, and turning points. This study drew on previous literature that revealed a continued historical pathway that LGBTQ+ educators have an invisible set of expectations by the white heteronormative society's morals and values of what and who is acceptable to teach children. This literature also found that LGBTQ+ educators learned from their experiences how "straight" society can create a climate of fear, hostility, microaggressions, and discrimination toward LGBTQ+ educators that keep them in the closet. The study explored

whether the positive or negative attributes in their educational climates affect LGBTQ+ educators' negotiation of their performance of their sexual identity.

LGBTQ+ people know, understand, and feel the consequences of “coming out” at the wrong time and with bad people, so they perform on the front stage until they choose, which empowers them, not the system that tries to control them. We are losing good people who are good teachers; their fear and not wanting to deal with a system that continues to go by the heterosexual contract, that judges them without knowing them as a person first; they are leaving for an institution that will accept them as a person first. My study found that homophobic leaders continue to exist in our K-12 schools, and these are the people making LGBTQ+ educator's lives hell.

Keywords: LGBTQ+ educators, queer theory, Goffman's performance theory, homophobia, identity, religion, social norms

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my deepest gratitude to my professor and chair of my committee, Dr. Frances Julia Riemer, for her invaluable time, encouraging and open conversations, and the honest, firm feedback I knew I would receive. I am incredibly grateful to my committee members, Dr. Joseph Wegwert, Dr. Ijeoma Eugene Ononuju, and Dr. Adama Sallu, for providing their generous time, knowledge, and expertise in gender studies, education, and equity.

I could not have undertaken this journey without my 11 participants. The shared stories of their personal queer experiences affected and inspired not just me but many others. I am forever grateful to all of you. You all made this study relevant in real-time.

I want to give a special thanks to Patrick Gibbs and Robert Ramos for our friendship, late-night laughter, and encouragement. Words do not express my gratitude to Annette Addair for all her encouragement and support and the times we reminisced about where we were and are now.

I would like to recognize my family and friends who always shared words of encouragement and support. I am grateful I have you in my life. This endeavor would not have been possible without the unconditional love of my partner, Tina, and our kids, Noah and Hailey. The three of you are the first in my life to love me first as a whole person. Being gay has always been irrelevant. Thank you for your love, encouragement, understanding, and patience as we traveled together.

Last, I would like to acknowledge our dog Mia, also known as “DocMia,” who was earning her doctorate, as she kept me company in the early morning and late at night as I ZOOMED, read, wrote, and edited.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Research Questions	8
Theoretical Frameworks	12
My Positionality.....	15
Research Methodology	16
Definition of Terms.....	17
Abbreviations Used.....	29
Summary	30
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	32
Identity Negotiation and Self.....	34
Sexualized Identities	36
LGBTQ+ Identity Development Models.....	52
Teacher Identity	53
Beginning Stage of Teacher and Student Relationships	59
Pink and Blue Mirrors of Gender Identity.....	61
Optical Views of Queer and Goffman's Performance Theories	63
Summary	66
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	68
Research Questions	69
Research Methodology	70

Chapter	Page
Qualitative Research Study.....	72
Participant Criteria and Selection	73
Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants.....	74
Introducing LGBTQ Participants	76
Participants Chosen Identities.....	77
Ethical Considerations	79
Data Security.....	80
Data Disposal	80
Data Collection and Instrumentation	80
Instrumentation	81
Interviews.....	81
Data Analysis	83
Validity	85
Summary	86
CHAPTER FOUR: PERFORMING IDENTITIES	87
Restatement of the Research Questions.....	87
Theme: Performing Gender	88
Reasons for Leaving Toxic Climates in Schools	90
Teacher Identities.....	91
Runaway Wives to Lesbian Marriage	96
Riley and Keito Both Identify as Tomboys	98
Theme: Homophobia and Microaggressions	100

Chapter	Page
Homophobic Intentions to Ruin Educator’s Careers	102
Sub Theme: LGBTQ+ Rotates Around the Axis of Religious and Societal Norms	115
Religion and Homosexuality.....	116
Male-to-Male Matrimonies	119
Summary	120
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	122
Research Question One.....	122
Research Subquestion One.....	124
Summary of the Findings.....	125
Implications for Practice	127
For Schools	129
For the Future.....	130
Researcher Reflections	131
Summary	132
REFERENCES	134
APPENDIX	
A MAP (2022a) REPORT: COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF LGBTQ+ LAWS AND POLICIES	141
B STUDY PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER	148
C PARTICIPANT’S ANALYTICAL PROFILE	149
D NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW APPROVAL.....	150

Chapter	Page
E	STUDY PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM..... 152
F	INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 156
G	PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW LIST OF QUESTIONS..... 157

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Sociodemographic Characteristics of Study Participants	75
2 Pseudonyms of Study Participants and Each of Their Meanings	77
3 Identity and Pronouns of Study Participants.....	78
4 Participants Openly Out with Conditions and Education Information	89
5 Participants 2023-2024 School Year Educator Environments.....	91
6 Participant's Experienced Homophobia and Microaggressions from Others	101

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“Homosexuality appears like a ghost only dimly and sometimes not at all.”

~Monique Wittig

LGBTQ+ educators continue negotiating the performance of their identities in their school climates. As an educator who identifies as LGBTQ+, I can relate to how we perform our identities in schools since I have experienced that negotiation for 20 years. I perform to protect my inside secret, waiting for the right people, right time, suitable space, or whatever that might be that happens.

The uncertainty of social acceptance has sometimes kept me silent and in the closet at school. There is a true sense of fear for all educators as we work with minor students, parents/families, and unpredictable communities that may or may not accept you. What you knew about how they perceived you as a great person, parent, coach, and teacher could be gone once they realized you are LGBTQ+. After forty years of personal and professional experiences of sharing my truth when coming out or when others have taken the liberty to disclose my story, I have waited through the silence as their moral compass led to their decision to accept me. There is an odd power you hand over to others as you wait in limbo for their approval, then when they do not accept you, the haunting fear of unknown negative possibilities, discrimination, and the actions of what hate delivers to those unaccepted by the heteronormative society.

This study was catalyzed by my own experiences as an educator and built on previous research in LGBTQ+ studies. There is a growing body of research on LGBTQ+ students in K-12 schools. However, limited literature describes the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ educators. This study fills that gap by examining the life narratives of LGBTQ+ educators and how they negotiate their sexual orientation and gender identity in K-12 schools.

Purpose of the Study

This narrative study aims to bring awareness of how LGBTQ+ educators negotiate the performance of their identities in K-12 schools. The social and political climate in the United States continues to oppress LGBTQ+ educators in heteronormative K-12 schools.

Heteronormativity, one of the key concepts in queer theory, pertains to “the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent-that is organized as a sexuality-but also privileged” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 548).

Rodriguez and Pinar (2007) explained, “Michael Foucault has been focused on ‘the formation of the subject,’ that is, on how human beings are socially constructed by power relations” (p. 285). Foucault states, “My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects... [thus], it is not power, but the subject” (Foucault, 1982, as cited in Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007, p. 285). Rodriguez and Pinar (2007) asserted that Foucault believed that “power is not something that only oppresses or negates; instead, power produces” (p. 286):

In defining the effects of power by repression, one accepts a purely juridical concept of that power, and one identifies power with a law that says no; it has, above all, the force of an interdict. I believe this is a wholly negative, narrow, and skeletal conception of power, which has been curiously shared. If power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it? What gives power its hold, what makes it accepted, is quite simply the fact that it does not weigh like a force which says no, but that it runs through, and it produces things, it produces pleasure, it forms knowledge, it produces discourse; it must be considered as a productive network which runs through the entire social body much more than as a

negative instance whose function is repression. (Foucault, 1979, as cited in Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007, p. 286)

Anne Schlichter (2004) emphasized:

First, queer theory distinguishes between a cultural system that produces and regulates sexual identities, on the one hand, and heterosexuality as the hegemonic identity position arising from the same system. Consequently, the object of the critique is neither heterosexual desire nor the subject desiring another gender but the sociocultural system, which inscribes a heterosexual identity as a hegemonic position. (p. 546)

A historical example of the hegemonic position of the sociocultural system was the *Lawrence v. Texas* Supreme Court case (Biegel, 2018). Biegel (2018) explained:

The U.S. Supreme Court's 6-3 decision on behalf of the petitioners in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) removed the presumption of criminality that still shadowed LGBT persons in 2003 and severely impacted their right to be out, both under the law and as a matter of public policy. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated. It was impossible for many LGBTs to be open about their identities if basic expressions of same-sex love remained illegal. (p. 13)

The late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, the late Chief Justice Rehnquist, and current Justice Clarence Thomas agreed with Scalia's opinion when he dissented in *Lawrence v. Texas*. Biegel (2018) asserted:

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, dissenting in *Lawrence v. Texas*, aligned himself unapologetically with the thinking behind the initiative when he insisted that, 'many Americans do not want persons who openly engage in homosexual conduct as partners in

business, as scoutmasters for their children, [or] as teachers in their children's schools.' (p. 80).

Justice Thomas has not changed his position, even years later, after the Supreme Court ruling to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. Edelman (2022) found:

In future cases, we should consider all of this Court's substantive due process precedent, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*. Because any substantive due process decision is 'demonstrably erroneous,' we have a duty to 'correct the error' established in those precedents. (para. 8)

Although LGBTQ+ educators have a right to be out under the law, one can see from the polls, surveys, state laws, policies, and homophobia that an underlying expectation exists that LGBTQ+ educators continue to conform to societal expectations. Biegel (2018) stated:

K-12 educators are still confronted with a combination of subtle pressure and expressed admonition that limit their ability to be open about who they are. These limitations continue to be reflected in job placement and promotion decisions that favor educators whose sexual orientation and gender identities appear to conform to mainstream norms. (p. 81)

This queer narrative study served as a safe space for LGBTQ+ educators' voices to share their experiences of the classroom, how they worked through diversity and discrimination, and how they negotiated their performance of identity in heteronormative K-12 classrooms. This narrative inquiry study examined and learned from LGBTQ+ educators' experiences and perceptions of barriers, social pressures, and obstacles in their lives and careers. LGBTQ+ educators' stories tell their historical experiences as they lived these experiences.

Staying silent and performing as society deems normal has never been easy for “queer people to tell their queer theories” (Sawyer, 2021, p. 24). Urrieta & Hatt (2019) argue that identity, why we study identity, and research is dynamically rooted in power because it is “systematically distributed in society, most often unevenly, with some sectors of society exerting it as a form of domination over others” (de Lissovoy, 2016, as cited in Urrieta & Hatt, 2019, p. 12). This study provides a space for marginalized queer people to tell their *testimonios*, their narrative of what counts of their lived experiences, and their claim to truth. The abusive trends of preservations from Euro-West whiteness positionalities/identities should no longer be empowered but challenged and dismantled.

“There are gay and lesbian teachers in every school building in America- probably in numbers greater than our representation in the general population” (Woog, 1995, as cited in Jackson, 2007, p. 1). Woog (1995) interviewed three hundred gay teachers across the country, and he noted, “It is one thing to be open about one’s sexuality in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, or Boston; it is another to be openly gay in medium-sized cities, or the suburbs” (as cited in Jackson, 2007, p. 114). Kevin Jennings (1994) stated, “In my native south, few teachers were willing to contribute, even anonymously, so heavy is the land of homophobia in the Land of Dixie” (p. 12). Jennings's (2015) research found there were LGBT teacher stories that reflected progress and unexpected experiences, and that work still needs to be done. One participant from Jennings’s (2015) study, Benny, stated, “Many times I felt as if I led a triple life” (p. 158). Another participant, Erika, stated, “After more than a decade of teaching, sometimes I still feel voiceless” (Jennings, 2015, p. 112).

I know from a personal standpoint I would be less reluctant to hide my LGBTQ+ identity in the Washington Elementary School District (WESD) in Phoenix, one of Arizona’s largest

elementary school districts. On July 28, 2022, the WESD Governing Board members announced a typical statement of being committed to a learning environment conducive to the physical, social, and emotional safety of all students. However, the WESD (2022) included LGBTQ+ in their resolution, stating, “WHEREAS, WESD is committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive climate where LGBTQ+ students, families, and staff can live their authentic lives and be treated with dignity and respect” (para. 2).

Laurie Roberts (2023), in her opinion column in the *Arizona Republic*, noted that WESD proved they were standing by their resolution on February 23, 2023, when their school board members unanimously rejected a renewal agreement with the Arizona Christian University student-teacher program. One board member, Tamillia Valenzuela, noted the university’s mission to “influence, engage, and transform the culture with truth promoting the biblically informed values that are foundational to Western civilization” (Valenzuela, cited by Roberts, 2023, para 5). Roberts (2023) stated, “Among those values, according to the university’s website, are ‘traditional sexual morality and lifelong marriage between one man and one woman’” (para. 6).

WESD highlighted their educational policies and how they create an inclusive environment for all people. By integrating these considerations, educational stakeholders can work towards creating a positive and inclusive environment that benefits K-12 classrooms, students, educators, families, and broader communities. It is essential to approach these discussions with a forward-looking perspective, aiming to enhance the overall quality and impact of education.

As LGBTQ+ K-12 educators, we know discrimination needs to end in K-12 schools; however, it is not for the lack of trying but for plodding progress. The movement for LGBTQ+

equality including equality in the workplace, has a significant history that can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. Biegel (2018) stated:

Two key turning points provided the impetus for the ramping up of legal efforts across the board. In 1969, an uprising at the Stonewall Inn in New York City highlighted the persistent and inequitable harassment of LGBTs by law enforcement officials. And in 1973, the American Psychiatric Association's vote to remove homosexuality from its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which codifies psychiatric conditions and is used as a key reference across the globe, was viewed by many as having transformed the entire landscape. (p. 8)

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2013) faculty diversity report stated:

In 1970, the American Federation of Teachers became the first labor union to call for an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation (in 2007, the AFT also went on record calling for an end to discrimination based on gender identity and expression). (p. 5)

The AFT continued to collectively contribute to the shifting legal landscape to address the inequality and discrimination that LGBT workers endure. The AFT (2013) report listed their efforts supporting LGBT rights:

[I]ncluding resolutions advocating for educational and workplace equity for sexual minorities (1988), barring the AFT from holding its conventions and conferences in municipalities that enforce legal codes discriminating against LGBTQ individuals (1994), supporting legal protections for transgender workers (2003), and endorsing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (2010). (p. 5)

Research Questions

Drawing on queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's performance theory (1959), this study was guided by these research questions:

1. **How do LGBTQ+ educators perform their gender identities and sexual orientations in historical heteronormative classrooms and schools?**
 - a. **How do LGBTQ+ educators regulate their gender identity and sexual orientation in their pedagogy?**

This study draws on Butler's (1990) queer theory of gender performance of identity. Butler explains, "Gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end; the term *strategy* better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs" (p. 190). "Research has shown that gay and lesbian teachers are reluctant to come out to members of their school community, fearing that they should be harassed, or even fired for being homosexual" (Hooker, 2019, p. 85). Due to this fear, LGBTQ+ educators still need to consciously navigate whether they will negotiate the performance of their gender identity and sexual orientation in K-12 schools. Butler (1990) refers to this navigation of performance "as a strategy of survival, within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences...we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right" (p. 190). Goffman's (1959) performance theory attests to this as he explained:

Sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain. (p. 6)

Biegel (2018) stated, "The Pew Research Center found in 2007- that 28 percent of Americans still agreed with the goals of the Briggs initiative and believed that school boards

‘should be able to fire’ teachers who were known to be gay.” (p. 80). Biegel added, “the Pew 2007 survey revealed that a full 15 percent of those ‘who have a close friend or family member who is gay’ would still advocate firing them from teaching jobs for no reason other than their sexual orientation.” (Biegel, 2018, p. 81).

LGBTQ+ people are supported federally protected due to the landmark case of *Bostock v. Clayton County* (Fawbush, 2022). U.S. President Joe Biden stated, “The Supreme Court held that Title VII’s prohibition on discrimination ‘because of ...sex’ covers discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation” (The White House, 2021, para. 3). Additionally, in the enforcement of Executive Order 14021 of March 8, 2021, President Biden stated:

It is the policy of my administration that all students should be guaranteed an educational environment free from discrimination based on sex, including discrimination in the form of sexual harassment, which encompasses sexual violence, and including discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity” (The White House, 2021, para. 1).

In June 2020, “the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is illegal under Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sex in employment” (MAP, 2022a, para. 1). The Supreme Court ruling benefits the livelihood of LGBTQ+ people; however, there is a misconception of what this means at the state level. When this ruling passed, I had conversations and arguments with some LGBTQ+ educator friends. These friends stated that we were safe because of the Supreme Court ruling. I explained that, yes, the federal umbrella covers us. However, concerns remain at the state’s level with explicit laws against employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The twist is that not all states and territories protect against employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. There are state-by-state statutes *with sex-based protections* that the state government or agency “explicitly affirmed they interpret the states’ ban on sex discrimination to also apply to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity” (Movement Advancement Project [MAP], 2022a, para. 4). Since there are state-by-state statutes within the June 2020 Supreme Court ruling, “people in all states can seek recourse for employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity through the federal Equal Opportunity Commission and federal courts” (MAP, 2022a, para. 3).

The MAP (2022a) results highlighted that state laws explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity have been passed in 23 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia, where 53 percent of the LGBTQ+ population live in states prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (See Appendix A). Ten states explicitly interpret existing prohibitions on sex discrimination, including sexual orientation and gender identity, and 27 percent of the LGBTQ+ population live in states explicitly interpreting existing prohibitions on sex discrimination to include sexual orientation or gender identity. One state’s law explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation only, and two percent of the LGBTQ+ population live in states prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual orientation only. Nineteen percent of the LGBTQ+ population live in states that do not prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, including two percent of the LGBTQ+ population living in states that preempt local nondiscrimination laws (MAP, 2022a).

The MAP (2022b), the Center for American Progress (CAP, 2022), the Trevor Project, (2022), the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), and the National Education

Association do not have formal statistics on the LGBTQ+ teacher populations by state or nation. However, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC, 2020), MAP (2022b), and CAP (2022) have LGBTQ+ statistics of *workers*, not identifying where they are employed or their specified professions.

The HRC (2020) conducted a national study that found, “Despite legal gains, LGBTQ workers remain closeted at the job; 46 percent of LGBTQ+ workers are closeted at work” (p. 6) and continue to feel pressure to negotiate their sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace; therefore, they remain in the closet at work. Twenty-eight percent of LGBTQ+ workers are closeted and not open to anyone in their lives.

The HRC (2020) study found that the LGBTQ+ workers’ reasons for not being out at work are: “38 percent of being stereotyped, 36 percent of making others feel uncomfortable, 31 percent of losing connections or relationships with coworkers, and 27 percent of people thinking they are attracted to them because they are LGBTQ” (HRC, 2020, p. 6). The study is critical because it found that LGBTQ+ workers’ reasons for not being out include fears of being stereotyped, of how they make others feel, and loss of accepting people in their workplace.

The HRC (2020) study also found, “1/4 of LGBTQ employers report that coworkers who they are out to seem uncomfortable once they say something related to their sexual orientation or gender (e.g. mentioning a partner, spouse, personal history)” (p. 6). While over half, 54 percent of non-LGBTQ+ workers stated, “that they would be very comfortable working with an LGBTQ+ coworker; of those who would not be very comfortable, a majority said it was because they ‘didn’t want to hear about their coworker’s sex life’” (HRC, 2020, p. 6).

The HRC study found that when LGBTQ+ workers are unwelcome in their work environment, they experience adverse effects on their social, emotional, and mental health. The HRC (2020) study found:

- 25 percent of LGBTQ+ workers feel distracted.
- 28 percent of LGBTQ+ employees lie about their personal lives at work (down from 42 percent in 2008).
- 17 percent felt exhausted from spending time and energy hiding their sexual orientation (13 percent from hiding their gender identity).
- 31 percent felt unhappy or depressed at work. (p. 7)

This study examined and learned from LGBTQ+ educators about their lives and careers in K-12 education. The study identified the challenges, barriers, identities, strengths, and misunderstandings about how LGBTQ+ educators negotiate their performing identities. The study explored LGBTQ+ educators' processes of coming out and their negotiation of performing their sexual identities and gender identities in their current or past school climates.

Theoretical Frameworks

Queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's (1959) performance theory intertwine and serve as the framework for this study. The participants had a platform to share their queer stories in a supportive environment that encouraged openness that provided a space for how LGBTQ+ people tell their stories and share their truth which does not include barriers and obstacles to how LGBTQ+ educators to people tell stories and share their truth without barriers and obstacles. Queer narrative strategies include "queer appropriations of forms typically linked to truth-telling, the revelation of secrets, authenticity, and transparency, namely the interview, the autobiography, the diary, and the documentary" (de Villiers, 2012, as cited in Sawyer, 2021, p. 25).

“Queer theory and its relationship to qualitative research are significant to higher education, sociocultural understandings, and experiences for marginalized populations in schools for at least the following three reasons” (Wozolek, 2019, p. 1). Wozolek (2019) stated:

First, there is a question about what queerness means, a question that is often unpacked through the sociohistorical, contemporary, and self-reflective lens. Queerness is, therefore, one possible way to think about scholarly fields and offer a particular kind of critique of academic understanding. Second, as cis-normative and heteronormative perspectives remain the status quo for norms and values in everyday school culture, queer theory put into practice through qualitative research can serve as a powerful tool with which to shift historical and contemporary understandings in schools and communities. ...Finally, because the consequences of such scholarship strongly inform the ways of being and knowing of marginalized youth in schools, implications for this work are similarly significant (p. 1).

Jennings’ (1994, 2015), Jackson’s (2007), and Connell’s (2014) research studies provided detailed narratives from LGBTQ educators’ experiences in education, politics, and society. This study’s findings were compared with past studies if there have been movements to change the historical K-12 educator’s experiences in classrooms in 2023. This study examined the way queer theory and performance theory overlap and how educators intersect their personal and professional identities. As Warhol and Lanser (2015) noted, “We recognize ‘queer’ as the sign for the move(ment)s that challenge - and again, aim to understand, analyze, and rectify heteronormative systems and practices and their attendant binary assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality” (p. 2). The critical narrative paradigm suggests that the “power dynamics of

societies create practices, systems, and situations of marginalization” (Laliberte et al., 2017, as cited in Gavidia & Adu, 2022, p. 2).

Warhol and Lanser (2015) stated:

Narratives are critical to constructing, maintaining, interpreting, exposing, and dismantling the social systems, cultural practices, and individual lives that shape and are shaped by performative acts. Feminists and queer narrative theorists identify and demystify the workings of those norms in and through narrative and expose dominant stories keeping binaries in place. (pp. 7-8)

Britzman’s (1995) essay, “Is There a Queer Pedagogy, Stop Reading Straight,” insisted on three methods of queer theory:

The study of limits, the study of ignorance, and the study of reading practices. Each method requires an impertinent performance, an interest in thinking against one’s conceptual foundations, an interest in studying the skeletons of learning and teaching that haunt one’s responses, anxieties, and categorical imperatives, and a persistent concern with pedagogical relations can allow more room to maneuver thinking the unthought of education. (p. 155)

Meyer, E. (2007) asserted that “queer theory offers educators a lens through which education can transform the praxis to explore and celebrate the tensions of new understandings created by teaching new ways of seeing the world” (p. 15.). Butler’s (1990) queer theory seeks to understand the challenges educators endure as they may not follow the “cultural matrix” by adhering to the heteronormative expectations, but they are challenging the cultural laws that define and regulate sexuality. Goffman’s (1959) performance theory brought a critical lens to assist with the understanding of queer theory’s strength of performance that delivers the sounds

to voice, open mindfulness of perspectives, and understanding how to unpack the ghosts of shame, guilt, and uncertainty of the acceptance of others.

My Positionality

I identify as a person, Carissa, Anglo, New Mexican, gay educator. My positionality comes from the many worlds I have experienced as a high school freshman, a student in higher education, a parent of two artificially inseminated children, an educator, a girls' soccer coach, and an administrator. The first impression people see of me is that I am white, which then shifts to me being privileged because I am white, not privileged being female. That marginalizes me a step on the social ladder.

I did not realize this privilege until I was in class at the University of New Mexico; people would say I would not have this awareness because of my unconscious bias toward white privilege. My professor identified as Latina. It was a class on English language students, and I answered one of her questions about students with a second language. I responded to her question; she told me my answer was based on white privilege. I explained that my white privilege did not speak; I was speaking from my experiences living in southeastern New Mexico. She stated again that it was my white privilege. Did I ask her if being gay was also part of my white privilege? She ignored me, turned on her heels, and continued teaching. This experience taught me that what people first see of me is that I am white; my sexual orientation and being female place me as marginalized. This position puts me in another awkward position with heteronormative people; they are fine I am white, accepting that I am female, but hate I am gay.

As I age, I am less hesitant to perform any differently than who I am. I can be hesitant about sharing my sexual orientation in school with students. I am not naive to think that a parent, staff, or student still would not pull the LGBTQ+ card on me, stating I was a pervert or child

molester, because those hateful words stay with you, and they sting when your mother tells you that is what you are and who you will be....

I understand my roles and responsibilities as the researcher in this narrative study. As I researched how LGBTQ+ educators perform their gender identities and sexual orientations in K-12 classrooms to comply with a heteronormative society, I am aware that the project affected me emotionally. But this research study is bigger than me; my narrative research is an important opportunity for LGBTQ+ educators to share their voices, history, and perspectives with strangers in a documented study. White (2016) said, “At crucial moments - an emergency or an opportunity - one must act first and think later” (para. 8).

My job has been to provide a stage to listen, write, then share the emergency and opportunity of time to present their lived experiences, performances, and perspectives of their acts in heteronormative settings. Metaphorically, I am the optic *Testimonio* cylinder tube, and my responsibility is to be a listener as a witness:

To be a bystander *testimonio* is to remain silent in the face of oppression. *Testimonio* as a research methodology or pedagogy is meant to change us, reframe, reconfigure, and reconceptualize our identities as researchers, students, teachers, and listeners - in the face of trauma, oppression, and hope. (Urrieta et al., 2015, p. 13)

Research Methodology

I collected stories from the participants’ lives and told stories of experiences of negotiating the performance of their gender identity and sexual orientation as a K-12 LGBTQ+ educator. My role as the researcher is to co-construct their stories, “examining the stories for how they are produced interactively between the researcher and the participant or performed by the participant to convey a specific agenda or message” (Riessman, 2008, as cited in Creswell,

2013, p. 75). I understand narratives are “the structured quality of experience” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990. p. 2). The participants’ narrative stories highlight the importance of their lived experiences through their lived lens of performing their sexual orientation and gender identities in K-12 classrooms.

The narrative approach is the best fit for this research problem because it is necessary to write in a flexible and literary style that conveys the personal stories of LGBTQ+ educators’ life experiences and their lives. Creswell (2013) stated, “Narrative stories are gathered through many *different forms of data*, such as through interviews, which may be the primary form of data collection, but also through observations, documents, pictures, and other qualitative data sources” (p. 71). In this study, I shared my participants’ stories. When the participants recounted their experiences, they shed light on their *identities* and how they see themselves (Creswell, 2013). I can relate to understanding the “narrative as a ‘doing’ or performing of identity, and this occurs in opposition to identity as an expression of an essentialized self” (Coleman, 2023, p. 4.).

I designed this study to provide a platform for LGBTQ+ educators to express their power of voice. I shared the life experiences of negotiating their gender identity and sexual orientation in traditional heteronormative K-12 classrooms. This study critically analyzed how their identity negotiation and performance of self, teacher professional, and sexuality and orientation influenced their work as educators and how they managed the constructs of their identity in gender-conforming K-12 classrooms.

Definition of Terms

Agender: “Describes a person who does not identify as male or female or some combination of male and female. Some agender individuals see themselves as genderless,

while others see themselves as gender-neutral.” (Annie E. Cassey Foundation [AECF], 2021, para. 1).

Ally: “A person who confronts heterosexism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and heterosexual privilege in themselves and others out of concern for the well-being of LGBTQIA+ people.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 1).

Asexual: “A person who does not experience sexual attraction but may experience other forms of interest (e.g., intellectual, emotional). Asexual people may also identify as ‘bisexual,’ ‘gay,’ ‘lesbian,’ ‘pansexual,’ ‘queer,’ ‘straight,’ and many more.” (GLSEN, 2014, p. 2).

Asexuality: “Generally characterized by not feeling sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, the deliberate abstention from sexual activity.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 2).

Bigender: “Describes a person who has two genders. Bigender people may experience two gender identities simultaneously or at different times. These gender identities can be binary - male and female - or include nonbinary identities.” (AECF, 2021, para. 4).

Biphobia: “Fear or hatred of people who are bisexual, pansexual, or omnisexual.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 3).

Bisexual: “A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders or towards people regardless of their gender.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 4).

Cisgender: “The prefix cis means ‘on this side of’ or ‘not across.’ A term used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not transgender.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 6).

Cisnormativity: Refers to the practices and institutions that legitimize and privilege those comfortable in the gender belonging to the sex assigned to them at birth. On the other hand, this norm systematically disadvantages and marginalizes all persons whose gender identity and expression do not meet social expectations. (Browne, 2019, p. 31)

Closeted: Describes a person who is not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. A closeted person may be referred to as being ‘in the closet.’ There are many degrees to being out/closeted; closeted individuals may be out to just themselves, close friends, or to their larger network, or not publicly open about their status as LGBTQ+ people. (PFLAG, 2023, para. 30)

Coming Out: “Refers to voluntarily making public one’s sexual orientation and gender identity.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 5).

Cross Dresser: “A word to describe a person who dresses partially as a member of a gender other than their assigned sex; carries no implications of sexual orientation.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 6).

Discrimination: “Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation.” (American Psychological Association, 2022, para. 1).

Drag King: “A person (often a woman) who appears as a man, generally, with an act or performance. This term has no implications regarding gender identity.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 8).

Drag Queen: “A person (often a man) who appears as a woman, generally, with an act or performance. This term has no implications regarding gender identity.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 9).

Dyke: A derogatory term directed at a person perceived as a lesbian. It is often used against women who are gender nonconforming, assuming that their gender nonconformity implies a sexual attraction to women. Some lesbians (of all gender expressions) have reclaimed the term and used it as an affirming label to identify. (GLSEN, 2014, p. 2)

Enby: “Describes a person who does not identify as exclusively male or exclusively female and usually prefers ‘they’ as a pronoun. Enby is the phonetic pronunciation of ‘NB,’ meaning nonbinary. Not all nonbinary individuals prefer or use the term.” (AECF, 2021, para. 8).

Fag/Faggot: A derogatory term directed at a person perceived as a gay man. It is often used against gender-conforming women, assuming their gender nonconformity implies a sexual attraction to men. Some gay men (of all gender expressions) have reclaimed the term and used it as an affirming label to identify. (GLSEN, 2014, p. 2)

Gay: A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some members of the same gender. ‘Gay’ often refers to a male-identified person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some other males. ‘Gay’ should not be used as an umbrella term to refer to all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; the term ‘LGBT’ is more accurate and inclusive. (GLSEN, 2014, p. 2)

Gender: “A social construct to classify a person as a man, woman, or another identity. Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth, a set of social, psychological, and emotional traits is often influenced by societal expectations.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 11).

Gender Affirming Surgery: “A surgical procedure that enables an individual’s body to be more congruent with their gender identity. Also referred to as sex reassignment surgery or gender-confirming surgery.” (AECF, 2021, para. 11).

Gender Dysphoria: “Describes the extreme discomfort that a person feels because their assigned sex at birth does not match their gender identity. This sense of unease or dissatisfaction can cause depression and anxiety and negatively impact an individual’s daily life.” (AECF, 2021, para. 12).

Gender Expression: “How one expresses oneself in terms of dress, mannerisms, and behaviors that society characterizes as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 12).

Gender Fluid: “Describe a person whose gender expression or gender identity changes over time. Not everyone whose gender identity or expression changes identifies as gender fluid.” (AECF, 2021, para. 14).

Gender Identity: “A person’s internal identification as male, female, something in between, or something other than the two conventional gender options. A person’s gender identity is not visible to others and can match or differ from their assigned sex at birth.” (AECF, 2021, para. 15).

Gender Nonconforming: “Describes a person who does not adhere to the traditional expectations of their appearance or behavior of their assigned gender. Some individuals identify as transgender, but others, for example, masculine lesbians, do not.” (AECF, 2021, para. 17).

Genderqueer: “A person whose gender identity and gender expression falls outside of the dominant societal norm for their assigned sex, is beyond genders, or is some combination of them.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 13).

Hate Crime: “Offenses that are motivated by hate or by bias against a particular group of people. These crimes could be based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age, or disability.” (LGBT Denmark et al., 2012, as cited in Browne, 2019, p. 31).

Heteronormativity: A set of lifestyle norms, practices, and institutions that promote binary alignment of biological sex, gender identity, and gender roles. Also, assume heterosexuality as a fundamental and natural norm; and privilege monogamous, committed relationships and reproductive sex above all other sexual practices. (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center, as cited in Browne, 2019, p. 31)

Heterosexism: The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression that reinforces realities of silence and invisibility. (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 14)

Heterosexuality: “A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 15).

Homophobia: “The irrational hatred and fear of LGBTQIA+ people. Homophobia includes prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence brought on by fear

and hatred. It occurs on personal, institutional, and societal levels.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 16).

Homosexual/Homosexuality: “An outdated term to describe a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 17).

Identity: Identity is how we understand ourselves, what we call ourselves, and often whom we connect to and associate with. We have a unique diversity of social identities based on our sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, and other essential parts of our identity. Those identities develop over time, intersect with each other, and help give meaning to our lives. Remember that these terms are about self-identification; no one can tell anyone else how to identify or what terms to use. (GLSEN, 2014, p. 2)

Internalized Homophobia: The fear and self-hate of one’s own LGBTQIA+ identity that occurs for many individuals who have learned negative ideas about LGBTQIA+ people throughout childhood. One form of internalized oppression is the acceptance of myths and stereotypes applied to the oppressed group. (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 18)

Intersectionality: Coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, this term refers to the overlap of social categorizations or identities such as race and ethnicity, sexuality, gender, disability, geography, and class which exist in an individual or group of people that can contribute to discrimination or disadvantage. (PFLAG, 2023, para. 89)

Intersex: People who, without medical intervention, develop primary or secondary characteristics that do not fit “neatly” into society’s definitions of male or female. Many

visibly intersex people are mutilated in infancy and early childhood by doctors to make the individual's sex characteristics conform to society's idea of what normal bodies should look like. Intersex people are relatively common, although society's denial of their existence has allowed very little room for intersex issues to be discussed publicly. (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 19)

Lesbian: "A woman whose primary sexual orientation is toward people of the same gender." (UCSF, LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 20).

LGBT or LGBTQ: An umbrella term referring to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Sometimes the acronym is written as LGBTQ, with the Q referring to those identifying as queer and questioning. The acronym can also include letters about other identities that do not conform to dominant societal norms around sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. (GLSEN, 2014, p. 3)

LGBTQ+: An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) or, historically, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender). The addition of the Q for Queer is a more recently preferred vision of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term queer focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed definition. The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender. The "+" represents those who are part of the community but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity. (PFLAG, 2023, para. 94)

Microaggression: "A microaggression is a subtle often unintentional, form of prejudice. Rather than an overt declaration of racism or sexism, a microaggression often takes the

shape of an offhand comment, an inadvertently painful joke, or a pointed insult.”

(Psychology Today, 2023, para. 1).

Nonbinary: A gender identity that embraces an entire universe of expressions and ways of being that resonates with an individual. It may be an active resistance to binary gender expectations and the intentional creation of new unbounded ideas of self within the world. (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 23)

Oppression: Systems of power and privilege, based on bias, which benefit some social groups over others. Oppression can 1) take many forms, including ideological, institutional, interpersonal and internalized; 2) be intentional and unintentional; 3) be conscious and unconscious; and 4) be visible and invisible. Oppression prevents the oppressed groups and individuals from being free and equal. Many people face oppression based on more than one of their identities, creating a unique complexity of challenges and resilience. (GLSEN, 2014, p. 1)

Out: A term which describes people who openly self-identify as LGBTQ+ in their private, public, and/or professional lives. There are many states of being out; individuals can be out only to themselves, close friends, or everyone. Some transgender people prefer to use the term disclose. (PFLAG, 2023, para. 116)

Outing: “The deliberate or accidental sharing of another person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without their explicit consent. Outing is disrespectful and presents a danger for many LGBTQ+ individuals.” (PFLAG, 2023, para. 117).

Pansexual/Omnisexual: “Term used to describe people with a romantic, sexual, or affectional desire for people of all genders and sexes.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 22).

Privilege: “Privilege can be defined as advantages people have virtue of their status or position in society.” (Shaw & Lee, 2020, p. 45).

Prejudice: “To prejudge and involves making premature judgments without adequate information or with inaccurate information. Often prejudice is adopted when there is no other basis for understanding.” (Shaw & Lee, 2020, p. 52).

Queer: This term can include but is not limited to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and asexual people. This term has different meanings to different people. Some still find it offensive, while others reclaim it to encompass the broader history of the gay rights movement. It can also be used as an umbrella term like LGBT, as in *the queer community*. (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 24)

Queer Theory: In academic circles, queer theory became a method of analysis that disrupted fixed meanings and exposed underlying contradictions and structures of power, particularly as they pertained to regulation of sexual behavior and the oppression of people who do not conform to societal expectations around sexuality...queer theory seeks to destabilize cultural ideas and norms that are used to oppress nonconforming people. (Shaw & Lee. 2020, p. 47)

Questioning: Describes a person discovering and exploring their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or some combination thereof. Using this term enables an individual to identify as part of the LGBTQ community while avoiding other labels and recognizing that their process of self-identification is still underway. (AECF, 2021, para. 26)

Racism: “A system of oppression that benefits white people at the expense of people of color.” (GLSEN, 2014, p. 2).

Reclaimed Words: As language evolves, some individuals and communities identify with terms previously slurred against them. The words are *reclaimed* and given new meaning, often imbued with a sense of resilience. Examples include “queer,” “dyke,” and “tranny.” Not all community members accept the use of reclaimed words, as they may still find them offensive and hurtful. (GLSEN, 2014, p. 2)

Sex: “A categorization based on the appearance of the genitalia at birth.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 25).

Sexism: “A system of oppression that benefits male-identified people at the expense of female-identified people.” (GLSEN, 2014, p. 2).

Sexuality: “The components of a person that includes their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or sexual practices.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 26).

Sexual Minorities: Refers to groups whose sexual orientation is not strictly heterosexual or whose sexuality is not exclusively expressed through heterosexual relations. Those who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual are the most readily identifiable sexual minority groups; however, the term can include anyone who engages in same-sex sexual relations, even if they may identify as heterosexual. (LGBT Denmark et al., 2012, as cited in Browne, 2019, p. 33)

Sexual Orientation: “An enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction. Sexual orientation is fluid. Asexuality is also considered a sexual orientation.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 27).

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI): “An acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Every person has a sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.” (AECF, 2021, para. 28).

Straight: “Describes a man who is attracted to women or a woman who is attracted to men. It can be seen as a synonym for heterosexual.” (AECF, 2021, para. 30).

Stereotype Threat: Stereotype threat is when individuals fear they may confirm negative stereotypes about their social group. This fear can negatively affect their performance and reinforce the stereotype, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. It can impact various domains, notably academic and professional performances. (Heaning, 2023, para. 1)

Third Gender: “An umbrella term for a gender other than man or woman. The third gender can refer to a man and a woman, neither, or any other gender identity or role. Some societies legally recognize three or more genders.” (ORAM, 2016, as cited in Browne, 2019, p. 33).

Transgender: It is often used as an umbrella term; some commonly held definitions are:

1) Someone whose gender identity or expression does not fit (dominant-group social constructs of) assigned birth sex and gender; 2) A gender outside of the man/woman binary; and 3) Having no gender or multiple genders. (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 29)

Transgender (or Trans) Man: “Describes a person who was assigned female sex at birth but identifies as male. This person may or may not actively identify as trans.” (AECF, 2021, para. 32).

Transgender (or Trans) Woman: “Describes a person assigned a male sex at birth but identifies as female. This person may or may not actively identify as trans.” (AECF, 2021, para. 33).

Transition: A complex process by which transgender people align their anatomy (medical transition) and gender expression (social transition) with their gender identity. Transitioning is a multiple-step process that occurs over a long period. It can include such steps as using a different name, using new pronouns, dressing differently, updating legal documents, hormone therapy, and surgery. The exact steps involved in a person’s transition varies. (AECF, 2021, para. 34)

Transphobia: “The fear or hatred of transgender people or people who do not meet society’s gender role expectations.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 28).

Transsexual: A person who lives full-time in a gender different from their assigned birth sex and gender. Some pursue hormones and surgery, while others do not. Sometimes, it is used to refer to trans people pursuing gender or sex confirmation specifically. (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 30)

Transvestite: “This is an outdated and problematic term due to its historical use as a diagnosis for medical/mental health disorders. Cross dresser has replaced transvestite; see alternate definition.” (UCSF LGBT Resource Center, 2022, para. 31).

Abbreviations Used

AECF:	Annie E. Casey Foundation
CAP:	Center for American Progress
GLSEN:	Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network
GSA:	Gay Straight Alliance

HRC:	Human Rights Campaign
IRB:	Institutional Review Board
LGBT:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual
LGBTQ:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer
LGBTQ+:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer and/or Questioning.
LGBTI:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex
MAP:	Movement Advancement Project
NAU:	Northern Arizona University
WESD:	Washington Elementary School District

Summary

Chapter one provided background information on identities and the issues LGBTQ+ educators address in heteronormative K-12 classrooms. This chapter highlights the discrepancies between the legal rights of LGBTQ+ people to be out and the persistent societal expectations from the surveys that may pressure them to conform to heteronormative norms. This chapter presented the HRC (2020) and MAP (2022a) survey results identifying LGBTQ+ workers. However, the reports do not distinguish the professions of these workers. The lack of standard statistics on LGBTQ+ educators in K-12 classroom settings can contribute to their invisibility in the educational systems. The survey results indicated that all LGBTQ+ have nondiscrimination rights at the federal level; however, not all LGBTQ+ workers have the same employment protection rights at the state and territory level in the United States. This chapter included the research problem, interview questions, theoretical framework, my positionality, methodology, LGBTQ+ terms and definitions, and abbreviations used in the study.

The literature review in chapter two focused on the themes of performing identities, self-identity, teacher identity, LGBTQ+ identity, and the contextual factors surrounding identity negotiation within the K-12 school systems. The literature review addressed the impacts of the impacts of sexualized identities and how queer theory contributes to the challenges LGBTQ+ educators endure in traditional heteronormative classrooms. Chapter three aligned with the objectives of the narrative study on LGBTQ+ educators. The major components include the methodology using the narrative theory method, focusing on understanding the narratives and stories of LGBTQ+ educators. The participants in the study met the requirements outlined, and data was collected from the 19 open-ended interview questions. The validity of this study was crucial to ensure its creditability and rigor.

In chapter four, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify common themes and variations of the 11 participants. Their stories were used to provide a vivid and rich authentic representation of their experiences. Chapter five of this research study provided a comprehensive overview. It summarized the key findings, discussions, and conclusions and discussed the implications of what we know now from this study. Implications and recommendations are addressed, and insights are shared.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Schools serve the same social functions as prisons and mental institutions – to define, classify, control, and regulate people.” ~Michel Foucault

Through the journey of my literature review, I found myself at an intersection of an optical device as I read many books, journals, case studies, interviews, news stories, state bills, laws, policies, history articles, and timelines on LGBTQ+ topics. All these resources surrounded me as I navigated through this rotating tube; the data, information, and findings were like floating pieces of colored glass; the identities and reflections of self were mirrors. As I turned over one page, there was a new person, idea, controversy, and change I wanted to know about; each would add more pieces of colored glass to my tube. I am introducing the metaphor of the kaleidoscope of my silent optical lens as I participate in this literature review.

I framed my study and asked myself, “What exactly is a queer theory, and how am I going to do this where it makes sense?” During my literature review, I read Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s (1993) *Tendencies*, and she asks, “What is queer” (p. 5)? Then I opened Annamarie Jagose’s (1996) *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, and the first page had Michael Warner’s quote, “The appeal of ‘queer theory’ has outstripped anyone’s sense of what it exactly means” (as cited in Jagose, 1996, p. 0). The irony of thirty years later, I am asking the same question, and queer theory is my framework for this study. Kincheloe and Tobin (2009) made a statement that we all know but may not be in the time and space to realize: “We are all in the process of becoming--- everything we study is in the process of becoming something new and unique” (p. 522). This quote has weight and significance regardless of our age, background, identities, experience, and education.

Queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman’s (1959) performance theory are woven through my literature review as queer theory opens the umbrella of the possibilities when

questioning the social and cultural norms, gender, and sexual identities in the historical heteronormative K-12 schools. Goffman's (1959) performance theory informs how one negotiates their dual performance as a way of protecting their sexual identity as educators from an unapproving, homophobic heteronormative society. Both theories bring an understanding to sociocultural movements, social perspectives, and historical problems of domination and suppression and challenge what is accepted and considered normal by heteronormative white society.

Both theories can be used to educate and empower marginalized people, which I believe begins with educators in school systems. As an educator, I do not support oppression; it is time to end marginalizing school systems, allowing others to dismiss some and accept others. However, suppose LGBTQ+ people (i.e., educators, students, parents, community, and school systems) continue to permit the privileged heteronormative society to control K-12 learning environments. The silence, whether enforced or self-imposed, contributes to the perpetuation of marginalization. When marginalized groups are unable or afraid to share their stories and lived experiences from their perspectives, it continues to allow systemic issues to persist and for their voices to be ignored.

This chapter reviewed relevant literature connecting performed identities of LGBTQ+ educators in K-12 schools, drawing on a queer theory analysis and research on identity studies. This literature review focused on five specific areas of inquiry: a) identity negotiation and self; b) sexualized identities, inside and outside schools; c) LGBTQ+ identity development models; d) teacher identity; e) teacher and student relationships; e) gender identity; and f) queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's (1959) performance theory.

Identity Negotiation and Self

Identity encompasses how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us; it can be subject to a continuous evolution of ourselves and negotiation of performance. This section captures the introduction of identity from the early to mid-20th century and the development of how our identity influences our performances. This work sets the stage for this study's reframing or queering of LGBTQ+ educators' identity performances. Identity negotiation has been the focus of several influential sociologists since the middle of the last century. Charles Cooley (1902) introduced the concept of the *looking glass self* over 100 years ago (LibreTexts, 2023, para. 1). The looking glass self entails the reflected vision one sees in the mirror and reflects three factors: one's social identity dependent on the appearance one may have on one's self, the personal qualities one has, and how others perceive one in society. Cooley stated, "'society' and 'individuals' do not denote separable phenomena, but are simply collective and distributive aspects of the same thing" (LibreTexts, 2023, p. 1). Cooley's focus did not reference gender, sexuality, race, or class. Instead, he focused on how an individual is the product of society, and society is the product of the individual, which is fundamental to our understanding of identity.

Other sociologists, such as Mead (1913), Goffman (1959), and Swann (1987), studying identity subsequently advanced Cooley's foundation work. "The survival of people's identities rests not only in their own hands but in the hands of others" (Swann & Bosson, 2008, p. 448). "I (WBS) [William B. Swann] used the phrase 'identity negotiation' to refer to the process of reconciling two competing forces in social interaction" (Swann & Bosson, 2008, p. 449). Swann's (1987) concept of identity negotiation extended Cooley's work:

The concept of identity negotiation is based on the assumption that people enter their social interactions with specific goals and try to establish mutual identities that enable

them to attain them. A negotiation process ensues, and if successful, a working consensus emerges that defines the identity that each person is to assume during the interaction.

From then on, the interaction proceeds smoothly until the participants have achieved their goals or one partner decides not to honor the identity that he or she has negotiated (e.g., Goffman, 1959; McCall & Simmons, 1966; Stryker & Statham, 1985; Weinstein & Deutschberger, 1963). (p. 1048)

In Mead's (1913) *The Social Self*, he stated, "That this response to the social conduct of the self may be in the role of another – we present his arguments in imagination and do it with his intonations and gestures and even perhaps with his facial expression." (para. 12).

Goffman (1959) asserted there is a level of agreement in the role everyone assumes within social interactions to maintain a working consensus; "an idealized impression is offered by accentuating certain facts and concealing others" (p. 65). The understanding of the "working consensus established in one interaction setting will be quite different in content from the working consensus established in a different type of setting" (Goffman, 1959, p. 10).

Swann and Bosson's (2008) research identified personal and social self-views. Personal self-views refer to "qualities that make people unique and distinct from others (e.g., intelligence, dominance)" (p. 448). Whereas social self-views "refer to roles, group memberships, and other qualities that people share with others (e.g., American, Democrat)" (p. 448). Both are identified as self-views braided within each view "...by personal narratives that organize and contextualize people's self-knowledge into a dynamic, coherent, and internally consistent whole" (McAdams, 1999, as cited in Swann & Bosson, 2008, p. 448). Swann and Bosson (2008) state, "Identities systematically influence the personas people assume in specific contexts, as well as the conditions under which they assume" (p. 448). Goffman (1963) stated, "During mixed contacts,

the stigmatized individual is likely to feel that he is ‘on,’ having to be self-conscious and calculating about the impression he is making, to a degree in areas of conduct which he assumes others are not” (p. 14).

We know from the research of Cooley (1902), Mead (1913), Goffman (1959), and Swann and Bosson (2008) that the concept of self encompasses how one self-identifies, understands personality/uniqueness (both personal and social self-views), and perceives others (society). However, during their research, none of the sociologists mentioned gender identity or sexual orientation. Urrieta and Hatt (2019) argued that “identity is complex, which we tend to define as our self-understanding” (p. 2).

Sexualized Identities

Many events occurred during the 1900s which brought an awareness of the gay community and spurred research on human sexuality. This section of the literature review reflects the timeline of progress and social understanding of sexualized identities. Historically, societal attitudes and official discourse about sexuality and identity have been troubling.

Katherine Bement Davis (1929), a prominent American social reformer, stated, “homosexual practices have always been observed as common where groups of men are isolated from women for considerable periods of time...” (p. 244). Davis shared Dr. C. Stanford Read’s summation of the Freudian explanation of homosexuality:

Sexual instinct is not a new motive force which appears in a full-fledged form at puberty. However, asynthetic product formed from the combination of a number of partial impulses which were present throughout childhood. During the first period, the child’s sexuality is believed to centrosome regions areas of its own body, and later, it is the whole unified body which is the source of its own regard. This latter is the stage of

narcissism or self-love, which plays a very important part in the development of later life. At this period, the child tends to take itself as its object-love and to love itself in others with similar organs. Subsequently, the love passes over to the opposite sex... The psychoanalytic theory is that homosexuals are only more strongly fixed than other people in this narcissistic stage, organs like their own being always the essential element for their love... The homosexual component has, therefore, its germ in all mankind and finds its outlet normally in a sublimated form in friendships and companionships. Those, however, who are too prematurely fixed or arrested in the evolution of their sexual disposition are exposed to the danger that a flood of libido which finds no outlet may, through failure in social life, intense outbursts of sexual needs, or through disappointment in the opposite sex, regress to this earlier form of gratification (Stanford, 1921, as cited in Davis, 1929, p. 244).

Davis (1929) and Kinsey et al. (1948) report similar observations in gender-segregated institutions and environments where same-sex relationships transpired. Katharine Davis's (1929) *Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-Two Hundred Women* was the first study in the United States conducted on the sex lives of married and unmarried women. She eventually extended the study to include lesbians. Her study surveyed 1,000 married women and 1,200 college-educated women on their sexual experiences and choices. Of the 1,200 single women, 52 percent were in the female educational group, which "includes several deans of women, principals of public and private schools, one city superintendent of public schools, and teachers all along the lines from college to kindergarten" (Davis, 1929, p. 262).

Davis's (1929) work is recognized as a precursor to Kinsey et al.'s (1948, 1953) studies. Both studied the sexual experiences of people. I reference the word people, as their studies

demonstrated evidence of women and men having homosexual and bisexual experiences. Kinsey et al. (1948), in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, interviewed and surveyed 12,000 men about their sexual activities and found that “4 percent of all men engaged exclusively in homosexual activities” (pp. 621-622). Significant numbers of men had sexual activities with both men and women.

In 1953, Kinsey et al. published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, a study of 8,000 women. He and his team found that “women engaged in sexual behaviors more actively than popularly believed” (Blount, 2005, p. 86). Kinsey and his team argued that Americans were “particularly distressed about homosexuality... there appears to be no other culture in the world where the public opinion and the statute law severely penalize homosexual relationships as they do in the United States today.” (Kinsey et al., 1953, p. 483). Kinsey et al. (1948) expressed:

Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black, nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separate pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behavior, the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex. (p. 639)

Marcus (2002) stated,

In historian John D’Emilio’s history of the early years of gay civil rights effort, he credits the war years, when ‘mobilization of American society for victory during World War II... uprooted tens of millions of American men and women, many of them young, and deposited them in a variety of nonfamiliar, often sex-segregated environments. (p. 21)

Davis (1929) noted that it was common in gender-exclusive boarding schools and colleges observing same-sex relationships. As I read through Davis's (1929) case studies, in Case #5, a female teacher pointed to Davis, stating:

You do not ask for anything but personal experiences, but I am going to give you something else on a venture. I am absolutely certain that such experiences, as I have just cited, exist much more commonly than people suppose, both in girls' boarding schools and (still more frequently) in women's colleges. (p. 321)

Davis contends, "homosexual practices have always been observed as common groups of men are isolated from women for considerable periods, notably in the army during wartime, in prisons, mining camps, boys' schools, and certain types of men's colleges" (p. 244). Davis's experiences as a director of a reformatory and the head of the Bureau of Hygiene allowed her to speak to the homosexual attractions in prisons, reformatories, and custodial homes. She stated, "As in a majority of cases, the women have been accustomed to heterosexual expression, it seems quite clear that these substitute for normal relationships" (Davis, 1929, p. 245).

I question if people in gender-exclusive environments experiment with their sexual identity because the dominant heterosexual structure of oppression is invisible or if they encounter what the gender norm is in their current environment. Butler (1993) argued that heterosexuality is always an act and is always at risk of default and that it "knows its possibility of becoming undone; hence its compulsion to repeat which is at once a foreclosure of that which threatens coherence" (p. 314). As queer theorists argue, queer identity is fluid, "instead of fixed and stable, queer pedagogies make room for 'reinvention' (i.e., trying on different identities and ideologies)" (Jackson, 2010, p. 38).

Kinsey et al.'s (1948, 1953) studies initially had positive support and interest; however, conservative readers were angry, and they made sure he paid the price. Although Kinsey did not identify as a homosexual, he experienced the condemnation of a hetero-privileging society. "The furor over the Kinsey findings eventually led funding agencies to withdraw their support for his research, leaving Kinsey confused and bitterly disappointed in how his work had been received" (Morantz, 1977, as cited in Blount, 2005, p. 88). Kinsey's team was accused of aiding communism and promoting and advocating homosexuality. Davis (1929) also experienced heteronormative and hetero-masculine wrath from her funders, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his male advisors.

In the 1910s, Rockefeller supported her studies, seeing her research as advocating for "...strict moral standards that condemned nonmarital sex for both men and women" (Exner, 1921, as cited in Jabour, 2021, p. 5). However, while studying human sexuality, she "...began to promote an honest evaluation of actual sexual behavior as the basis for rational sex ethics" (Exner, 1921, as cited in Jabour, 2021, p. 5). Rockefeller and his male advisors neither shared nor supported her "enthusiasm for a non-judgmental approach to human sexuality" (Fosdick, 1927, as cited in Jabour, 2021, p. 4). Rockefeller pulled her study's funding and fired her; she could no longer serve in an advisory capacity.

Later, Davis's work on human sexuality was not supported by Rockefeller. She was deemed as "fast losing her grip" (Fosdick, as cited in Jabour, 2021, para. 10). Kinsey et al.'s work was recognized by Walter W. Stewart, Rockefeller Foundation Trustee as being "...in this taboo area [that] is certain to arouse emotional attitudes" (Wimpee & Iacobelli, 2020, para. 39).

Both researchers brought visibility to human sexuality, which was at first popular, supported, and then vilified when their studies documented the frequency of same-sex and

bisexual relationships. Judith Butler (1993) proclaimed that the homophobic efforts won this battle by trying to erase and control their studies from further research publicly when she asked, “Is it not a sign of despair over public politics when identity becomes its own policy, bringing with it those who would ‘police’ it from both sides?” (p. 311). Butler (1993) argued, “...politically, we might argue, isn’t it quite crucial to insist on lesbian and gay identities precisely because they are being threatened with erasure and obliteration from homophobic quarters?” (Butler, 1993, p. 311).

In the 1940s and 1950s, gays “were ranked right along with Communists as the number one threat to national security” (Biegel, 2018, p. 202). Senator Joseph McCarthy and President Eisenhower were critical players in creating and supporting an atmosphere of “fear and persecution; the demonization of gays and lesbians had its roots in policies adopted by the military during World War II” (Biegel, 2018, p. 202). “As knowledge of the incidence of homosexual behavior spread, conservative opponents found ways to convert awareness to fear” (Blount, 2005, p. 88).

In post-World War II, the U.S. military “became one of the first postwar institutions to hunt for homosexuals” (Blount, 2005, p. 88). The army quietly penalized homosexuals by discharging them without receiving an honorable or a dishonorable discharge. Rigorous screenings for homosexuality led to thousands of soldiers leaving the military, and the “investigators forced those accused of homosexuality to name other names as well” (Blount, 2005, p. 88). The military could also mandate soldiers to go through “involuntary psychiatric treatment, incarceration in “queer stockades,” and a dishonorable discharge that included the loss of all veteran’s benefits and the official branding of “sex pervert” for life” (Biegel, 2018, p. 202).

Senator “McCarthy and his colleagues decided to probe civilian agencies to see if they, too, employed homosexuals” (Blount, 2005, p. 88). The *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government* (1950) was based on the interim report submitted to the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments. This interim report opened an investigation on the employment of homosexuals and other sex perverts in government, which became a witch hunt. The subcommittee’s objectives were to determine the extent of their work, consider why it was undesirable, and then examine the effectiveness of the methods used to deal with these sex perverts. Cory (1975) reported the outcome of the investigation:

Most of the authorities agree, and our investigation has shown that the presence of a sex pervert in a Government agency tends to have a corrosive influence upon his fellow employees... This is particularly true in the case of young and impressionable people who might come under the influence of young men and women who are brought into Federal jobs not be subjected to that type of influence while in the service of the government. One homosexual can pollute a Government office. (p. 3)

“The conclusion of the committee [is] that a homosexual or other sex pervert is a security risk” (Cory, 1975, p. 272). Not only did the subcommittee deem that homosexuals were security risks, but they also believed, “The lack of emotional stability which is found in most sex perverts and the weakness of their moral fiber, makes them susceptible to the blandishments of the foreign espionage agent” (Cory, 1975, p. 272). “Gays were still seen as mentally ill by the leading associations of psychologists and psychiatrists during that era, and the military establishment embraced this view with passion” (Biegel, 2018, p. 202). Biegel (2018) stated, “In 1950, a special congressional subcommittee recommended that these military policies be used to model for banning all gays from government service” (p. 203). These recommendations became

President Eisenhower's executive order in 1950, "banning 'homosexuals' from all federal jobs" (Biegel, 2008, p. 203).

For these reasons, they were unsuitable as government employees. This order continued until 1993 when President Bill Clinton and the U.S. Congress enacted the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, allowing gays and lesbians to serve in the military as they would not be asked about their sexual orientation during their enlistment screening. In 2007, the presidential primary campaigns began sharing their positions on the military ban. Candidates Senator Hilary Clinton (D-NY) and Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.) had issued statements repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." However, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) said that gay troops pose "an intolerable risk" to national security (Wilcox, 2007, as cited in Biegel, 2018, p. 322). Only when the Obama administration repealed Don't Ask, Don't Tell could homosexuals start serving openly in the military.

"LGBT individuals have been classified as 'persons on the axis of oppression'" (Capper, 1993, as cited in deLeon & Brunner, 2013, p. 178), "discriminated against and forced to remain coverts about their sexual orientation" (deLeon & Brunner, 2013, p. 178). Throughout U.S. history, hetero-privilege "denies minority groups full access to the freedoms of citizenship" (deLeon & Brunner, 2013, p. 178). Levy (2000) argued, "To be excluded from full membership...is to serve as a constant reminder of the ranking of power" (as cited in deLeon & Brunner, 2013, p. 178). Sedgwick (1993) stated, "The closet is the defining structure for gay oppression in this century." (p. 71). deLeon & Brunner (2013) argued that because of this gay oppression, "LGBT individuals were forced into hiding...this intense fear forced gay educators to hide deep in the closet and gay educational leaders, even deeper" (p. 178). This *closet* was a

place to hide your identity, but it did not necessarily mean it was safe. deLeon and Brunner shared Karslake's (2007) definition of the closet:

Closets are a place of death. So many gay people are forced to live in two different realities - the world where they are pretending and the closet world where they have all these fears of guilt, anger, and shame. (Karslake 2007, as cited in deLeon and Brunner, 2013, p. 178)

Judith Butler (1993) sees trouble with lesbians' being in or out of the closet. She questions, "If I claim to be a lesbian, I "come out" only to produce a new and different "closet" (p. 309). Butler (1993) explained that "*outness* can only produce a new opacity; and the closet produces the promise of a disclosure that may never come" (p. 309).

So we are out of the closet, but into what? What new unbounded spatiality? The room, the den, the attic, the basement of the house, the bar, the university, and some new enclosure, like Kafka's door, produce the expectation of fresh air and light of illumination that never arrives. (Butler, 1993, p. 309)

Butler (1993) further emphasizes that being out of the closet "must produce the closet again, and again to maintain itself as out" (p. 309). Butler's thesis reflects my experiences and the many times LGBTQ+ people express they are out of the closet; however, they must come out to every person they meet, everywhere they go, and each personal endeavor they pursue.

Goffman (1959) contends, "...when an individual appears before others, his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have" (p. 3). People alter their appearance, mannerisms, dress, and setting to create an acceptable self or image to perform in front of their audience, then revert to backing themselves when off stage. Goffman compares self-presentation to a play, a performance that occurs on two stages. The onstage performance is

one for all to see; the individual provides a version that is “molded and modified to fit into the understanding and expectation of society in which it is presented” (Goffman, 1959, pp. 22-23).

The backstage performance is the time to drop the role or identity on the front stage; this “plays a significant role in the process of ‘work control’ whereby individuals attempt to buffer themselves from the deterministic demand surrounding them” (Goffman, 1959, p. 114).

Judith Butler (1990) relates to this same ideology of acting with her theory of gender performativity. Butler (1990) avows,

...if gender is something that one becomes - but can never be - then gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and that gender ought not be conceived as a noun or substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort. (p.152)

Butler’s (1993) work examined society’s understanding of gender. She argued that our body does not sustain the truth of our identity; our reality is what we portray and act out. Butler (1993) called drag a role or a play that any gender may perform:

Drag is not the putting on of a gender that belongs properly to some other group, i.e., an act of expropriation or appropriation that assumes that gender is the rightful property of sex, that ‘masculine’ belongs to ‘male’ and ‘feminine’ belongs to ‘female.’ (p. 312)

She argued there is no proper gender identified as being binary, either female or male. Butler insisted that nobody has a gender from the start and that gender is determined through the social norms bestowed upon us by society.

Urrieta & Hatt (2019) based their definition on two assumptions:

(1) The study of identity is the study of subject formation. The study of who counts as belonging to a category, a concept of self, or a group. Identity is always a process of

becoming with multiple consciousnesses depending on social location. Important are the stakes that membership carries; thus, our second assumption (2) identity is power. Power is at the root of who “counts” as belonging to an identity, as well as who is able to self-define, self-identify, and deny others their identity. (p. 2)

During the McCarthy era, the growing fear of homosexuality expanded to schools and school workers. School workers who did not fit the gender norms of presentation and were unmarried “risked suspicion of homosexuality” (Blount, 2005, p. 80). School systems were expected “to purge schools of gay and lesbian teachers based on fears that homosexuality was contagious” (Jackson, 2007, p. 2). The history of negative messaging and banning homosexuals from the government, military, and other institutions was now directed at educational institutions. Jackson (2007) argued that throughout history, lesbian and gay teachers have been viewed as a threat to society. She contends:

The familiar but false association between homosexuality and pedophilia has silenced gay and lesbian teachers, prevented gay and lesbian teachers from advocating for themselves and for young people, and caused educators to turn a blind eye to the existence, let alone contributions, of gay and lesbian teachers. (Jackson, 2007, p. 2)

Bem (1993) asserts, “The resulting prejudice against those who deviate from this social script has been carefully developed by institutional heterosexism through the powerful institutional discourses of organized religion, medicine, sexology, psychiatry, and psychology.” (as cited in Meyer, E., 2007, p. 21). Bem (1993) continues that gender polarization works to reinforce heterosexuality by serving two significant functions:

First, it defines mutually exclusive scripts for being male and female. Second, it defines any person or behavior deviating from these scripts as problematic...taken together, the

effect of these two processes is to construct and naturalize the gender-polarizing link between the sex of one's body and the character of one's psyche and one's sexuality. (p. 81)

This history makes coming out of the closet challenging in the workplace. An HRC (2020) survey found that 46 percent of LGBTQ+ workers were closeted at work, and 28 percent were closeted and not open to anyone in their lives. The HRC (2020) survey results include 28 percent of LGBTQ+ workers lying about their personal lives at work, 17 percent being exhausted from spending time and energy hiding their sexual orientation, and 13 percent hiding their gender identity at work. Schlichter (2004) suggested "That we must understand the critique of heterosexuality through the notion heterosexual notion" (p. 559). Schlichter emphasized that "Butler so aptly states, the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as becoming a subject" (1997, as cited in Schlichter, 2004, p. 559). Schlichter (2004) contends, "It is crucial that we develop an understanding of heterosexual subjection as an overdetermined process of 'becoming straight' under the conditions of heteronormativity" (p. 559).

Scholars of LGBTQ+ identity argue that the impact of oppression surfaces fear and silence. Jackson's (2007) study stated, "Other studies confirmed that coming out at school is an individual decision...they were situational as well" (p. 119). Jackson explained: "Some of these studies examined teachers' reasons for being closeted. All these reasons were rooted in fear" (p. 119). The findings summarized:

- 1) Fear of being accused of child molestation (Evans, 1997; Griffin, 1992; Jennings, 1999; Lipkin, 1995; Olson, 1997; Woods & Harbeck, 1992);
- 2) Fear of being accused of recruiting students to be gay (Evans, 1997; Griffin, 1992; Jennings, 1999; Lipkin, 1995; Olson, 1997; Woods & Harbeck, 1992);

- 3) Fear of being fired for being gay due to lack of legal protections (Harbeck, 1992; Sears, 1992);
- 4) Fear of losing their job if their sexual orientation was discovered regardless of legal protections (Grayson, 1987; Griffin, 1992; Jennings, 1999; Lipkin, 1995; Sears, 1992; Olson, 1997; Woods & Harbeck, 1992);
- 5) Fear of their local communities' reactions (Grayson, 1987; Jennings, 1999; Lipkin, 1995);
- 6) Fear stemming from living in a homophobic society (Blount, 1996; Epstein & Johnson, 1994; Grayson, 1987; Jennings, 1999; Lipkin, 1995; Olson, 1997);
- 7) Fear deriving from an implied 'don't ask, don't tell' policy at their schools (Carlson, 1997). (as cited in Jackson, 2007, pp.119-120)

This fear explains educators staying in the closet. They fear losing everything they have earned. Blount (2005) asked, "Why do so many LGBT school workers remain silent about harassment, job discrimination, intimidation, and ostracism" (p. 3)? Based on her research, she writes, "Mainly they believe the risks to their chosen livelihood are too great" (Blount, 2005, p. 4). Kissen (1996) confirmed, "For those who consider teaching to be their primary identity, the thought of never being able to teach again is devastating" (p. 73).

In Connell's (2014) study, teachers responded differently when asked how their fear affects their being open in their school communities. Most feared how they would be perceived and how the school community would react. Connell (2014) claimed this pressure "forces teachers to hide their identity because anything related to sexuality is to come out as a political and empowering act" (p. 443). Hooker's (2019) study followed Mayo's (2008) study findings,

...that most gay and lesbian teachers have chosen to come out to only some of their colleagues. He [Mayo] found that with his subjects, as I did with mine, they enjoy guarded relationships with their colleagues, ‘where professionalism and teamwork, combined with privacy and discretion, have become the norm at school.’ (Mayo, 2008, as cited in Hooker, 2019, p. 92)

If educators continue to teach in fear, have hesitation, and stay invisible in our school systems, their experiences as LGBTQ+ educators will be under-represented in school history. This erasure continues to allow heteronormativity to dominate our school systems. Stories of LGBTQ+ educators are best told by the people living in those histories, not by the “privilege[ing] Whites, men, the middle and upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these locations as natural or normative points of reference” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, as cited in Sawyer, 2021, p. 24). Sawyer (2021) argued, “This naturalization of history, even a false history, can supplant untold stories of resistance, reshape the memory of those engaged in historical counter experiences (Brown & Au, 2014) and even scaffold a positive reception of a false narrative” (p. 24).

Teachers in same-sex relationships continue to be cautious and have an awareness that others are not accepting of their sexual identity. They know this reality as their world, not just in the schools but in grocery stores, restaurants, and even when traveling in and out of the United States. Goffman (1959) adds, “Performers are aware of the impression they foster and ordinarily also possess destructive information about the show” (p. 144). Goffman (1959) suggested

...a performer tends to conceal or underplay those activities, facts, and motives which are incompatible with an idealized version of himself and his products. In addition, a

performer often engenders in his audience the belief that he is related *to them* in a more ideal way than is always the case. (p. 48)

Their performance must be *right on cue* and what Goffman (1959) calls a routine performance. Their everyday routine performance is to arrive at school, be ready to be in character as a straight person, teach what they are mandated to teach, and not stray from this pedagogy that is no longer yours. You must follow the script and deliver this performance to your audience (students, staff, and administrators). At the end of your contract day, you can leave your stage (school setting), and when you are home, you can take off your approved costume and mask and think to yourself, you made it through another day of your created illusion. Our routine becomes so flawless that, as Goffman (1959) suggested, "...the audience, in their turn, often assume that the character projected before them is all there is to the individual who acts out the projection for them" (p. 48).

We know that as LGBTQ+, when we confide personal details about ourselves with peers, these revelations can come at an unpredictable cost. This revelation becomes a moment of vulnerability; there is trust, and there could be a need to remove the armor, shield, and mask. Nevertheless, there is harrowing doubt as you debate with yourself as you look in the mirror, asking yourself, "Do I have the courage, to break this routine facade and dismantle the heteronormative power to become now my power?" As the courage grows inside, you feel empowered, you are in a perfect moment, and then you hear your own words coming out of your mouth, whether it was a slip of your tongue or an emotional verbal outburst, "I am LGBTQ+!" That moment is deafening silent, and time pauses, and for every person who announces their sexual identity, skepticism, steps in, "What if this person tells the wrong person?" Sullivan (2003) reminds us, "Once again, 'coming out' has its benefits and its disadvantages, but either

way, the call to come out presupposes that such an action is in itself transformative and the identity that one publicly declares unambiguous...” (p. 31).

Research reflects that LGBTQ+ educators face a range of discriminatory policies and practices. They fear being fired, harassment from students, parents, faculty, and the community, and homophobic stereotypes. “Of all professions, education is probably the most discriminatory against homosexual individuals” (as cited in Jackson, 2007, p. 5). Jackson (2007) stated:

[Kevin] Jennings points out that in a homophobic society, ‘a gay teacher is problematic’ because teachers are expected to pass along student society’s dominant values - ‘Thus, gay teachers, by their very existence, seem to contradict a central function of schooling in society. (Jackson, 2007, p. 5)

According to the Journal Education and Policy Studies (JELPS), “*The National Survey of Educators’ Perceptions of School Climate* of 2007 and 2011 studies filled a gap in literature on the school environments of LGBT teachers, they indicated that LGBT educators perceived a problematic climate across the U.S.” (Wright et al., 2019, p. 2). The *National Survey of Educators’ Perceptions of School Climate (2017)* was the third survey instrument asking LGBTQ+ teachers about the consequences of coming out. The 2007 and 2011 summary of responses reflected:

Very serious adverse consequences were reported to administrators. Respondents reported being threatened with job loss, not having contracts renewed, being reassigned and investigated, having payment for extra duties withheld, not being promoted, being denied merit pay, receiving unfair action plans, and having services for their students withheld. (Wright et al., 2019, p. 4)

The JELPS (2017) school climate survey had emerging themes of negativity and positivity. “In discussing students, respondents either felt that student were unaccepting of their LGBT status or that student also were not safe to be out in the environment” (Wright et al., 2019, p. 11). Parents’ responses “expressed concern about parents from religious backgrounds, those who did not want their child placed with them, or those who felt that an LGBT educator was a pedophile” (Wright et al., 2019, p. 11). The positive themes included “support, role model, and Gay Student Alliance (GSA)” (Wright et al., 2019, p. 11).

LGBTQ+ Identity Development Models

Several gay and lesbian identity models have been established to describe sexual identity and orientation. While these models more closely resemble perspectives of the dominant heteronormative society, I present them here as context for this study. They all delineate stages and describe a linear process of identity development. Cass (1984) coined the term homosexual identity formation to define and recognize LGB individuals as they managed their homosexual identity. Her model offered six stages of a complete sense of identity about sexual orientation: 1) identity confusion, 2) identity comparison, 3) identity tolerance, 4) identity acceptance, 5) identity pride, and 6) identity synthesis. Troiden (1988) proposed a four-stage model of homosexual identity development that included 1) sensitization, 2) identity confusion, 3) identity assumption, and 4) commitment. He also introduced three integral components that are fundamental concepts of identity development: self-concept, identity, and homosexual identity.

Jackson’s (2007) gay teacher identity model focused on the “pedagogical consequences of gay teacher identity development, i.e., how participants’ experiences related to being gay or lesbian shaped their practice” (p. 41). Jackson’s (2007) model integrates gay and teacher identities and illustrates how internal and external factors shaped the teacher participants in her

study and influenced their professional classroom practice. Jackson looked at the identity formation of lesbian and gay teachers and how they perceived themselves in the classrooms. Jackson (2007) developed a six-stage gay teacher identity development concept that included 1) pre-identity, 2) identity realization/survival, 3) identity questioning, 4) identity focus, 5) identity integration, and 6) change agent.

Connell (2014) describes three paths—splitters, knitters, and quitters—that educators take when deciding whether to come out in schools. Splitters create a boundary between personal and professional life and choose not to come out; knitters work to bring identities into the school environment; and quitters move into administration or leave education altogether.

I insert this journal entry from the Wozolek's (2018) article because I can hear and feel the agony of trying to say how educators and LGBTQ+ educators have been shaped to conform. However, we cannot keep rooting for our LGBTQ+ students from inside our closets.

Journal Entry: 12/15/2015

This place is soul-crushing. A place where only the straightest and whitest can remain feeling whole. No wonder I'm struggling to make it. No wonder my students can't fight back their darkest feelings. And yet, tomorrow, I'll get up and do it all again. Not for me. I suppose I am too far gone. I get up for the kids whose voices remain unheard. Fight until you're silenced. Do not silence yourself. (Wozolek, 2018, p. 1)

The educator who shared this entry could identify with the stages in the LGBTQ+ identity models. I argue that the educator could have worked through the stages specified in Cass's (1984), Troiden's (1988), Jackson's (2007), and Connell's (2014) LGBTQ+ models, but school pressures keep LGBTQ+ educators closeted.

Teacher Identity

As a kid, I would play-act as a teacher, and my students included my sister and stuffed animals. My mom would remind me to stop being bossy and understand that my sister could not read. My mom would model how to patiently teach letter sounds and names of letters to show me how to teach my younger sister. I loved watching her teach us; her voice was soft, but her tone was direct. Our work needed to be perfect, and she would have us redo it till it was. I thought it was magical to teach someone something they did not know, and with this magic fairy dust I wanted to be a teacher.

I learned how cruel people could be to other LGBTQ+ people and me from an early age. My gay identity became what others focused on, not the person they grew up with and knew. This gay “thing” brought heavy baggage of unacceptance from my family, losing childhood friends and peers, and a lack of coaches supporting me, which drove me to a different academic route. My experiences in corporate America were about financials, climbing the career ladder, following corporate policies, and making the company look great. Your work performance was based on data to which your identity was attached.

When I returned to school to earn my Bachelor’s in Education, I knew I was entering a different arena, one in which I would need to be cautious of being openly out. I knew there was still this stigma of us being horrible people. As I read and researched, I found that everyone automatically assumed you were heterosexual. When you have children, they automatically think you are straight. After being in the same school for a while, people would ask about my husband, or they would ask about my children’s dad. I would explain that they do not have a dad, then the expression of pity and then they want to dispute about how my children had to have a dad and ask me if it was a bad relationship. I would laugh and then share with them that I was artificially inseminated. The look on their face! This revelation would turn the whole conversation around,

and they would be fascinated by the inseminations, their pity for us gone, and in that instant, I was a liberated woman. Then, I would share I have a partner; my colleagues would return to not knowing what to think or do with me. Being gay, I knew time would tell.

Reeves (2018) stated, “Teacher identity is the practice of becoming and being a teacher” (p. 4). Teacher identity weaves together how teachers teach and their relationships with their students. This concept of identity sheds light on the symbiotic relationship between identity and practice. Palmer (1997) argued:

[A] good teacher is compelled to stand where “personal and public meet, dealing with the thundering flow of traffic at an intersection where ‘weaving a web of connectedness’ feels more like crossing a freeway on foot. As we try to connect ourselves and our subjects with our students, we make ourselves, as well as our subjects, vulnerable to indifference, judgment, and ridicule. (p. 8)

Palmer (1997) stated that “a good teacher must stand where personal and public meet, dealing with the thundering flow of traffic at an intersection where ‘weaving a web of connectedness’ feels more like crossing a freeway on foot” (p. 8). “To reduce our vulnerability, we disconnect from students, from subjects, and even from ourselves. We build a wall between inner truth and outer performance. We play-act the teacher’s part.” (Palmer, 1997, p. 8). I observe this play-act of teaching and how when there is not a relationship, teacher and student will either disconnect, look the other way where the student does not exist, or constantly complain that something is wrong with the student and or family when the student performs in ways of their opposite born identity. I want to stress that not all educators act this way with students and LGBTQ+ people they encounter in schools.

In Jackson's (2007) study, participants realized they denied their "students access to their full range of humanity. They found that sharing aspects of themselves did more to challenge stereotypes by putting a human face to the gay community." (p. 47). Kincheloe's (2008) research found that "All teachers, of course, should honor the being and experiences of oppressed, but they should never take them simply as they are" (p. 167). Palmer (1997) stated this self-protective split is encouraged by academic culture. Even though multiple methods of knowing are stressed, the academy "honors only one objective way of knowing that takes us into the real world by taking us out of ourselves" (Palmer, 1997, p. 10).

Jackson (2010) stresses the positive effects of being "naturally queer" and what this can look like, "...where it matters in such a way that it is seen as bringing playfulness and a way of thinking that turns traditional notions on their head in productive and useful ways" (p. 37). Arvaja (2016) suggested that teacher education programs need to provide opportunities and a stronger focus on "giving students opportunities to reflect upon their biographies and schools' cultural contexts to understand the relationships and possible tensions between these" (p. 392). Researchers advocate for teachers: "a need exists to develop practices that would actively support reflective identity work" (Cohen, 2010; as cited in Arvaja, 2016, p. 392) and, hence, promote professional self-understanding (Arvaja, 2016). As Kincheloe (2008) explained, "Identity is always in process; it is never finalized, and as such, it should not be treated as something beyond the possibility of change" (p. 167).

Palmer (1997) contends, "The teacher within is not the voice of conscience but of identity and integrity. It speaks not of what ought to be, but of what is real for us, of what is true" (p. 10).

Britzman (1995) states that the problem is

this liberal desire for recovery and authenticity when it takes the form of inclusion in the curriculum. She shares the importance of teaching teachers the personal value of being authentic, stating, ‘what difference makes in the field of curriculum, the hope is that the truth of the minority might persuade the normative folks to welcome the diversity of others...and to prevent racist, sexist, and heterocentric attitudes.’ (p. 159)

Palmer (1997) stressed the importance and awareness of telling the truth about ourselves to our colleagues:

But telling the truth about ourselves with colleagues in the workplace is an enterprise fraught with danger, against which we have erected formidable taboos. We fear making ourselves vulnerable in the midst of competitive people and politics that could quickly turn against us, and we claim the inalienable right to separate the ‘personal’ and the ‘professional’ into airtight compartments (even though everyone knows the two are inseparably intertwined). So, we keep workplace conversation objective and external, finding it safer to talk about technique than about selfhood. (p. 13)

As LGBTQ+ educators move through these dangerous intersections, they fear their sexual orientation and gender identity will be exposed. “Queer narrative strategies of resistance include queer appropriations of forms typically linked to truth-telling, the revelation of secrets, authenticity, and transparency, namely, the interview, the autobiography, the diary, and the documentary.” (de Villiers, 2012, as cited in Sawyer, 2021, p. 25). However, their heterosexual colleagues have the privilege and society’s acceptance to share their life experiences and personal stories through the heteronormative lens, whereas LGBTQ+ educators need to be more aware of how they perform these intersections of personal and professional lanes.

Britzman (1998) suggests that educators always need to look for ways in which what we *do not know* (and what we desire not to know) influences teaching practices. In particular, educators need to consider the multiple ways in which *what we (unconsciously) repress* hinders teaching and learning (as cited in Kumashiro, 2000, p. 46).

As a gay educator, I believe in empowering students, encouraging them to use their voices and learn about themselves; however, how many of us encourage our students but do not practice what we are promoting? bell hooks (1994) spoke about empowerment when she wrote, “Empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging our students to take risks” (p. 21). As educators, we cannot expect our students to take risks if we are unwilling to take the same dangers; when students share confessional narratives, but we are reluctant to do the same, then we are “exercising power in a manner that could be coercive” (hooks, 1994, p. 21). Kincheloe (2008) stated,

Freire maintained in the spirit of this critical hope. Oppression, he understood, always reduces the oppressed understanding of historical time to a hopeless present. We are all oppressed from time to time by this hopeless presentism that tells us time and again: ‘things will never change.’ Throughout history these hopeless moments have been followed by radical changes. Freire’s framework of historical hope was ‘paralleled by a pedagogical hope shared between students and teachers.’ (p. 165)

Freire (1998) believed this framework brought historical hope to students and teachers to learn in the here and now; he stated:

The hope that we can learn together, teach together be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering

of joy...Hope is a natural, possible, and necessary impetus in the context of our unfinishedness. Hope is an indispensable seasoning in our human, historical experience. Without it, instead of history, we would have pure determinism. (p. 69)

Beginning Stage of Teacher and Student Relationships

I share Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological theory in my study because it brings the importance of teacher relationships to student needs. Bronfenbrenner contributed to the field of child development with his first theory, "ecological systems theory" (1973-1979), then revised to 'ecological systems theory' (1980-1993), and to the final title, 'bioecological theory' (1993-2006) (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 3). The Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development (1973-1979) was the first phase; "Bronfenbrenner (1979) showed that a developing individual is contained within four systems...microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem" (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 3). In the second phase (1980-1993), "Bronfenbrenner paid more attention to the role of developing individuals in influencing their development and focused more on the biological influences" (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 3). In the third phase (1993-2006), there were several changes and more emphasis on the proximal process. "Bronfenbrenner emphasized the use of the PPCT model in research to show how interactions between process, person, context, and time could explain the development of individuals" (Tudge & Rosa, 2013, as cited in El Zaatari and Maalouf, p. 3). The bioecological theory theoretical framework identifies five systems to understand humans in their environments.

I am introducing this first quote as it highlights what some of us forget about the first day of school for students four to five years old and even of the new student on campus. Bronfenbrenner described this as "...the science of children in strange situations" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, as cited in Navarro & Tudge, 2022, p. 1). The first strange situation was

the first day of school for preschoolers and kindergarteners. At the beginning of every school year, we have this insane ritual where parents drop off their four to five-year-old students to adult strangers, aka educators, kids they do not know (through kids' perspectives, kids are not strangers, just tall and older people are), strange big building, gates to keep you in, everything is unknown.

As a child, you do not know what is happening or going to happen to you. Many things could happen at this point: the child may not cry or scream, and the parent is crying, and we have to encourage them to leave because, their treasured child is in the classroom moving on with their life; or the child is screaming or clinging on their parent for dear life, then we are helping the parent escape from their child and the child eventually goes in the classroom with much encouragement, coaxing, and positivity; or the parent drives off, and their child runs after the car in a full parking lot, then we are dodging cars trying to keep the child safe, but still encouraging, coaxing, and positive. Then, the traumatized child still needs to walk into a strange room (classroom) with yet another adult smiling at them or telling him where to put his backpack, water bottle, sit, and then the classroom door closes. I realize it may seem ridiculous that I added this scenario, but this is the first organic introduction of students and educators building relationships and the students' gaining familiarity with an adult they see every day who is patient, comforting, understanding, accepting, and consoles them through this weird experience of being left by their parent to a bizarre situation of not having a sense of belonging.

We begin this sense of belonging with students on their first moment on their first day at school; these strangers (educators) and kids they do not know (peers) become part of their microsystem, and we insert ourselves into their immediate environment of their family. We

know from studies the importance of students having a sense of belonging to the school.

Bronfenbrenner defined the microsystems as:

...a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relationships experienced by the developing person in a given *face-to-face setting* [italics added] with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1996, as cited in Navarro & Tudge, 2022, p. 3)

The mesosystem slides into everyone's stage when our student is first dropped off or when parents and families have their first conversation with the teacher or staff member at school. These are the moments when educators and families build relationships around the student. In education, we discuss the importance of relationships and the two stages, microsystem and mesosystem, that impact students directly. Scholars in educational research have reiterated the importance of building relationships with students. "A sense of belonging is defined as the 'extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment'" (Goodenow, 1993b, as cited in El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 2). "In the same vein, Longaretti (2020) thought of belonging at school in terms of relational, behavioral, and emotional aspects, namely belonging as being and doing, felt or lived, relating and acceptance" (as cited in Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022, p. 2). We know that when students feel a sense of belonging, they have a sense of safe places to express themselves, maybe not to everyone, but to those they trust.

Pink and Blue Mirrors of Gender Identity

A child's first experience before they come out of the womb is the experience of heteronormativity. People want to know what your family is having before you are even born.

Before a child enters the world, they are identified as female or male. You are dressed in pink as a female and blue as a male.

Meyer, I. (2007) injected:

Children learn at a very early age that it is not biological sex that communicates one's gender to the rest of society; rather, it is the signifiers we choose to wear that will identify us as male or female. These choices are codes that are explicitly and implicitly taught to children. (p. 19)

I remember when I was pregnant with my first and second child, the first question I was asked was, "Is it a girl or a boy?" Once someone hears the gender they may or may not ask if the baby or you are healthy. Blaise (2009) argued:

Children's sex, gender, and sexuality are usually understood through biological or socialization understandings of identity. It is common to believe that young children are biologically born with their sex identity and that as they grow and develop, they learn about their gender roles. (p. 452)

Richardson (2012) asserts that in our society and our schools, "we make assumptions, create generalizations, uphold stereotypes, design experiences, and hold different expectations about how girls and boys, women and men, just 'are' and should be." (p. 23). He identified this as gender discrimination facilitated stereotyping or *sextyping*. Students will not be who they are until they are around groups that accept them. Richardson's (2012) research brought to light a valid question, "should schools model themselves after society, or should society model itself after schools" (p. 11)? Richardson (2015) argued:

Westernized heteronormative scripts are practically handed to us on day one. And, the people in our lives (acting as producers, directors, and audience members) will continue

to ensure we stick to the script: no improvising allowed; be your character, play your gendered performance. (p. 2)

Educators play a role in society's expectations of gender roles. We see this in schools daily. Many teachers, as they are people, have the same common theme of people's belief systems regarding their perspectives of what they think gender norms and expectations are for everyone. If you are not part of their norm, there is something abnormal. The only safe place for male and female genders to switch is during "active play" in preschool and kindergarten classrooms, where they independently switch gender roles or are assigned by their peers who play whatever their imagination tells them. At this age, you can be anyone or anything as a human. The adults eventually squash or suppress these ideas. Conversely, the adults give students permission to switch gender roles or be something else, (i.e., trees, flowers, animals), but this is a 'controlled play' where adults control the when, where, and why to stop.

Optical Views of Queer and Goffman's Performance Theories

I drew on queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's (1959) performance theory for this research study. Britzman (1995) stated that "Queer Theory is an attempt to move away from psychological explanations like homophobia, which individualizes heterosexual fear and loathing toward gay and lesbian subjects at the expense of examining how heterosexuality becomes normalized as natural" (p. 153). Wozolek (2019) found queer theory is complex and can be difficult to define because of its "multiplicity of dimensions, differences, and similarities that constitute queerness, its forever-fluid identities and forms, and numerous scholarly lenses answer Sedgwick's question as a productive know of possibilities" (p. 1).

Britzman (1995) stated there is a problem when we are not acknowledging and discussing queer theory in academics. She states:

[T]hat these problems may seem situated solely in the small spaces of classrooms and educational studies. The stakes, however, are raised when the absence of gay and lesbian theorizing in education is set in tension with crucial cultural and historical changes that concern constitutional bodies of knowledge and knowledge of bodies. (p. 151)

Britzman (1995) brings awareness to tensions, social anxieties, difficulties, and discomfort with the term queer as a noun or identity, arguing, "...is not polite to call anything queer" (p. 153). Britzman (1995) states,

To work within the terms of gay and lesbian theories, then, allows for the consideration of two kinds of pedagogical stakes. One has to do with thinking ethically about what discourses of difference, choice, and visibility mean in classrooms, in pedagogy, and in how education can be thought about. (p. 152)

The second pedagogical stake is "thinking through structures of disavowal within education, or the *refusals* - whether curricular, social, or pedagogical - to engage a traumatic perception that produces the subject of difference as a disruption, as the outside normalcy" (Britzman, 1995, p. 152).

Queer theory seeks to disrupt and deconstruct normative theories. To avoid sexual orientation and sexual identity discrimination, LGBTQ+ workers tend to perform a heterosexual identity. Wittig (1992) contends that "Heterosexuality is always already there within all mental categories. It has sneaked into dialectical thought (or thought of differences) as its main category" (p.43).

The CAP (2022) survey revealed that "over 50 percent of LGBTQ+ Americans have deliberately hidden personal relationships to avoid experiencing discrimination. Between 20% and 33% LGBTQ have altered other aspects of their personal or professional lives to avoid

discrimination” (Graveris, 2022, p. 15). Oppression is when 50 percent of LGBTQ+ people consciously hide their authentic selves from society. An example is how the dynamic power of the heterosexual community can push LGBTQ+ people into a dislocated space of nonexistence in the workplace.

Wittig (1992) found:

To constitute a difference and to control it is an ‘act of power since it is essentially a normative act. Everybody tries to show the other as different. But not everyone succeeds in doing so. One has to be socially dominant to succeed in life.’ (p. 29)

LGBTQ Nation (2021) defined queer theory as a field of study that “challenges existing traditional ideas about identity, sexuality, and gender - particularly that of heteronormativity, or the belief heterosexuality is the natural, moral, or “normal” expression of sexuality.”

(lgbtqnation.com., 2021, para 4). Britzman (1995) argues that queer theory is the movement away from “psychological explanations like homophobia, which individualizes heterosexual fear of and loathing toward gay and lesbian subjects at the expense of examining how heterosexuality becomes normalized as natural” (p. 153).

Meyer, E. (2007) asserts:

The queer theory goes beyond exploring aspects of identity and experience. It questions taken-for-granted assumptions about relationships, identity, gender, and sexual orientation. It seeks to explore rigid normalizing categories into possibilities beyond the binaries of man/woman, masculine/feminine, student/teacher, and gay/straight. (p. 15)

Meyer, E. (2007) stated, “These acts of surveillance are rooted in Foucault’s (1975) concept of Panopticon – an all-seeing, yet completely invisible source of power and control” (p. 22). Meyer, E. (2007) explains, “This type of surveillance and control is particularly effective because we all

unknowingly contribute to it unless we actively work to make it visible by questioning and challenging it.” (p. 22). Drawing on queer theory in this study required me to provide a space for LGBTQ+ educators to share their queer experiences through their narratives, their stories that are not interrupted, without twisting the plots and decontextualizing the frames of the traditional power which influence the Anglo-European history. Baszile (2017a, 2017b) stated, “To resist hegemony, as many scholars noted, we need to try to understand and confront the lived past to move with a reconceptualized purpose and vision into the future.” (as cited in Sawyer, 2021, p. 35).

Framing their queer narratives revealed the “human face on the abstract and symbolic quality of lived experience, helping to situate it historically, socially, and subjectively” (Pinar, 2012, as cited in Sawyer, 2021, p. 35). The storytelling from this narrative study is rooted in their lived experiences in K-12 classrooms, which controlled spaces of dominance that suppress their identities promote their continued performance of heteronormativity, and teach in structures of oppression. It is the right time to dismantle these structures, shift the suffocating entanglements, and finally have conducive learning environments that welcome all. Sawyer (2021) argued, “Telling our own stories is difficult, but the alternative is all too apparent: someone else will do it for us, and we will be present only through our absence” (p. 36).

Summary

In chapter two, I reviewed the literature associated with performing identities and connected it to what we know about how LGBTQ+ educators perform identities in K-12 schools. I provided a psychological/sociological examination of self-identity, the I and me, teacher identity, and LGBTQ+ identity. I established a context for this study around identity negotiation and self, sexualized identities inside and outside schools, teacher identity, and sexual orientation

identity. I concluded with a focus on queer theory, which is a reframing of queer identities, and how they shape LGBTQ+ teachers' performances in the classroom.

Chapter three provides the research methodology of this narrative inquiry study. The chapter addresses the research questions and methodology, participant selection criteria, introduces the LGBTQ+ participants and their chosen identities, ethical considerations, data collection and instrumentation, interviews, and data analysis. Chapter four shares the research findings from the participant's interviews. The themes and subthemes about how the participants negotiate the performance of their sexual identity in K-12 schools are discussed.

Chapter five connects the findings presented back to my research questions, drawing on scholarship that includes Butler's (1990) queer theory and Goffman's (1959) performance theory. This chapter summarizes the findings and discusses the implications of what we know from this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“...do justice to difference (individual, historical, cross-cultural), to contingency, to performative force, and to the possibility of change....” ~Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

This narrative study was designed to understand better how LGBTQ+ educators perform their self and teacher identities in the K-12 academic culture. There were challenges as I explored the participants’ lived experiences as LGBTQ+ educators; however, as I reflect on the positive outcome of the study, I refer to Sedgwick’s (1990) description of queer as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality, that aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (p. 8). This narrative study

open[s] the mesh of possibilities” and throughout the journey that we take there will be an “a ‘route,’ a mapping, an impossible geography - impossible not because it does not exist, but because *it exists and does not exist exactly at the same time*. (Golding, 1993, as cited in Britzman, 1995, p. 155)

This study served as a safe space for LGBTQ+ educators to share their experiences in schools, how they work through diversity and discrimination, and how they perform their identities in heteronormative K-12 classrooms. Narrative research “uses a variety of analytical practices and is rooted in different social and humanities disciplines” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2014, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 70).

Narrative researchers collect *stories* from individuals (and documents, and group conversations) about individuals’ lived and told experiences. These stories may emerge from a story told to the researcher, which is co-constructed between the researcher and the participant. A story intended as a performance to convey some message or point. (Riessman, 2008, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 71)

Queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's (1959) performance theory framed the LGBTQ+ educators' narratives of how they perform their lived queer experiences in and out of schools; this theory was used because it can "reconsider sociopolitical, historical, cultural norms and values" (Wozolek, 2019, p. 1). In this chapter, I present the research questions, and the significant components of the research plan including the methodology and queer theory framing, participant criteria and selection, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and validity.

Research Questions

These research questions guided this study:

- 1. How do LGBTQ+ educators perform their gender identities and sexual orientations in historical heteronormative classrooms and schools?**
 - a. How do LGBTQ+ educators regulate their gender identity and sexual orientation in their pedagogy?**

The research questions added to the fragments of interchanging glass mirrors in my kaleidoscope of inquiry. The research questions elicited the participants' stories of their queer experiences in schools, how they perform their identities, and which identities they portray in schools. Butler (1993) argues, "...professionalization of gayness requires a certain performance and production of 'self' which is a *constituted effect* of a discourse that nevertheless claims to 'represent' that self as a prior truth" (p. 310). Seidman (2006) stated that, "stories are a way of knowing... Individuals' consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues are abstractions based on people's concrete experience" (p. 7).

This study contributes to the specific knowledge, life, and teacher queer experiences of the marginalized group of LGBTQ+ educators. The study's outcome identified the participants'

challenges, barriers, strengths, and misunderstandings and how, when, and why LGBTQ+ educators perform their identity. The information collected from this study can educate educators on recognizing and addressing bullying, verbal and physical harassment, and microaggressions targeting LGBTQ+ students and staff. The data collected from this study can encourage using inclusive language that respects gender identities and sexual orientations. In addition, begin a support system for LGBTQ+ educators, including mentorship programs and resources to help them navigate challenges in school systems.

Research Methodology

The narrative method “begins with the experiences expressed in the lived and told stories of individuals” (Creswell, 2013, p. 70). “Bertaux (1981) has argued that the subjects of inquiry in the social sciences can talk and think...If given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on.” (as cited in Seidman, 2006, p. 8). Chase (2011) defined narrative inquiry as

meaning and making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one’s own or other’s actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing consequences of actions and events over time. (p. 421)

The significance of this narrative study served as a safe space for the authentic power of LGBTQ+ educators’ voices to share their queer experiences in the classroom, how they perform through diversity and discrimination, and how they perform their identity in heteronormative K-12 classrooms. Butler (1993) argued, “...identity categories tend to be instruments of the regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures...” (p. 308). To better understand the queer human, understanding their ability to perform for others is an

ongoing decision, "...when an individual appears before others, his actions will influence the definition of the situation they come to have" (Goffman, 1959, p. 3). To better understand human behavior is the ability of people to symbolize their experience through language. "Heron points out that the original and archetypal paradigm of human inquiry is two people talking and asking questions of each other. He says:" (Seidman, 2006, p. 8)

The use of language itself...contains within it the paradigm of collaborative inquiry, and since language is the primary tool whose use enables human construing and intending to occur, it isn't easy to see how there can be any more fundamental mode of inquiry for human beings into the human condition. (Heron, as cited in Seidman, 2006, p. 8)

Creswell (2013) found that qualitative and narrative inquiries "involves closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study within the political, social, and cultural contexts of researchers, and the reflexivity or "presence" of the researchers in the accounts they present." (p. 45). The participants' narratives revealed their performances as lived experiences in what Britzman calls "systematic inclusion and systematic exclusion system."

Britzman (1995) states, "...schools are important sites that contribute to the normalization of heterosexual behavior" (p. 22). She found in Richard Friend's (1993) article, "Choices, not Closets," that he "exposes two ways that such lessons are passed on in schools through the process of systematic inclusion and systematic exclusion" (Britzman, 1995, p. 22). School systems are intentionally suggesting negative or false information about homosexuality either by including biased information or excluding accurate and affirming information. Britzman (1995) explained that "systematic inclusion is the way in which negative or false information about homosexuality is introduced in schools as a pathology or deviant behavior." (p. 22). Are they in an environment where "systematic exclusion enforces 'the process whereby

positive role models, messages, and images about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are silenced in schools” (Friend, 1993, as cited in Britzman, 1995, p. 22)?

During the participant’s interviews, I carefully listened to their narrative stories, paying attention to moments where their story contains a ‘turning point’ by taking a significant turn, encountering tension, or experiencing interruption. I know these moments are pivotal in understanding the complexity of the educator’s experiences. Queer theory guides this narrative inquiry “as a body of literature continuing to evolve, it explores the myriad complexities of the construct, identity, and how identities reproduce and ‘perform’ in social forums.” (Creswell, 2013, p. 32). The narratives of each participant have a voice to share their queered history in education, the identities they perform, whether it is a front or backstage, and their queered experiences of sociopolitical and their successes.

Qualitative Research Study

Creswell (2013) asserts that qualitative research “begins with assumptions and the use of interpretative/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). Qualitative research tries to provide detailed and in-depth understanding through an interpretative lens. Qualitative research uses multiple methods rather than relying on a single data source. The data collected for this qualitative research included participant interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell (2013) stated, “We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationship that often exists between researcher and participant.” (p. 48). Qualitative research was conducted to better understand the contexts and settings that the participants in the study used to address the issue or problem. I chose qualitative research because I could write in a “*literary, flexible style*”

as I conveyed the stories of my participants (Creswell, 2013). Face-to-face and directly talking with participants was a component of data collection to experience the issues and problems and see them behave and act within the interview (Creswell, 2013). As the researcher, I was the key instrument that collected the data by examining documents and observing the participants' behaviors while I interviewed them. I also designed the instrument of the 19 open-ended interview questions (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research relies on complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic. "Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from 'bottoms up' by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information" (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). Inductive and deductive logic and complex reasoning were used to identify and build themes checked against the interview data.

Participant Criteria and Selection

The target population for this qualitative study included K-12 educators, who may or may not be openly out in their schools. I contacted four of my friends who are LGBTQ+ educators and invited them to participate in my research. As I conducted this narrative inquiry, my study needed "one or more individuals to study, individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or which shed light on specific phenomenon or issue being explored." (Creswell, 2013, p. 147).

The selection criteria for this study's participants included 1) being a K-12 educator, 2) having an LGBTQ+ identity, 3) being or not being openly out, 4) having taught more than two years, and 5) being from 22-75 years. The participants were recruited with a snowballing approach to select participants, which then these participants led to other possible participants. Snowball or chain sampling strategy is "Identified cases of interest from people who know

people who know what cases are information-rich” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 158).

The participant recruitment began with contacting colleagues and persons I know who self-identified as LGBTQ+ educators; some publicly perform their identity and some do not in their schools. I contacted 22 LGBTQ+ educators, and 11 educators committed to sharing their experiences in the study by sending the study recruitment letter via email (Appendix B). Four of the 11 participants were friends who are LGBTQ+ educators who met the study’s criteria and agreed to participate. They shared my study information with others they knew who identified as LGBTQ+ educators and would meet the study’s criteria. These five potential participants contacted me for additional information about the study and decided they would participate. I contacted two acquaintances who met the study criteria, and they also agreed to participate.

A total of 11 LGBTQ+ educators participated in this study. However, 11 other potential participants withdrew for multiple reasons; some withdrew after I sent them the interview questions and said they would not participate for personal reasons. Two contacts shared that they were not openly out and would not be comfortable sharing their personal information. The other LGBTQ+ educators stated they were interested, so I sent them the interview questions and followed up, but they never responded.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

This study comprised 11 participants who shared their queer experiences in the K-12 classrooms. Their stories represent how they may or may not share their sexual identity with colleagues, students, parents, and administrators, and the balancing act they perform front stage in classrooms to conceal and protect their sexual identity from the scrutiny of others. Their narratives spoke to the timing of their decisions of with whom, how, when, or if they shared their

sexual identity, with the experienced understanding of how this shared knowledge might impact their careers.

Table 1 highlights the participants' sociodemographic characteristics, including their pseudonym, age at the time of study, age of coming out, religious beliefs, relationship status, and whether they have children or pets.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Pseudonym	Age at Time of Study	Age of Coming Out	Religious Beliefs	Relationship Status	Children/Pets
Jack	45	17-18	Christian	Partner (Male 13 yrs)	None
Griffith	32	17	Atheist	Married (Male)	None
Farris	46	24	NP/Catholic	Married (Male)	None
Jara [^]	28	20s	Atheist	Engaged (Female)	None
Maia*	47	414	NP/Catholic	Married (Female)	5 + 1
Riley	29	14	N/A	Partner (Female)	None
LGemini*	60	30	Spiritual	Married (Female)	2 Dogs
Sam*	54	44	Christian	Single	2
Gerald	58	17	NP/Catholic	Married (Male)	None
Edward	39	17-18	None	Married (Male)	None
Keito	27	14	Spiritual	Single	None

Note. *Maia, LGemini, and Sam were once married to males. [^]Jara was in a six-plus-year relationship with a male. NP means non-practicing.

Introducing LGBTQ Participants

I am honored that 11 individuals shared their stories for this study. They were brave in their willingness to narrate stories of their personal and professional experiences and challenges. I harken to deLeon and Brunner (2013) in calling them warriors when they wrote, “A warrior of the heart combines the traditional values of warriorship such as strength and bravery with virtues of the heart like courage, conviction, and empathy.” (p. 183).

The participants were given pseudonyms, and the information in Table 2 highlights each participant’s pseudonym and its meaning. I assigned each participant a pseudonym with meanings about bravery, confidence, and being a warrior. The participants’ pseudonyms were created based on the first letters of their names and analytical profiles (Appendix C). The meaning of their names came from multiple naming texts. The participants had a choice to agree with the pseudonym chosen or choose their own. One participant strongly encouraged me to use his real name, even putting it in writing he permits me to do so. I explained that the pseudonym protected his privacy and that he would need one to participate in the study, following Northern Arizona University’s (NAU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines (Appendix D). He eventually agreed. Two other participants wanted to choose their pseudonyms, and I honored both requests.

Table 2***Pseudonyms of Study Participants and Each of Their Meanings***

Participant	Meanings of Pseudonym
Jack	“Healthy and Strong”
Griffith	“Strong Chief”
Farris	“Man of Courage”
Jara	“To Liberate, to Set Free, Free”
Maia	“Brave Warrior”
Riley	“Courageous, Strength, and Bravery”
LGemini	Chose her Name
Sam	In Memory of Daughter’s Name
Gerald	“Spear Warrior”
Edward	“Wealth Guard”
Keito	“Blessing, Favor, and Grace”

Note. Participants’ pseudonyms names came from many sources of first names.

Participants Chosen Identities

Before the interviews began, I collected background information on the participant’s gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity identities, whether or not they used pronouns, and if they did, what pronouns they used. Table 3 shows the participant’s pseudonym, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and pronoun use.

Table 3*Identity and Pronouns of Study Participants*

Participant	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation Identity	Race	Ethnicity	Pronoun Use
Jack	Male	Gay	White	Caucasian	Not Used
Griffith	Male	Gay	White	British	He/Him
Farris	Male	Gay	Hispanic	Latin/Mexican	Not Used
Jara	Female	Lesbian	White	Hispanic	She/Her
Maia	Female	Lesbian	White	Caucasian	She/Her
Riley	Nonbinary	Gay/Queer	White	Hispanic	She/They
LGemini	Female	Lesbian	White	Caucasian	She/Her
Sam	Female	Bisexual	White	Caucasian	She/Her
Gerald	Male	Gay	White	German/Irish	He/Him/They/Them
Edward	Male	Gay	White	Appalachian	Either is fine
Keito	Female	Lesbian	White/Black	Japanese	She/Her

As a researcher, my goal was to accurately convey the participants' perspectives. It is important for me to note that in the context of reporting the data on the participants' responses, there may have been instances where the distinction between gender, sexual orientation, and pronoun use became blurred or intertwined. The participants in my study might have expressed themselves in ways that reflected the complexity and fluidity of these concepts, and their responses might not always align with traditional categorizations.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting my research study, I needed to seek NAU approval for my research study. IRB approval was required when your research involves human subjects. The intent of the IRB is to lead “researchers to a heightened awareness of important ethical issues embedded in their proposed research” (Seidman, 2006, p. 59). The first step was to complete the online NAU research application within IRBNet. There were multiple documents to be completed and then uploaded to the NAU IRBNet, including the project narrative, list of project personnel (all personnel must have their Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative training certification), the curriculum vitae from me, my committee chair, and faculty advisor.

The participant informed consent form was also submitted to the IRB for review. Although interviewing a participant may not seem like a life and death risk, it is not without risk. The IRB requested that I include the Mental Health Resources contact page, which I did. My informed consent form included the invitation to participate in the study, a brief statement of the purpose of the research, how it will be conducted, and the time for interviewing. Participants had explicit rights to withdraw from the study. The participant's information was held confidential, and they were identified with a pseudonym to conceal their identity and protect their privacy. They were given a name with a meaning of ‘bravery’ or being a ‘warrior.’ One of the participant's initials was used to pick the pseudonym name. Each participant had a choice to choose a pseudonym or use a name they preferred.

The data collection tool, my interview questionnaire, the recruitment letter for participants, and the interview protocol letter were uploaded to the IRB. All forms had to be approved by the IRB before interviewing my participants (NAU, 2023).

Data Security

“The participant has the right to privacy and the right to request that identities remain confidential and not be revealed” (Seidman, 2006, p. 67). No identifying information from this study was used in any materials created from their interviews. Their name was not used in this dissertation; their responses are only identified by their assigned pseudonym; their pseudonym is attached to notes, transcripts, audio recordings, interview protocol, analytical profile, and interview questions. Research data is encrypted and password-protected.

Data Disposal

Once the data was analyzed, the audio tape recordings were erased, and the transcripts and notes shredded. Pseudonyms were attached to the transcripts downloaded from the Otter.ai transcription service. Once the transcripts were approved, I went into the Otter.ai system and manually cleared the conversation from the trash bin; Otter.ai deleted the conversation then. Participant’s email information and the contents of the emails were deleted.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The narrative study began by collecting completed participant informed consent (Appendix E) and analytical profile forms from each of the 11 participants. Some participants sent their signed consent and analytical forms via email before the scheduled interviews. The participants I met in person brought their signed consent and analytical profile forms to the interview. The signed informed consent forms to participate indicated that their participation was voluntary, that they were to withdraw from the study at any point, and that pseudonyms were used to identify them. The participants received the interview questions two days before the interview so they could review the questions and discuss questions or concerns.

Instrumentation

Each participant participated in a semi-structured interview, allowing them to answer questions freely. The questions were open-ended to encourage participants to reflect on their experiences and elaborate on their responses instead of responding with “yes or no” (Creswell, 2013). The flexibility of open-ended interview questions and prompts allows participants to share their stories in non-heteronormative ways. The intention is for the participants to reconstruct their queer experiences as educators. I designed the interview questions to seek an understanding of how the dominant roles of heteronormative norms in K-12 schools suppress LGBTQ+ educators’ performances of their identity.

Interviews

Seidman (2006) stated that interviewing is the primary mode of inquiry because “[r]ecounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout history that humans have made sense of their experience” (p. 8). I pre-scheduled each participant’s interview for a 90-minute format. Seidman (2006) explained, “An hour carries with it the consciousness of a standard unit of time that can have participants ‘watching the clock’” (p. 20). Two hours is too long to sit; the 90-minute interview allows participants to reconstruct their experience, put it in the context of their lives, and reflect on its meaning; this schedule also lets the participants know the time allotted to plan accordingly (Seidman, 2006).

The first interview session with each participant is to ask, *how*? Seidman (2006) emphasized that by asking *how* the participants reconstructed and narrated their life events and experiences. I met with six participants in person and interviewed them at a scheduled time at their chosen location. Three participants’ interviews were conducted via FaceTime on cell phones because they live out of state. I interviewed two participants by cell phone; one lives out of state and does not have FaceTime capability, and the other participant did not have capacity

on her phone. I recorded the participants' interviews on a digital voice recorder and then downloaded them to be transcribed by the Otter.ai (<https://www.otter.ai/>) software.

Participants had a choice of an interview setting, and I met them in their favorite coffee shops, their office, my home, and others through FaceTime (www.apple.com) and cell phone. The interviews began with me reviewing the interview protocol (Appendix F) with each participant. The interview protocol, once again, explained the purpose of the study and the interview process. The participants had their copy of the interview questions (Appendix G), and I had my copy of the same interview questions. I wrote interview notes on the interview questions form; their pseudonym was listed as their name. I kept notes on their behaviors (i.e., laughed, cried, sighed, looked away, hesitated) (Creswell, 2013). I also made notes when they answered multiple questions within one question; this helped me put their stories chronologically to ensure each interview question was answered or if I needed them to expand on previous questions (Creswell, 2013).

I did not interrupt as the participants listened and answered the questions. I took notes, checked off the interview questions as they answered them, jotted down keywords, followed up with them to expand on what they had shared, and asked for clarity to check my understanding. Drawing on narrative inquiry as methodology, I was cautious and aware that their story was theirs and not my interpretation of it. I consciously allowed each participant to reconstruct their experiences and what was important to them; this was their sense of what happened. I was not there, and I would not insert my own experiences into their experiences; this was their moment. Once the tape recording was off, the interview ended to avoid the "...after the fact conversations that are not normally covered in the written consent form" (Seidman, 2006, p. 21).

Before interviewing, I informed the participants that a second interview was possible. The second interview was to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts from their initial interview and ask questions or clarifications. I spaced the interview(s) from three days to one week apart as this timeframe “allows for the participant(s) to mull over the preceding interview, but not enough time to lose the connection between the two” (Seidman, 2006, p. 21).

Before sending the participants a copy of their transcripts, I read them without coding. If there were questions I had or needed clarification, I either called or emailed the participant requesting clarification of my questions. I sent the participants’ transcripts to allow them to ask and answer questions, add information, and address any clarification questions regarding the study. Then, they sent me their final approval of their transcript. Once approved, I printed the transcripts, and while listening to the participant’s recordings, I edited the transcripts for grammar and spelling and added clarification notes based on the interviews. While listening to and reading the transcripts, I also referred to my memory notes I had taken on each participant interview list of questions form because some participants answered the interview questions with other questions. For example, when asked, “What is your story about coming out?” some responded by telling their story to the question, “How do you describe personal identity (to yourself, your LGBTQ+ community, the outside world, as an educator)?” As I took notes, I knew I would need to reorganize their story to place the events in the chronological sequence of the questions to analyze the themes.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for narrative interviews in qualitative research involves systematically examining and interpreting the collected narratives to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. I began by reading each of the participants' narratives first without transcribing. I then listened to

the participant's recorded voice interviews multiple times before I began transcribing. I transcribed each participant's interviews by hand using a color-coded system of identifying and classifying the codes and themes. Through this analysis, I saw the thematic content emerge and found the common patterns across the participant's narratives (Creswell, 2013). Once the participants' transcriptions were ready and the data collected notes were read, the researcher described and classified the codes and themes chronologically and interpreted the data for the story's larger meaning. The final step was representing and visualizing the data. This step presented the narration focusing on processes, theories, and unique and general features of the participant's life (Creswell, 2013).

I analyzed the data from the interpretive lens of queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's (1959) performance theory that focused on negotiating their performance of self, LGBTQ+ identity, and teacher identity, and "how it is culturally and historically linked to discourse and overlaps gender and sexuality" (Watson, 2005, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 300). The storied form told by the participants incorporated "the three-dimensional space approach of Connelly and Clandinin (2000) [which] includes analyzing data through three elements: interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation (physical places or the storyteller's places)" (Creswell, 2013, p. 189).

Creswell (2013) stated that data collected in a narrative study is analyzed for the story they must tell. There is a realization that the participants may not tell their stories chronologically during the interview process. The researcher takes an active role and "restor[ies]" the participants' stories to make sense. "*Restorying* is the process of reorganizing the stories into a type of framework...to analyze them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and

scene), and then rewriting the stories to place them in chronological sequence” (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, as cited in Creswell, 2013. p. 74).

The coding process involved aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code, and then assigning a label to the code. This initial analysis of coding the data was a broad overview, developing a short list of tentative codes of 25-30 categories of information, working to reduce and combine them into five or six themes, which I used to write the narrative (Creswell, 2013). The final coding stage was organizing and reorganizing the data to reduce the volume to five to six themes.

Validity

As part of the narrative inquiry research, building trust with the participants is vital. “Fetterman (2010) contends that participant observation requires close, long-term contact with the people under study” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Following member-checking techniques, the participants viewed their transcripts to verify for possible missing information or if there were misinterpretations of their stories. It is important to continue the cooperative and collaborative relationship with the participants and their “data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions...so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

During the data collection and analysis process, adequate time was provided for each participant to ensure their stories were accurate and rich, with thick descriptions that provided details of their theme, reflected on their experiences, and added information to the data collection when needed.

Summary

Chapter three provided the major components of the research plan for this narrative study. The chapter addressed the qualitative research study, methodology, selected participant criteria and selection, data collection, instrumentation of interviews, IRB process, data analysis, coding, thematic analysis, and validity. This study was guided by the two research questions for LGBTQ+ educators and used queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's (1959) performance theory. The participant's stories elicited, coded, and analyzed to understand their past, present, and future barriers and challenges as LGBTQ+ educators.

Chapter four contains the data analysis and findings from the participants' interviews of how they negotiate their performance of their sexual identity in K-12 schools. This chapter shares the narratives of the participants. The chapter is organized by the themes and subthemes that emerged.

Chapter five shares the discussions and connects the findings presented in chapter four. This chapter summarizes the key findings draws conclusions, discusses the implications of the study, and provides reflections on what the study means.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERFORMING IDENTITIES

We have, then, a basic social coin. With awe on one side and shame on the other.

~Kurt Riezler

The research findings for this narrative study were based on interviews with LGBTQ+ educators on how they negotiate the performance of their sexual identity in historically heteronormative classrooms and schools. This study aims to bring awareness of how LGBTQ+ educators perform their sexual identities in and out of K-12 schools. This chapter presents findings collected from semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 11 LGBTQ+ educators. I chose interviews to collect data to allow the participants to share their queer stories from their voice and language.

The two key themes that emerged from the rigorous analysis of the data were: 1) performing gender at school, 2) homophobia/microaggressions, with a subtheme of religion and societal norms. The participants shared their candid responses to the interview questions. The 11 LGBTQ+ educators shared their personal and real-world encounters. This chapter relates their experiences, not only in their professional roles but also in the broader contexts of their lives.

Restatement of the Research Questions

Drawing on queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's performance theory (1959), this study was guided by these research questions:

2. **How do LGBTQ+ educators perform their gender identities and sexual orientations in historical heteronormative classrooms and schools?**
 - a. **How do LGBTQ+ educators regulate their gender identity and sexual orientation in their pedagogy?**

Theme: Performing Gender

Participants shared stories of how and why they performed gender norms in the K-12 heteronormative school systems. Some participants identified being “openly out” but not at work. Others indicated there were limits to who and when they told. Butler (1990), Goffman (1959), and Wittig (1992) enforced the strength of language in how social acts speak to the performances that participants exhibited. Butler (1990) puts gender performance in perspective:

Gender is...a construction that regularly conceals its genesis: the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions obscured by the credibility of those productions - and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them. (p. 190)

Relatedly, Butler calls punishment “unnatural” actions and identities that society deems normal. Goffman (1959) relates this dispute as a function for their audience:

These inhibitions of the audience allow the performer some elbow room in building up an impression of his own choice and allow him to function, for his own good or the audiences, as a protection of a threat that close inspection could destroy. (pp. 67-68)

Wittig (1992) adduced, “Language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it” (p. 78). Table 4 highlights that all the participants identified as being openly out and their years of experience in education. During the interviews, the participants shared their conditions and limits to being out, in order to control the validating of others’ questioning of their sexual identity, especially at work (school systems).

Table 4*Participants Openly Out with Conditions and Education Information*

Pseudonym	Openly Out/Not Out	Years in Education	State Reside	K-12 Title
Jack	Openly Out	23	AZ	Yes-Asst. Super
Griffith	Openly Out/Limits	10	AZ	Yes-Principal
Farris	Openly Out/NOAW	20+	AZ	K-6 Teacher
Jara	Openly Out/NOAW	6	AZ	Left profession
Maia	Openly Out/NOAW	12	NM	K-6 SPED Teacher
Riley	Openly Out/NOAW	7	AZ	Left profession
LGemini	Openly Out/NOAW	36	NM	7-12 Online Teacher
Sam	Openly Out/NOAW	30+	AZ	K-6 Teacher
Gerald	Openly Out	21	OR	SPED Teacher
Edward	Openly Out	16	KY	Left site-College
Keito	Openly Out	5	AZ	Left profession

Note. NOAW is Not Out at Work

During data analysis, the educators' experiences and challenges of being LGBTQ+ became evident. As they shared their stories, I saw an unraveling: despite their initial response, the educators were not always out publicly as LGBTQ+ educators in their school communities. The participants believed their actions as being "openly out" were part of their identity until I asked more specific questions that challenged their assumptions. As Sullivan (2003) wrote, "We may even be unaware of the assumption we've made until something happens to challenge that assumption" (p. 83). It became clear that the educators were selective and cautious of who knew 'it,' (i.e., their sexual identity).

I continued to hear all participants relate to “it” when they spoke of their sexual identity, as though only “it” was safe to use in referring to their homosexuality. “It” relates to Goffman’s (1959) performance theory of discrepant roles played to keep secrets, the dark secret of the participant’s sexual identity. Goffman (1959) suggested, “These consist of facts about a team which it knows and conceals and which are incompatible with the image of self that the team attempts to maintain its audience.” (p. 141). The team that I am referring to is the participants’ sexual identity. Participants were emotional when sharing their public and private experiences of “it.” There were tears, silence, and, in Gerald’s case, weeping.

Reasons for Leaving Toxic Climates in Schools

The participants’ stories reveal the challenges of performing as teachers in schools, constantly aware of being educators in heterosexualized K-12 school systems. This oppression influenced their decisions to change their schools or leave the education profession. Goffman (1959) stated, “Although particular performances, and even particular parts or routines, may place a performer in a position of having nothing to hide, somewhere in the full round of his activities, there will be something he cannot treat openly.” (p. 64).

Table 5 shows the participant’s decisions in their education careers. Only Jack and Gerald have stayed in their current districts.

Table 5*Participants 2023-2024 School Year Educator Environments*

Participant	Left Profession, or Returned to University Advanced Degree in Education – To be out of the Classroom	Left Brick & Mortar	Moved School for Fresh Start	Moved to Progressive School or Teaching at College Level	Stayed
Jack					X
Griffith				Progressive	
Farris			3 times		
Jara	Left Profession				
Maia		Online			
Riley	Advanced Degree		3 times		
LGemini*		Online	2 times		
Sam			3 times		
Gerald					X
Edward			1 time	College	
Keito	Advanced Degree				

Note. *LGemini experienced a time when the private school board did not renew her teaching contract. She believes it was because of her sexual identity.

Teacher Identities

The participants shared stories of how their sexual and teacher identities fit into their “bounded acts” of performances. Butler defines performance as a ‘bounded act’ whereas performativity “consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as a fabrication of the performer’s ‘will’ or

'choice.' [emphasis in original] (Sullivan, 2003, p. 89). Participants discussed avoiding busybodies trying to insert themselves into the participant's personal lives. Goffman's (1959) performance theory avows, "Dark secrets are, of course, double secrets: one is a crucial fact that is hidden and another fact that crucial facts have not been openly admitted" (pp. 141-142).

Riley: "... It's No One's Business, but if You Ask, I'm Not Gonna Lie." Riley has only been teaching for seven years. She has changed schools three times, trying to find a school where parents would want their kids in her class and colleagues want to work with her even if she is gay because she is a professional and loves teaching. However, she does not want to be ostracized by others because she does not fit in the mold. Riley, who left the profession, shared her classroom experience in a heavy-hearted way:

Yeah, I like just keep going back to school that education experience because that's really where it is [hesitates, looks down, gathers a breath] it's the hardest for me. Because everywhere I have worked, I feel like it's just been, like, I'm just tiptoeing, and I can't really be myself because I'm afraid.

Riley shared that she is openly out but only reveals it when an adult or teacher asks. She does not tell parents or students. Riley stated, "If a parent was also a teacher of one of my students, then they know, and then they can do whatever they want with that information." She shared that she would not explain her relationships and would say my partner and not provide a name. While living with her partner who is a high school principal, Riley identified her as "her roommate." She shared that she assumed that her principal knew, but she provided no details, and the principal never asked. Riley stated that being an educator affected her self-identity because she could not be herself; she shrugged as she looked down and expressed, "So it's like, I'm just, I'm just there." Riley left the classroom and returned to the university to earn her

Educational Psychology degree; with this degree, she shared that she could still help students and not have to be in the classroom.

Griffith: “I Just Didn’t Advertise It, but I Didn’t Try to Hide It Either.” Griffith shared that when he started teaching in the public schools, he was not out and was told by his gay mentor teacher, “Whatever you do, do not tell anyone.” Griffith said he halfway disagreed with his friend and mentor teacher’s advice but only shared his sexual identity with close friends. However, he made conscious efforts to keep his conversations professional rather than personally based, as he did not want his sexual identity to come up. He stated:

I didn’t talk about my personal life. What I shared had nothing to do with romance and things of that nature. I shared more about travel and adventure. And so, in that sense, that is a negotiation because I’m like choosing intentionally what to talk about and what not to talk about. I negotiate, which is like a professional decision, for many different reasons, such as when talking to students and families.

He is now out professionally as a 7th - 12th educational leader in a progressive charter school. Griffith stated, “I am out to everyone, anyone, and everyone. I don’t necessarily advertise it with the students, but I am like 100% unapologetically myself with students and families.”

Farris: “I Put On a Little Performance for Them. Because I Didn’t Want Anyone to Know I Was Gay.” He shared that people at work would ask him questions—if he had a girlfriend—and were getting overly personal and making him uncomfortable. Farris also knew his colleagues were conservative and religious, and he was uncomfortable telling them and shared with me:

So, I'd have to lie, I would lie [shrugging his shoulders]. I would just make up whatever.

Because I didn't want them to judge me, you know, and we did have a good relationship; we got along well. And I didn't want to break that.

At the beginning of his educational career, Farris let his coworkers think he was straight. He would pretend to be straight and go on dates with girls. Nine years ago, Farris decided he would not hide his sexual identity anymore. However, he said he is not the type to tell everyone about his business, and he stated:

I'm not one to tell people to flaunt my life and start telling everybody about my life and my personal business. I don't do that. I have to feel comfortable with people and get to know them in order for me to be able to tell them, 'Hey, I have a husband.' I am cautious about who I tell that to, not because I am not afraid of them not being accepting of me being gay, which has nothing to do with it. It's just that I am very cautious of who I bring into my life, regardless if they are gay, straight, or whatever. I'm just careful.

Farris is working on his teaching certification and teaches Technology at a K-6th grade charter school. Farris felt he had to hide his identity when working in the junior high and high schools as he thought those groups were not ready to hear about or see a picture of his husband. So, he moved to an elementary school because there was less negotiation and performance. Farris shared, "I feel that working in the elementary school or at that level, there was a little bit more compassion, more welcoming even like with colleagues and administrators."

Jara: "I Knew Quickly I Could Not Be Who I Was." Jara had experiences in other schools where she felt unsafe sharing her sexual identity. Jara explained that she would take her time in making conscious decisions about what she would share with her colleagues because she did not feel safe at other schools. Jara shared that "the hardest part was really just navigating

when I could be myself and whom I was allowed to say things to or what was giving up too much information.” She said it was tough because colleagues always wanted to know about her life, stating, “It was tough negotiating.” When I asked her what she meant about not feeling safe, she responded that the principal was passive-aggressive and dismissive of students who did not fit the “norm.” “So, I kept to myself, and I got more quiet.” She was trying to finish the school year as she looked for another school where she could fit in and be herself.

Jara eventually found her way to the ideal school with a perfect team of administrators. She found it easier to be openly out when her male high school principal brought his husband and her female high school principal brought her wife to charter school events. Jara shared that most of her coworkers did not know about her sexual identity, “But once I realized I was around a queer administration, I was able to easily just be like, I am gay, and started bringing a partner to school events.” She believed that when students saw her attend school events with her female partner, they sought her as an ally; she stated, “They started showing up in my office wanting to talk.” Jara shared that as the school counselor, she was careful not to express to students she is gay. Still, she made a connection that allowed her to teach, counsel, mentor, discuss homophobia, mediate between dating partners, and provide a comfortable space for students. Parents shared what they did not like about gayness openly. Jara stated she never shared with parents or students she was gay; she could tell some knew or assumed, and she left it at that.

Jara is leaving the education profession after six years to pursue something else. She shared that she loved education and “...that all that it [education] brought to me made me a better human.” She added that being in schools was difficult and straining because she said, “Knowing that I can’t change where families are, I can’t help in every situation made it a little

bit harder to know that I can't help everyone." Jara felt much pressure from the educational system but ultimately missed the students most.

Runaway Wives to Lesbian Marriage

Maia, LGemini, and Sam were married to males at the beginning of their teaching careers. They believed they had easier transitions with staff knowing them personally before they fell in love with women.

Maia: "I Was the Married PTA Mom." Maia shared her first experiences in the education system; she identified as a married [to a male] mom with four children volunteering in classes. She was active in the Parents Teachers Association (PTA), and for a time, she was the PTA president. She later became an educational assistant, and then when the principal encouraged her to become a special education teacher since she had a four-year degree, she pursued working towards her teaching certification. Maia continued teaching at the same school where she was volunteering. She had many personal relationships with the principal, teachers, staff, and the parent community. Maia believes that they first knew her as a person because of these long relationships. She had support from the school community, which made it easier to come out to them and their acceptance of when she married her female life partner.

Maia shared that she is openly out, but during the interview, she stated, "I don't put it out there." She teaches special education at an online charter school and has had no issues. However, she stated:

I will say that I gauge it with parents. There are a few parents that I've gotten to know on a personal level, and they know. But, it's not like something that I, you know, come out to as I am Mrs. McFarland, and I'm a lesbian.

LGemini: “I Also Didn’t Want It to Be Held Against Me.” LGemini is a veteran educator of 36 years. LGemini shared that she encountered many experiences when she taught at the middle school level when students wanted to know if she was married. She said:

They [students] would come up to my desk and say, so is your husband...? And then I would say, ‘Well, my spouse,’ and they’d say, ‘Well, what’s your spouse’s name?’ And, of course, I would use the Saturday Night Live character and say it’s Pat. I would never give them the information they were looking for. I didn’t really think it was their business.

LGemini referenced Pat, a nonbinary character from the Saturday Night Live show; this response is one way she inadvertently performs in the classroom as a heteronormative married person. She used the tactic to throw off her students and give them the perception that she was married to a male without providing Pat’s gender. LGemini shared that she felt it was not the student’s business. She stated, “And then I also didn’t want it to be held against me.” I asked her if Pat was heterosexual, and she responded, “It is not their business, and probably not!” She said she tells students it is not their business because she does not want it returned to her. LGemini explained, “It’s more so about a feeling it might be returned, used in retaliation like they’ll go home and tell their parents, then their parents may call the school and say, I can’t have that teacher teaching my child.” I asked LGemini if she thought there was a performance of not being gay to avoid retaliation. She said, in a matter-of-fact way, “Yep! Because I know they’re gonna go to battle with a gay. I just didn’t get to be myself, and I did not really mention it, you know, outwardly. And that’s that...”

Sam: “They Knew I Was Going Through a Divorce, and They Knew My Girlfriend, but That Was My Safe Place [School]. Those People Knew Me. They Knew Who I Was. I

Proved Myself as a Teacher. So, I Was Respected.” Sam identifies as being openly out, but has recently decided to be more careful of being so vocal because of experiences she has had to work through to understand. As she was coming out and having her first experience of having a girlfriend, she did not know that she would have to defend who she was now (i.e. her sexual identity), not being a coach’s wife, going through a divorce, and her children not needing her as much as they were getting older. However, her relationships with lifelong friends changed. When she started teaching, she was married to a male educator who was also a high school coach. Sam had taught at the same school for a long time and was in a school where the teachers grew up together, bought homes around the same time, had children around the same time, and experienced the same life events together. So, when Sam met a gay woman to whom she was attracted, everyone knew because they had all worked together and were all friends. Many of her friends were happy for her because she was happy.

Riley and Keito Both Identify as Tomboys

Riley and Keito shared that they do not fit the gender norms as educators. Keito said, “I’ve always been more like a tomboy, and where I shop is in the men’s section. I’m not transgender, and I don’t plan on doing a change.” Riley shared the sentiment, stating, “I am like a tomboy. I feel like, I really identify with, like, gay, like men, for whatever reason, even though I’m not like, I’m not trans.” Riley identifies as nonbinary, and Keito identifies as female. Riley’s haircut is short, which she called a “boy cut.” Keito enjoys wearing men’s clothes.

Riley, a seven-year educator who identifies as gay/queer, nonbinary, and openly out, shared:

If someone were to ask me my pronouns, they are she/they. It’s not something that I’m oftentimes just like broadcasting to everyone. As an educator, my students will call me Ms. Trevino. Sometimes, if I am lucky, they’ll just call me Trevino, which makes me

happy! When they call me Ms. Trevino, I don't correct them to call me just Trevino.

Because, based on where I worked, it just wasn't [hesitation]. It just wasn't safe to do that.

It may seem trivial that Riley is pointing out that she would instead be called "Trevino" than be formally addressed as Ms. Trevino. Riley identifies as a nonbinary person and wishes to be greeted as Trevino because it does not have a gender attached. She shared that she was uncomfortable explaining or telling others to call her Trevino because she did not feel safe enough to make that request to her students.

Keito is openly and professionally out. She has no intentions of hiding her sexual identity from students, parents, colleagues, and the administration. Keito does not conform to the heteronormative society norms of dress in and out of the classroom. She shops in the men's clothing section and wears men's button-downs, long-sleeved shirts, slacks, and ties. She does not shave her legs or underarms, has multiple tattoos on her arms [sleeves], and has a soft, masculine way about her. Keito stated she dresses in men's fashion because these are the clothes she chooses and is comfortable dressing in, saying, "It's just something I feel more comfortable in, like as far as clothing, like I've always been more like a tomboy."

Keito shared an example of when her 2nd-grade students asked her if she had a girlfriend or a husband, she would honestly answer, "No, I have a girlfriend." She taught in the classroom for five years. She recently earned her Master's in Educational Leadership and shared that she is leaving the K-12 school system to lead an outside agency that supports high-risk students in 7th-12th grade schools. Keito explained, "There are just so many limitations, and the real work, what I want to do is to have these types of conversations [gender identity with students], but I can't in the leadership positions in schools."

Theme: Homophobia and Microaggressions

Homophobia and microaggressions ranged from denial to fear to outrage. As I listened to the stories of my participants, I was incredulous when they shared that they had not experienced homophobia or microaggressions. Yet when I asked them to “Tell me about a time...” or “Tell me about a challenge...” their stories would reveal microaggressions or homophobias. Once Edward put this in perspective, I understood. He said, “Yes, I suppose microaggressions are so plentiful. I couldn’t even see them. It would be like, I don’t know, being in the ocean. And someone’s saying, ‘Can you point out a drop of water?’”

The participants conveyed their perceptions of indirect and direct homophobia and microaggressions and how they cope and rationalize with others during these interactions. Their experiences included: being called *faggots* by others; educators having the intent to ruin their careers; protestors yelling that they are living in sin; coming out to families only to hear that it is “ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard, you must be on drugs;” being told they are “going to hell;” and being called a “groomer” and insinuations of being a pedophile.

A common form of aggression happened when they wore their traditional wedding band or mentioned having a partner. It was assumed that they were involved in a heterosexual marriage or relationship. However, their feminine or masculine mannerisms created a sense of questioning and judgment. This aggression starts with societal expectations that everyone is heterosexual and conforms to traditional gender roles.

Table 6 reveals that all the participants endured microaggressions and homophobic acts from their families, administration, staff, student’s parents, and students:

Table 6*Participant's Experienced Homophobia and Microaggressions from Others*

Participant	Administration	Staff	Parents of Students	Students	Participant's Family	Others
Jack		X				
Griffith	X	X	X	X	X	X
Farris		X			X	X
Jara	X	X	X	X	X	
Maia					X	X
Riley		X		X	X	X
LGemini	X			X		
Sam	X	X			X	X
Gerald	X	X				X
Edward	X					X
Keito	X		X	X	X	

Wittig (1992) highlighted the “social contract of heterosexuality,” which oppresses others by the laws they enforce on societies that their “straight mind” executes. “For heterosexual society is the society which not only oppresses lesbians and gay men, it oppresses many different/others, it oppresses all women and many categories of men, all those positions of the dominated.” (Wittig, 1992, p. 29).

Some participants expressed that they felt there were two types of microaggressions and homophobia—direct and indirect. However, they all agreed that both were still homophobic.

Experiences of homophobia and microaggressions towards their sexual identity greatly affected whether they were openly out, personally or professionally.

Homophobic Intentions to Ruin Educator's Careers

Three veteran educators, Jack, Gerald, and Edward, are openly out in their schools and districts. They each experienced levels of homophobia and microaggressions that created a hostile environment. They expressed their fears of being fired, publicly outed, and threatened. Their stories revealed how this environment became the reality they lived in and survived. They believe, and their stories confirm malicious intents to destroy their careers in education.

Jack was a principal in a conservative Mormon community, which was not accepting of gay people. He experienced a public outing when a teacher wrote a letter to the school board informing them that the principal of the school was gay and the community wanted him fired. Gerald, a special education teacher, had an administrator who told him to keep his mouth shut and not say he was gay to anyone, or he could find himself dead. When Edward started his teaching career, his principal told him that the community he was teaching in would not accept him as a gay man and that he would be crucified. These men believe that were they heterosexual, they would have never endured these experiences. Their being outed was not based on being insubordinate or their work ethics; it was based on their sexual identities.

Jack: “Facebook and Social Media Stalked Me and Figured It Out.” Jack shared his story of when he was new in his educational career. He felt that “I didn’t think it (being gay) needed to be like flashing in people’s faces. and I was not ready for myself.” During his time as a principal, he had a teacher transferred by the school district to his school site, who was on a corrective action teaching plan and was on a last attempt not to be dismissed. Jack stated,

The teacher started asking people questions and stalking me on social media platforms, trying to find out my private life. Once the teacher found out I was gay, she sent a letter

to the school district, letting them and others in the community know they had a gay principal.

Jack said he received a call from the superintendent and was told not to worry and that they supported him. He shared that as he looks back, this negative experience of homophobia became positive, stating with a smile, “that this person’s actions thought they were going to destroy me, and has helped me to share who I am with people all throughout the district.” Jack is the assistant superintendent in his school district.

Gerald: “NO AIDS.” Gerald shared that he has always been out because he does not lie. Still, he is more private about his sexual identity. He stated, “I have always been pretty cautious, knowing that even in Oregon, things can be twisted around and turned into things you don’t expect. So, I have always been relatively careful.”

If students asked if he was married or had children, Gerald answered that he had a cat and would divert the conversation to talking about his cat. However, he was honest when supervisors and staff members asked if he was married. Gerald shared a time when his five staff members supervised at the county school district, and his new female supervisor had walked in to join them at their staff breakfast meeting. The new supervisor asked him if he was married, and he said yes. There was a moment of silence, and then she boldly stated “My hairstylist says that all gay men are promiscuous.” Gerald described that moment:

She didn’t say anything else. She just stopped there and stared at me. And then she asked me about my husband, and I felt like she was saying, you know, your husband’s promiscuous, meaning I am too. But, um [hesitates] I remember, like, looking around the table, and everybody had their fork in the air, mouth open; like, did she just say what we think she said? And I ignored it. I didn’t make a thing out of it.

Soon after this incident, Gerald explained that a student bit him, and he had to go to the hospital to get checked for hepatitis,. Not until he received his hepatitis results did someone in the district request that he also get checked for the AIDS virus. The letter he received was a copy of his hepatitis results, and that is when he saw someone had written “No AIDS” in pencil across it. Gerald went to the “good supervisor” and told him he gave no one permission to check his blood for AIDS, and if he had AIDS or the student had AIDS, then he would understand the need for that knowledge. However, the female supervisor requested the AIDS test without his permission, which was against the law. Gerald shared:

I just had not been working there too long, and I didn’t want to make a fuss. So, I just kind of moved on from it. And it ended up that this same supervisor was gonna be like the ringleader trying to destroy me because I was a gay man.

The final straw with this supervisor was when Gerald delivered his first 15-minute public Teacher of Year nomination speech, giving a 12-second shout-out of appreciation to his soon-to-be-husband, and the chaos began. After he delivered his speech, he was looking for her to get feedback, but she was nowhere in sight. Gerald walked to his car and received a phone call from her. As he started to share this experience with me, he hesitated, looking away from the camera. Gerald tilted his head like he was again in that time. He asked her, “What?” He repeated what she said, “I mean it, you shut your mouth, or someone’s gonna shoot you in the head.” He shared that she said more as he stood in the parking lot. He was trying to remember everything she said so he could write it all down in his car. He shared that he was not sure if these threats were serious. However, he stated, “But she was still threatening me to make me quiet.”

As Teacher of the Year, Gerald’s school district had given him explicit rules and procedures to follow. The demands included district-approved written scripts. They would need

to see interview questions before the interview(s), and his answers had to be approved by the district before giving the interview. Gerald could only be interviewed if he followed this process. He was not to meet with anyone until authorized by the district. He could not go to the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) to talk about teen suicide at the local high school. The supervisor told him he could not meet with those students “because they offered no value to the district.” Gerald felt that these rules were impossible to follow, and the administrators knew it. Gerald shared that he knew he could not comply with all of their rules but needed to comply to prevent being fired from the school district.

During the Teacher of the Year recognition at the White House, with the President of the United States, Cabinet Members, Secretaries of State, White House Correspondents, the Secretary of Education, and the other teachers of the year representing their states present, Gerald was asked by the White House Press Corps if there was anything he wanted to share. He expressed the thoughts going through his mind at that moment. The loss of his 15-year-old best friend who had come out to him on a Friday and then committed suicide on a Monday morning before school started; another best friend who died of cancer at 18; and another friend at 17. When Gerald was living in this momentous occasion, he thought of them and how they never got these chances, “They didn’t,” he slightly started to choke up, “...they didn’t get to go on a trip overseas, you know, those sorts of things.” He gets emotional at this point; he starts choking up weeping as he says, “So, I thought of my friends while I was at the White House...” As he was about to take his next breath, he was still sad; he sat in his chair and lifted his head. I could see a growing smile as if he was back in 2014. He shared:

And I, I was in the back behind some other teachers, And I said, ‘pardon me, ladies,’ to the teachers in front of me. I said, ‘I’m coming out of the closet.’ And there’s this kind of

joking because I already was out of the closet. But I had been told that if I mentioned anything, I'd be fired. And I walked up. And I can't remember my whole statement, but it started with, 'Ugh, as one of the first openly gay teachers of the year...'

Gerald was fired, and he struggled to find a teaching position because he felt blacklisted. When the school district fired Gerald, they accused him of not being focused on the classroom and missing 45 school days. He got the Teacher's Union involved, and they fought for him to regain his job. The threats, homophobia, and microaggressions he endured were illegal. He kept emails he received from the district. Gerald stated he was only absent 17 of those 45 days and was out due to the Teacher of the Year award engagements he had to attend. Gerald was able to get back into the schools as a substitute teacher. His case prompted the district to fire cabinet members, and board members got "wiped out."

Gerald explained that he was a private person, conservative in the classroom, and he knew that when he received this reward, he would be openly and publicly gay for all to see and hear. He stated, "There's a price that you pay when you are put forward like that, and I know that it's such an unusual situation because what private person suddenly has that media attention?" This public award brought attention, "And it pushed some really hateful people to say some really hateful things...and their goal was to hurt you."

Gerald continues teaching special education and is an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. He shared that he was one of the 36 people who wrote an amicus curiae brief on his employment discrimination experiences based on his LGBTQ+ sexual identity in the Supreme Court's landmark case, *Bostock v. Clayton County*.

Edward: "As a Teacher, It Has Almost Always Been Administrators Who Are Homophobic." Edward shared that in his first year of teaching public school in Kentucky, the

principal pulled him into the administrator's office, asking him, "So that I know, you are openly gay?" Edward responded, "Yes." Then the principal told him, "Well, just so you understand, in this town, you will be crucified, and no one will protect you, including me." Edward knew he would have to be "in the closet" to receive his teaching license because in Kentucky, you could have your four-year degree in teaching, but it was at the principal's discretion whether or not you had a successful year of teaching. Edward explained, "The principal at the site was the one who signed off to receive his teaching license, and if you did not receive their signatures, you did not earn your teaching license."

Edward had worked so hard for his four-year degree; he came from poverty, and it took everything he could do to get through college. He stated, "We fled to Vermont." He shared that he and his husband could not sustain work in Kentucky fearing losing everything. They lived in Vermont for two years; it was a beautiful place but not a good fit. Back in Kentucky, he knew of a recently hired principal by the school district, and this principal contacted him, offering him a teaching position in Kentucky. They spoke, and the principal said he would love for him to return. Edward told him:

We are thinking about moving back to Kentucky, but I'm gay, and I'm going to be gay, and I'm going to be a gay teacher. And I am never going to be quiet about that. So, do not hire me if you can't handle that.

The principal hired Edward as a teacher, and they moved back home to Kentucky.

Edward believed there was "extra scrutiny of anything that I was doing!" He shared an example of a story of some straight teachers' actions. As he started to share, I could hear a higher pitch of his voice that seemed to indicate annoyance:

And as a teacher, it has always been administrators who are homophobic. It usually looks like extra scrutiny of anything I was doing. So, you know, they were great teachers who would do, you know, outlandish things, like having students put condoms on bananas as some part of the project in class. And there was really not an eyelash batted, or they would post videos of themselves on social media, literally getting progressively drunk as they are taking shots... and no one bats an eyelash. Whereas the queer teacher puts a Dolly Parton quote, 'It's a good thing I was born a woman, or I would have been a drag queen!' on the quiz.

This quote cost him five trips to the administrator's office, and they wanted to know if he was indoctrinating students. Edward shared that the administration stated there was a parent complaint; however, when he asked to see it, there was no evidence, nor would they "let him speak to it." He found out his students were being pulled out of other classes and questioned about him. Edward was accused of "shoving gay stuff down people's throats just for having pride flags on a poster." He said they "...forced me to come to these hushed meetings after the fact, without allowing any representation."

Edward shared that he faced many roadblocks in K-12 classrooms. He and a professor from the local university wrote an 800-page French curriculum for his high school students because they lost their books after COVID. His idea was to give each student this paper book to use to write and study. He had seen in other school districts that people were being celebrated for these triumphs. However, he had a different experience: his curriculum was banned.

He argued that all teachers create their work and share it daily with others. Edward went to the district asking why; he was advised to contact the Department of Education, and they would have to put him on a list. He contacted the Department of Education, and this is the

conversation he shared: “Hi, how can I be put on the list? And they were like, well, the list is defunct; no one buys textbooks anymore. There’s no rule.” He went back to the district and shared this information. They asked to vet the book, and they still banned it. Edward went to the board and explained that he was not making money from the books. He could print them for free and called a local company to bind the books. The superintendent contacted the local company and said, “I need you not to work with him. And I need you not to print this.” The person went back and conveyed this information to Edward. Edward shared that the superintendent attends an anti-LGBTQ+ church and would not allow this book to be used by the students.

When his students had a 93% proficiency on their French AP tests, instead of the school celebrating the success, they questioned how they paid for the test. Edward stated he paid the fees because the students could not afford to pay, and he got in trouble. When he tried to create and start a fund for the student fees for the AP test, he was told he could not.

Edward shared his little town’s experience when they had their second annual pride this year. The FBI had to get involved because of the threats targeting LGBTQ+ people. Edward emphasized:

Horrible people saying things like that we should not be allowed around kids that we are deviants and disgusting. And then, when they were told they were being hateful, they would act shocked and offended. And I’m like, you just said that was deviant and disgusting and suggested that I shouldn’t be allowed around kids. Do you really think that that’s not hateful? But I don’t think these people think in those terms.

Edward later became the Teacher of the Year, representing his state in 2022. He has since left the K-12 classrooms and is now teaching at the college level, where he believes he can reach

a more extensive classroom of students. He is an author, mentor, and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights.

Riley: “I’m Not Going to Judge You; You Don’t Get to Judge Me.” Riley explained that she has been a target of homophobia and microaggressions from her family and colleagues. She spoke of times when her conservative aunt and her son would talk about faggots and gays. These conversations made her uncomfortable, so she would comment. Riley was dismissed by one of them, who said, “Oh, well, that’s just because, like, you’re gay, right?” She brushes these comments off, saying they do not have a filter, but then stated: “But I know that it’s more rooted to something that’s like, that’s actually homophobia.” She expressed that she had to think about it, as she nervously stated, “I feel like there’s been a couple of instances where it’s not always very direct homophobia, like, it’s not like gays are bad, like sort of situation, it’s been indirect.”

Riley described an experience wearing a silly shirt with rainbows and a print that said, “Your Kid’s Favorite Teacher!” One of her teammates told her it was surprising that she wore that shirt to school since they teach in a conservative community. She said, “If they are under the impression or know that part about you, they might have a problem with kids being in your class.” She shared that she did not think her teammate meant it in a homophobic way, but to her, it was homophobic. Riley expressed:

People just live in their own little worlds. And I don’t think they realize, like, how hurtful these things can be, and how it kind of like tears, [hesitates as she is trying not to cry] someone is like [hesitates] tears down your like identity, your confidence.

Riley said that when these things happen, it reminds her why she must stay in the closet when teaching. Every time she gets a haircut (her hair is cut short), little kids ask her if she is a boy or a girl, and the teachers ask her if she is embarrassed when kids ask her that. Riley told

them no, that she liked what the kids were asking and that it was good for them to ask those questions of a person. Kids also asked her if she was married or had a boyfriend. In her experience at a Title 1 school with primarily Hispanic families, kids asked her if she liked girls or boys.

Keito: “Welcome to My Classroom” Letter. Keito has had experiences in the classroom similar to Riley’s. When students jokingly call her Mr., she reminds them she is Ms. Keito. She shared that when students made these comments or asked why she dressed like a man, she turned the moments into a teaching opportunity. She believed that her students did not know and that it was vital for them to learn how these comments can make people feel uncomfortable. She also wanted them to know they can be who they are.

Keito’s first experience as a teacher started with her “Welcome to my Classroom” letter, in which she shared her personal information she has a girlfriend, four kids, her education, and “yada, yada.” When the assistant principal pointed this out to her, he told her she had to change her letter from having a girlfriend to having a partner or significant other. When she asked the assistant principal why, he told her a parent had called and complained because her kids had read the letter and saw she had a girlfriend. Keito conjectured it made her kids guess because she was a woman with a girlfriend. She stated:

At the time, it just kind of threw me off because I was like, if people can say husband or boyfriend, then why do I need to change mine? I could see if it was across the school. Everybody just said partner or significant other, but for me specifically, because I put girlfriend, I had to change mine [welcome letter to parents.]

The administrator directed her to remove “girlfriend” from her parent’s letter.

Sam: “That Was Thrown Out There to Shut Me Up!” Sam finalized her divorce, continued in a new relationship with a woman, planned to be together forever, and moved to another school for a fresh start. Sam felt she was doing the right thing by being upfront and telling her new principal and her grade-level team she was a lesbian and had a girlfriend. All went well for a few years until the grade-level team changed. One teacher left, and a new teacher joined, which changed the team’s dynamics. Two of the teachers on the team were in a secret affair, and Sam felt she got pulled into their drama since she was friends with them. Her grade-level team told her that if she shared there was an affair, they would find out that she had a girlfriend and that she dated girls. Sam stated, “That was thrown out there to shut me up. Nevertheless, it didn’t work because I didn’t care.” She felt they could say nothing about her teaching or her personality but came after her sexual identity. “They think it’s my weak spot and was kind of a veiled threat.”

Sam transferred to another elementary school in the same district at a different grade level and plans not to be “out” in the new school. She shared that when she met with the principal of her new school, who had been her assistant principal at her previous school, Sam told him she was looking for a fresh start and was excited to teach at a different school and grade level with a new team of teachers. Sam told him she wanted to start a pride club using her new school’s mascot. The principal advised her not to add the word “pride” to anything. She was confused but stated, “This is a very conservative community; the word ‘pride’ would be misconstrued, and she would be putting herself out there. The parents are not supportive of that so that he couldn’t be supportive of that.”

Griffith: “A Form of Discriminatory Behavior Because It’s Just a Complete Lack of Knowledge.” Griffith shared instances and how he handles microaggressions and homophobia.

A teacher asked Griffith what gender his husband refers to him, asking, “If my husband ever calls me, she or her?” Griffith explained that he does not directly answer these questions. He turns around. Griffith walks away from people being intrusive, and he “leaves it like that.”

Griffith described situations when he negotiated his identity. When colleagues were discussing bullying a feminine male student(s), teachers blamed the student for being flamboyant and suggested that they would not be bullied if they did not act that way. He found their attitudes to be problematic because they were excusing bullying. Griffith shared two options: “To go Stonewall and pick up the nearest brick and start a riot, or do I like to plant some seeds and hope for change?” Griffith acknowledged that he was frustrated that he had to negotiate his identity “because it’s uncomfortable to sometimes challenge your colleagues.”

He shared that a teacher from a different school asked if his site had any transgender students. Griffith said they had some openly trans students. The teacher commented, “...all of that is so sad.” He told her response was sad, and then he paused and said:

And I decided to let it go at that time because this is someone that doesn’t work at my school, doesn’t work on my network, nor doesn’t work on my sphere of influence. And so, I just kind of exited from the conversation.

After Griffith shared this moment with me, I asked him if he would have handled that conversation differently. He said, “I think I would have, but it was a social event, and I chose to exit the conversation because everyone was having fun. I did not want to take the responsibility of educating them.”

LGemini: “I Was Brought Into the Principal’s Office About That!” LGemini shared an experience of homophobia when she was a physical education teacher at the middle school level. A female student found a coupon with a discounted dinner offer on it. She said, “We

should all get dressed up and go there and eat.” This information got back to the principal, and she was called into his office to speak to him regarding her comment about the female students.

LGemini shared what the conversation was between her and the principal:

The principal tried to twist that I was a weirdo freak and a predator until we reminded him of last month. You’re gonna take that female student that was misbehaving on the field trip back to school alone in your truck, and I stopped you. He said, ‘Oh yeah,’ I said, YEAH! [whole emphasis] So, won’t you back off it, you know, so he left me alone.

[Silence as she shook her head] I was called into the office to discuss that! What are my intentions?

LGemini was visibly irritated as she narrated that story. She shared that she was called into the office while teaching high school. She calmly said, “I kissed my partner then, and they asked me about that and brought me into the office.” LGemini shrugged off that experience. When I asked her if these two experiences affected how she performed her school identity, she said, “It did not really. [silence] Well, maybe. [silence] Maybe I’m a little reluctant to say that. [silence] I don’t say I’m openly gay at school online. [silence] So, maybe a bit of an impact. [silence] Yeah...”

LGemini brought up the incident with the principal:

It just irritated me. I did clear it up. And I pretty much said, ‘How dare you to even suggest that I had ulterior motives?’ Yeah. [silence] But once I drew attention to his, what could have been heinous behavior, not that I totally didn’t think he had any wrong intentions. When he suggested that he take that student home in his truck, but I’m the one who said, ‘Hey, that won’t look good. And she could say something about you. Yeah, that’s not true.’ I had his back, and he didn’t have mine. [silence] Yeah, I just wanted him

to know that that wasn't nice. Because he damn well, I didn't [hesitates, like a stumble of words]. My intentions were good.

LGemini described another challenge she encountered teaching at a private school. She explained:

I'm not sure, but I kinda felt that at my private school in Albuquerque [drifts to silence and didn't finish the sentence]. I never, they never really did say why they did not renew my contract. But after seven years of success of being there [drifts to silence], you know, I am pretty darn sure it was because I was gay. I'm like 90% sure. So, how did I handle that? I just got another job somewhere else. And my feelings were hurt, but there wasn't much else I could do. So, yeah, I just moved on and got a job somewhere else and went back to public school.

Sub Theme: LGBTQ+ Rotates Around the Axis of Religious and Societal Norms

The participants' culprit was their sexual identity. They shared how they deal with the two dominant systems that historically support oppression: religion and heteronormativity-enforced norms. As Wittig's (1992) work found, "I can only underline the oppressive character that the straight mind is clothed in its tendency to immediately universalize its production of concepts into general laws which claim to hold true for all societies, all epochs, all individuals." (p. 27). She states that the function, "is to poeticize the obligatory character of the 'you-will-be-straight-or-you-will-not-be'" (Wittig, 1992, p. 28).

Edward and His Father (Ed Carver) Candid Conversation on His 21st Birthday:

As Edward explained,

I told my dad, 'Well, you have figured it out. Now, you know I'm gay.' And he was like, 'Yeah'. And then he said, 'Well, I wish you weren't.' I said, 'Well, I'd spent a lot of time

wishing the same thing. It is not going to change.’ And then we both laughed. He said, ‘You’re kind of soft sometimes. And that’s a good thing. But you have to walk into every room like you got the biggest dick in the room because that’s the only way you’re going to survive.’ And I said, ‘Well, I will try to do that. And I have tried to do that, you know, in the way that he means it, which is, I have to, I have to envision myself as just as good as other people.’

Jara: “Oh, Are You Ever Going to Be With a Boy?” Jara described her experiences when she told others she was a proud lesbian. She could see that people got uncomfortable, so she does not mention gender when she speaks of her partner. That omission seems to make them more comfortable when they meet their partner. She stated, “And then they start to make their opinions after they meet us together.” There is a negative connotation to the word lesbian, and Jara thinks people are saying, “Girls can’t be with girls, and boys can’t be with boys!”

Jara shared that her dad struggles with her two siblings; her brother is bisexual, and she has a transgender sister who is a lesbian. She noticed her dad “has a bit more homophobic side” towards her transgender sister and bisexual brother. Jara thinks it is easier for her dad to accept her because she is a woman dating a woman. She stated, “And I think that’s to do with misogyny, and his patriarchy... there’s still like that they almost get pleasure from that for like hearing about lesbians.” Jara shared that she believed there is an indoctrination in society of heterosexual marriage, stating, “It was put in your head, like, you’re going to be a wife, and there’s going to be a husband.”

Religion and Homosexuality

Farris, Jara, and Maia shared the challenges they endured with being raised in Catholic homes with strong beliefs that homosexuality is a sin. These participants shared experiences of growing up in a Catholic household: you follow the rules, including the tradition of your father

“[giving] you (female) away” to a man and that you marry in the Catholic Church. There is no wiggle room for alternatives. Maia giggled in disbelief as she emphasized, “Being born and raised Catholic, they do not believe in homosexuality. You marry somebody of the opposite sex, and you’re together to have children and to God...” She shrugged her shoulders slightly and said, “So, yeah, so if you do come out, you are kind of ousted.”

While religion and marriage were not factors for Sam and LGemini, their parents were surprised when their daughters left female-male marriages to be with women. Sam aptly described the heteronormative vision of the female gender role in society. “You know when you’re a little girl, you meet Prince Charming, you get married, you have kids, you have jobs, you raise them, you have grandkids, and you live the stereotypical Cinderella kind of life.”

Sam: “The More I Got to Know Her, the More I Felt Happy Again and Alive.” Sam was married to a male for 20 years. Sam and her husband were Catholics who did not believe in divorce. However, she had an affair and fell in love with a woman. This change in her life made her question everything she knew, thought, and was raised to believe. Sam and her husband divorced, and after some time passed, they became friends. When she told her children, they told her they already knew. However, her mom and dad were not as supportive for some time. Her mom told her she was going through “a phase and other stereotypical things.” I let silence take a moment and did not push her to share what other things her mom said. However, about 10 minutes later, when asked about her challenges, Sam stated:

I guess the biggest challenge is just telling people, I mean, that I jumped from being married to a guy to falling in love with a girl. So, I don’t know if it was necessarily a challenge. It was just scary.

I asked her if her mom was a challenge. Her response:

She was because she said it was a phase, and that caught me off guard because I didn't expect that from her at all. After all, that's not how I was raised. But I also think the way [hesitates, seemingly holding her breath] she responded to me, telling me that it was because my girlfriend had been in our lives as a friend, so I think she feels like she was lied to. So, she jumped back at me for it. Both of us talked to each other so meanly.

LGemini: "I Developed a Relationship With a Girl." LGemini smiled, shrugged as she tilted her head to the right, and said, "And then I met my girlfriend..." LGemini shared a similar experience. She was not unhappy in her marriage to her ex-husband. She was 30 years old, teaching in Espanola, New Mexico, and then, in a matter-of-fact way, stated, "I developed a relationship with a female." She smiled and shared that she told her mom and dad about it and that "they were only kind of upset for about 10 hours, 12 hours, then everything was back to normal." I asked, "...and your husband?" She said, "That dissolved." Then, she was silent; she looked away from her phone as though her thoughts were elsewhere in time. Then she said, "The first person I was with, I tried to be friends with her, but she does not really want to be friends." There was a bit of awkward silence as she looked away from me.

Male-to-Male Matrimonies

Male-to-male marriage experiences were opposite of the women's experiences in terms of social, gender roles, religious, and family expectations. When Maia, LGemini, and Sam married males, they experienced no questioning from their families. Then, when they divorced, the focus of the divorce was that they were leaving their husbands for another woman. Maia's family thought she was doing drugs. She shared that her parents drove to the city where she lived, and they would make her go to a rehabilitation center. She stated with a giggle, "They actually thought I was doing drugs; that was the only way to explain my behavior if I was doing drugs." However, when the married males shared their first marriages with males, they did not experience as much drama from their families as the women did. It is essential to note that the gay men in this study had not been previously married to women.

Edward: "I'm Happy. I Have a Husband and a House." When Edward had his first teaching interview, he wore his wedding band; he hoped the interviewer would assume he was straight because he needed this position to earn his teaching license. From then on, he and his husband had a policy stating, "We both reference our husband in some fashion because we don't want to work in a place that wouldn't want us anyway!" He proudly stated in his happy-go-lucky Kentucky accent:

We can afford things like, not just the basics, like food and electricity, which in itself shows I was successful from where I am from, and we can afford a vacation. We can do nice things. I have written a book. I make sure that I smile.

Farris: "This Guy Is Into Me?" Farris is a Hispanic male with brown hair and brown eyes, and he had shared that he was shocked this white, blond hair and blue-eyed man was interested in him, stating whimsically, "This guy is into me?" They started their romance, in a heteronormative traditional way, by talking to each other by telephone and eventually met in a

neutral place for their first date. They continued, agreed to make it official as boyfriends, and made their commitment to each other and marry. With tenacity, Farris stated, “We have *our own home*; we have *our own life*.”

Gerald: It Was This Strange Pressure Because As I Am Giving My Vows, I’m Also Thinking I Am Probably Going to Be Fired This Week!” Gerald shared a different experience, which was interesting as he married his male partner in front of news crews. He chose to marry his life partner on the day that gay marriage became legal in Oregon. Knowing that the city would heavily publicize the marriage ceremony for all to see, hear, and read about in the newspaper, this ceremony would be against the school district’s strict order on him not being publicly out.

Griffith: “What’s Their Name?” Griffin giggled about how people acknowledged the symbolic wedding ring on his right-hand finger. He said that out of curiosity, they started asking questions. When they asked if he was married, he stated he was married. They would ask, “Oh? What is their name?” or “What is his name?” as they snickered. He responds, “Maybe you will meet him someday.” At other times, when his husband came up in an open conversation, Griffith shared that some people would tell him they did not know he had a husband. He responds, “And I just said yeah, then we would kind of move out of the conversation.”

Summary

It was heart-wrenching to hear the stories of LGBTQ+ educators. They told me they teach in fear, afraid that people will bully and threaten them. They were pushed into silence and feared losing their livelihoods. All participants shared that they did not want to be identified by a sexual label. They wanted to be seen as people, as humans.

The participants' initial perceptions of being openly out without facing discrimination reflected either a lack of awareness or unchecked optimism. However, as I delved deeper into their narratives, they began to share specific instances prompted by the interview questions. They realized that they were not openly out at work and that they faced challenging situations in negotiating the performance of their sexual identity in K-12 schools. They began to recognize and articulate the experiences of homophobia and microaggressions they encountered from administrators, staff, students, parents of students, and their own families. The participants highlighted the effects of religion and societal-enforced heteronormativity norms in their lives.

Nevertheless, despite various ways of performing identity, all 11 teachers recounted negative experiences in the K-12 classrooms. These negative experiences with families, school administrators, colleagues, parents, and students affected them professionally and personally. Most searched for safer spaces. Jara left the profession. Keito and Riley returned to college, received a higher degree, and left the classroom. Maia and LGemini moved from brick-and-mortar buildings to online teaching. Griffith moved to a progressive school in the charter system. Edward went to teach at a university. Sam and Farris left schools for fresh starts at other school sites. Only Jack and Gerald continued teaching in the same districts.

In chapter five, I connect their stories to my research questions and discuss implications for policy and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The audience senses secret mysteries and powers behind the performance, and the performer senses that his chief secrets are petty ones. As countless folktales and initiation rites show, often the real secret behind the mystery is that there really is no mystery; the real problem is to prevent the audience from learning this, too. ~Erving Goffman

This narrative study aimed to understand how LGBTQ educators perform and negotiate the performance of their sexual identities in K-12 schools. The 11 LGBTQ+ educators opened their closet doors and shared the stories of their queer experiences in and out of the classroom. This chapter connects the findings presented in chapter four back to my research questions, drawing on scholarship that includes queer theory (Butler, 1990) and Goffman's (1959) performance theory. It summarizes the key findings, draws conclusions, discusses the implications of what we know now from this study, and provides reflections on what this study means.

This study provides stories of the complicated ways the participants performed and regulated their sexual orientation and gender identity within the confines of historically heteronormative K-12 school systems. The study's participants told stories that illustrated the articulating experiences of coming out and performing sexual identity with homophobia, microaggressions, and a fear of not being socially accepted.

Research Question One

How do LGBTQ+ educators perform their gender identities and sexual orientations in historical heteronormative classrooms and schools?

In chapter four, the participants shared their queer experiences inside and outside of schools. There was a sense of pride when participants shared their perspective of being openly out. Sullivan (2003) explained, "Associated with 'pride' and with the rhetoric of choice was the belief in the transformative power of 'coming out,' of publicly declaring one's personal and political

identity” (p. 31). Despite their strong sense of agency, the participants’ stories included instances of not being openly out and needing to perform and regulate their sexual orientations in their schools. deLeon and Bruner (2013) argued that because of gay oppression, “LGBT individuals were forced into hiding...this intense fear forced gay educators to hide deep in the closet and gay educational leaders, even deeper.” (p. 178). According to their stories, the educators were aware of the disadvantages and risks that came with being openly out in the school systems, including an unaccepting society and the potential to become the target of heteronormative politics.

Wittig (1982) declared, “It does not happen by magic, it must be done. It is an act, a criminal act, perpetrated by one class against another. It is an act carried out at the level of concepts, philosophy, politics” (p. 80). The participants shared the language of “Gauge,” “Don’t advertise it,” “Pretend to be straight,” “I choose when I am comfortable,” “Don’t want to talk about it,” “Not broadcasting it,” “Didn’t want it to come up,” and “Didn’t need it flashing in people’s lives,” as they stated to whom and when they share their sexual identity with heterosexual friends, colleagues, and family members.

Goffman (1959) explained that “defensive and protective practices comprise techniques employed to safeguard the impression fostered by an individual during his presence before others” (p. 14). Participants managed impressions when deciphering how they needed to perform. Farris, Jack, and Edward shared how, in their early years of teaching, they did not think people in schools were ready for them to share their sexual identities. Farris shared that when he was at the high school level:

I did have to hide my identity, even though I was out to my family and friends; I just didn’t think that group of people were ready to hear me talk about my husband and have a picture of him up.

Jack explained he had realized the community he was teaching in was not ready for him to come out and say, “Hey! I’m the teacher here. And I’m also gay. And I was okay with that.” Edward shared that during the first year of teaching, he performed as a heterosexual and thought that the moment his colleagues saw his wedding band, they would assume he was straight. Edward said he did not like doing this; it made him uncomfortable to lie, but he needed to do it to get his teacher’s license.

Keito divulged that she was comfortable with her sexuality in and out of the classroom and that she did not perform heteronormatively. However, she added there are instances where she may cover up the tattoos on her arms. Keito shared, “I remain pretty true to who I am. The only time I guess I’ve really done something similar is just covering up my tattoos during the interview, but I am still masculine presenting.” She did not outwardly reveal her sexual identity to students, but if they asked, she would tell them she had a girlfriend.

Research Subquestion One

How do LGBTQ+ educators regulate their gender identity and sexual orientation in their pedagogy?

All the participants were aware of the salience of gender identity and sexual orientation, and they made informed decisions about how they would regulate themselves in schools. They were conscious and intentional, harkening to Goffman’s (1959) performance theory when he wrote, “It often happens that the performance serves mainly to express the characteristics of the task that is performed and not the characteristics of the performer” (p. 77). The task for my participants is educating their students while minimizing the markers of their sexual identity.

The conversations with the participants emphasized the importance of separating their personal life from their teacher identity life in terms of sexual identities. Jack, Griffith, Farris, Jara, Maia, Riley, LGemini, Sam, Gerald, and Edward shared that they did not hide their sexual

identities, but they were not announcing it either. Narrative analysis allowed the educators space to talk about how they regulated identity while not disrupting the heteronormative social contract. The participants were adamant they made conscious decisions not to share their sexual identity with their administrators, colleagues, students' families, and students. The majority of the participants knowingly avoided sharing their sexual identity in K-12 schools to prevent backlash, stigma, and discrimination.

Only Keito stated, "I am very open about my sexuality – talking openly about it." Keito shared that when students would call her Mr. and would laugh, she would correct them. She teaches students to understand how it makes people feel when making fun of people because they are different. She said, "So, they just don't really know and need to hear that. So that they aren't making people feel uncomfortable."

All educators shared that being LGB did not change their pedagogy. However, they gained more of an awareness of LGBTQ+ students, even though participants did not all divulge their sexual identities to those students. Jara, a high school counselor, identified double standards in her role as she struggled to navigate her own sexual identity while assisting students in understanding the pressures and challenges of both heterosexuality and homosexuality. She explained, "So, like before, since everyone was on the same page with sexualities, like no one had really talked about it. But, because I am straying from the norm, her sexual identity, it meant it had to be a conversation."

Summary of the Findings

The stories collected in this study reflect Connell's (2014) findings that gay and lesbian teachers subject themselves to two competing categories of identifying as LGBTQ+ and as teaching professionals. These two competing categories imply a balancing act between their

personal and career lives. She found three educator pathways they identified with and followed one of these paths: splitting, knitting, or quitting.

All of the participants in my study were *splitters*. They placed boundaries between their personal and professional lives and chose not to come out at school. They did not have an intentional plan to bring their sexual identity into the classroom, so they cannot be considered *knitters*. Still, they were not hiding their sexuality, and at the same time, they were also not openly out. My participants enacted Connell's (2014) *quitter* pathway in various ways. While they did not leave the profession, Jack, Griffith, Jara, LGemini, Maia, Keito, Riley, and Edward invested in advanced degrees, intending to return to a new supportive role for K-12 students rather than as classroom teachers. They teach college, left brick-and-mortar schools during COVID to teach online, and continued teaching online or went into administration.

The participants affirmed that once they were outed, they became subjects of societal aggression in and out of the classrooms. Sullivan (2003) explains, "Homophobia and 'gay-bashing' are other examples of the policing of identity and of punishment for what is seen by some as 'unnatural,' as are the often-violent right-to-life protests held outside abortion clinics" (p. 84). My participants dealt with homophobia and microaggressions in different ways. Some accepted these actions and behaviors were indirect, and they recognized that they were the subject of homophobia and microaggressions. It was alarming but not surprising that participants tried to separate direct versus indirect homophobia and microaggressions when someone made derogatory comments towards them and other LGBTQ+ people.

There is a parallel between the way the LGBTQ+ participants responded to microaggressions and homophobia and the way some may react when they experience verbal, emotional, or physical abuse relationships. A subconscious disconnect or denial is a coping strategy that helps them navigate in the heteronormative society. Regardless of indirect or

directness, homophobia and microaggression are nonetheless gay-bashing, and the acceptance of these acts permits others to continue to marginalize gay teachers. “Its use only serves to fuel existing prejudice,” writes Simon Watney (1992:18), “and may even lead to an increase in discrimination and violence” (as cited in Jagose, 1996, p. 106). All participants understood it was not a good idea to be openly out in the school system because their sexual identity could fall into the unaccepting hands of society’s politics. Edward shared his resentment of this heteronormative control and stated, “Feeling that other people could destroy me had profound psychological effects on me and my husband.”

Implications for Practice

There are many problems with the political attacks on LGBTQ+ educators. We know, as LGBTQ+ educators, that this larger political reality puts a spotlight on us. This spotlight brings attention to LGBTQ+ teachers, who understand what it is like to perform to the standards of the “straight mind.” They negotiate the performance of their sexual identity in and out of classrooms, which makes them seasoned actors. They know, understand, and feel the consequences of coming out at the wrong time and with the wrong people. So, they perform on the front stage until they choose, which may empower them, but not the system that tries to control them.

We are losing good people who are good teachers. They fear and do not want to deal with a system defined by heterosexuality that judges them without knowing them as a person first. They are leaving for spaces where they are accepted as individuals and professionals. This study found that homophobic leaders continue to exist in our K12 schools, and these administrators make LGBTQ+ educators’ lives difficult. They all shared that they felt their self-identity, teacher identity, and LGBTQ+ identity were so affected by having to be silent that they started questioning themselves and their career choice. They knew they would continue to perform a normative identity if they wanted to teach.

These recommendations will assist in improving the environment for LBQTQ+ educators in K-12 schools:

Recommendation One: Comprehensive nondiscrimination state and district policies defined, supported, and enforced that explicitly include LGBTQ+ identities. These policies should clearly define the consequences of discriminatory behavior.

Recommendation Two: Mandatory educator and educational leadership training programs at the university and college created for all educators to attend as part of their education program. These programs should integrate LGBTQ+ diversity strategies for creating inclusive schools and classrooms, understanding with the intent to support diverse administrators, educators, staff, families, and student structures, and addressing bias.

Recommendation Three: District policy supports in place for educators and students. Schools need to have nondiscrimination policies in place that explicitly protect individuals based on their gender and sexual identities.

Recommendation Four: Professional development training for all educators, including administrators at site and district levels. Mandatory training on diversity, equity, and inclusion for all school staff, educators, and administrators. This training can promote understanding, sensitivity, and understanding of marginalized people and contribute to a more inclusive and supportive school culture in educational communities.

Recommendation Five: A curriculum for inclusion with inclusive curricula and education materials that reflect diverse perspectives, including LGBTQ+ history, contributions, and experiences. This material will create a more inclusive and accurate representation of the world.

Recommendation Six: Counseling and support services for all educators, staff, students, and families. These services can provide counseling and support groups to help the school community navigate challenges and foster a sense of community and understanding.

Recommendation Seven: Parental and community engagement that will encourage open communication between educators and administrators at the site and district level, students and families can receive support to help break down stereotypes and reduce the potential stigma of LGBTQ+ people.

Recommendation Eight: Representation highlighting positive examples of LGBTQ+ educators within the school community that can challenge the stereotypes and demonstrate that diverse identities are valued.

For Schools

Sharing the educators' stories with school districts and higher education institutions will bring awareness concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion for teachers. Although many school districts claim they enforce, support, and encourage inclusion, equity, and diversity in their schools, my 11 participants affirm there is little to no support in Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, and Kentucky public and charter schools. Griffith and Jara found charter schools advancing inclusion, equity, and diversity environments. Nonetheless, Jara left the education field. While only two of the 11 participants stayed in the same district, I also highlight the valor and the cultural capital Jack and Gerald brought to their work life. Jack survived a smear campaign from a homophobic teacher, and Gerald succeeded in a discrimination lawsuit.

School districts struggle to find and retain teachers, yet all 11 educators left their workplaces after experiencing discrimination, homophobia, and microaggressions from administrators, staff, and students. School districts spend much time and money preparing educators to represent their schools and mission. When a senior educator leaves a site, the district

loses its investment in the teacher (i.e., benefits, stipends, training, professional development, materials, recognitions, and the time they pay someone to train them). How can we retain educators when they experience social, emotional, and mental abuse simply because they are LGBTQ+?

For the Future

The success of our LGBTQ+ educators and LGBTQ+ students can be ensured by developing policies and procedures to create and support sustainable, welcoming learning environments for all people in the school systems. All my participants disclosed that they did not feel their schools were safe and inclusive. We can start these conversations with LGBTQ+ people present, as we are key stakeholders in policies that embrace inclusive, equitable, and diverse environments.

I have had many debates with people because they will argue that they are protected by federal law. However, few people understand that you must stop discrimination at the state level. It is crucial to also bring attention to laws in place and how the laws are written at the state level. In some states, there is no protection at all for LGBTQ+ people. Figure 2a (Appendix A) identifies the state laws and local nondiscrimination ordinances that explicitly prohibit discrimination on sexual orientation in Oregon, (Gerald) and New Mexico (Maia and LGemini). For the participants who reside in Arizona (Jack et al.) and Kentucky (Edward), there are no explicit state protections for discrimination based on sexual orientation. Figure 3 (Appendix A) identifies the federal and state laws on employment discrimination. The participants who reside in Oregon (Gerald) and New Mexico (Maia and LGemini) have state laws that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Whereas for the participants who live in Arizona (Jack et al.) and Kentucky (Edward), there is no state policy that explicitly prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

On the local level, professional development training can be developed to educate about the effects of bullying, discrimination, microaggression, and homophobia on individuals' social, emotional, and mental health. I want to say there is change happening; the problem is this is a prolonged change. I do not want to imply that simple professional development and workshops will solve this issue, but they are a start. Voices need to be heard so actions happen. The Anti-Defamation League and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation report from June 2022 through April 2023 found at least 356 anti-LGBTQ+ extremist and non-extremist incidents, including organized demonstrations intending to intimidate organizers and attendees at drag shows, bomb threats at hospitals that offer care for LGBTQ+ people, and include the mass shooting in a gay bar that took the lives of five people in Colorado; motivated by hate (Anti-Defamation League, 2023). These are the incidents that are reported and documented; this report has only data that people report to agencies and does not include all the instances of unreported daily harassment described by my participants. Organized political attacks on gay educators encourage the attacks experienced by my participants. If they genuinely care about our teachers, administrators can provide support by disrupting hate speech and action in their schools and districts.

Researcher Reflections

In my third year of teaching, I had a 3rd grade class. The kids were great, and I loved teaching but was cautious about sharing. I only divulged that I had two kids and never shared about my partner. I would identify her only as my friend. It was a lie that I believed I had to tell to keep me safe. During lunch, four students came to my classroom to talk to me. I was eating lunch and grading papers. One of the eight-year-old students asked me if I was a lesbian. I about choked on my food. The other students stared at me, waiting for me to answer. I asked her why she would ask me that and who told her that. She shared that her family's cleaning lady asked her who her

teacher was, and then cleaning lady outed me to my student. I lied to my students and told them no, that I was not a lesbian. They left the classroom to go back to recess. I wanted to throw up, and I was worried people would talk. The trauma, bullying, microaggressions, and homophobia hit me like a freight train. I finished the year and moved to teach in another school district.

I knew from my queer experiences there were so many more stories out there that existed and that I needed to create a safe space where LGBTQ+ educators could freely share the stories of their experiences, barriers, social pressures, and obstacles endured in classrooms every day. I knew from my personal gay educator experience that my research would be bigger than me, and there would be many more LGBTQ+ educators facing challenges and complexities. I knew I needed to find them and ask if they would participate in my study.

This research posed new questions. I wonder if Jara, Riley, and Keito will return to K-12 school systems. I want to follow up with my participants to see how they are doing and their current experiences. I want to query the white entitlement of gay men and how this entitlement impacts and protects them. I know from personal experience and my participants' experiences that gay educators face challenges daily. How do we move from here? Do schools continue to remain unsafe spaces for many of their professionals, and are we educators committed to performing a heterosexual identity if we want to continue in the classroom? Finally, I thank my 11 participants for sharing their stories, pain, and successes. I thank them for trusting me and opening themselves to this research.

Summary

The participants in my study emphasized the significant impact of keeping their personal teacher and LGBTQ+ identities separate. The silence they endured to keep these aspects of their lives separate led them to question themselves and their commitment to being educators in the K-

12 schools. The outcomes of my study highlight the importance of creating inclusive, safe spaces and supportive environments within educational settings.

REFERENCES

- American Federation of Teachers. (2013). *Creating a positive work environment for LGBT faculty: What higher education unions can do*. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from <https://www.aft.org/position/faculty-diversity/lgbt-faculty>
- American Psychological Association. (2022). *Discrimination: What it is and how to cope*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.apa.org/topics/racism-bias-discrimination/types-stress>
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2021). *LGBTQ Definitions, Terms & Concepts*. Retrieved November 20, 2022 from <https://www.aecf.org/blog/lgbtq-definitions>
- Anti-Defamation League. (2023). *Year in review: Anti-LGBTQ+ hate & extremism incidents, 2022 – 2023*. Retrieved November 3, 2023 from <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/year-review-anti-lgbtq-hate-extremism-incidents-2022-2023>
- Arvaja, M. (2016). Building teacher identity through the process of positioning, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 59, 392-402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.07.024>
- Bem, S. (1993). *The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality*. Yale University Press.
<https://archive.org/details/lensesofgender00sand/page/4/mode/2up?q=mutually+exclusive+scripts>
- Berlant, L., & Warner, M. (1998). Sex in public. *Critical Inquiry*, 24(2.), 547–566.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344178>
- Bertaux, D. (Ed.). (1981). *Biography and society: The life history approach in the social sciences*. Sage.
- Biegel, S. (2018). *The right to be out: Sexual orientation and gender identity in America's public schools*. The University of Minnesota Press.
- Blaise, M. (2009). What a girl wants, what a girl needs: Responding to sex, gender, and sexuality in the early childhood classroom. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 23(4), 450–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568540909594673>
- Blount, J. (2005). *Fit to teach: Same-sex desire, gender, and school work in the twentieth century*. State University of New York Press.
- Britzman, D. P. (1995). Is there a queer pedagogy? or, stop reading straight. *Educational Theory*, 45(2), 151–165. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1995.00151.x>
- Browne, E. (2019). *Gender norms, LGBTQI issues, and development: A topic guide* alignplatform.org.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. Routledge.

- Butler, J. (1993). Imitation and gender insubordination. In H. Abelow, M. A. Barale, & D. M. Halperin. *The lesbian and gay studies reader* (pp. 307–320). Routledge.
- Cass, V. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research*, 20(2), 143-167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224498409551214>
- Center for American Progress. (2022). *Fact sheet: LGBT workers in the labor market*. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/fact-sheet-lgbt-workers-in-the-labor-market/>
- Chase, S. E. (2011). Narrative inquiry: Still a field in the making. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 421-434). Sage Publications.
- Coleman, J. J. (2023). Narrative repair in teacher education: Restorying painful histories and “damaged” queer teacher identity, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 124(6). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104031>
- Connell, C. (2014). *School's out: Gay and lesbian teachers in the classroom*. The University of California Press.
- Connelly, M. E., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1176100>
- Cooley, H. C. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. Charles Scribner's Sons. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.213958/page/n11/mode/2up?q=separable+phenomena>
- Cory, D. W. (1975). Employment of homosexuals and other sex perverts in government: Assault on gay America. *Arizona PBS*. p. 270–277. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/context/employment.html>.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Davis, K. B. (1929). *Factors in the sex life of twenty-two hundred women*. <https://archive.org/details/factorsinsexlife00davi>
- deLeon, M. J., & Brunner, C. C. (2013). Cycles of fear: A model of lesbian and gay educational leaders' lived experiences. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(1), 161–203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X12459482>
- Edelman, A. (2022, June 24). Thomas wants the Supreme Court to overturn landmark rulings that legalized contraception and same-sex marriage. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/thomas-wants-supreme-court-overturn-landmark-rulings-legalized-contrac-rcna35228>

- El Zaatari, W., & Maalouf, I. (2022). How the Bronfenbrenner bio-ecological system theory explains the development of students' sense of belonging to school? *SAGE Open*, 12(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221134089>
- Facetime. (2023). Communication software. www.apple.com
- Fawbush, J. (2022). *Bostock v. Clayton County case summary*. FindLaw.com. <https://supreme.findlaw.com/supreme-court-insights/bostock-v--clayton-county-case-summary-.html>
- Foucault, M. (1976). Power as knowledge. In C. Lemert, *Social theory: The multicultural, global, and classic readings* (6th ed.). (pp. 360–365). Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Gavidia, L. & Adu, J., (2022). Critical narrative inquiry: An examination of a methodological approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/16094069221081594>
- Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Network. (2014). *Terms and concepts thematic*. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/GLSEN%20Terms%20and%20Concepts%20Thematic.pdf>.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Random House.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Simon and Schuster, Inc.
- Gramsci, A. (1929-1936). Intellectuals and Hegemony. In C. Lemert (Ed.), *Social theory: The multicultural, global, and classic readings* (6th ed.), (pp. 209-210). Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.
- Graveris, D. (2022, July 27). *LGBT statistics, facts, And challenges* [2022 data]. Sexualalpha.com. <https://sexualalpha.com/lgbt-statistics-facts/>
- Heaning, E. (2023, October 10). Stereotype threat: Definition and examples. SimplyPsychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/stereotype-threat.html>
- Hooker, S. D. (2019). Can gay and lesbian educators form authentic relationships in their school communities? *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 14(1), 82–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197918760223>
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge. <https://archive.org/details/teachingtotransg0000hook/page/20/mode/2up?q=p.+21>
- Human Rights Campaign. (2020). *A workplace divided: Understanding the climate of LGBTQ workers nationwide*. Retrieved October 12, 2022, from <https://instituteforpr.org/a-workplace-divided-understanding-the-climate-of-lgbtq-workers-nationwide/>

- Jabour, A. (2021). *Why we should recognize Dr. Katharine Bement Davis alongside Dr. Alfred Kinsey as a pioneering sex researcher*. Nursing Clio. Nursing Clio Why We Should Recognize Dr. Katharine Bement Davis Alongside Dr. Alfred Kinsey as a Pioneering Sex Researcher
- Jackson, J. (2007). *Unmasking identities: An exploration of the lives of gay and lesbian teachers*. Lexington Books.
- Jackson, J. (2010). "How do you spell homosexual?": Naturally queer moments in K-12 classrooms. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(1), 36-51.
<http://libjournal.uncg.edu/index.php/ijcp/article/viewFile/69/54>
- Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer theory: An introduction*. New York University Press.
- Jennings, K. (1994). *One teacher in 10: Gay and lesbian educators tell their stories*. Allyson Publications.
- Jennings, K. (2015). *One teacher in ten in the millennium: LGBT educators speak out about what's gotten better...and what hasn't*. Beacon Press.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2008). Afterward: Ten short years-Acting on Freire's requests. *Journal of Thought*, 43(1-2), 163.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A265910207/AONE?u=anon~9aa81a58&sid=googleScholar&xid=ec6db13f>
- Kincheloe, J. L., & Tobin, K. (2009). The much exaggerated death of positivism. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 4, 513–528. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-009-9178-5>
- Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., Martin, C. E. (1948). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. W. B. Saunders Company.
<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.187552/page/n645/mode/2up>
- Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., Martin, C. E., & Gebhard, P. H. (1953). *Sexual behavior in the human female*. W. B. Saunders Company.
https://archive.org/details/sexualbehaviorin0000alfr_p8y6
- Kissen, R. M. (1996). *The last closet: The real lives of lesbian and gay teachers*.
<https://archive.org/details/lastclosetrealli0000kiss/mode/2up?q=devastating>
- Kumashiro, K. (2010). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1170593>
- LibreTexts. (2023). Cooley. Retrieved November 27, 2022, from
[https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/Introduction_to_Sociology/Sociology_\(Boundless\)/04:_The_Role_of_Socialization/4.03:_Theories_of_Socialization/4.3B:_Cooley](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/Introduction_to_Sociology/Sociology_(Boundless)/04:_The_Role_of_Socialization/4.03:_Theories_of_Socialization/4.3B:_Cooley)
- Marcus, E. (2002). *Making gay history: The half-century for lesbian and gay equal rights*. HarperCollins Publishers.

- Mayo, J. (2008). Gay teachers' negotiated interactions with their students and (straight) colleagues. *University of Minnesota: Experts@Minnesota*.
<https://experts.umn.edu/en/publications/gay-teachers-negotiated-interactions-with-their-students-and-str>
- Mead, G. H. (1913). The social self. *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology & Scientific Methods*, 10, 374–380. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2012910>
- Mead, G. H. (1929). The self, the I, and the me. In C. Lemert (Ed.), *Social theory: The multicultural, global, and classic readings* (6th ed.) (pp. 167–172). Routledge Taylor and Francis Group
- Meyer, E. (2007). “But I’m not gay”: What straight teachers need to know about queer theory. *Academia.edu*. Retrieved April 21, 2022, from
https://www.academia.edu/2751077/_But_Im_Not_Gay_What_Straight_Teachers_Need_to_Know_about_Queer_Theory
- Meyer I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(5), 674–697. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674>
- Movement Advancement Project. (2022a). Employment nondiscrimination. Retrieved October 16, 2022, from https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/employment_non_discrimination_laws
- Movement Advancement Project. (2022b). Retrieved September 24, 2022 from <https://www.lgbtmap.org/>
- Navarro, J., & Tudge, J. (2022). Technologizing Bronfenbrenner: Neo-ecological Theory. *Current Psychology*, 42, 19338-19342. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02738-3>
- Northern Arizona University. (2023). *Human research protection program*. IRB new project - Human Research Protection Program (nau.edu)
- Otter.ai. (2023). *Qualitative research software*. <https://otter.ai/>
- Palmer, P. J. (1997). The heart of a teacher identity and integrity in teaching. *Change: The magazine of higher learning*, 29(6), 14–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091389709602343>
- PFLAG. (2023). *LGBTQ+ glossary*. Retrieved November 25, 2023 from <https://pflag.org/glossary/>
- Psychology Today. (2023). *Microaggression*. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/microaggression>
- Reeves, J. (2018). Teacher identity. In J. I. Lontas, T. International Association, & M. DelliCarpini (Eds.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching* (pp. 1–7). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0268>
- Richardson, S. (2012). *eleMENTary school (hyper) masculinity in a feminized context*. Sense Publishers.

- Richardson, S. (2015). *Gender lessons: Patriarchy, sextyping & schools*. Sense Publishers.
- Roberts, L. (2023). School board targets Christian teachers to protect LGBTQ students. *AZCentral.com*. Retrieved November 23, 2023, from <https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/laurieroberts/2023/03/06/school-board-targets-christian-teachers-to-protect-lgbtq-students/69969714007/>
- Rodriguez, N., & Pinar, W. (2007). *Queering straight teacher's: Discourse and identity in education*. Peter Lang Incorporated International Academic Publishers.
- Sawyer, R. D. (2021). Queer narrative theory and *currere* thoughts toward queering *currere* as a method of queer (curricular) self-study. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 7, 23–38.
- Schlichter, A. (2004). Queer at last? Straight intellectuals and the desire for transgression. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 10(4), 543-564. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/172931>.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *Epistemology of the closet*. The University of California Press.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1993). *Tendencies*. Duke University Press. <https://archive.org/search?query=tendencies+sedgwick>
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education & the social sciences* (3rd ed.). Teacher College Press.
- Shaw, S., & Lee, J. (2020). *Gendered voices, feminist visions*. Oxford University Press.
- Sullivan, N. (2003). *A critical introduction to queer theory*. New York University Press.
- Swann, W. B. (1987). Identity negotiation: Where two roads meet. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53(6), 1038–1051. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.53.6.1038>
- Swann, W. B., Jr., & Bosson, J. K. (2008). Identity negotiation: A theory of self and social interaction. In O. P. John, R. W. Robins, & L. A. Pervin (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 448–471). The Guilford Press.
- The Trevor Project. (2022). *2022 national survey on LGBTQ youth mental health*. Retrieved October 6, 2022, https://www.thetrevorproject.org/trevor01_2022survey_final.pdf (thetrevorproject.org)
- The White House. (2021). *Executive order on preventing and combating discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation*. Retrieved February 2, 2023 from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-preventing-and-combating-discrimination-on-basis-of-gender-identity-or-sexual-orientation/>
- Troiden, R. (1988). Homosexual identity development, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 9(2), 105-113. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-0070\(88\)90056-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-0070(88)90056-3)

- UCSF LGBT Resource Center. (2022). *General definitions*. <https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/glossary-terms>
- University of Florida. (2022). *LGBTQ Terms and Definitions*. Retrieved November 21, 2022 from <https://lgbtq.multicultural.ufl.edu/programs/speakersbureau/lgbtq-terms-definitions/>
- Urrieta, L., & Hatt, B. (2019). Qualitative methods and the study of identity and education. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Retrieved March 17, 2023 from https://www.academia.edu/39988270/Qualitative_Methods_and_the_Study_of_Identity_and_Education
- Urrieta, L., Kolano, L., & Jo, J. (2015). Learning from the testimonio of a "successful" undocumented Latino student in North Carolina. In E. T. Hamann, S. Wortham, & E. G. Murilo, Jr. (Eds.), *Revisiting education in the new Latino diaspora* (pp. 49-70), InfoAge Publishing.
- Warhol, R., & Lanser, S. (Eds.). (2015). *Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv8j6sv>
- Washington Elementary School District. (2022). *Resolution recognizing and affirming LGBTQ+ students and staff*. KM_454e-20220809132100 (wesdschools.org)
- White, E. (2016). Top 25 quotes by Edmund White. *A-Z Quotes*. Retrieved January 15, 2023, from https://www.aquotes.com/author/15566-Edmund_White
- Wimpee, R., & Iacobelli, T. (2020, January 9). *Funding a sexual revolution: The Kinsey Reports*. Rockefeller Archive Center. <https://resource.rockarch.org/story/funding-a-sexual-revolution-the-kinsey-reports/>
- Wittig, M. (1992). *The straight mind and other essays*. Beacon Press.
- Wozolek, B. (2018). Gaslighting queerness: Schooling as a place of violent assemblages *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 15, 319-338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2018.1484839>
- Wozolek, B. (2019). Implications of queer theory for qualitative research. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.735>
- Wright, T., Smith, N. J., & Whitney, E. (2019). LGBT educators' perceptions of safety and support and implications for equity-oriented school leaders. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies*, 3(2). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336591944_LGBT_Educators%27_Perceptions_of_Safety_and_Support_and_Implications_for_Equity-Oriented_School_Leaders

APPENDIX A

MAP (2022a) REPORT: COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF LGBTQ+ LAWS AND POLICIES

The MAP (2022a) report is part of my study to make clear the commonalities and differences across US states, territories, and regions concerning LGBTQ+-related laws and policies.

Figure 2a: Sexual Orientation Protections Through Federal Circuit Court Rulings, State Laws, and Local Nondiscrimination Ordinances

United States Regions	State law explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation (22 states and DC)	State interprets existing prohibition on sex discrimination to include sexual orientation (2 states)	No explicit state protections for discrimination based on sexual orientation (26 states)	The state is in a federal circuit with a ruling that explicitly interprets federal prohibition on sex discrimination to include discrimination based on sexual orientation (6 states)	Percent of the state population protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation through local ordinances
West Region					
CA, OR, WA, HI, NV, UT, & CO	7				
AK			1		41%
ID			1		29%
MT			1		17%
WY			1		
Southwest					
NM	1				
AZ			1		35%
TX			1		12%
OK			1		3%

Midwest					
MN, IA	2				
MN		1			
MO			1		35%
IN			1		32%
NE			1		22%
OH			1		22%
KS			1		11%
SD & ND			1		
IL & WI				2	
Southeastern					
AR, TN, NC			3		
FL			1		60%
KY			1		27%
LA			1		12%
WV			1		10%
MS			1		7%
GA			1		6%
AL			1		5%
SC			1		4%
VA			1		3%
East Coast					

NJ, RI, MA, NH, ME, DE, MD, D.C.	8				
CT, NY, & VT	3			3	
PA		1			
U.S. Territories					
Guam, Puerto Rico	2				
American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marina Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands			3		

Figure 2b: Gender Identity Protections Through Federal Circuit Court Rulings, State Laws, and Local Nondiscrimination Ordinances

United States Regions	State law explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender identity (20 states and DC)	State interprets existing prohibition on sex discrimination to include gender identity (3 states)	No explicit state protections for discrimination based on gender identity (27 states)	The state is in a federal circuit with a ruling that explicitly interprets federal prohibition on sex discrimination to include discrimination based on gender identity (23 states)	Percent of the state population protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation through local ordinances
West					
CO	1				
CA, OR, WA, HI, NV, & UT	6			6	
AK			1	1	41%

ID			1	1	29%
MT			1	1	17%
WY			1		
Southwest					
NM	1				
AZ			1	1	35%
TX			1	1	12%
OK			1		3%
Midwest					
MN & IA	2				
IL	1			1	
MI		1		1	
ND & SD			2		
MO			1		35%
NE			1		22%
KS			1		11%
IN			1	1	27%
OH			1	1	22%
WI			1	1	22%
Southeastern					
AR, TN & NC			3		
LA			1		12%

WV			1		10%
MS			1		7%
SC			1		4%
VA			1		2%
FL			1	1	60%
KY			1	1	27%
GA			1	1	6%
AL			1	1	5%
East Coast					
NJ, DE, MD, CT, VT, & D.C.	6				
RI, MA, NH, & ME	4			4	
PA & NY		2			

Figure 3: Federal and State Laws on Employment Discrimination

Table 3: Federal and State Laws Employment Discrimination

Federal law Prohibits employment discrimination based on sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity.				
United States Regions and U.S. Territories	State law explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (23 states, two territories, & D.C.)	State (law not included in heading) explicitly prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (10 states).	State law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation only (1 state).	No explicit prohibitions for discrimination on sexual orientation or gender identity in state law (16 states, three territories).
West				
CA, OR, WA, HI, NV, UT, CO	7			

AK		1		
ID, MT, WY				3
Southwest				
NM	1			
AZ, TX		2		
OK				1
Midwest				
MN, IA, IL, MI	4			
ND, NE, KS, OH		4		
WI			1	
SD, MO, IN				3
Southeastern				
VA	1			
FL, KY		2		
AR, LA, MS, AL, GA, TN, SC, NC, WV				9
East Coast				
ME, NH, VT, NY, MA, RI, CT, NJ, DE, MD, DC,	11			
PA		1		
U.S. Territories				
Guam, Puerto Rico	2			
American Samoa, Commonwealth of the				3

North Mariana Islands, US Virgin Islands				
Totals	23 states, D.C., & 2 territories	Ten states	One state	16 states & 3 territories

APPENDIX B
STUDY PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

May 24, 2023

Dear Participant,

My name is Carissa Marie Lynch. I am a doctoral candidate at Northern Arizona University. I am conducting a study to understand better how LGBTQ+ educators negotiate the performance of their sexual orientation and gender identities in K-12 schools. I am seeking volunteer LGBTQ+ educators to participate in interviews about your experiences in schools and school districts.

I will begin interviews on May 22 and through June 30, 2023. The interviews will be conducted and, with your permission, recorded through Zoom or audio recorded in person. A second interview is to confirm the accuracy of the initial interview results or if additional questions or confirmations are needed. The recordings will be erased after they have been transcribed. No personal identifying information from this study will be used in any materials created from these interviews. The information obtained in this study will be published in my dissertation. It may be presented in printed material under a pseudonym.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time. There will be no direct benefit to you if you participate in this research. However, you will contribute to the understanding and awareness of queer experiences and perceptions of barriers, social and political pressures, and obstacles from the voice of your lived experiences as an LGBTQ+ educator.

If you would like to participate in this interview process, as it is voluntary, please reply to this invitation and indicate times during May 22 - June 30 that would be convenient for the interview.

Thank you for considering my request. If you have any questions, please let me know at 480.766.9574 or at cml599@nau.edu.

Sincerely,

Carissa Marie Lynch
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership
College of Education
Northern Arizona University
cml599@nau.edu

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT'S ANALYTICAL PROFILE

Participants' Background Information

- Pseudonym
- Pronoun Use or Not Used
- Age
- Educator Position and Educational Setting
- Current State Residing
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation Identity
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Religious Beliefs/Religion
- Married/Partnered/Widow/Divorced
- Children

APPENDIX D

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board for the
Human Research Protection Program



Institutional Review Board for the
Human Research Protection Program

(525). S Beaver St
PO Box: 4062
Flagstaff AZ 86011
928-523-9551
<https://www.nau.edu/IRB>

To: Carissa Lynch, BS Elementary Education, MA Special Education, MA Educational Leadership
From: NAU IRB Office
Approval Date: May 18, 2023

Project: A Kaleidoscope: Performing Identities of LGBTQ+ Educators in K-12 Classrooms
Project Number: 2004328-2
Submission: Revision
Action: APPROVED
Project Risk Level: MINIMAL RISK
Approval Expiration Date: April 25, 2026
Next Report Date:
Review Category/ies: **The project is not federally funded or supported and has been deemed to be no more than minimal risk.**

This project has been reviewed and approved by an IRB Chair or designee.

- Northern Arizona University maintains a Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (FWA #00000357).
- All research procedures should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the guidance.
- The Principal Investigator should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that affect the protocol and report any unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others. Please refer to Guidance Investigators Responsibility after IRB Approval, Reporting Local Information and Minimal Risk or Exempt Research.

- All documents referenced in this submission have been reviewed and approved. Documents are filed with the HRPP Office within IRBNet. If subjects will be consented, the approved consent(s) are available within IRBNet upon approval notification from the HRPP Office.

Important

The principal investigator for this study is responsible for obtaining all necessary approvals before commencing research. Please be sure that you have satisfied applicable external and University requirements, for example (but not limited to) data repositories, listserv permission, records request, data use agreement, [conducting University surveys](#), [data security](#), [international](#), [conflicts of interest](#), [biological safety](#), [radiation safety](#), [HIPAA](#), [FERPA](#), [FDA](#), [sponsor approval](#), [clinicaltrials.gov](#), [tribal consultation](#), or school approval. IRB approval does not convey approval to commence research in the event that other requirements have not been satisfied.

APPENDIX E

STUDY PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: A Kaleidoscope: Performing Identities of LGBTQ+ Educators in K-12 Classrooms

Principal Investigator: Carissa Marie Lynch

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Participation in this research study is voluntary, and you do not have to participate. This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

This study is designed to examine and learn from LGBTQ+ educators about their lived experiences and careers in K-12 education settings. As a participant in this research, you will be asked questions about your queer experiences and perceptions of your sexual orientation or gender identity informed by your professional and personal barriers, social and political pressures, and obstacles from the voice of your experiences as an LGBTQ+ educator.

There are no direct benefits from participating in this study. You may choose to refrain from answering any of the following questions, and you reserve the right to withdraw from this study at any time for any reason. Your identity will not be shared in any published material.

However, your answers will be utilized to conclude this study. The information obtained in this study will be published in my dissertation and may be presented in printed material under a pseudonym. You will not benefit directly from participating in this study.

Although, there are no expected risks to you due to participating in this study. There could be minimal risks as you may feel uncomfortable while being interviewed about your queer experiences. This is a research study that may involve questions related to sensitive topics. As researchers, we do not provide mental health services. However, we want to provide you with contact information for available resources, or please get in touch with your current health provider if you need assistance at any time.

The initial interview will last approximately 90 minutes and will be conducted, with your permission, and recorded through Zoom or audio recorded in person with 19 open-ended interview questions. The second interview will be scheduled three to five days after the initial interview and will last approximately 30 minutes. The second interview will be scheduled to confirm the accuracy of the initial interview results or if additional questions or confirmations are needed.

No personal identifying information from this study will be used in any materials created from these interviews. Your name will not be used in any report. Identifiable research data will be encrypted and password-protected. Your responses will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in an encrypted and password-protected file. Only the research team will have access to the file. The list will be destroyed when the study is completed, and the data have been analyzed. I want to audiotape this interview with your permission to make an accurate transcript. Once I have made the transcript, I will erase the recordings. Your name will not be in the transcript or my notes. Because of the nature of the data, it may be possible to deduce your identity; however, there will be no attempt to do so, and your data will be reported in a way that will not identify you. Information collected about you will not be used or shared for future research studies.

The information that you provide in the study will be handled confidentially. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released or shared as required by law. Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board may review the research records for monitoring purposes.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact Dr. Frances Riemer, Dissertation Chair, by email at frances.riemer@nau.edu or by 928.774.4168 at Northern Arizona University.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the Human Research Protection Program at 928-523-9551 or online at <http://nau.edu/Research/Compliance/Human-Research/Welcome/>.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I affirm that I am at least 18 years of age and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

AGREEMENT TO BE AUDIORECORDED

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

AGREEMENT TO BE VIDEORECORDED

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject and those of his/her parent or legal guardian have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Mental Health Resources

Human Rights Campaign (<https://www.hrc.org/resources/qtbipoc-mental-health-and-well-being>).

Transgender Community

- Transgender Community (<https://translifeline.org/>). Trans Lifeline – 877.565.8860

LGBTQ+ Youth

- LGBT National Youth Talkline – 1.800.246.7743
- Trevor Lifeline (<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help/>). TrevorLifeline – 1.866.488.7386 or TrevorText - Text START to 678-678
- The Steve Fund Crisis Textline* - (<https://www.stevelfund.org/crisistextline/>). Or Text STEVE to 741741

LGBTQ+ Adults

- Lifeline* (<https://988lifeline.org/>) or Call – 1.800.273.8255
- Crisis Text Line* (<https://www.crisistextline.org/text-us/>) Or Text HOME to 741741

All Ages

- LGBT National Hotline (<https://www.lgbthotline.org/national-hotline>). 1.888.843.4564

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I appreciate your meeting with me today.

This study is being conducted to understand better how LGBTQ+ educators negotiate the performance of their sexual orientation and gender identities in K-12 schools. The objective of this study is for LGBTQ+ educators to share their experiences and their perceptions of barriers, social pressures, and obstacles they encounter in their lives and careers in heteronormative K-12 schools. You are encouraged to share your personal experiences and stories throughout this interview, which are important to hear. This information will be used to interpret your experiences. I promote your honesty and openness throughout the interview.

I would like to inform you of your rights as a research participant. There are no direct benefits from participating in this study. You may choose to refrain from answering any of the following questions, and you reserve the right to withdraw from this study at any time for any reason. As with any online activity, the risk of a breach of confidentiality is always possible; however, to the best of my ability, your answers in this study will remain confidential. The information obtained in this study will be published in my dissertation and may be presented in printed material under a pseudonym.

The interviews will be conducted and, with your permission, recorded through Zoom or audio recorded in person. To protect your confidentiality, your interview and information will be labeled with a pseudonym and not identified to you personally in any way. The recorded interview will remain solely in my possession; no other person will know you participated in this study.

- Do I have your permission to record this interview?
- Have you received and have you been able to review the Informed Consent Form I provided to you earlier?
- Do you have any questions regarding this document?

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW LIST OF QUESTIONS

I have prepared a list of questions to help guide our conversation, and please do not hesitate to share any of your experiences or stories you may see relevant. We will talk about your queer experiences and perceptions of your sexual orientation or gender identity informs your professional and personal barriers, social and political pressures, and obstacles from the voice of your experiences as an LGBTQ+ educator.

- Do you have any questions before we begin your interview?

Personal Identity

1. How would you describe your identity?
2. Does your personal identity negotiate your performance as an educator?
 - a. If so, in what ways?
 - b. If not, is there a time or situation when it does?

Teacher Identity

3. Why did you decide to become an educator?
 - a. Can you please share about those moments?
4. How would you describe your identity as an educator?

Sexual Orientation

5. When did you realize you were lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer (or questioning), or other sexual identities?
6. What is your perception of the meaning of “coming out of the closet?”
 - a. Can you please talk about your experiences of coming out?
 - b. What was it like?

7. What does out or openly LGBTQ+ mean to you?

Gender Identity

8. Does your gender impact your identity as an openly LGBTQ+ educator?
 - a. If so, in what ways?
 - b. If not, is there a time or situation when it does?

Race and Religion or Religious Beliefs

9. Does your race impact your LGBTQ+ identity? If so, in what ways?
10. Does your religion or religious beliefs impact your LGBTQ+ identity? If so, in what ways?

LGBTQ+ Educator

I am interested in your experiences as an LGBTQ+ educator in schools and districts. The following questions ask about your sexual orientation or gender identity, whether you are openly “out” or “closeted” in schools or at the district level.

11. Whom are you out to in your school or district? Talk about this experience.
12. How do you negotiate your performance of your sexual orientation or gender identity in schools or school districts?
 - a. (Prompt: negotiate your sexual orientation or gender identity and perform as heterosexual in schools and districts)
13. How does your sexual orientation or gender identity affect how you regulate your pedagogical approaches?
 - b. (Prompt: if and how this may change your pedagogy with students and colleagues, i.e., teaching styles, collaborative, reflective, constructivist, integrative, or inquiry-based approaches)
14. Describe what it is like being openly LGBTQ+ in your school or district.

School and District Settings

15. Tell me about the school or district where you are an educator. How would you describe the culture there.
16. What are some cultural messages in your school and district? (Prompt: insiders know that maybe outsiders do not know)
 - a. Heterosexuality (Prompt: Gender roles, male, female, being straight)
 - b. Homosexuality (Prompt: Being LGBTQ+, support for LGBTQ+ educators & students)
17. Have you experienced homophobia at schools or districts? If so, talk about what happened.

Conclusion

18. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?
19. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your experience with me. Your interview will help me to understand how LGBTQ+ educators negotiate the performance of their identities and how they perform through diversity and discrimination in K-12 schools and districts. I appreciate your time and honesty.

Respectfully,

Carissa Marie Lynch
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership
College of Education
Northern Arizona University