# LGBT INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS
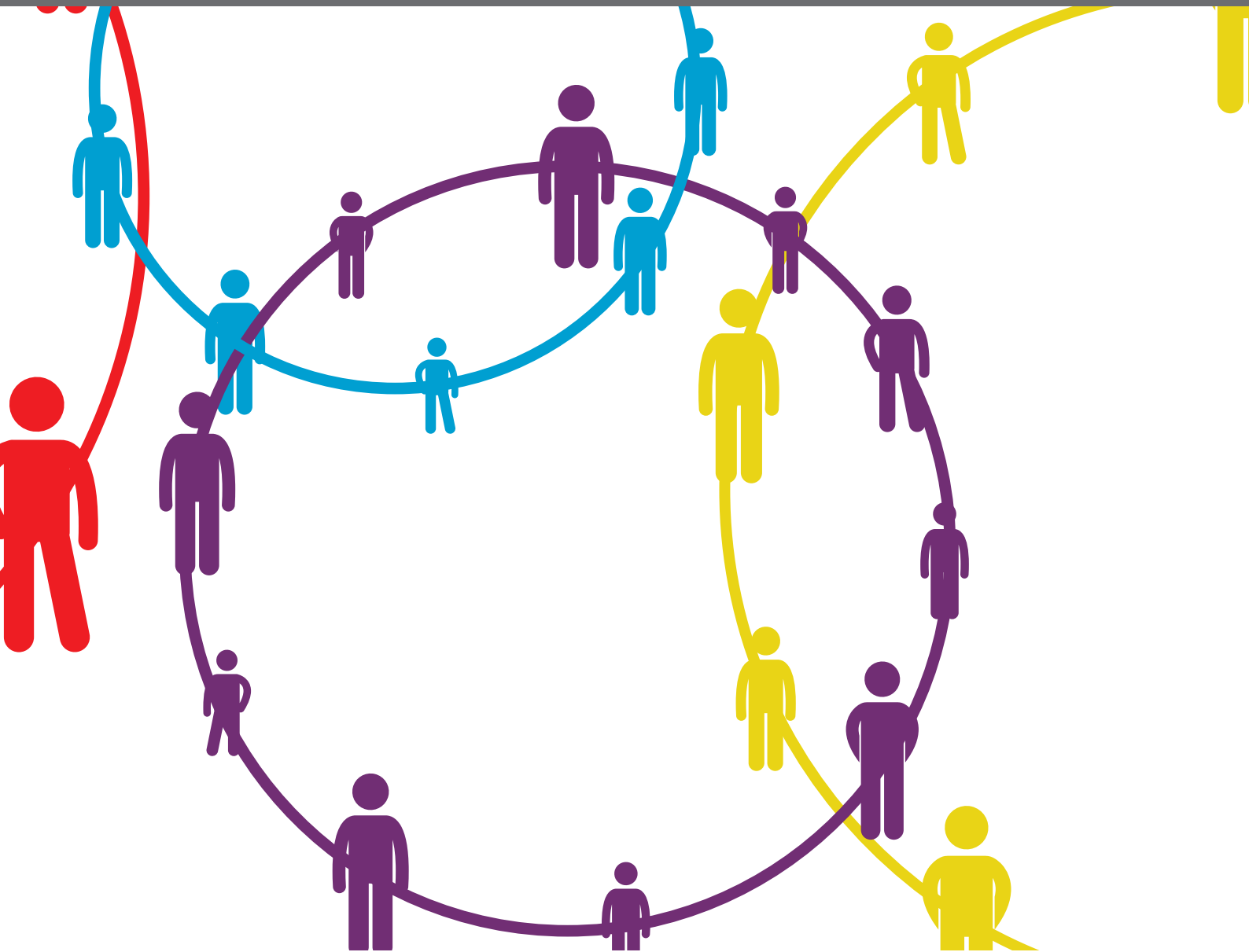
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# LGBT INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

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# Editorial: LGBT Inclusion in Schools

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**Editorial on the Research Topic**

**LGBT Inclusion in Schools**

> The likelihood that your acts of resistance cannot stop the injustice does not exempt you from acting in what you sincerely and reflectively hold to be the best interests of your community.

Susan Sontag (2007).

In proposing this Research Topic, we were interested in hearing accounts from practitioners and scholars who are involved in studying the narratives associated with LGBTQ+ experiences across a range of educational, community and cultural domains. Research continues to suggest that queer young people experience higher rates of depression, anxiety and self-harm compared to their heterosexual peers (Goldbach and Gibbs, 2017). Evidence also indicates that they are more likely to attempt suicide (Marshal et al., 2011) and experience eating disorders (Austin et al., 2013). We hoped that the Research Topic would engage with the multitude of stories that represent the diversity of LGBTQ+ lives as lived and the authors of the papers are globally situated and united around "flipping the (normative) script to survive" (Giroux, 2015).

The authors in this Research Topic narrate a contemporary account of the social realities as experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals and their allies, and in doing so rewrite the dominant narratives so often expressed in and by minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) which considers how stress can affect the mental health outcomes in individuals with a minority status. The Research Topic engages with a critical reorientation to the field to elucidate how minority status can expose Queer individuals and their allies to three stressors:

- General stressors: These are stressors which result from environmental circumstances. They could include family factors such as parental conflict, parental separation, abuse and neglect and community-related factors such as social deprivation.
- Distal stressors: These are stressors which arise from the experience of prejudice, discrimination and violence.
- Proximal stressors: These are stressors which arise from the expectations of rejection, prejudice, discrimination and violence. That is, an individual with a minority status does not have to actually experience distal stressors but the anticipation that they might encounter these stressors in different social and environmental contexts can result in psychological distress, concealment and internalized homophobia. For example, they may anticipate that they will encounter prejudice if they disclose their sexual or gender identity. This can lead to students concealing their identities, which can result in internalized stigma.

It is important to acknowledge that while much progress has been made for LGBTQ+ inclusion to become widely recognized and accepted as the "norm" that there still remains, for many young

Queer, Non-Binary and LGBT individuals, negative social and cultural experiences when disclosing their identities (distal stressors) which may increase expectations of further rejection (proximal stressors) in different contexts (Goldbach and Gibbs, 2017). Additionally, concealing one's identity due to fear of rejection (proximal stressor) can reduce the likelihood of experiencing prejudice, discrimination and violence (distal stressor) (Goldbach and Gibbs, 2017). Thus, the stressors are inter-related and bi-directional. Meyer's theory suggests that the stressors can be moderated by social support systems that are specifically established to foster both group solidarity and positively affirm minority identities. Many schools now provide "safe spaces" for students who identify as LGBTQ+ to meet informally. These groups enable students to provide one another with mutual support and advice. Some groups also adopt a proactive approach to LGBTQ+ inclusion within the school by developing initiatives to embed LGBTQ+ inclusion into the curriculum and the environment. Providing opportunities for queer students to meet as a group can enhance social connectivity, reduce internalized stigma and increase resilience. However, there is also a risk that separating out one group of students in this way can also result in internal exclusion though the creation of an "othered" group. One way of addressing this is to allow membership of the group to heterosexual allies who are deeply committed to LGBTQ+ inclusion.

This Research Topic aims to extend existing scholarship in the field in the tradition of Waller (1932), Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) and Cutuly (1993) and draws on quotidian portraits that account for the multiplicity of ways in which LGBTQ+ individuals, including students, teachers and allies, juggle the complexity of competing personal and professional demands whilst facing moral and ethical conflicts within their institutions. Darder (2011, p. 238) has noted how

[Queer} bodies are … restricted, alienated, and domesticated…, [and] are often under enormous pressure to follow strict policies and procedures for classroom conduct.

Adolescence is also a critical time during which young people explore their sexual and gender identities and research indicates that stigmatizing experiences during adolescence can reduce academic achievement and result in negative outcomes later in life (Radkowsky and Siegel, 1997). Prior to disclosure, LGBTQ+ young people may have experienced psychological distress from internalized stigma, particularly as they are coming to terms with their sexual or gender identities. The anticipation that their disclosure might be met with hostility or disgust can result in fear of disclosure (proximal stressor) and concealment of identities.

The process of "coming out" can result in exposure to both proximal and distal stressors for young people and the authors in this Research Topic address how individual and personal experiences (can critically) orient and provide valuable insight into effective strategies for coping (or not) with professional/ personal obstacles and adversity and stigma. The authors, in narrating the pedagogy of the "abjected," offer up another lens, a different worldview which is a significant critical presence of interruption in the contemporary performativity of heteropatriarchal and cis gender normativitites. Goodson and Gill (2011) have noted that when narratives of (normative) performativity are entrenched, disruption and provocation are required and in speaking back a truth to power. In this Research Topic, we have endeavored to (re)present a kaleidoscopic insight into the social and cultural landscapes in which we live as Gay, Queer, Trans, Non-Binary and Two Spirit people to challenge the tidal cacophony of those who would rather have us remain silent.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Improvement in Gender and Transgender Knowledge in University Students Through the Creative Factory Methodology

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In Spain, Social Educators, similar to both social workers and educators in the United States, help coordinate social change through educational interventions and mobilization of social groups to benefit marginalized people and overall societal welfare. They are trained to work with diverse populations, and it is important that they have awareness and training on gender and transgender issues given the extensive discrimination that transgender people endue. Research has begun to identify the important role that knowledge and attitudes of health and educational professionals may play in providing a supportive, healing context to combat the harmful effects of this discrimination and how educational trainings may foster improved knowledge and attitudes in helping professions. This study describes a program to improve knowledge and positive attitudes toward gender and especially transgender people in university students who study Social Education. The researchers measured knowledge and attitudes toward gender and transgender people issues of 64 students before and after receiving a 4-month interactive training. They used the Short Form of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale, a 12-item scale of transphobia and gender ideology variables. The researchers also asked participants about their knowledge of gender and transgender issues before and after training. The methodological experience "Creative Factory" was employed as an interactive training program. The main goal of this methodology is to enable students in a formative context to analyze social realities to generate discussion and innovate ideas to design successful practices. After 4 months of training with a weekly session on gender and transgender learning, students showed improvements in knowledge and attitudes toward both gender and transgender people. Specifically, students demonstrated more knowledge about gender and transgender issues and more positive attitudes toward transgender people. The study demonstrates that training in gender education using the Creative Factory methodology improved knowledge and attitudes in students.

**Keywords: transgender people, attitudes, sexual education, social education, social change**

# INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) states in Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2011) that human dignity must be respected and protected. Article 21 of the same Charter censors discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation and in the same year resolution 17/19 recognizes the rights of the LGBT community for the first time including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (DePalma and Cebreiro, 2018). Transgender is a general term in which people living their daily lives feel and live as the opposite gender to the one associated with the sex assigned to them at birth (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2019). The term "transgender" refers to a wide range of social identities and gender presentations (Billard, 2018). In a study conducted in the United States, transgender people were classified into three groups: (1) people who were assigned as men at birth who felt they were women, (2) people who were assigned as women at birth who felt they were men, and (3) those who did not identify as men or women (Factor and Rothblum, 2008). In the last decade in particular, there is growing evidence that, in fact, there is a considerable group of people who do not identify as trans binaries (Motmans et al., 2019).

Transgender people can be subject to severe violence though virtually all are subject to significant and harmful microaggressions and transphobic prejudice (Grant et al., 2011). Transphobia refers to negative beliefs and attitudes about transgender people, including aversion and irrational fear of masculine women, feminine men, transvestites, transgender, or transsexuals (Hill and Willoughby, 2005). The transgender group has historically been a marginalized group, and although today transgender people are more accepted by society, many health and mental health professionals (physicians, psychologists, social educators) either do not have knowledge or positive attitudes and do not believe that they are qualified to provide care services to transgender people and therefore avoid doing so (Kanamori and Cornelius-White, 2016, 2017). There is some evidence that gender expression, perhaps more so than mere sexual orientation or gender identity, may be a factor in the prejudice people experience. While transprejudice is clearly higher among males than females and heterosexuals than LGBT people, there is also evidence that transgender people may be marginalized within the LGBT community when they violate traditional gender roles (Salvati et al., 2018a,b).

It is therefore important for helping professionals who are in contact with transgender people to gain successful educational and training experiences to become familiar with the trans history and culture and demonstrate better interaction patterns with transgender people. It is crucial to design and test interventions with such professionals, preferably early in their training such as during university.

## Literature Review
### Transphobic Attitudes in General

There is a plethora of research that has been done in the context of gender studies has been on research on sexism and homophobia. And although there are more and more studies that have been conducted on the prejudices that exist against people with transgender identities (e.g., Grant et al., 2011; Morison et al., 2018), comprehensive studies targeting the general transgender population are still lacking (Scandurra et al., 2019). Likewise, there is also budding body of research investigating in particular the attitudes of helping professionals toward transgender persons (e.g., Kanamori et al., 2017; Stryker et al., 2019). While most of these studies are conducted with English-speaking samples, more research is needed with Spanish-speaking samples because they are not many (e.g., Carrera-Fernández et al., 2013) and none specially concerning knowledge and attitudes toward transgender persons within the ranks of social educators.

In a general population study of attitudes toward transgender people with 668 people, the results showed that a majority supported the possibility of transsexuals undergoing sex reassignment; however, 63% thought that the individual should bear the corresponding costs. In addition, a majority supported the right of transgender people to marry in their new sex and their right to work with children. The right of transgender people to adopt and raise children was supported by 43%, while 41% opposed it. The results indicated that those who believe that transsexuality is caused by biological factors had a less restrictive view of transsexuality than people who carry out a psychological view. Men and the older age group were found to have a more restrictive view of these issues than women and the younger age group (Landén and Innala, 2000). This finding has also been found in other studies, where higher scores have been found in men than in women in terms of transphobia (Nagoshi et al., 2008; Norton and Herek, 2013; Elischberger et al., 2016).

As an example of a study concerned with family relations and transphobia, Factor and Rothblum (2008) compared transgender people to their non-transgender siblings, and found that groups of transgender people experienced significantly less social support from their family than their non-transgender siblings. Transgender people also experienced more harassment and discrimination than their non-transgender brothers and sisters.

Another study by Lombardi et al. (2001) investigated the prevalence of transgender people who had experienced violence and discrimination. In their study they found that 60% of the respondents reported being victims of harassment by strangers on the street, verbal abuse, assault with a weapon and/or sexual assault. More than one-third (37%) of respondents also reported being disciplined at work, being degraded or treated unfairly, being fired and, consequently, experiencing economic problems (Hill and Willoughby, 2005).

Although there is evidence that transgender people receive negative attitudes and transphobia from different groups, there are populations in which studies of attitudes toward transgender people demonstrate positive attitudes. Studies with health professionals and feminist communities show that these are populations with generally more positive attitudes toward transgender people (Franzini and Casinelli, 1986; Kendel et al., 1997).

A study by Kanamori and Cornelius-White (2016) showed results consistent with the studies mentioned so far. In their study they found that health professionals in general maintain generally favorable attitudes toward transgender people. The study also

found gender differences in attitudes consistent with many previous findings, finding that women showed more accepted attitudes toward transgender people than men.

## Context of Transphobia in Spain for Educational Interventions

Given the need for studies with Spanish-speaking populations and the site of this study in Spain, this section will review the context that have been carried out on transphobia toward those that identify as transexual thanks to different contributions from activism and academia in this region (Platero, 2014; Platero and Ortega, 2017).

Within the educational framework, different studies confirm the lack of attention to the issue, even though it is an issue that matters to different collectives that work with transgender people. For example, in medicine, where the framework for the interpretation of transsexuality comes from, the National Centre for LGBT Health Education offers educational programmes, resources and consultations to health care organizations with the aim of optimizing quality and cost-effective medical care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people (National LGBT Health Education Center, 2019).

Another organization for the visibility of transsexual minors is the appearance of the Association of Families of Transsexual Minors, *Chrysallis*, which is fighting for society, health and schools to meet the needs of transsexual children on an equal footing with cisexual children. To this end, they have made a list of about seventy schools they call transfriendly to facilitate the path of minors. Among the educational needs of the minors the association points out the essential "The training of all personnel related to the educational process, teachers, counselors, psychologists, assistants, social workers and management teams, as well as the training of students" (Gavilán, 2015, p. 85).

These examples reflect current social change in the interpretation of gender and sexuality. However, much remains to be done for these people to freely develop their identities. Various researches and studies indicate that, in the field of formal education, there are no training programs, and gender diversity is an issue that is not contemplated when different studies detect the need to work with students. For example, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rigths [FRA], 2013), produced the largest set of empirical information with the LGBT collective to date with 93,000 people over 18 years of age in the EU, where its highlighted that members of this community can not be themselves in their daily lives. The results showed the following data: 47% of respondents had felt discriminated against or harassed because of their sexual orientation; more than 80% remembered negative comments or acts of bullying in the school environment and 67% of respondents stated that they hid their sexual orientation in the school stage.

In Spain, homophobic bullying has always been present in schools. INJUVE (2011) stressed that the homophobic collective imposes its law in classrooms in the face of the passivity of other students and teachers. In this line, some authors highlight the importance of the role of the observer as a facilitator of abuse (Gini, 2006; Byers, 2013). A little later, in 2012/13, the Education Commission of the Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual and Bisexual Collective of Madrid (COGAM) together with the

State Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals (FELGTB) carried out a study on sexual diversity in the classrooms where the results showed that of 653 children under 25 years of age who acknowledged having suffered bullying because of sexual orientation, 43% had come to devise suicide highlighting the failure of the school system (DePalma and Cebreiro, 2018). Against this backdrop, Pichardo and Puche (2019) decide to focus on the attitude and practices of teachers in the face of sexual diversity. The results show that nursery, primary and secondary school teachers think that not being heterosexual or skipping gender traits or traits related to appearance are the reasons that generate the most insults or rejection. As we have read in the previous point, gender is also a variable where men are more likely to insult and less likely to ask for help and women are more likely to face issues of diversity and coexistence in the classroom. Finally, there is a constant demand for training on the part of the actors involved, both for teachers and students, since both groups are victims of discrimination (insults, mockery, exclusion) due to their personal characteristics (Pichardo and Puche, 2019).

In this path of discrimination prior to the university stage, schools do not guarantee measures against the stigmatization and marginalization of these people where the educational dimension of heterosexual and patriarchal norms continues (Elipe et al., 2017; Alegre, 2018). In the universities the panorama is not better either, the forms of identity and the new considerations associated to the inclusion of sexual diversity continue being a pending subject due to the strong cultural roots and the gender binarism. In addition, the concept of university is historical and maintains its essence, its raison d'être transcends all time, place or social circumstance without reforms prevailing (Medina, 2005). Proof of this is that despite the fact that different media such as literature, cinema, plastic and audiovisual arts or advertising have introduced transsexual experiences in the educational sphere, the same does not happen in the academic sphere where there is a generalized misinformation about the LGBT+ community (Castro and Ramos, 2019). Basque ley 09/2019, of 29 June[1] (Spain), includes in its articles 16 and 17 the obligation to incorporate methods, curricula and educational resources that serve to increase understanding and respect for the diversity of gender identities by dictating actions in matters of transsexuality. However, this law only works for basic education reflecting university absence.

Faced with this panorama, the university responds to heternormativity that is structured in a dichotomous system of male-fall-masculine and female-vulva-feminine. Therefore, LGBT people continue to be constructed as minorities respecting a community of equals made up of heterosexual people. This means that they are conceptualized from the discourse of otherness and from a hegemonic and heteronormative position. What generates that the educational intervention reproduces discourses that consider these people as deficit, limiting them in agency (Galaz et al., 2016).

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[1]LEY 09/2019, de 29 de junio, de no discriminación por motivos de identidad de género y de reconocimiento de los derechos de las personas transexuales. (accessed October 24, 2019)

Faced with this situation, trans people exclude themselves, when choosing university studies they opt for training spaces perceived as safer and more respectful such as careers related to art, feminized (teaching or nursing) and humanities studies and related to social change also attracts them. However, more masculinized careers such as engineering or scientific-technical ones perceive them as less desirable. Despite the fact that in some universities there are associations of LGBT students, in general, the university is created as an androcentric and eurocentric space that strips itself of affectivity and focuses on science. Thus, the university has become a space full of physical, bureaucratic and symbolic barriers for LGBT people (Pichardo and Puche, 2019).

## The Creative Factory Intervention

For several years, the El Observatorio del Tercer Sector de Bizkaia (OTSB) (Fundación EDE, 2016) has been developing the creative factory (CF) methodology as an educational intervention that generates reflections and innovative solutions to significant social problems and which aims to generate interaction between different agents. This proposal was born from the meeting of people and collectives working for social transformation from multiple fields, such as that of unaccompanied immigrants, people in processes of exclusion and with severe mental illness, mistreatment among peers or the response to violent behavior in adolescents, among others. In this way, students reflect from the critical (social, political, systemic) to foster creativity in order to respond to the integral development of the personality and to ensure that the educational institution is not content with merely reproducing the social system, but fulfils its function of transforming reality and that future professionals can develop alternative strategies to respond to social demands (Rodrigo and Rodrigo, 2012). In addition, making use of creativity, professionals are able to adapt to new changing contexts and can contribute significantly to society (Goñi, 2000; Chacón and Moncada, 2006). A recent study studying the creativity of university students concludes that students show greater creativity after having fostered it in class (Caballero et al., 2019).

The CF methodology has been applied since the 2011/2012 academic year in the subject of General Didactics. We have based and been inspired by the process carried out by Alonso and Arandia (2014) but adapting it to the current group and making modifications. On this occasion, we introduce a growing topic relating to transsexual persons, adapting the methodology to the needs of the students after evaluation (2018/2019) for continuous improvement. Although the subject of transgender people has been introduced throughout the continuous assessment, the methodology of the CF is carried out through training sessions consist three seminars. That is to say, in order to deepen the theme and offer more formation, the CF process is accompanied by different interventions and educational activities throughout the 4-month period (September–December).

## Objective and Hypothesis

Social educators work in many areas, with different vulnerable populations, including transgender populations. For this reason, the importance of training these professionals so that they can act and intervene in educational spaces as well as in family, work and community spaces is highlighted (Parcerisa-Aran and Forés, 2003; Bas-Peña et al., 2014).

It is therefore important to assess the level of knowledge on gender and transgender issues in Social Education students and to design educational models that train students in these issues. In addition, it is also important to know the attitudes that they have toward transgender people since many times negative attitudes or concrete stereotypes are given from ignorance. Education is one of the basic tools for students to get to know this group and improve their knowledge and attitudes.

The main objectives of this study were, on the one hand, to measure the attitudes of social education students toward gender and transgender people, and on the other hand, to value the knowledge about transgender people in these students. And finally, to measure the changes in attitudes and knowledge after an education program in transgender people based on the creative factory methodology.

Hypotheses suggest that Social Education students would have positive attitudes toward gender and transgender people prior to taking the course. Since students do not receive much information on gender and transgender issues during their university studies, in terms of knowledge, it is expected that students will not have much knowledge on the subject of transgender before taking the transgender training course. As other studies have shown, women are expected to have better attitudes than men toward transgender people. Finally, thanks to the creative factory methodology, improvements are expected in both knowledge and attitudes toward gender and transgender people.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Participants

The sample was taken from second-year Social Education degree students in the Public University of the Basque Country (Leioa, Spain). The researchers offered them voluntary participation in this study. 64 people participated in the study. The average age of the subjects was 20.23 years. 81% (52 people) of the participants were women, 17% (11 people) were men and 2% (1 person) was not identified as either men or women.

All the students participated on a voluntary basis, received information about the procedure of the investigation and gave their consent before participating in the study. Therefore, the procedure followed is approved by the Ethics Committee respecting the Helsinki Declaration of the World Medical Association.

### Measures and Instruments
#### The Short Version of the Gender and Transphobia Scale

As Billard (2018) says, so far, there are six published scales for measuring attitudes toward transgender people: the Gender and Transphobia Scale (GTS; Hill and Willoughby, 2005), Transphobia Scale (TS; Nagoshi et al., 2008), Transgender Attitudes Scale (ATTI; Walch et al., 2012), Transgender Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (TABS; Kanamori et al., 2017), Transgender

Prejudice Scale (Case and Stewart, 2013) and Transprejudice Scale (for transgender women; Winter et al., 2009).

The Gender and Transphobia scale is a scale developed and validated in Canada (GTS; Hill and Willoughby, 2005) and analyses negative attitudes toward trans people, including transsexuals, transgender, and transvestites. It assesses the cognitive (gender), affective (transphobia) and behavioral (gender attack) of the co-components mentioned. It is a scale that has been translated and validated in several cultures.

The scale used in this study is the short version of the GTS was validated in Spanish with a stable factor structure and adequate reliability (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2013). The brevity of the instrument saves time and increases the effectiveness of the evaluation processes. It is a test with good psychometric properties. The Cronbach's alpha of their corresponding subscale indicated good psychometric properties. The scale showed good reliability, with a $\alpha = 0.80$ for Gender Bashing and a $\alpha = 0.83$ for Transphobia = Genderism (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2013).

The scale is a 12-item scale that measures the variables of Gender Bashing, transphobia and genderism. The genderism is a belief system based on a heteronormative social model. Genderism devalues people who do not adjust to their gender roles or whose sex is not consistent with their gender. The transphobia is the attitudinal component and this includes negative feelings, aversion and fear of people who transgress the rigid two-gender model. Gender bashing is the act of victimizing a person emotionally, physically, sexually, or verbally because they are transgender. It is the behavioral component of sexism (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2013).

The first six items of the short version of the GTS measures gender bashing and the last six transphobia and genderism. The answers are answered on a scale from 1 to 7 with the following values: 1 is strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 somewhat agree, 4 neutral, 5 somewhat disagree, 6 disagree and 7 Strongly disagree. Lower scores indicate a higher level of transphobic attitudes. The lowest score that can be obtained in these two factors would be a 7, indicating high levels of gender bashing and transphobia/genderism. The highest score that can be obtained in these two factors would be a 42, indicating absence of gender bashing and transphobia/genderism.

### Scale to Measure Transgender Knowledge and Other Variables

For clarity and ease of administration, a single item measure employing Llikert scale of 1 to 10 was used to self-assess students' knowledge of transgender people. Students had to evaluate their knowledge about transgender people: 1 being a complete lack of knowledge about the subject, and a 10 an optimal knowledge about the subject. The item was: my level of knowledge about what it means to be a transgender person is. The Likert scale places each individual at a particular point of knowledge. This scale is used to help the respondent assess his or her knowledge about the topic being asked. It allows us to measure the degree of knowledge that the respondent considers to have regarding a specific topic (Ospina et al., 2005). Other variables collected were the age and gender of the students answering the questionnaire. It was also asked if they personally know any people who are transgender.

## Procedure

The first step was to secure permission from the university ethics committee to carry out this research. The project took place in a Spanish University with a World ranking in the top 500 universities within the undergraduate program of Social Education, which is composed of seven modules. Specifically, we are located in the subject of General Didactics belonging to the third module called Foundation of Educational Processes, which is taught in the first 4-month period of the second-year (2019/2020).

On the first day of class the students were informed about the study, and the people who decided to voluntarily participate in the study completed the pre-tests using the google forms platform. The questionnaires answered by the students were anonymous and had to include a code in order to identify the relationship between the questionnaires carried out before and after the educational intervention.

After the training they retook the measures again.

## Data Analysis

The data of the participants were collected through google forms. To begin with, descriptive analyses were carried out for sociodemographic data, transgender knowledge, and Short Version of the GTS results. Paired $t$-test for related samples were calculated to compare the means between the test and retests in the variables of knowledge about transgenderism, and the gender bashing and transphobia/genderism factors of the GTS. $t$-tests were also performed for independent samples to see differences in Short version Gender and Transphobia Scale questionnaire factors between men and women. To analyze the data we used the program R-comander program and the results were reflected in tables.

## RESULTS

**Table 1** shows different descriptive variables of the sample, including maximums, minimums, means, and number of people and percentages of men, women and non-binary persons among the participants. The data show that the average age of the participants was 20.23 years and that most of the participants were women (81%).

Knowledge about transgender issues is divided between groups that have scored less than 3, from 3 to 7, and more than 8 on a scale of 1 to 10. Where 1 would be the minimum knowledge about transgender topics, and 10 would be the optimal knowledge about transgender topics. Finally **Table 1** includes the number of people and the percentage of people who had close relationships with transgender people, had acquaintances (not close relationships), and those who did not know transgender people. Most of the participants knew a transgendered person, although not necessarily (48%), and knowledge about transgender people was medium in most participants (61%).

**Table 2** shows the comparison of means of knowledge about transgender people, gender bashing, and transphobia/genderism of the Short version Gender and Transphobia Scale between the test and the retest according to the $t$-test for related samples. The

**TABLE 1 |** Age, gender, knowledge of any transgender person and knowledge of transgender issues of the study participants.

| Age | | Mean | | Maximum | | Minimum | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 20.23 | | 29 | | 18 | |
| **Gender** | | **Women** | | **Men** | | **Other** | |
| | *N* | % | *N* | % | *N* | % | |
| | 52 | 81 | 11 | 17 | 1 | 2 | |
| **Know a transgender person** | | **No** | | **Yes, but not personally** | | **Yes, a close person** | |
| | *N* | % | *N* | % | *N* | % | |
| | 17 | 27 | 31 | 48 | 16 | 25 | |
| **Knowledge of transgender issues on a scale of 1 to 10** | | **Less than 3** | | **Between 3 and 7** | | **More than 8** | |
| | *N* | % | *N* | % | *N* | % | |
| | 3 | 5 | 39 | 61 | 22 | 34 | |

**TABLE 2 |** *t*-test for comparison knowledge about transgender people, gender bashing, and transphobia/genderism before and after training.

| Paired *t*-test | Pre mean | Pre SD | Post mean | Post SD | *p*-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level of transgender knowledge** (Scale from 1 to 7, Higher scores indicate a higher level of knowledge) | 6.76 | 1.61 | 7.29 | 1.39 | 0.015 |
| **Gender bashing total factor** (Scale from 1 to 7, Lower scores indicate a higher level of transphobic attitudes) | 40.58 | 3.39 | 40.36 | 3.23 | 0.219 |
| **Transphobia/genderism total factor** (Scale from 1 to 7, Lower scores indicate a higher level of transphobic attitudes) | 40.90 | 3.27 | 41.42 | 1.73 | 0.208 |

data show that there was a statistically significant improvement in knowledge about transgender. In the gender bashing and transphobia dimensions there were improvements although not significant.

The mean comparisons shown in **Table 3** were made between people who defined themselves as women or men. The differences between men and women in gender bashing were significant, with men having more gender bashing. There were no significant differences in transphobia. There was one person who did not define himself as either a man or a woman. But being only one is not representative to make a comparison of means between different genders. Therefore we will describe below the characteristics of this person. The scores in gender bashing was 42 and in transphobia 42 being the highest scores that can be taken on this scale and representing a very low level of both factors in this person.

## DISCUSSION

The descriptive data show the characteristic data of the students of Social Education where the average age is around 20 years old and the great majority of people are women. There was only one person who was not considered binary (neither male nor female).

Throughout the study, the relevance of making the reality of transgender people known has been justified in order to put an end to discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, in social education professionals whose socio-educational work promotes the achievement of social change (Parcerisa-Aran and Forés, 2003; Bas-Peña et al., 2014). The following is a review of the results found and the explanations that justify these results with the review of the scientific literature.

The first objective of the study was to explore the level of knowledge that students of the social education degree perceive to have toward what it means to be a transgender person. In this research, only 34% believe they have optimal knowledge. Therefore, the hypothesis is fulfilled that the students would not have much knowledge about this subject before having received specific training. The previous evidence showed the lack of information about LGBT+ collectives in the academic field (Castro and Ramos, 2019). As well as professionals in contact with transgender people, with a perception of positive attitudes toward them, they did not feel qualified to respond to their needs due to the lack of training. Other research stated that trans people when choosing university studies could be inclined toward degrees related to social change or the humanities, perceiving them as more respectful and, therefore, safe environments (Pichardo and Puche, 2019). In our study, dealing with a humanities degree, it has been found that only 25% of the participants say they know a transgender person closely, while 27% say they do not know any transgender person. This underlines the importance of increasing knowledge

**TABLE 3 |** *t*-test for the comparison of independent means between men and women of the factors of gender bashing and transphobia/gender.

|                          | Men mean   | Men SD    | Women mean | Women SD    | p-Value |
| ------------------------ | ---------- | --------- | ---------- | ----------- | ------- |
| **Gender bashing**       | 36.54545   | 6.817091  | 41.40385   | 0.9550611   | 0.039   |
| **Transphobia/genderism**| 38.90909   | 5.769827  | 41.30769   | 2.380793    | 0.203   |

*Lower scores indicate a higher level of transphobic attitudes.*

about this group even in those professions in which there is a greater sensitivity to work with disadvantaged groups (Gavilán, 2015).

Several studies have found that transgender people experience violence and discrimination (Lombardi et al., 2001; Hill and Willoughby, 2005). Fortunately, there are populations such as health professionals and feminist communities that have positive attitudes toward transgender people (Franzini and Casinelli, 1986; Kendel et al., 1997). As has been observed in this study, social educators are also a population with positive attitudes toward this group. Considering that they are professionals who work actively in different social contexts, their training on gender and transgender issues is important (Gavilán, 2015, p. 85).

The second objective was to analyze the attitude of Social Education students toward transgender people. According to the hypothesis of the study, it was expected to find positive attitudes toward transgender people because of the sensitivity or respect that is expected of students in the degree of social education toward disadvantaged groups. In this case, a fairly low transphobia and gender aggressiveness score was found, which is why this hypothesis was affirmed. Also in a study with a sample of 668 people, positive attitudes toward transgender people were found, such as the recognition of the right to adoption, among others (Landén and Innala, 2000). Fortunately, there are populations such as health professionals and feminist communities that have positive attitudes toward transgender people (Franzini and Casinelli, 1986; Kendel et al., 1997). From this study it can be deduced that the Social Education student body is also a population with positive attitudes toward this group. Regarding negative attitudes, several studies have found that transgender people experience violence and discrimination (Lombardi et al., 2001; Hill and Willoughby, 2005), which prevents them from being able to behave according to their identity because of the inadequate treatment they received (Hill and Willoughby, 2005; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rigths [FRA], 2013). This research shows that 85 and 71%, respectively, of the mockery that has been directed at women for showing a male aspect or behavior or at men for their female aspect or behavior, state that they have not made any mockery and 92% have not behaved violently toward women for their male behavior or toward men for their female behavior. Aversion or fear of transgender people (e.g., male women and female men) are attitudes that are part of transphobia (Hill and Willoughby, 2005) and need to be eliminated.

In terms of gender differences, the results of this study show that men have lower scores than women on gender bashing and transphobia/genderism. Despite a small sample of men compared to women, men showed significantly more

discriminatory responses than women on the gender bashing scale. The results also suggest there may be more transphobia in men than in women although the results are not statistically significant. These findings coincide with other studies showing that men have more transphobia than women (Landén and Innala, 2000; Nagoshi et al., 2008; Norton and Herek, 2013; Elischberger et al., 2016; Kanamori and Cornelius-White, 2016).

In reference to the third objective, the aim was to study the changes given in attitude and knowledge in the students of Social Education after receiving training on the transgender subject. It was expected to find an improvement after the training through the creative factory methodology. This hypothesis has been partially fulfilled, given that no differences have been collected in the improvement of attitudes toward the collective; one explanation may be that from the beginning the average of transphobia and gender aggressiveness found was low and although in transphobia an improvement is observed, this has not turned out to be statistically significant. Range restriction (the mean was already very high on the scale, indicating low transphobia) may account for the finding, suggesting that future studies should use measures with a wider range that may be more sensitive to change.

On the other hand, there has been a statistically significant difference in the perceived knowledge on the subject of transgender, having increased the knowledge after receiving the training, so it can be stated that the training received has made it possible for the participating students to increase their knowledge. In a previous investigation with students and teachers in the field of health, it was found that after a training of 8 h the knowledge, attitudes and clinical preparation toward people of sexual and gender minorities improved with respect to the control group that had not received any training (Pratt-Chapman and Phillips, 2019). Thus, learning programs on transgender issues improve both knowledge and attitudes toward transgender people. For this reason, the importance of promoting training courses on gender and transgender for professionals so that they can act and intervene both in educational spaces and in family, work and community spaces (Parcerisa-Aran and Forés, 2003; Bas-Peña et al., 2014) is highlighted.

This training program on gender and transgender has created a context of reflection and knowledge generation for students using the creative factory methodology (OTS, 2016). This methodology makes use of creativity and, thanks to this, facilitates the capacity to adapt to new changing contexts and can contribute significantly to society (Goñi, 2000; Chacón and Moncada, 2006). In this study, it has been demonstrated that through

the creative factory methodology, changes can be achieved both in attitudes and in the students' knowledge about gender and transgender issues. This demonstrates that the methodology has served to improve knowledge on transgender issues.

The current study is subject to several limitations. The use of a single item measure to measure the students' perception of transgender knowledge is one obvious drawback as reliability and validity information are not available for the use of this measure. The lack of a control group and the small sample size for a quantitative study offer further constraints for the internal and external validity of the study. Future research could employ more validated measures, comparison groups using no intervention or other interventions to compare effectiveness and larger, more diverse Spanish speaking sample sizes. Future lines of research also aim to collect information from university students of different grades. In this way, it will be possible to carry out a comparative analysis between students from different disciplines. Another future line of research is to carry out a qualitative study where the results are focused on the innovative contributions of the students. In this case, an analysis of the good practices and innovative ideas presented by the students will be carried out.

As mentioned above, despite the importance of gender training for Social Education students, studies show that they receive little training on the subject (Bas-Peña et al., 2014). An objective for future studies is to continue creating this type of training both at the Social Education level and at other levels for which it is even more necessary to develop skills in relation to the relationship and treatment with people, in order to continue promoting awareness and learning about gender and transgender issues.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Ethics Committee for Research Related to Human Beings (CEISH) of the University of the Basque Country. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Supporting Transgender Inclusion and Gender Diversity in Schools: A Critical Policy Analysis

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In this article, we conduct a policy analysis of transgender affirmative policies in Ontario and examine their implications for addressing gender justice and gender democratization in the school system. By adopting a case study approach, we provide a critical analysis of these policies and of how stakeholders with familiarity and knowledge of trans-affirmative policies from two school boards in Ontario are making sense of their impact with respect to addressing trans inclusion in schools. As such, our study offers insight into two trans-affirmative policies and their implications for both supporting transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary students and envisioning gender-expansive education in the school system. We draw on interviews with key informants—two teachers and a school board official—as a basis for reflecting on the need to move beyond a discourse of accommodation in trans inclusive policies to one that explicitly articulates a pedagogical commitment to gender justice and gender democratization in schools.

Keywords: gender justice, gender democratization, trans-affirmative policy, transgender, trans inclusion, gender diversity, transgender students, non-binary

## INTRODUCTION

In this article we provide a critical analysis of trans-affirmative policies from two school boards in Ontario and examine their implications with respect to supporting transgender and gender diverse students in the education system. This focus is important in light of the high rates of harassment, victimization, absenteeism, and suicide among transgender and gender diverse youth in schools that are documented in the existing literature (Wyss, 2004; Greytak et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2011; Egale, 2012; Human Rights Campaign Gender Spectrum, 2018). Our purpose is to generate knowledge and understanding about how to best support trans and non-binary youth in schools by undertaking a critical policy analysis that addresses the limits of accommodation and the necessity of embracing gender democratization through pedagogical and curricular intervention (Youth Gender Action Project, 2009; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2016, 2019; Smith and Payne, 2016; Frohard-Dourlent, 2018; Luecke, 2018). Hence, our study contributes to an emerging body of trans-focused scholarship that is concerned to address gender diversity and transgender inclusion in the education system (Greytak et al., 2009; Ryan et al., 2013; Millei and Cliff, 2014; Payne and Smith, 2014; Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017; Ullman, 2017; Goodrich and Barnard, 2018; Leonardi and Staley, 2018; Sinclair and Gilbert, 2018; Slater et al., 2018; Carlile, 2019; Kjaran, 2019; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2019). Firstly, we outline our approach to critical policy analysis and explicate a trans-informed framework for understanding our approach to addressing gender diversity in the education system more broadly before examining the particular

school board policies in question. We then go on to present the viewpoints of three key informants who provide further insight into these policies and trans inclusion in schools.

## FRAMING APPROACH TO POLICY ANALYSIS

We initially consider these policies through Bacchi's lens of problematization and "the way in which the 'problem' is represented [which ultimately] carries all sorts of implications for how the issue is thought about and for how the people involved are treated" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1). Bacchi's (2009) approach builds upon Foucauldian principles of subjectification and inquires how the subject comes to be constructed and constituted through policy (p. 16). She argues that in conceiving of policy as discourse the "emphasis … is upon the ways in which language, and more broadly, discourse sets limits upon what can be said" (Bacchi, 2000, p. 48). Bacchi further elaborates that this approach to critical policy analysis is about "recogniz[ing] the non-innocence of how 'problems' get framed within proposals, how the frames will affect what can be thought about and how this affects possibilities for action" (p. 50). Hence, we are concerned to draw attention to the limits of how specific school board policies *construct* the problem of the trans subject as an object of intervention with respect to articulating specifically the conditions necessary for supporting trans youth, and more broadly, gender diversity in the education system. It is the *policy frames* informing the production of these texts, which rely on a fundamental logics of accommodation as a basis for addressing the problem of the need for trans inclusion, that is a critical focus in our analysis of these texts.

Relatedly, we also draw on Ball's (1993) framing of "policy as text" with its interpretive repertoires that are products of multiple agendas and compromises which are enmeshed in networks of governance with their specific contingencies and shifting conditions of emergence. For example, given that policies are (multi)authored and read and enacted in a variety of settings, it is important to understand that: "Few policies arrive fully formed and the process of policy enactment also involve ad-hockery, borrowing, re-ordering, displacing, making do and re-invention [...] The onus is on schools to 'make' sense of policy where (sometimes) none is self-evident" (Ball, 1993, p. 8). Moreover, each stakeholder may interpret a policy differently, and so the written text does not necessarily result in the same actions being undertaken by each school. Important questions related to how policies are read and interpreted, their priority, the environment they enter, and the motivation of stakeholders to enact them need to be considered. Hence, in this article we investigate how several stakeholders with familiarity and knowledge of trans-affirmative policies within the context of their respective school board/school are making sense of these policies, and how their insights might be utilized to further inform possibilities for addressing trans inclusion and gender diversity in the education system.

Overall, we underscore the importance of *policy as discourse*, which considers not only what policymakers choose to incorporate in policy, but also that which they do not think

about or *deliberately* choose to exclude, underscoring that policy is not simply just text, but embedded in the exercise of power through "a *production* of truth and knowledge, as discourses' (Ball, 1994, p. 21). As such we draw attention to the ways in which policy texts constitute the terms of trans inclusion and support for transgender youth in schools and how such texts are interpreted by key stakeholders such as educators in schools, who are the targeted recipients of these policies. In this regard, we investigate the extent to which transgender inclusion and support for trans youth are understood to be "spoken by policies" (Ball, 1994, p. 22).

## TRANS-INFORMED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

We draw specifically on trans-informed theoretical frameworks which inform both our understanding of trans inclusion and policy governance. For example, Spade (2015), trans law scholar and activist, argues that attention needs to be directed to the administration of trans polices rather than focusing just on the "law" or policy itself as a basis for investigating their impact with respect to addressing trans inclusion and gender diversity. This focus on the administrative aspects of governance does not deny the need for human rights legislation and policy development, but rather, directs attention to learning more about how such policy frames relate or rather translate into enhancing "trans well-being" and gender diversity in schools (Ashley, 2018, p. 1). Indeed, Spade advocates for a shift in focus from an individual human rights framing of discrimination to one that addresses more broadly regimes of gender classification and categorization: "Such a shift requires us to examine how administrative norms or regularities create structured insecurity and (mal)distribute life chances across populations" (p. 9). In this respect, as part of our case study we provide a snapshot into how three key informants are making sense of the policy and what the implications are for creating spaces in schools for addressing trans marginalization and gender expansive education (Ullman, 2017; Cumming-Potvin and Martino, 2018).

Such a trans-informed analytic perspective is important as it has the capacity to inform our understanding of how transgender inclusivity and gender diversity are being considered in education policy contexts, with implications for addressing the erasure and invisibility of trans lives. This focus is necessary given Namaste's (2000) explanation that erasure is "a defining condition" of trans people's lives (p. 4). In fact, Stryker (2006), argues for a Transgender Studies focus that addresses

anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles, and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between the gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood (p. 3).

Hence, we are interested in understanding how a trans-informed critical analysis might be interwoven in trans-affirmative policies, along with a commitment to addressing the impact and effects of "assumptions regarding sex and gender, biology and culture..." (Stryker and Aren, 2013, p. 3).

This commitment entails unpacking the ways in which gender and non-binary classifications are administratively addressed in these policies to better understand how they perpetuate or minimize the "vector of violence and diminished life changes" for transgender and gender diverse youth in schools (Spade, 2015, p. 142). As such, we examine how the recognition of transgender personhood and its livability are understood within the limits and possibilities that are circumscribed by trans-informed policies in the school system that rely on a fundamental logics of accommodation. What knowledge about transgender phenomena and gender diversity are articulated through such trans-inclusive policies and what are their implications for ensuring gender justice and democratization in the education system (Connell, 2009; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2018)?

Such trans-informed frameworks on gender democratization require a critical focus on the impact of *cisgenderism* and cisnormativity in schools which "refers to the cultural and systemic ideology that denies, denigrates, or pathologizes self-identified gender identities that do not align with assigned gender at birth" (Lennon and Mistler, 2014, p. 63). These cisnormative regimes of practice also reinforce what Rands (2009) refers to as the *gender oppression matrix*, which involves privileging individuals who conform to gender norms while punishing those who transgress them. As such, Rands advocates for the need to embrace gender complex frameworks in ways that complement the trans epistemological underpinnings of this study (Stryker, 2006; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2018). In light of this framing, we acknowledge that institutionalization of cisgendersim in schools contributes to a cultural hegemony which privileges certain gender identities and forms of embodiment over others (Spade, 2015; Nicolazzo, 2017c). As Connell (2009) argues, there is a need to confront gender hierarchies and their effects which she envisions as a commitment to *gender democratization* (p. 146). In this respect, gender democratization moves beyond the discourse of trans inclusivity that relies solely on a fundamental logics of accommodation and liberal notions of human rights to address curricular and pedagogical reform that accounts for more expansive and equitable understandings of gender (Courvant, 2011; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2015, 2018; Keenan, 2017).

## ABOUT THE STUDY

We chose to focus on two school boards which were the first to develop trans-affirmative policies in Ontario and conducted semi-structured interviews with one policymaker and two educators familiar with such policies. These school boards fall under provincial jurisdiction whereby each province in Canada is responsible for creating its own educational structures[1]. Canada's

constitution, known as *The Constitution Act of 1867,* stipulates that "[I]n and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education..." (s. 93) [2]. Legislation consists of provincial statutes, along with bylaws and regulations of local school boards or commissions that set out the division of responsibilities in the area of public instruction. School Board A is one of the largest and most diverse in Canada, covering a large urban center and serving a school population of over 200,000 students. It was the first school board in the country to develop a trans-affirmative policy in 2011, prior to the Ontario Human Rights Commission authorizing the inclusion of gender identity and gender expression as legislative grounds for discrimination in 2012, underscoring a commitment to addressing trans inclusivity and gender diversity in their schools. School Board B is a smaller board serving urban, suburban and rural communities in Ontario with a population of over 74,000 students, which introduced a trans-affirmative policy in 2012. Firstly, we provide an overview of these policies utilizing a trans-informed lens in analyzing their specific discursive articulations of trans-inclusivity. We reflect on the insights regarding the limits of accommodation in trans-affirmative policy gleaned from the interviews with key informants from each of these boards. In this sense, our approach to analyzing these policies was informed by both Bacchi's WPR ('What's the Problem Represented to Be?') approach, and Stephen J. Ball's interrogation of policy as *text* and policy which draw attention to the interpretive aspects of highlighting the discursive frames of accommodation that come to define the limits of how trans-informed understandings are articulated for schools. As such our overall critical analysis is specifically informed by our engagement with trans informed theoretical frameworks that draw attention to the need to address more systemic matters related to gender justice involving the institutionalization of cisnormativity.

We employed a case study design with the specific aim of "gather[ing] comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information" (Patton, 2015, p. 536) about trans-affirmative policies. It was the attention directed not only to the examination of the key roles by policymakers and stakeholders in the creation of these policies, but also the knowledge and perspectives of educators whose understandings of trans inclusivity were guided by their knowledge of these policies that we were concerned to investigate. Inquiring about their interpretive understandings of the policies, therefore, lent itself to embracing a qualitative case study research design (Patton, 2015). In this respect, the study was not conducted with the aim of generalizing about the impact

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[1]All school boards in Ontario are required to ensure that they meet the Ontario Ministry of Education's equity stipulations in accordance with the Ontario Human

Rights Code. While provincially developed policies are to be enforced by all school boards in the province, the policies developed by the school board are only implemented by schools that fall within that board's jurisdiction.

[2]There is no Federal Department of Education in Canada. Educational policy in Canada is developed provincially and is specific to each provincial jurisdiction. Ontario is comprised of three branches of government: legislative, executive and judicial. The executive branch is comprised of elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) who introduce policy for consideration in the House of Commons. The decisions made in Cabinet provide direction for policy development and implementation in the Ontario Public Service (OPS). The OPS is comprised of non-partisan staff who develop and implement policy. The development of such policies can be instigated through the proposal of a bill by an MPP that may be encouraged by public opinion.

of such policies, but rather to generate knowledge about how such policies articulate understandings about trans inclusions and with what political effects. The focus on key informants through purposive and snowball sampling (Patton, 2015) allowed us to draw on the insights and experiences of the following three participants who had either a hand in creating these texts, or first-hand experiences of their administration: *Grace*, a non-binary individual, had been a high school teacher of visual arts, French and special education with School Board B for the past 5 years; *Dean*, a transgender man, who has been an elementary school teacher in School Board B for 29 years and *Michael*, a cisgender male, with 17 years of administrative experience as an equity officer, who contributed to the development of School Board Policy A. These participants were specifically selected due to their knowledge and experience(s) with the policies we analyzed. They were selected through purposive and snowball sampling measures among the limited pool of administrators/educators who had experience or critical feedback specific to the policies. In this regard, they provided "in-depth knowledge about particular issues" (Patton, 2015, p. 219) and they were selected due to their expertise regarding trans-affirmative policies in their respective school boards. Given the specific nature of case study research, we were not so much concerned to generalize across a population of educators, but to provide an analytic focus on the particularity of the policies in question in light of the existing literature in the field about the barriers to supporting transgender inclusion and gender diversity in schools (Payne and Smith, 2014; Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; Meyer et al., 2016; Morgan and Taylor, 2018). All participants signed a consent form agreeing to both audio recording of the interviews and the non-identifying data being used in research publications. Teacher participants were asked to share their knowledge with respect to the policy in their school board. They were prompted to provide their overall assessment and impressions of the trans-affirmative policy and what impacts—if any—they may have seen in their schools as a result of the policy. Policy creators were asked how the policy came about, why they felt it was necessary, and how effective they believe the policy has been in achieving its purpose.

A thematic analysis of the interview data was undertaken by means of "identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning" as a result of a constant reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts (Clarke and Braun, 2017, p. 297). The significance of policy and curriculum as sites of intervention and the limits of relying on a discourse of accommodation emerged as key themes that further enhanced our own interpretive and critical examination of the trans inclusive policies that are the subject of this article.

## TRANS-INCLUSIVE SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES WITHIN THE ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

In this section, we focus our attention on two specific school board policy texts in question. Trans-informed policy analysis at the local level of school boards in Ontario needs to be understood as a response to broader legislative frameworks at the provincial level. For instance, gender identity and gender expression were included in 2012 as part of the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2012a). As a result, Ontario became the first province in Canada to legally recognize the term "gender expression" (Kirkup, 2018, p. 109). Conversely, at the federal level there has been a struggle to introduce similar grounds for discrimination. Bill C-16 (2016)—a federal government sponsored bill that prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression—was introduced into the House of Commons in May 2016. In this sense, it is significant to understand that Ontario, as a province, has been far more progressive in its consideration of trans and gender diversity with respect to law and policy, and as such, so have the provincially governed secular school boards (Martino et al., 2019).

**School Board Policy A** was released in 2012, the first trans specific school board policy of its kind in Canada (see Shanks and Lester, 2019), and offers valuable considerations, ranging from pronoun usage, privacy, and structural accommodation(s) (i.e., all-gender bathrooms and change rooms), with an emphasis on safety and protecting the human rights of trans students. Bacchi (2009) encourages the start of any policy analysis to lead with the question of what the problem is represented to be. In this case, the policy was created "to raise awareness and help protect against discrimination and harassment [and] fulfill a shared obligation to promote the dignity and equality of those whose gender identity and or gender expression does not conform to traditional societal norms." In order to address this problem, the policy emphasizes the need for accommodation, insisting that its *goal* is to set out "best practices related to accommodation based on gender identity and gender expression.". The policy relies on a fundamental discourse of accommodation as a basis for both raising awareness about and addressing harassment and discrimination of trans people in the education system. It indicates that schools must address "each student's needs and concerns separately" and states that staff "should not disclose a student's transgender/gender non-conforming status to others" or to "the student's parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) without the student's explicit prior consent" unless necessary. This stipulation reflects a legal requirement as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code with regards to protecting and respecting confidentiality as it pertains to disclosure of one's transgender status (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2012b). The policy also emphasizes the student's "right to be addressed by a preferred name and pronouns corresponding to their gender identity." In this capacity, the policy places the "student in charge" in an effort to demonstrate that they are the "driver" of their own narrative (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018, p. 332). However, while the policy endorses agency with respect to pronoun usage, it does not explicitly address how to sustain these reiterative vocalizations of trans and non-binary identification and embodiment which are presented in terms of the individual right of the student to request such forms of address. In this respect, the policy omits the importance of a continued commitment to these reiterative vocalizations and maintains "the power relations that a discourse constructs

and allows," rendering the cisnormative system primarily unchallenged (Ball, 1994, p. 22).

In fact, School Board Policy A seems to envision gender inclusivity to be fundamentally bound primarily to physical accommodation. The policy text sets its focus on the potential for the existence and inclusion of trans and gender diverse bodies in physical spaces, specifically outlining individual procedures to be taken into account with respect to student and staff requests for accommodation. In fact, physical accommodation is foregrounded in the body of the document with its emphasis on students having the right to "safe restroom facilities and the right to use a washroom that best corresponds to the student's gender identity, regardless of the student's sex assigned at birth." The policy explicitly addresses accommodation in the space of physical education, which is typically gender segregated. Specifically, it insists that staff must ensure that "students can exercise their right to participate in gender-segregated [. . .] class activities in accordance with each student's gender identity." Accommodation in this area also emphasizes the right of students "to a safe change-room that corresponds to their gender identity." However, the onus for such accommodation rests with the individual student requesting such a space. Thus, the fundamental discourse of accommodation governing the terms of trans inclusion in this policy is one which constitutes the *individual* trans student as responsible for ensuring their own safety and well-being and requires them to basically be *out* in order to do so. Such a policy stipulation actually flies in the face of research in Canada and elsewhere that shows that trans students are particularly vulnerable to both verbal and physical and harassment. Key findings from a national school climate survey in Canada found that school climate was far more hostile and unwelcoming to transgender students: "[a]lmost three-quarters (74%) of trans students reported being verbally harassed about their gender expression" (Taylor et al., 2011, 23). In fact, this study found that "trans students were more likely to report hearing negative gender-related or transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students (89.8% of trans youth)" (p. 52) (see also Greytak et al., 2009). Concerning physical harassment, Taylor et al. (2011) found that "trans students were much more likely than sexual minority or non-LGBTQ students to have been physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression (37.1%)" (p. 64). They also investigated the extent to which schools responded and intervened to instances of transphobia and that school-based policies paid "insufficient attention to the damaging effects of negative gender-related comments on students, especially trans youth, who are most often the target of these remarks" (p. 117). In addition, the study also found that "nearly half (43.0%) of trans students reported that school staff members never intervened when homophobic comments were being made" (p. 110).

School Board Policy A does offer an acknowledgment of the importance of trans-inclusive content in teaching and in all subject areas, including a separate section that addresses "curriculum integration." It calls for the need to address the erasure of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals from the curriculum which "creates a misconception among many students that transgender people do not exist and are an object of scorn." The policy also advocates for school board and curriculum-based leaders to "integrate trans awareness and trans positive advocacy training into staff professional development curricula." Such a consideration is important and underscores Rands' (2009) point that educators must be prepared adequately "to teach gender in more complex ways that take into consideration the existence and needs of transgender people" (p. 419). However, no accountability measures or allocation of resources are actually stipulated to ensure such professional and curricular development. In fact, in order to ensure that educators are equipped to do this, School Board Policy A places responsibility on librarians in schools to "acquire trans-positive fiction and non-fiction books for school libraries and encourage the circulation of books that teach about gender non-conforming people." If policy as text reflects policy as a product of compromises between different agendas and interests, then this stipulation reads far more as a non-committal compromise or formality rather than a devotion to follow through on pedagogical and curricular development (Ball, 1994, 17). "Different interpretations" (Ball, 1994, 17) of "trans-positive" books and what it means to "encourage the circulation of books" leaves this commitment relatively ambiguous.

In conjunction with this stipulation, the policy text provides an appendix of resources for students and parents, ranging from reading materials (which include handbooks about parenting transgender and gender diverse children), online resources for trans youth and their families, and also identifies support groups for trans youth. In this sense, the policy text is indirectly informed by research which indicates:

Educators, policymakers, and safe school advocates must continue to seek to understand the specific experiences of transgender students, and implement measures to ensure that schools are safe and inclusive environments for all LGBT youth. Given the potential positive impact of supportive educators, student clubs, curricular resources, and comprehensive anti-harassment policies on the school experiences of LGBT students, it is imperative that schools work to provide these resources to students. Along with providing access to LGBT-related resources, it is important for educators, advocates, and policymakers to recognize how the needs of transgender youth may both be similar to and different from the needs of their non- transgender peers. Schools should explicitly address issues and experiences specific to transgender students (Greytak et al., 2009, p. 54–55).

However, there is no explicit attention to addressing the institutionalization of cisgenderism as part of a boarder commitment to the educative "work that must be done to create classrooms that truly integrate trans lives into current curricula and classrooms" (Courvant, 2011, 26; Malatino, 2015; Keenan, 2017).

Nevertheless, most of these practical examples and resources are reserved for the appendices in the policy text, while more general assertions and assurances about curricular inclusion are reserved for the main text, as outlined above. As a result, there is an absence of any explication of how a trans-inclusive pedagogy and curriculum might be enacted or any specific allocation of resources to achieve such outcomes (Keenan, 2017). This is an important policy consideration for, as Nicolazzo

(2017a) expresses, "just as trans* people need physical space to be themselves, we also need epistemological spaces of our own to learn how we come to know ourselves and our worlds through gendered perspectives" (p. 7). In this respect, trans-specific policies need to move beyond a discourse of policies *for* transgender individuals toward policies that engage with them and constructively consider how such integrations can restructure a cisgenderist system in light of the provision of necessary supports and resources for principals and schools to ensure that gender expansive education can be enacted (Mangin, 2018).

**School Board Policy B**, published in 2013, is closely modeled on and was adapted from School Board Policy A. However, instead of taking the opportunity to build on its predecessor, School Board Policy B copies word for word entire sections that are lifted directly from the School Board Policy A with some alterations and omissions. In fact, one of the creators of School Board Policy A was consulted to help draft School Board Policy B, likely due to the fact that the former school board is known for its reputation as a leader in equity and social justice education.

The replication of policy documents from one context to another emphasizes the act of what Phillips and Ochs (2004) refer to as policy borrowing, which is understood as the "conscious adoption in one context of policy observed in another" (p. 774). It also highlights the board's disengagement from the understanding that policy practices are "specific and contextualized" and are "framed by the ethos and history of each school and by the positioning and personalities of the key policy actors involved" (Braun et al., 2010, p. 558). This act of policy borrowing is evident from the introductory page of School Board Policy B, where the policy uses the same excerpt from the Ontario Human Rights Code as School Board Policy A to detail the significance of providing "equal rights and opportunities, and freedom from discrimination." This insertion highlights the exigency behind the need to respond to provincial legislation for ensuring the rights of gender minorities in public and state funded institutions. In this respect, there is a necessity for policy networks to coincide and value intersecting identities that endure discrimination and not just one group; this reliance on the OHRC as a foundation must go further in underscoring the importance of intersectional identities and how these multiple vectors invite further issues of harassment, discrimination and trans marginalization (Spade, 2015). Moreover, the policy mirrors the representation of the problem as outlined by School Board Policy A, suggesting that it has been "designed to raise awareness and help protect against discrimination and harassment." While the problem presented (Bacchi, 2009) is understood in terms of ensuring protection from harassment and discrimination, such a commitment is understood as enacting accommodation measures at the request of the actual trans student. Ironically such a policy stipulation puts the student in the *driving seat* for ensuring their own accommodation with no specific accountability being required for the actual system to take responsibility for trans inclusive interventions. Frohard-Dourlent (2018), e.g., argues that trans inclusive policies and practices which rely on student led reform agendas are limited and that what is required is the need for more

systemic driven approaches that "do not require the presence of trans bodies and instead offer possibilities for educational spaces in which all students would experience fewer pressures of gender and sexual conformity" (p. 328).

School Board Policy B also borrows the section "accommodation based upon request" directly from School Board Policy A, but with significant omissions, speaking to how policy as discourse emphasizes constraints imposed by discourse through the purposeful omission of select sections of text (Ball, 1994; Bacchi and Eveline, 2010). Specifically, School Board Policy B does *not* highlight that "there is no age limit on making an accommodation request" or the suggestion to put a request "in writing for purposes of clarity" and protection, which begs the question of what the purpose of this intentional omission might entail. However, it *does* offer specificity with respect to contingency when it comes to unresolved requests and outlines how both students and employees can respectively "seek recourse" if they feel that their accommodation needs remain unmet. School Board Policy A does not offer such a potential to appeal accommodation measures. However, much like School Board Policy A, it continues to place the student in charge of their own accommodation(s), assuming "that students have the power and language to assert individual needs and identify solutions to potential conflicts" (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018, p. 338).

It is significant that the section on trans curricular development and integration included in School Board Policy A is *omitted* from the School Board Policy B text. Such an omission reflects an *active* decision not to address, explicitly, the curricula necessity for elaborating the terms of what a "gender-complex education" might entail with its emphasis on ensuring that educators and students are incessantly "aware of the ways in which the gender oppression matrix and heterosexism work in tandem to privilege certain groups of people and oppress others and take action to challenge the gender oppression matrix and heterosexism" (Rands, 2009, p. 426). By actively removing this piece from the policy, the policy itself reaffirms a regime of truth in which support for challenging dominant, cisgender discourses with respect to the provision of gender expansive education is not specifically addressed. This aspect of what Ball (1994) refers to as "the processes of policy influence and text" highlights that "only certain influences and agendas are recognized as legitimate" (p. 17): "Policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set" (p. 19).

In addition, while School Board Policy A encourages school libraries to include books and resources that deal with gender diversity, this detail is *also* removed from and not acknowledged in School Board Policy B. Dean, a trans educator, noted that even when libraries do contain materials discussing gender diversity, they are not always visible nor physically attainable:

I do know that my perfectly well-meaning, sweet, friendly librarian who used to be at my school would hit books that were about "sensitive topics," like gay things, really high up so that none of the children could get at them. I mean, you now, the younger children. Maybe the [grade] 7's and 8's might be able to reach them, if they looked in that area. It's like we're putting them

up without putting them up. We'll put them up and never ever talk about them or encourage anybody to look over there.

Dean's insight demonstrates the lack of consideration—both in policy and practice—of how trans and gender diverse students can exist epistemically and need to see themselves reflected within the education system (Nicolazzo, 2017a; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2018), nor does the policy account for statistics that indicate that the inclusion of such resources minimizes rates of victimization (Greytak et al., 2009). Despite removing these curricular considerations from their replicated policy text, School Board Policy B includes the same appendix about making schools safer and more gender affirming places, without acknowledging how a trans-inclusive curriculum can contribute to achieving these goals (Taylor et al., 2011).

Dean accounts for the difficulty of attaining resources that address gender diversity. While Prosser (1998) notes that examining transgender narratives in curriculum will result in introducing a more expansive discussion of gender and gender embodiment, leading to a deeper understanding of the spectrum of identities. Dean, however, noted that lack of access to trans-affirmative materials and resources, despite occasional efforts by the Ministry of Education, serves as a great barrier to properly implementing a trans-inclusive curriculum:

That's always the thing where you say curriculum and materials, what can we come up with? And so, there are novels that we can find. And there's been some great stuff written by ETFO [The Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario], you know? [...] But what happens is that the books... they have a very short market time... when they're on queer topics. And so, you make this whole lesson plan or whatever it is... Resources based on this book, and then you can't get a hold of the book!

In this respect, while resources may be recommended or listed in policy appendices for teachers to access in order to be inclusive in their pedagogy, acquiring these resources proves particularly difficult in practice. Such a lack of access suggests that although policies are created to be inclusive and to accommodate trans students, and to even "raise awareness," such efforts fall flat due to a lack of investment in resources and tools for curricular intervention. Despite the fact that 'when teachers are given the opportunity and the resources, they welcome the challenges presented by GSD [gender and sexual diversity]' (Bryan, 2012, p. 133), this remains an area where schools continue to fall short based on Dean's experience.

Commendably, both policies offer a consideration of sex-segregated physical education (P.E.) classes and gender segregation in other classes where the policy insists that "students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with their gender identity." However, such a policy that is *gender considerate* does not encourage schools and their educators to avoid gender segregation for the purpose of class activities and as an overall pedagogical strategy for addressing trans and non-binary inclusivity (Rands, 2009; Jackson, 2010; Ehrenhalt, 2016). Overall, there is clearly an emphasis on the logics of accommodation in both policies which appears to be motivated by and conceived in response to legislative requirements in the Ontario context with no significant allocation of resources and detailing of accountability measures for

ensuring professional and curriculum development for teachers in schools.

## INTERPRETIVE ACCOUNTS OF TRANS-INCLUSIVE POLICIES

In light of our focused analysis on the content and contextualization of these school board policies in Ontario, we draw on conversations from key informants to reflect upon and generate insights into trans-inclusive policy development and discursive limits and possibilities of policy frames that rely on a fundamental discourse of accommodation. We conceptualize the accounts that are derived from interviews with our participants as *snapshots* because they provide a window into the response to these policies by educators at a certain place and point in time. In this sense, they emphasize Ball's (1994) point about "policy as discourse" and as "set within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment" (p. 2). It is in this sense that "the 'effects' of policy cannot simply be read off from texts," and that it is essentially how they are interpreted by actors in schools that is equally an important consideration in policy analysis (Ball, 1994, p. 21): "A policy is both contested and changing, always in a state of 'becoming', of 'was', and 'not quite; 'for any text a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings' (Codd, 1988, 239)" (Ball, 1994, p. 16).

## The Significance of Policy and Curriculum as Sites of Intervention

Each participant questioned whether policy was enough to foster more equitable conditions of access for transgender and gender diverse students in the public education system, echoing Spade's (2015) assertion that more is needed beyond the mere human rights legislative and policy frameworks. For example, participants discussed the idea about the potential of a trans-affirmative curriculum having a greater impact than the actual policy itself. Grace, a teacher of 5 years, was particularly optimistic about the current trans-affirmative policy, its current social relevance and the discussion surrounding it:

Well, we have to start from somewhere. Right? So right now, this is our starting point... It's current. People are talking about it ...It's a good place to start talking ...but it can't stay at that [trans-affirmative policy level] ...It can't just remain a discussion of private enclosed places like the washroom ...because it happens all the time that you get a topic that gets a lot of buzz and then *poof*, it's gone.

Grace affirmed that though the policy has surfaced during a "trans moment" (Nicolazzo, 2017b) with respect to transgender rights, it is crucial that the conversation regarding the importance of trans accommodation within schools is not seen as fulfilled simply because policy has created a space for discussing trans-affirmative engagement. As Kumashiro (2004) asserts:

... challenging oppression requires more than simply becoming aware of oppression, and this is because people are often invested in the status quo, as when people desire repeating

what has become normalized in our lives. Change requires a willingness to step outside of this comfort zone (p. 46).

Therefore, policy itself is a necessary political intervention, but as Grace points out, it is rendered ineffective unless educators can address their own subconscious desires for learning and teaching within a gender binary and cisgenderist framework (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; Smith and Payne, 2016; Morgan and Taylor, 2018). As Rands (2009) argues, a more gender-complex approach to education involves critically interrogating the *gender oppression matrix* as a basis for fostering professionally informed threshold knowledges about gender diversity. Thus, addressing gender democratization in the space of schools needs to be understood in terms of not just the official articulation of trans-affirmative policy discourse that relies on elaborating the specifics of accommodation, but of a concerted and long-term commitment on behalf of administrators and educators to interrogating institutionalized gender hierarchies and addressing cisgenderism (Connell, 2009; Nicolazzo, 2017c). By positioning accommodation requests as a resolution to trans marginalization in the education system, these policies tend to downplay the implications of requiring transgender students to surrender themselves to a process of investigation in order to receive permission to exist within a cisnormative system whilst refusing to restructure it. Moreover, it ignores Spade's (2015) cautioning to avoid such top-down approaches that do little to address more expansive equity issues.

Michael, for example, noted that Health and Physical Education is an important curriculum site where educators are required to officially address gender diversity at both the school board and Ministry of Education level (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015):

… the Health and Phys-Ed curriculum that was just recently released […] is the only curricular expectations that speak specifically to gender identity and trans population. There are no other curricular expectations that lay that out specifically. So, how that looks in terms of how it's taken up in schools because it's still vague and wide enough to drive a truck through the way expectations are set up, again there's no P.D. that's been attached to it, no money that's been attached, so we'll see how that's embraced by Health and Phys-Ed teachers everywhere.

Addressing gender diversity with respect to physical education is important given the fact that this is an area where students are already interacting with themes of the body and imposed gender roles (Green, 2010). Michael's point, however, is that there are no allocated resources for professional development for teachers, and hence a lack of commitment on behalf of the school board despite its policy endorsement for supporting trans and gender diverse youth in schools. Moreover, he confirms that there are no specific curricular stipulations outside of the health and physical education curriculum, which is a fraught space, especially given the recent conservative government's regressive amendments to the 2015 version, which significantly delayed what grade educators are able to address gender and sexual diversity (Ferguson and Rushowy, 2019). Such contingencies further highlight the need for an officially sanctioned policy and curriculum framework as a support for teachers in schools with regards to addressing transgender and gender diversity on "both

systematic and incidental levels" throughout the curriculum (Green, 2010, p. 6).

Michael, however, indicated that he has not witnessed any effort to employ a trans-inclusive curriculum by school administrators. Rather, he pointed out that the onus is on educators to create an accepting and safe learning environment that is encouraged in the trans-specific policy. In fact, Michael felt that steering a school to create an accepting learning environment with respect to embracing gender diverse expression in the classroom does not necessarily equate with developing a trans-informed curriculum:

I personally don't see that there's been any drive by the ministry to embed gender diversity education in the curriculum any more than it already is. There's kind of an emphasis in the Education Act that you're responsible for doing it, and it's something that's supposed to be done under the Accepting Schools Act that is sort of a daily… making sure that you're being inclusive, and respectful and all that sort of stuff. […] But I understand the nature of gender identity is not a learning outcome. [Laughs] In the curriculum, do I think that's going to happen anytime soon? I don't.

Despite the emphasis in the Education Act[3] and the Accepting Schools Act[4] 2012, evidence suggests that teachers are not effectively trained or provided with sustained professional development which explicitly addresses gender identity and gender complexity, and that this lack of training and the absence of trans-inclusive curriculum impact on enhancing understanding of trans inclusivity and livability in the school system (Luecke, 2011; Payne and Smith, 2014; Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; Smith and Payne, 2016; Goodrich and Barnard, 2018; Leonardi and Staley, 2018). Importantly, the presence of a trans-inclusive curriculum is significant given that in schools which had a curriculum that was LGBTQ-inclusive, students were less likely to hear negative remarks about transgender people (Kosciw et al., 2018, p. 70). Moreover, Michael exposes the limits of the policy in its failure to address resource allocation and accountability measures for supporting trans-affirmative curricular and professional development for principals and teachers in schools.

Grace also underscored this sentiment that teachers undoubtedly require further education: "Anybody who works in the school should have some sort of sensitivity training. We all do the workplace safety training." When prompted about developing this understanding and education for teachers with respect to what form it would take, and who would run such a program, Grace answered simply: "P.D. Day [Professional Development Day]! We do everything online for WSIB [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board], stuff like that. I think it's possible to put together modules that you have to

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[3]The Education Act was amended in 2012 by Bill 13 to formally mandate the promotion of awareness, safety, and inclusion of transgender students in schools in order to prevent transphobia.

[4]The *Accepting Schools Act* requires schools to prevent and address inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour among students in schools. It requires schools to have policies in place that address bullying and ensure inclusive education. The passage of the act controversially allowed for the creation of Gay Straight Alliances without being vetoed or disallowed in public schools in Ontario.

complete in order to stay employed. That's already been done. It's not a far stretch. Um. [Pause]. I mean, training will only do so much, but…" However, Green (2010) insists that these professional development days need to provide productive spaces for teachers to unpack understandings about gender diversity before they can adequately expect their students to do the same. Bryan (2012), for example, found that "teachers are quite blunt about the degree to which they already feel unsettled and unprepared when it comes to teaching about gender and sexual diversity" (p. 133) (Payne and Smith, 2014; Ullman, 2015; see also Leonardi and Staley, 2018). Therefore, it is clear that some teachers are willing to combat their feelings of unpreparedness by educating themselves on gender diversity in order to create an inclusive classroom environment for their students. However, Smith and Payne (2016) found that after attending trans-informed professional development, many teachers "resisted gender-affirming pedagogy and fixated on the logistics of accommodating transgender students and keeping them safe" (p. 34), which speaks to the logics at the heart of the school board policies that are the subject of this article.

Nevertheless, Michael stressed that the responsibility for ensuring respect for diversity rests with the school's code of conduct. He added that while the latter is important, without proper education for teachers regarding issues of *gender sensitivity* and the need for a pedagogical commitment to addressing gender diversity and trans inclusivity more broadly, students have a difficult time understanding the extent to which compulsory heterogenderism[5] and cisgender systems actually operate to deny trans recognizability and livability in the school system (Wyss, 2004; Taylor et al., 2011):

[The code of conduct] is supposed to inform students about how they should be behaving, and when they don't behave that way, they get punished. So, we've really set up the system terribly in the sense that staff who are expected to give the message haven't been properly trained. There's no focus on what that training should look like for staff in a regular curriculum day. There's no emphasis of the priority for that within the curriculum itself. And students who need the information to be able to understand how to create a respectful environment don't necessarily get it from the staff—because they haven't received the training—get punished when they don't behave that way.

Michael suggests that simply writing the expectation of respect into the code of conduct is insufficient, and he points to the limits of a liberal focus on diversity as a basis for educating about trans inclusivity and addressing the specific needs of gender minority students (Gressgård, 2010; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2015). Rather, what is required, he argues, is a focus on *why* this respect is essential in terms of ensuring gender democratization and gender expansive understandings in the education system (Pyne, 2014; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2018). Moreover, such an assertion highlights the significance of embracing a model of *trickle up* social justice that shifts the focus

away from merely accommodating individual students to one that embraces a systemic consideration of trans marginalization in the education system with its attention to creating self-determining spaces for trans and non-binary students to be recognized and affirmed (Spade, 2015; Frohard-Dourlent, 2018). Specifically, addressing the concerns of one student at a time does little to restructure a problematic cisgenderist system. Our policy critique in fact highlights that there needs to be a move beyond such reactive approaches to the presence of trans students in schools to encourage a broader focus on gender diversity as a necessary basis for addressing trans affirmative education (see also Frohard-Dourlent, 2018). This critical insight has vital implications for policy formulation and frames with respect to moving beyond an individualistic focus on accommodating the tans student. For example, research by Taylor et al. (2011) in Canada and Kosciw et al. (2018) in the United States found that trans students felt more comfortable and a greater sense of belonging in schools with specific LGBTQ inclusive policies and curriculum (p. 79). Our policy analysis is informed by such empirical insights and, hence, speaks to our critique of policy frames that eschew a much-needed focus on trans informed curriculum development and pedagogical intervention. Such a redirected focus highlights the need for more systemic education about gender diversity as opposed to more a reactive approach to relying merely on the presence of a trans student as basis for instigating gender diversity education. In fact, while Meyer et al.'s (2016) research with teachers revealed that the presence of a trans or gender-creative student was instrumental in initiating intervention and support measures with respect to addressing trans inclusion, they are critical of what they refer to as "a pedagogy of exposure" where the individual trans student risks becoming the "sacrificial lamb" for instigating more systemic policy enactment and curricular intervention designed to address and educate about gender diversity (p. 17). This does not mean that trans and non-binary students should not be at the center of trans affirmative policy articulation and enactment in schools. In fact, it is vital that trans-informed policies prioritize "building leadership and membership on a "most vulnerable first" basis, centering the belief that social justice trickles up, not down and that meaningful change comes from below" (Spade, 2015, p. 137). However, intervention and gender justice education which is taken solely in response to the presence of the trans student or by trans students themselves advocating for themselves and for such education constitutes a fundamental abnegation of responsibility on behalf of the education system to ensure the safety, privacy and well-being of gender diverse youth. Through an approach which entails school boards and schools actively supporting and taking responsibility for gender complex education (Rands, 2009), constructive steps toward gender democratization which entails a "shift [in] focus from the individual rights framing of discrimination …. [to] think[ing] more broadly about how gender categories are enforced on all people in ways that have particularly dangerous outcomes for trans people" can be actualized (Spade, 2015, p. 9).

In order to move toward gender democratization, participants appeared to advocate for what Rands (2009) refers to as a gender-complex approach to education which entailed raising

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[5]Nicolazzo (2017c) defines *compulsory heterogenderism* as "a cultural condition by which diverse gender identities are positioned as abject or culturally unintelligible" which contributes to their erasure and "makes one's gender identity incomprehensible, unknowable, and invalid" (p. 247).

awareness about regimes of *compulsory heterogendersim* and cisnormativity with their occlusion of trans and othering of non-binary subjectivities (Ehrenhalt, 2016; Worthen, 2016; Nicolazzo, 2017c) All three participants underscored the importance of developing a trans-affirmative curriculum which moved beyond merely accommodating trans students. However, they indicated that they were not aware of systematic professional development devoted to addressing gender identity and trans-inclusive education despite the School Board A's policy support for such initiatives, thereby foregrounding the lack of any real commitment to resource allocation to achieve these ends.

## The Limits of Accommodation

The participants agreed that despite each school board policy's emphasis on accommodation, they did not appear to translate into fostering a safe space for trans students. Grace, for example, insisted "that the real weakness is the accommodation based on request" aspect of their school board policy. When asked to elaborate on why they perceived this to be the case, their answer echoed those of the other participants:

I think that it creates a bit of a problem in that a student—anybody—might know that you don't fit female, but they don't really know if they want to fit into male. So, having that binary there established and saying, "Well, you have to fit into one of these and if you don't, you have to out yourself" when you might not even know what that means yet. Right? So, knowing that you're not the same as a binary isn't the same as knowing definitively, "I identify as trans." "I identify as queer."

Having students feel that they must *out* themselves in order to be accommodated has the potential to increase surveillance of trans and non-binary bodies and, hence, enhances the very risk of being victimized (Ingrey, 2018). Moreover, by placing the onus on students to request their required accommodation, presumes that students who are, as Grace suggests, non-binary, understand what kind of accommodation(s) they require. In this respect, policies and schools need to envision a "transgender imaginary" which "encapsulates more dynamic possibilities in the realization of gendered personhood" (Martino, 2016, p. 383). This is a significant approach that is "grounded necessarily in the voices and embodied experiences of trans subjects themselves," and must be understood in response to what Namaste (2000) documents as "the epistemic violence that has contributed to the institutional and cultural erasure of the lived and bodily ontological existence of transgender people in the everyday world" (p. 382). Policies must offer a more nuanced consideration of the spectrum of embodiment and how reactionary accommodation based upon request is not as straightforward for all transgender and gender diverse individuals but also need to commit to resource allocation to foster more gender expansive education in schools.

This notion of requiring a student to *out* themselves based upon their gender identity and their need for accommodation is paradoxical to the very creation of the policies themselves, as both policies cite the Taylor et al. (2011) report that documented the alarming statistics of trans student victimization occurring within schools. Grace, for instance, linked the limits of accommodation to this potential for increased victimization and marginalization:

It [the policy] asks people to *out* themselves and mark themselves as different, which then puts them at a higher risk of being victimized. […] I think that different people might find different solutions. … I would hope that there's somebody they can talk to and… "Based on request"—I don't know if it says it in here if it has to be the actual student who makes the request. Because having a friend ask would be a solution as well. I don't know if it would be possible to anonymously ask or make a request. But it is a barrier in, you know, receiving the accommodations that are promised in this.

By placing the onus on the students to not only out themselves but also claim their own transgender identity and the subsequent required accommodations, these policies continue to enforce cisgender privilege in schools. While still maintaining the dominant gender binary, the policies create an "other" gender category, in which a student must situate themselves if they are not cisgender. The creation of an "other" gender category, as Namaste (2000) further explains, "allows for a transgender identification but also denies a simultaneous identification with the gender of 'man' or 'woman', while collapsing the different ways of identifying as transgendered and living one's life" (p. 44).

This system of having trans or gender diverse students declare their embodied differences reinforces the gender oppression matrix of which Rands (2009) speaks, which fails to "take into consideration those who do not identity within the binary gender categorization of men/boys and women/girls" (p. 423). As a result, while transgender students are not absolutely stripped of the right to use a bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity, they are denied the right of entering whichever bathroom they feel comfortable by having to *request* to be accommodated.

An emphasis on accommodation based upon individual request invokes no substantive change to the cisnormative system. As Dean explains: "I was away for 2 years, right? And so, you'd think if things had shifted [due to the policy], I would have noticed a difference. And I don't notice much of a difference." The polemic of relying on singular accommodations as opposed to invoked more sweeping proactive systemic interventions does little to interrogate or dismantle the cisnormative system, but instead requires individual students to submit to interrogation. In this respect, schools must heed Greytak et al.'s (2009) and Taylor et al.'s (2011) invitation to become proactive in addressing systemic issues by actively promoting and suffusing trans-affirmative resources, curriculum, and pedagogy within schools which ensure "the climate is significantly more positive for sexual and gender minority students" (Taylor et al., 2011, p. 28).

One of the unintended effects of the "accommodation based upon request" invoked by these policies is that proactive interventions may not be undertaken until they are sought out by trans students themselves. Mathers (2017), for example, highlights the problem of the cisnormative dynamics at play in how binary understandings of gender are mobilized to "make sense of transgender experience while placing an unequal emotional burden on transgender and gender non-conforming people to mend the interactional disruption of the gender panic" (p. 295). This polemic of relying on a policy discourse of accommodation at the expense of an emphasis on the necessity of

creating and resourcing the pedagogical conditions for educating about gender diversity highlights the ethical, epistemic and political considerations at play in addressing the articulation of trans-affirmative policies in the education system (Journell, 2017; Mangin, 2018).

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this article our focus has been on generating critical insights into the development of trans-affirmative policies and practices in specific school boards/school contexts, given the dearth of research that exists on this topic (Jones et al., 2016; Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017; Neary, 2018; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2019). Our case study enabled us to provide some particularity and context specificity about the formulation of trans inclusive policies in the Ontario context, with the objective of generating knowledge about the limitations of relying on a discourse of accommodation as a basis for supporting transgender and gender diverse students in the education system. Indeed, our research has highlighted that there is a continued need for educators and administrators to pay close attention to ethical and political questions of trans livability in education and school systems as part of an overall project of fostering gender justice and gender democratization for all students (Rands, 2009; Pyne, 2014). It has also foregrounded the necessity of trans-affirmative policy that is committed to addressing trans marginalization with respect to the provision of in-service and pre-service education to ensure that requisite teacher threshold knowledges about gender diversity and cisgenderism can be enacted beyond merely appealing to a fundament imperative of accommodation (Rands, 2009; Luecke, 2018). As Michael—equity officer with one of the school boards where we conducted our research—pointed out, resources are needed to support schools and teachers in this endeavor and political project of enacting gender democratization. This particular school board has a team of educators and social workers who are equipped with knowledge and expertise and who are sought out by schools to support administrators, educators and students in terms of enacting the policy with respect to its stipulations for accommodating trans students and addressing complex education. In this respect, there is some provision of trans-informed professional development and support for schools. However, there is a necessity for policymakers to explicitly address resource allocation and accountability more systematically. Moreover, such support and education must extend beyond merely fulfilling the accommodation terms of the policy, which requires and holds the board legally responsible for a failure to "respond to a transgender student's concerns or request" (Ludeke, 2009, p. 16).

Finally, in addition to staff and administrators requiring a deeper understanding of trans marginalization, this study has actively troubled the requirement bestowed upon trans and gender diverse students to request accommodation. It is important that schools deeply consider the necessity of students safely accessing these gender-segregated areas without having to request to do so. Putting the onus on the individual trans student

in this respect translates into a fundamental abnegation of the education system's responsibility to actively address the broader cisgenderist forces at play and their institutionalization in schools which make it difficult not only for trans youth to navigate the system on daily basis, but to feel comfortable about being out and visible in the first place, a phenomenon which (Carlile and Paechter, 2018) refer to as "precarious invisibility" (p. 86) (see also Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017; Ferfolja and Ullman, 2020). In this sense, trans-affirmative policy ultimately needs to engage in a sustained way with a critical trans politics that is committed to both "conceptualiz[ing] the conditions trans people face and more directly strategiz[ing] change that impacts the well-being of trans people" (Spade, 2015, p. 16).

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The Office of Human Research Ethics (OHRE), on behalf of Western's Research Ethics Boards (REB) at the University of Western Ontario. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

KO is a Ph.D. student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada. His research interests center upon examining the structural and political obstacles surrounding the consideration of transgender and gender diverse perspectives in the education system. WM is a professor of Equity and Social Justice Education in the Faculty of Education and an affiliate member of the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. His research interests include addressing queer and transgender informed perspectives on gender justice and democratization in the education system.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

KO was responsible for the design of the study and conducting the interviews with the key informants for the research study and conducted the thematic analysis and coded the data accordingly. KO and WM collaboratively conducted the proper ethics protocols and engaged in the writing process of the article together. WM draws significantly on the application of trans epistemological insights and approaches to critical policy analysis that are derived from his SSHRC funded research into supporting trans youth in schools.

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# Erratum: Supporting Transgender Inclusion and Gender Diversity in Schools: A Critical Policy Analysis

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**An Erratum on**

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Due to a production error, "(Shanks and Lester, 2019)" was incorrectly written as "(Shanks and Lester, 1994)." The citation has been updated throughout the article and in the reference list.

The publisher apologizes for this mistake. The original article has been updated.

## REFERENCES

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# Why LGBT Teachers May Make Exceptional School Leaders

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The recent school gate protests about the inclusion of LGBT identities in the curriculum suggest that sexual identity remains an issue of moral panic in UK schools. Given this current climate, and the legacy of Section 28, schools have rarely been easy workplaces for LGBT teachers. For LGBT teachers, significant energy and vigilance is required then to navigate the heteronormative and cis-normative staffroom and classroom. There is evidence that LGBT teachers try to remain as invisible as possible in their schools so as to not draw attention to themselves (Lee, 2019a). Some avoid promotion to school leadership roles fearing that the status will necessitate greater personal scrutiny by school stakeholders. Based on key attributes including, reading people, compassion, and commitment to the inclusion of others, making connections managing uncertainty, courage, and risk-taking, this perspective piece argues that some of the strategies LGBT teachers deploy to manage the intersection of personal and professional identities in school equip them with an array of particular skills that are conducive to excellent school leadership.

Keywords: cis-normativity, school workplace, parents, heteronormativity, leadership, teachers, LGBT

## INTRODUCTION

This article argues that the strategies deployed by LGBT teachers to manage the intersection of their personal and professional identities equips them with a distinct set of skills that are valuable to effective school leadership. It begins by reflecting on the sociological and political landscape for LGBT teachers before considering five key attributes that LGBT teachers may acquire through their lived experience as an LGBT teacher. The article concludes by recognizing the value of specific leadership programmes that celebrate protected characteristics and stresses the importance for young people of diverse role models, committed teachers, and authentic school leaders.

## THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

There are as many as 50,000 LGBT teachers in British schools, yet there are very few openly LGBT Headteachers (Lee, 2019a). The Equality Act of 2010 has done much to safeguard LGBT teachers from workplace discrimination but it is well-documented that despite advances in equalities legislation at the macro level, many LGBT teachers do not yet feel adequately protected or safe enough to be out to all stakeholders in their school workplaces (Gray, 2010; Lee, 2019a).

Schools remain woefully behind the majority of other workplaces when it comes to LGBT inclusion. This is because, since the advent of Ofsted and school league-tables, conservatism, and the approval of heterosexual, and conservative parents is at the heart of what schools do. Teachers are compelled to reflect the communities their schools serve through the Teachers Standards (Department for Education, 2013) which require that "personal beliefs are not expressed in ways

which exploit pupils' vulnerability" and that teachers "must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies, and practices of the school in which they teach (p. 11).''

Schools remain entrenched in the biologically predetermined power-ridden categorisations of male and female (Gray, 2010). This is evident in all phases of compulsory education, from the toys available in the reception class home corner through to highly gendered expectations of school leavers at their prom (Robinson, 2002). Pupils are grouped or split for activities according to gender, and even amongst the staff, rigid binaries of male or female are evident from the way in which pupils are expected to address them as Mr, Mrs, or Miss.

Homophobia in schools is well-documented in UK Schools. Cocker et al. (2019) report that many LGBT families are compelled to adopt to quite elaborate strategies to navigate homophobic discourses in schools, and Carlile (2019) too posits that work must be done within primary schools to acknowledge and celebrate LGBT relationships.

According to Piper and Sikes (2010), when teachers stray into territories in which sexual and gender norms are explored or questioned, this has the potential to create moral panic. When heteronormativity is threatened then so too are the discourses of power in the school (Gray, 2010; Rudoe, 2010) and interventions usually follow. Section 28 of the Local Government Act (1988–2003) was one such state sanctioned intervention when local authorities (to which state schools at that time belonged) were forbidden from "the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship." For 15 years, Section 28 created a climate in schools in which LGBT teachers feared they would lose their jobs should their LGBT identity be revealed in the school workplace. Worse still, for 15 years, young people were denied support for issues related to their sexual or gender identity, and children with same-sex parents were denied access to resources which featured families like theirs.

Despite the repeal of Section 28, the introduction of the Equality Act (2010) and the Equal Marriage Act (2015) there have in 2019, been school gate parental and faith group protests in Birmingham about the introduction of a new programme of Relationships, Sex, and Health Education that is inclusive of LGBT relationships. Anderton Park School was forced to go to the High Court seeking an injunction creating an exclusion zone around the school to prevent further protests, such was the devastating effect on pupils and staff. At nearby Parkfield School, the Assistant Headteacher, Andrew Moffatt received death threats for implementing resources that depicted LGBT characters. This raised anxiety for LGBT teachers with many equating the school gate protests with the hostilities of the Section 28 era.

Though rarely explicitly articulated, there is evidence that the principal fear of LGBT teachers is that the heteronormative school community will align their identity with discourses of hypersexuality and pedophilia [see Cavanagh (2008), Borg (2015), Thompson-Lee (2017)]. Piper and Sikes (2010) too observe that "fear of the pedophile taints adult–child relationships in general" (p. 567). Although Lee (2019b) suggests all teachers are potentially under suspicion, Piper and Sikes argue

that "When the focus is on sex that is regarded as being outside of the norm the difficulties are magnified" (p. 567). As the title of the 2010 article by Piper and Sikes declares, "All Teachers are Vulnerable but Especially Gay Teachers" (p. 566).

It is not surprising then that LGBT teachers frequently report that significant energy, on top of an already demanding role, is needed to compartmentalize their personal and professional selves, vigilantly, and tentatively navigating the complexities of their heteronormative school communities and trying to remain as invisible as possible (Ferfolja, 2007). Invisibility in the school workplace is of course not conducive to job promotion (Rudoe, 2010) and many LGBT teachers avoid school leadership roles altogether. Leadership is inevitably accompanied by greater visibility in the school community and greater scrutiny and interest from school stakeholders, and for some LGBT teachers such intrusion is not worth the reward of a leadership role.

It can be argued however that the strategies LGBT teachers learn to deploy to navigate the complexities of the heteronormative and cisnormative school workplace equips them with a set of skills that are conducive to an exceptional and distinctly effective style of school leadership.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is important to stress that this article rejects essentialist delineations of gender and sexuality recognizing that they perpetuate heteronormativity. In common with Butler (1990), this article recognizes that behaviors associated with gender and sexuality are "instruments of regulatory regimes" and "the normalizing categories of oppressive structures" (p. 13–14). When applied here, this article assumes that the oppressive structures of heteronormativity mean that some LGBT teachers experience the school workplace differently to their heterosexual and cis gendered colleagues. The behaviors needed to navigate the heteronormative school environment, when practiced over time equip LGBT teachers with particular abilities which give them a distinct set of skills and attributes.

## LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

There are five key leadership attributes that LGBT teachers may have in abundance. They are:

- Reading people
- Compassion and commitment to the inclusion of others
- Making connections
- Managing uncertainty
- Courage and risk-taking.

## READING PEOPLE

It is widely recognized that reading people is necessary for LGBT people to successfully negotiate heteronormative environments (Mîndru and Năstasă, 2017). Reading people is defined by De Melo et al. (2014) as "the ability to infer others" beliefs, desires, and intentions from their facial expressions (p. 1). They add

that reading people is "important in interdependent decision making… about the others' intention to cooperate."(p. 1).

LGBT people often develop highly developed instincts about the intentions of other people. Knight et al. (2014) show that gay men and lesbians tend to be disproportionately represented in occupations that require high levels social perceptiveness. This perception is practiced over time and often deployed at great speed to protect LGBT people from exposure to prejudice. Through extensive practice, LGBT teachers often need to become adept at reading people and situations, and horizon scanning to determine whether or not it is safe to be out. Every time an LGBT teacher enters a new environment, meets a new colleague or parent, they must be able to recognize the subtlest of dispositions and behaviors in others before judging whether or not where relevant, it is safe to acknowledge their sexual or gender identity, or whether it would be safer instead to espouse a neutral position or even to adopt a position of pseudo-cis gendered heterosexuality. When applied to leadership, being adept at reading people is a highly effective attribute. Snyder (2006) identified that LGBT leaders often develop excellent emotional intelligence becoming adept at reading people and situations. LGBT leaders who hone the skill of reading people are ideally placed to make good decisions when recruiting new employees (Snyder, 2006). They may also become astute and discerning when interacting with a wealth of different school stakeholders, especially heterosexual parents with traditional views on sexual and gender identity. This may include knowing how to engage difficult parents to diffuse an antagonistic situation and instinctively making good decisions on what information to share and what to withhold in the best interests of the school community.

## COMPASSION AND COMMITMENT TO THE INCLUSION OF OTHERS

Although the Equality Act (2010) protects UK LGBT teachers from overt discrimination, equality does not necessarily ensure inclusion. Exclusion can be subtle, divisive, and oft times unintentional. LGBT teachers report extensive experience of feeling marginalized (Lee, 2019b). This may be in school staffrooms, within their wider community, through their families of origin and often within their own experiences as a pupil at school (Ryan et al., 2009). Having experienced exclusion and marginalization, LGBT teachers often have empathy in abundance and are more likely to be highly sensitized to inclusive best practice in their classrooms and amid teacher colleagues. Shallenberger (1994) asserted that the adversity endured through being othered by society, enabled gay men to develop an array of particular skills, valuable to leadership including sensitivity to diverse employees and an understanding of oppression. Brooks and Edwards (2009) observe that LGBT workers have three primary needs which are inclusion, safety, and equity. LGBT teachers are likely to have a heightened awareness of those on the margins of their school community and seek ways to ensure they feel included. When applied to leadership, LGBT teachers with personal experience of exclusion are likely to have

developed a strong sense of social justice and an abundance of empathy with pupils, parents, and colleagues who may be marginalized on the basis of race, faith or social class, and other protected characteristics.

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

This article has described the interminable heteronormativity and cis-normativity that stubbornly prevails in UK school communities. Within these conservative school workplaces LGBT teachers become skilful in identifying ways in which they can connect with others with whom they may not naturally have much in common. Alternative genders and sexualities are silenced in school communities to such an extent that the revelation of a same-sex partner is seen as belonging in the realm of the private and intimate, in the way that an opposite sex partner is not (Lee, 2019b). Fingerhut (2011) found that developing kinship and building alliances between LGBT and heterosexual allies is key to disrupting heteronormative spaces. LGBT teachers may then use the sharing of information deemed intimate to their advantage. By revealing their gender or sexual identity, they enter into subtle transactional discourses with cis and heterosexual colleagues, who often share information that belongs in the private realm in return (Hunter, 2007). The intimate sharing of personal information is invaluable for school leaders when building trust with different stakeholders across the school community. LGBT teachers are practiced at finding common ground with a diverse range of colleagues and stakeholders, and where LGBT school leaders are able to come out to colleagues, they report closer working relationships and greater levels of trust from their colleagues Studies by Bowring (2017), Jennings (2005), Leithwood and McAdie (2007), all concluded that LGBT educators being out contributed to a better environment for themselves, their colleagues, and their students. Being open about sexual identity fulfills a basic need to confirm and affirm one's identity. Disclosure allows individuals to form an authentic and stable sense of self (Rose Ragins, 2004), and reduces the cognitive dissonance and burden of identity management within the school workplace (King et al., 2008). LGBT teachers who enter into a "Don't ask, Don't tell" relationship with their school communities often feel that their personal identities are being silenced (Thompson-Lee, 2017).

## MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

As this article has already posited, LGBT teachers are adept at tolerating a good deal of ambiguity and learn to function effectively when a great deal is uncertain. LGBT teachers often do not know for sure who knows about their gender or sexual identity. Space for declarative statements is often hard to find (Rasmussen, 2004) and rumor is usually commonplace in school communities. LGBT teachers present themselves to a host of different stakeholders in a variety of different contexts. This can be especially acute in rural school communities where there can be a blurring of the personal and professional (Lee, 2019a). Teacher colleagues are likely to be parents of children

at the school and parents may be predominant members of the rural community known to the LGBT teacher in a different context (Thompson-Lee, 2017). Even when LGBT teachers are out to the entire school community they cannot be sure whether school stakeholders approve or privately hold homophobic beliefs and values (Khayatt, 1999). Amongst all this uncertainty, LGBT teachers learn to adopt a business as usual attitude, performing effectively and without distraction whilst inwardly often managing a considerable degree of personal turmoil, something Meyer (2003) identifies as minority stress. Most recently however, Meyer (2015) has observed that LGBT people can mount effective coping responses and most survive and even thrive despite minority stress. This is an exceptional skill for school leadership. School leaders often must protect their school communities from uncertainty, adversity, or bad news whilst exuding confidence, calm, and a sense of being in control. According to Hansen (2011) a crisis is always the true test of leadership. He states that whilst it is easy to lead well when things are going well, it is far more difficult when things are going poorly. LGBT teachers have extensive experience of operating under great personal stress whilst betraying nothing in their professional demeanor. This makes them ideally placed to provide composed leadership that reassures school stakeholders and builds trust in their leadership.

## COURAGE AND RISK-TAKING

Finally, courage and risk-taking are vital facets of school leadership and LGBT teachers often develop these in abundance. According to Snyder (2006), the gay leaders in his study were comfortable in risk taking, and using their non-conformity, became creative problem solvers because of their experience of having to create their own life paths in a heterosexist society. Each time LGBT teachers apply for a new position they must calculate whether or not their new school workplace will afford them the space to speak their authentic selves into existence, or whether instead they will be corralled into an all too common "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009) arrangement with colleagues and line-managers. It is an act of considerable

courage for an LGBT teacher to present themselves authentically within a new school workplace. Those commencing their careers during the Section 28 era know all too well that schools often provide no space for LGBT teachers to speak their identity into existence (Nixon and Givens, 2007). Creating such a space is an act of considerable courage and involves great personal risk to and may jeopardize future career prosperity (Rasmussen, 2004). The LGBT leaders in Shallenberger (1994) study, perceived themselves as more valuable to their employer because of their courage and willingness to take risks. Courage and calculated risk-taking is important in school leadership and LGBT teachers through years of risk-taking and acts of courage often build a heightened intuition that guides them in taking appropriate risks and demonstrating courage in the best interests of their school communities.

Few would disagree that in order to flourish educationally, young people need access to diverse role models, committed teachers, and authentic school leaders (Lee, 2019a). When LGBT leaders become visible within their school communities, they embody a distinct and exceptional type of leadership (Fassinger et al., 2010) through the acquisition and application of the five attributes identified in this article. When LGBT teachers become school leaders, they trouble institutional heteronormative and heterosexist practices (Gray, 2013) and via their own visibility, give other school stakeholders such as children and young people, parents, and colleagues, permission to also participate authentically and without fear. At a time when the average length of service of a Headteacher is just 3 years, it is crucial that investment into effective and distinct school leadership programmes (e.g., Courageous Leaders, LGBTEd, as well as Women Ed and BAME Ed) continues, so that we attract, recruit, and keep talented school leaders who reflect the full diversity of British society.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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# Tales From the Chalkface: Using Narratives to Explore Agency, Resilience, and Identity of Gay Teachers

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Existing literature is dominated by accounts which position gay teachers as victims. We were concerned that this only presented a partial insight into the experiences of gay teachers. This study researched the personal and professional experiences of four gay teachers in England. It builds on existing research by presenting positive narratives rather than positioning gay teachers as victims. We use the term "chalkface" to illustrate that all were practicing teachers. The purpose of the study was to explore their experiences as gay teachers throughout their careers. The study used the life history method to create narratives of each participant. Semi-structured interviews were used. The study found that the repeal of Section 28 in England in 2003 did not have an immediate effect on the identities, resilience, and agency of the participants. The 2010 Equality Act in England and changes to the school inspection framework had a greater influence in supporting their agency, resilience, and willingness to merge personal and professional identities. All but one participant managed to use their identities as gay teachers to advance inclusion and social justice through the curriculum. Although the narratives that we have presented do illuminate some negative experiences, the accounts are largely positive, in contrast with existing literature which positions gay teachers as victims.

Keywords: queer, teachers, gay, stories, narrative

## INTRODUCTION

This study explores the experiences of four gay educators who taught in schools during Section 28 and following its repeal. We were interested in exploring the ways in which Section 28 impacted on the agency, resilience and identities of these teachers during the time that the legislation was in force and following its repeal. Homosexuality was partially decriminalized in England and Wales in 1967. Despite this, the government of the United Kingdom introduced Section 28 in 1988 which prevented schools from promoting homosexuality or its acceptability as a "pretended family relationship" (Local Government Act, 1988). Research demonstrates that the legislation continued to impact and influence teachers' practice and identities for many years after its repeal in 2003 (Greenland and Nunney, 2008; Edwards et al., 2016). This study explores the participants' experiences of teaching during and after the repeal of Section 28. It explores the international literature on the experiences of teachers who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or queer (LGBTQ+). It explores theoretical perspectives on stress, resilience, identity, and agency. The complete narratives of the participants are presented because we wanted to privilege their stories.

The narratives are subsequently analyzed using the theoretical frameworks that are outlined earlier in the paper.

## The Experiences of LGBTQ+ Teachers

Homosexuality was decriminalized in England and Wales in 1967. Prior to this, individuals engaging in homosexual acts faced a maximum sentence of life in prison. Despite decriminalization, official, and legal disapproval of homosexuality continued for many years with inequality remaining prevalent (Epstein, 2000; Nixon and Givens, 2007). Introduced by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1988, Section 28 (Local Government Act, 1988) signaled this disapproval by seeking to impose upon local authorities and their schools a prescribed view which sought to repress and restrict public debate of sexuality (Nixon and Givens, 2007). It has been argued that:

*Section 28 (part of the Local Government Act of 1988) was a notorious piece of legislation that sought to prevent local education authorities in the UK from 'promoting homosexuality'. The effect of Section 28 was to create uncertainty and fear among teachers as to what was (and what was not) permitted in schools.* (Greenland and Nunney, 2008, p. 243)

Recent research demonstrates the powerful and long-lasting cultural effect of Section 28 (Edwards et al., 2016). It contributed to a climate of fear through the normalization of heterosexuality, thus resulting in marginalization, oppression, and regulation of those with deviant sexual identities (Neary, 2013). It has been emphasized that:

*Most research referring to [Section 28] has been highly critical, viewing it as symbolic discrimination that institutionalizes a hierarchical relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and it is held up as a prime example of the exclusion of lesbians and gay men from full cultural citizenship.* (Burridge, 2004, p. 329)

Teachers held several misconceptions about Section 28, especially in relation to what was legal and what was not, and this uncertainty and confusion caused difficulties (Warwick et al., 2001). For example, teachers were often unable to draw distinctions between promoting homosexuality and simply providing students with advice (Greenland and Nunney, 2008). In addition, many teachers were unsure about the legality of discussing homosexuality, and this often led to an avoidance of the subject entirely (Buston and Hart, 2001). This meant that schools avoided discussion of LGBTQ+ topics and any related curricula (Epstein et al., 2003). Research also demonstrates that Section 28 supported the growth of homophobic bullying through creating school cultures which failed to challenge and address homophobia and homophobic harassment (Epstein, 2000; Warwick et al., 2001).

Section 28 prohibited schools from promoting homosexuality or its acceptability as a "pretended family relationship" (Local Government Act, 1988). This normalized heterosexual marriage (Nixon and Givens, 2007) and sustained cultures of heteronormativity in schools, despite the partial decriminalization of homosexuality over 20 years earlier. Thus, Section 28 reinforced the marginalization of people with LGBTQ+ identities. As demonstrated by Foucault (1978) and Ellis (2007), homo sexuality has been historically associated with disease and mental illness. Through condemning difference, Section 28 effectively positioned teachers with non-heterosexual identities as patients and sufferers (Ellis, 2007) whose divergence and difference left them feeling at risk and in need of help (Quinlivan, 2002).

Section 28 was repealed in England and Wales in 2003. Research demonstrates that the act continued to impact and influence teachers' practice for many years after its repeal (Greenland and Nunney, 2008; Edwards et al., 2016). Researchers have also argued that this repeal was a superficial change in legislation which only went a small way in challenging the deep heterosexist discourse and gross inequality already embedded in schools (Nixon and Givens, 2007). In part, this research study will explore the effect of Section 28 on teacher agency, resilience and identity and whether this has changed since its repeal in 2003.

Some research has demonstrated the harassment and discrimination of teachers with LGBTQ+ identities (Cooper, 2008; Neary, 2013). Dominant heteronormative discourses in schools often situate teachers with LGBTQ+ identities within exclusionary spaces (Gray et al., 2016). Research has linked these experiences of bullying, violence, invisibility, and alienation with elevated risks of mental ill health, self-harm, and suicidality (Mayock et al., 2009; Bryan and Maycock, 2017). Eliason (2010) conceptualizes the "suicide consensus" (p. 7) that has emerged from over 30 years of research. This research compared the experiences of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities with those of peers whose identities were normative (Bryan and Maycock, 2017). LGBTQ+ teachers are required to negotiate complex personal and professional boundaries (Vicars, 2006; Gray, 2013) and decide whether or not to be visible and open about their private truth (Grace and Benson, 2000). This isolation has deterred teachers from assuming positions as visible role models in schools (Russell, 2010; Gray et al., 2016). To conceal and reduce stigmatizing labels, individuals with LGBTQ+ identities will often pass off and cover up their sexuality in order to seek acceptance and equivalence. Through doing so, these teachers can conform to the heteronormative and heterosexist discourses that prevail in schools (Gray et al., 2016; Reimers, 2017).

According to Røthing (2008), teachers' experiences are influenced by "homotolerant" (p. 258) school cultures. Although heteronormativity might be less overt than it was previously (Berry, 2018), it still exists in subtle forms (Gray et al., 2016). These include bias and microaggressions (Francis and Reygan, 2016). Despite microaggressions originally emerging from race-based research (Lynn, 2002; Yosso, 2005), they have been explored in recent years in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity (Nadal et al., 2011; Francis and Reygan, 2016). Microaggressions therefore appear in a range of settings and contexts and can be understood as:

*…brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults towards members of oppressed groups.* (Nadal, 2008, p. 23)

Research has demonstrated that the LGBTQ+ community, including staff and students in schools, is exposed to microaggressions and subtle bias which perpetuate heterosexism and exclude those with LGBTQ+ identities (Walls, 2008; Nadal et al., 2011). Francis and Reygan's (2016) research has summarized the microaggressions facing those in the LGBTQ+ community. These include: heterosexist language; heteronormative and gender normative discourses; exoticising the identities of LGBTQ+ individuals; outright disapproval of those with LGBTQ+ identities; denying homophobia and pathologising those within the LGBTQ+ community. Minikel-Lacocque's (2013) research also characterizes the contested microaggressions which occur when aggressors deliberately and purposefully deny their actions.

Research demonstrates many of the factors contributing to the oppression of teachers with LGBTQ+ identities, including negative comments from students, peers, colleagues, lack of promotion, being forced to conceal their personal identities and heteronormative discourses in schools (Vicars, 2006; DePalma and Jennett, 2010; Piper and Sikes, 2010; Ferfolja and Hopkins, 2013; Gray, 2013; Gray et al., 2016). In addition to this research, teachers with LGBTQ+ identities have also been viewed with suspicion by parents and other adults (Rudoe, 2010) and recent safeguarding discourses has meant that a teacher's disclosure of their sexuality might be considered inappropriate (Gray et al., 2016).

Although there is a paucity of literature available (Ferfolja and Hopkins, 2013), research does demonstrate that the experiences of LGBTQ+ students have improved in very recent years with more students now self-identifying as LGBTQ+ to resist bigotry and discrimination (Berry, 2018). Despite this, research demonstrating the positive accounts of teachers in England remains sparse. Reflecting on the scarcity of this research, it is also important to consider the advances in international LGBTQ+ inclusion.

## The International Context

However, despite more liberal attitudes in some contexts, it has been argued that heterosexuality is embedded in the practices of institutions and the encounters of our everyday life (Epstein and Johnson, 1994). Although the rights of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities have been strengthened across Europe (Lundin, 2015), international research continues to demonstrate that heteronormative and heterosexist cultures are entrenched within schools (Kjaran and Kristinsdóttir, 2015). There is also evidence that these normative values are inculcated within schools in countries where homosexuality is legal, including Australia (Gray et al., 2016) and the United States (Lineback et al., 2016).

Even in countries known for their liberal attitude toward sexuality, such as Sweden, heteronormative attitudes continue to prevail within schools (Lundin, 2015). Furthermore, in countries where homosexuality is illegal or disapproved of, including some Asian and African countries, strict cultural values are used as a "yardstick" (Amoah and Gyasi, 2016, p. 1) to disregard the rights of those with LGBTQ+ identities (Po-Han, 2016).

Regardless of the legal status of homosexuality, religion, and culture shape public opinion on its acceptability (Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009). Research demonstrates that teachers with LGBTQ+ identities from across the globe continue to experience discrimination and marginalization (King et al., 2008; Hardie, 2012; Marris and Staton, 2016). Together, these factors restrict the willingness and ability of teachers to declare their sexuality in professional settings (Wright and Smith, 2015). This study will reflect on this and research the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers in England.

The recognition of same-sex relationships in the United States has increased, though many individuals with LGBTQ+ identities continue to face discrimination (Lineback et al., 2016). Despite this societal tolerance, research has demonstrated that some schools in the US provide discriminatory environments for lesbian and gay individuals and that teaching is one of the most homophobic professions in parts of the US (DeLeon and Brunner, 2013; Lineback et al., 2016). According to DeLeon and Brunner (2013), attempts have even been made to exclude LGBTQ+ teachers from the profession to lessen the risks of sexual abuse, pedophilia, molestation, and the recruitment of children into queer lifestyles (Jackson, 2007; Mayo, 2008; Lineback et al., 2016). Individuals with discriminatory views have accused LGBTQ+ teachers in the US of attempting to influence students' identities and this illustrates the problematic and homophobic school cultures which some teachers in the US are exposed to Jackson (2007).

Recent research by Reimers (2017) draws on data from a Swedish teacher training programme and demonstrates how sexuality norms produce spaces of heteronormativity in which one body can be more vulnerable than another. According to Reimers (2017), Sweden provides an environment for "queers" (p. 92) which is better than in many other places, although identifying as LGBTQ+ is still seen as deviation. Therefore, it can be argued that whilst attitudes in Sweden are generally more liberal toward sexuality, heteronormative discourses still dominate their schools and the experiences of queer teachers within them. To address the vulnerabilities of those within the LGBTQ+ community, Reimers (2017) suggests investigating homonationalism. This involves intersecting LGBTQ+ rights with a country's democracy and ideology (Puar, 2013). Reimers (2017) therefore argues that homonationalism can be used as a vehicle to advance an inclusive agenda within Swedish schools by favorably associating the country's ideology with the rights of those within the LGBTQ+ community.

To be LGBTQ+ and to work as a teacher is to occupy a complex terrain and exist within a "space of exclusion" (Gray et al., 2016, p. 286). This draws on Vicars' (2006) concept of "problematic terrain" (p. 351). Although state schools in Australia protect those with LGBTQ+ identities, Gray et al. (2016) highlights that such protection is not offered by independent and religious schools and that teachers within these schools are obliged to uphold any religious ethos. Ferfolja's (2008) research demonstrates that within the Australian Catholic schooling system, contractual obligations and the threat of dismissal are used to silence those with LGBTQ+ identities.

Even in countries where homosexuality is legal, teachers with LGBTQ+ identities are still likely to be victims of institutional apathy and there is a disconnect between the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights by societies and the recognition of these rights within education (Gray et al., 2016). Research also demonstrates this disconnect in the healthcare sector with one in every eight of the 5,000 LGBTQ+ people surveyed reporting experiences of unequal treatment from healthcare staff (Bachmann and Gooch, 2017). There appears to be limited research presenting any correlation between the prejudice-based bullying in these sectors.

## Minority Stress

Meyer (2003) Minority Stress model has been used by mainstream psychologists to explain how minority status can impact on mental health outcomes for individuals who identify as part of a minority group. It is a particularly useful model for understanding the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers because it identifies the various stressors to which they might be exposed to.

The model identifies different types of stress that minority individuals experience. Environmental circumstances such as poverty can produce general stressors (for example, financial stress). General stressors could also include the loss of a job, experiences of bereavement, or changes in family circumstances, such as divorce (Meyer, 2003). Distal stressors relate to the experience of stigma, prejudice, discrimination, victimization, and bullying by others based on an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity produces distal stressors (Meyer, 2003). These experiences can be shaped by structural forces (for example, racism, heteronormativity/heterosexism) which result in structural disadvantage for minority groups. Proximal stressors relate to an individual's perception or appraisal of situations. The expectation or anticipation that a person with a minority status may experience rejection, discrimination, victimization, or stigmatization based on one's previous experiences of this can result in self-vigilance and identity concealment (Meyer, 2003). LGBTQ+ teachers may anticipate negative reactions to their sexual orientation or gender identity from students, parents, or colleagues. To reduce the likelihood of negative experiences occurring, self-vigilance and concealment are employed but these tactics can result in fear of discovery, psychological distress, internalized shame, guilt, anxiety, and social isolation. Internalized negativity is where LGBTQ+ people internalize negative messages from others about their identities. It is a product of social prejudices. It can result in feelings of shame and self-disgust and can lead to adverse mental health outcomes (Herek et al., 1998; Herek, 2009). This can affect an individual's sense of self, resulting in detrimental impacts upon academic achievement, confidence, and social connectedness. Intersectional identities (for example, someone who is LGBTQ+ and has a disability) can result in multiple forms of discrimination.

Meyer (2003) identified social support systems as a vital factor in protecting minority groups from adverse mental health. Individuals may therefore choose to participate in sexual minority communities to enable them to enter into a non-stigmatizing environment (Cohen, 2004; Shechner et al., 2010). LGBTQ+ teachers may choose to join an LGBTQ+ network or they may form online social networks to gain support and positive affirmation. More recently, Meyer (2015) has argued that community resilience is an aspect of the minority stress model. LGBTQ+ people might access the queer community to benefit from community resilience. Meyer (2015) argues against a focus on resilience within individuals because it focuses attention on the individual's response to stress rather than the stressor itself, which is the social environment which the individual is exposed to. Research by Baams et al. (2015) found that feeling like a burden to significant others in their lives is a critical mechanism in explaining higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation among LGB youth. They found that although girls experience lower levels of stress in relation to coming out than boys, they felt more of a burden to family and friends and were therefore more likely to experience depression and suicidal ideation.

## Resilience

It is essential to consider the theme of resilience when exploring the capacities of LGBTQ+ teachers to navigate personal and professional transitions. Evidence suggests that resilience influences an individual's ability to adapt to transitions (Jindal-Snape, 2016). We conceptualize resilience as a characteristic that is not just individual but one that is relational. We draw on Greenfield's (2015) model of teacher resilience which examines the impact of relationships, institutional cultures, challenges, and the broader policy context on the resilience of teachers. This ecological framework of resilience is applied to the data to understand the factors which influence the resilience of the participants. This will address the final research question.

Traditional perspectives on resilience have conceptualized it as a fixed trait within individuals (Masten and Garmezy, 1985). However, more recent perspectives conceptualize resilience as a dynamic attribute which is influenced by social, cultural, and political contexts (Luthar, 2006; Roffey, 2017). Although some perspectives on resilience emphasize positive adaptation following adversity or trauma (Gayton and Lovell, 2012) and the capacity to grow in response to adversity (Stallman, 2011), these perspectives are not sufficient because they place emphasis on the individual to overcome adversity rather than exploring the systemic factors which directly influence a person's resilience (Meyer, 2015). Traditional perspectives emphasize resilience as the ability to rebound (McIntosh and Shaw, 2017), the ability to problem solve and to return to the previous state (McIntosh and Shaw, 2017; Sanderson and Brewer, 2017). This ability to push through regardless of circumstances is a dominant theme in the literature (Reyes et al., 2015) but these perspectives only offer a partial understanding of resilience because they do not acknowledge that resilience is relational and influenced by societal structures.

Literature has started to present models of resilience which identify the interdependency between the individual and broader contexts which intersect with their lives and the significance

of these contexts in shaping resilience (Hartley, 2011). For example, Jameson (2014) provides one of the few accounts of resilience from a systemic perspective. In addition, Greenfield (2015) model of teacher resilience emphasizes the way in which teachers are positioned within social and broader contexts which impact on their individual resilience. Although this framework will be used as a conceptual lens within this study to analyse the factors which shape the resilience of the participants, the model fails to identify the specific contexts which shape teachers' lives. Examples of these include political factors which restrict or support teacher agency and religious discourses which may impact on teacher resilience for teachers who are working in schools with a strong religious affiliation or which serve religious communities. However, the model is useful in that it identifies the individual, relational, and contextual factors which can serve as both risk and protective factors in relation to a teacher's resilience. These include a sense of hope, purpose and self-efficacy (individual factors), relationships with family and friends (relational factors), relationships with leaders and other colleagues (contextual factors), the extent of the challenges which teachers face and the broader policy context in which teachers operate (Greenfield, 2015).

## Agency

In analyzing the lived experiences of the participants, this study will examine the extent to which their agency is restricted or otherwise by systemic factors and discourses which regulate their working lives. Evidence suggests that individuals with greater agency experience smoother transitions (Bandura, 2000, 2001). Although agency has been conceptualized as the ability to take initiative (Jindal-Snape, 2016) and make choices, it is important to emphasize that agency is context-specific (Jindal-Snape, 2016) and also influenced by one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 2000). The concept of teacher efficacy is particularly relevant to this study. Specifically, this study will draw on Pantić's (2015) model of teacher agency which identifies four factors that influence teacher agency. These include sense of purpose, competence, autonomy, and reflexivity to mediate or overcome barriers which restrict agency (Pantić, 2015). The model is useful because it positions teacher agency within the broader socio-cultural contexts in which teachers operate and therefore acknowledges the role of systemic factors in influencing teacher agency.

## Identity

Literature suggests that LGBTQ+ teachers navigate their personal and professional identities (Gray, 2013). Some participants may be in the process of coming to terms with their gender identities or sexualities and will make decisions about whether to separate or intertwine their personal and professional identities. Within the context of this study, identities will be viewed as multiple and exist within a state of flux rather than being conceptualized as unified, coherent, and static. LGBTQ+ teachers have personal and professional identities which can intertwine or collide. Research demonstrates that some choose to maintain a distinction between their personal and professional identities and others mesh them together by using their personal

identities to advance LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools (Stones and Glazzard, 2019). In addition, some teachers may adopt Goffman's (1963) techniques of "passing" (p. 73) or "covering" (p. 102) to conceal their non-normative identities.

Seminal work on teacher identity has illustrated how the occupational and personal selves become integrated to produce a coherent self (Nias, 1989) whereas other work has highlighted the tensions that exist between substantial and situational selves (Sikes et al., 1985; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). However, more recent work suggests that teacher identity is not a stable entity but continually reconstructed as a product of conflicting discourses and practices (Sikes et al., 1985; Day et al., 2006). It is always deferred and in the process of becoming: "never really, never yet, never absolutely there" (MacLure, 2003, p. 131). Thus, identity formation is a continual process of negotiation and "a potential site of agency" (Clarke, 2009, p. 187).

## Research Gaps

Existing research has considered the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers. A synthesis of this literature highlights recurrent themes including marginalization, bullying, harassment, discrimination, and isolation. There is research from countries where homosexuality is illegal or disapproved of, including some African and Asian countries (Amoah and Gyasi, 2016; Po-Han, 2016), as well as in countries where homosexuality is legalized, such as Australia (Gray et al., 2016), the United States (Lineback et al., 2016) and throughout parts of Europe (Lundin, 2015).

Despite this international literature, there is a paucity of research capturing the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers and who currently teach or have taught in schools in England. Much of the existing research positions those within the LGBTQ+ community as victims (Gray et al., 2016) who are exposed to suffering and violence (Devís-Devís et al., 2017) and there appears to be limited research presenting positive accounts despite the field of positive psychology which has grown significantly in recent years (Lytle et al., 2014; Pawelski, 2016).

## Research Aims and Questions

The broad aim of the research was to explore the experiences of gay teachers who taught during and after Section 28 in England. We wanted to explore the ways in which the legislation impacted on them and whether their experiences changed following the repeal of the legislation in 2003.

This research study addressed the following research questions:

- What have been (and currently are) the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers?
- What factors affect their resilience?
- How do they negotiate their personal and professional identities?

Much of the existing literature positions queer teachers as victims who lack agency and are forced to conceal their identities (King et al., 2008; Hardie, 2012; Marris and Staton, 2016) or maintain a separation between their personal and professional identities

(Wright and Smith, 2015). This study sought to offer counter-narratives to the victimized narratives which are dominant in the existing literature.

## METHODS

This research study explored the lived experiences of four gay teachers. We sought to capture the unique nature of people's experiences (Goodson, 1992; Goodson and Sikes, 2001) in a form that was both engaging and compelling. Within a narrative methodology, we used the life history method to illuminate the unique and rich experiences of an individual's life (Webster and Mertova, 2007; Riessman, 2008). This method places informants' stories within the broader context of public issues and in doing so highlights the social and cultural discourses which intersect with the lives of individuals. Each teacher participated in a semi-structured interview.

### Participants

Participants were recruited to the study using our personal social media platforms. We were interested in representing the stories of queer teachers and we put out an open call to invite participation. The criteria for inclusion were that the participants needed to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, that they must be practicing teachers and that they must have taught during Section 28. Unfortunately, we did not secure participation from teachers who identified as lesbian or bisexual or trans and we recognize that this is a methodological weakness of the study. We have reflected on our own positionality within the research (Berger, 2013). It is possible that our own status as two gay male researchers impacted on the diversity of the sample. None of the participants were known to us. The breakdown of participants is included in **Table 1**.

### Procedures

We used semi-structured interviews in which we simply invited each participant to tell us about their experiences of being a queer teacher. Interviews were conducted via video conferencing software and audio recorded. We did not use a schedule but decided to follow the lead of the participants' (Alasuutari et al., 2008). Data were captured using digital recordings and transcribed to create life narratives for analysis.

The study gained ethical clearance from the university ethical approvals committee. Informed consent was gained prior to collecting any data and participants were assured of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity.

As Laurel Richardson has pointed out, writing about and re-presenting lives carries a "moral responsibility" (Richardson, 1990, p. 131) and consequently "it is not to be embarked on lightly" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 99). We were committed to using our "narrative privilege" (Adams, 2008) wisely by jointly interpreting data with participants and using member checks after the accounts were constructed.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used using an established framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to identify key themes arising from across the four narratives. Firstly, each narrative was analyzed individually to identify emergent themes. A cross-sectional analysis was then carried out to identify common themes from across the narratives. The outcomes of the cross-sectional analysis are presented in **Table 2**.

A table of themes arising from the analysis is presented in **Table 3**.

## RESULTS

The following narratives were produced using the interview transcripts. The narratives have been developed from the transcriptions and do not include all aspects of the transcriptions.

### Tom

September 1990 had arrived. It had been mid-day on the first day of a new school year and the high-pitched chime of the lunchtime bell had reverberated through the corridors. Tom was in his third year of secondary school and his routines had been well-rehearsed. He often left school to buy his lunch and flee the terror of the school canteen. Although he hadn't realized, his efforts to escape one horror had been exposing him to an even greater evil. Tom had always known that one day he would feel like he was

**TABLE 2 |** Cross-sectional analysis.

| Tom | Jack | William | Oliver | Final themes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher agency | Teacher agency | Teacher agency | Teacher agency | Teacher agency |
| Violence | Power | Teacher identity | Religion | Teacher identity |
| Teacher identity | Teacher identity | Resilience | Teacher identity | Resilience |
| Being outed | Geographic displacement | Deep inclusion | Resilience | Stress |
| Resilience | Resilience | Stress | Stress | |
| Stress | Stress | | | |

**TABLE 1 |** Participants.

| | Sexuality | Gender | Teaching sector | Type of school | Role | Years of experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tom | Gay | Male | Primary/higher education | State | Teacher/lecturer | 25 |
| Jack | Gay | Male | Primary | State | Head teacher/principal | 22 |
| William | Gay | Male | Secondary | Independent | Senior leader | 23 |
| Oliver | Gay | Male | Secondary | State | Senior leader | 20 |

| | Examples from the data |
|---|---|
| **Identity** | When I started teaching in 1996 under Section 28 the culture was very different. I felt it might be an issue for staff and children, so I didn't say anything. My first school was in Leeds. I lived in Manchester, so it was easy to keep my personal and professional lives separate. I made a conscious decision to look for jobs on the other side of the Pennines (Jack). |
| | When I first started teaching in the 1990s the law hadn't changed. I didn't lie but I only came out to some colleagues. I got the sense that if I pushed too far I would be pulled in for a conversation. I could have got the sack (William). |
| | Tom knew he could separate his personal and professional life and that he would not need to discuss his sexuality with colleagues and students. Hiding the truth gave Tom a safety net. He felt a sense of protection (Tom). |
| | My sexual orientation does not come into my teaching. Our focus is to educate and teach. My ethnicity has shaped my career more (Oliver). |
| **Agency** | The repeal of Section 28 has changed things, but it has been a delayed reaction. Much of the change didn't happen in 2003 and it took time, but the repeal resulted in changes to equality legislation in 2010 and changes to the Ofsted framework after that (Jack). |
| | I don't feel able to be open. My Vice Principal is a lesbian and she isn't out either. I would not be comfortable being out in the role I'm doing with the community that I serve. It is a predominantly Muslim community which makes it more difficult to prioritize a culture of acceptance … I know students suspect and have said things behind my back and some of the male staff of a particular ethnic faith have some issues about sexual orientation (Oliver). |
| | When I got my job in 2011, a small group of evangelical Christians said to the Head, we think you have just appointed a gay and we are not happy about it. The Head was horrified. I decided I wasn't going to edit myself out, partly because heterosexual staff don't edit their lives, but also partly to watch the fear behind their eyes (William). |
| | I was open about my sexuality from day 1 in my current school. I'm the Head so there is no one higher than me (Jack). |
| | I have freedom in the university to be open with students and colleagues about my sexual orientation. As a teacher educator I feel able to teach my students about issues pertaining to sexuality or gender identity in schools because this is a requirement of the Equality Act and school inspection frameworks (Tom). |
| **Resilience** | I told him about the law and said to him, if you are not happy you can take your child elsewhere (Jack). |
| | If I get backlash from parents, I just say, it's the law (William). |
| | If I can wrap LGBTQ+ issues up with the Equality Act, I will. I find it easier to talk about LGBTQ+ alongside other protected characteristics. I won't say things that will identify me. Comments were made about me by a colleague in the junior team which were hurtful. I am not out to all staff. I was told by my [line manager] not to go flaunting it around (Oliver). |
| **Stress** | In 2005 it was the early stages of my headship. The local authority had shortlisted the applications and I went to the teachers' center to collect them. One of the applications had a big star in the corner. I questioned this and was told that the feedback from the shortlisting panel was that this candidate was obviously gay. The local authority officers were endorsing homophobia after the repeal of Section 28. I thought, well I'm gay, I'd better be careful (Jack). |
| | I came out to colleagues but not explicitly to pupils … I got the sense that if I pushed too far I would be pulled in for a conversation (William). |

trapped inside a burning building. In his nightmares, he saw a building with no exit and no escape route. Tom became visibly upset when he recalled the incident described in this vignette.

The weather was bitterly cold and my hands and feet were freezing. The sky was dull and the air was thick. The pounding rain was not enough to block out the smell of noxious smoke oozing from the tall chimneys of the long rows of terraced houses. It was overbearing. We lived in a former mining community— this was a place where men were meant to be men! Oliver and I were walking back to school. Going into town for lunch was a way of escaping the pain and misery that we would have endured had we eaten in the school canteen. I had lost count of the number of times I had been called "a fucking gay faggot."

Suddenly, Simon ran up behind us. I didn't see him coming and I certainly didn't expect it. I thought that the bullies congregated and ate together at school. He was short and spotty but he held a reputation for being tough. He began punching me in the head and I crashed to the ground. My head hit the pavement and I blacked out. I gained consciousness but I could not see Oliver. Perhaps he had gone to get help. Blood was streaming down my face like a gushing waterfall. I could feel my eyes swelling as Simon continued to kick me repeatedly in the stomach.

Simon started stamping on my head. "Die you fucking queer, you deserve to get AIDS." The pain was unbearable, and I used

my hands to protect my head. My head began to throb as though I had been hit by a car. I pleaded with him to stop and let me go but he was wound up and roaring at me like a caged tiger. I curled into a tight ball trying to protect my body. I could hear the traffic screeching past, but no-one stopped. It lasted all of a few seconds, but it felt like hours. He crouched down and screamed right into my face. "Queer! Arse-fucker, cock sucker, stay away from me." The abuse continued. I felt trapped and Oliver had not returned. He had run off when Simon began punching me.

I felt dirty and ashamed. At one point, I wanted him to kill me. After all, I knew that I could not tell my parents what had happened because I wasn't out to them. My father would have been disgusted. He had made his feelings clear. I knew my mother would be more understanding because she worked in a gay nightclub, but I could not be sure she would accept me being gay. I knew I couldn't report it to the police, because they hated people like me.

All of a sudden a woman raced over the road and yelled at Simon. He stopped and cowardly ran away toward the school. She checked I was conscious, and I got up and made my way back to school, terrified that he would be waiting round the next corner to finish what he had started.

The thought of meeting him again in school and of what he might do to me made me feel sick to the pit of my stomach. I decided to tell my form tutor, Mr. Orange, what had happened.

Mr. Orange was a decent man and a good English teacher. He once jokingly chastised me for writing "chocolate" on the front of my English book in front of his surname. He could have ripped me to pieces but he didn't. I knew he liked me. I edited the bad language out of my account but told him the rest of what had happened. He knew I wasn't lying because my face was still covered in dried blood and dirt from the pavement. He listened patiently and his reply shocked me to the core. "Tom, there is nothing we can do because this took place outside of school. Just watch where you go and stay away from him." I had never felt safe in school, and I now knew that this would never change.

After years of suffering as a student, Tom wanted to make a difference. He wanted to be able to empower young children and make sure that they did not suffer throughout their own schooling, like he had. Tom knew he needed to train and become a teacher. After a 4 year course Tom was excited at the prospect of having his own class. It was 1998 and Tom had secured his first interview for a teaching post. He had completed his teaching practice placements in large schools located in sprawling council estates. However, Tom's interview was at a village primary located in a beautiful rural area. Immaculately maintained lawns fronted large detached houses, with luxury cars sat prominently on their drives. He was not used to places like this and already felt out of his depth. His sexuality strengthened these anxieties and he feared that his identity would impede his success. Tom was walking down a dark alley and knew nothing about what was waiting for him ahead. In the following vignette, he recounts his vivid memories of the recruitment and selection experience.

It was a hot and sunny day in May. I had to catch a train and a bus to get to the school as I didn't drive. The interview was one of those grueling scenarios. It involved meeting the staff, having lunch and talking to other candidates while sitting around all day waiting to be interviewed. The lunch was a disaster because it was dairy and meat. I am vegan but was too scared to say anything in case it made me stand out or look odd. I couldn't afford this at interview and I ate the meal. Sat opposite a panel of 12 interviewers, I then began to answer questions as they were fired at me one-by-one.

"Why have you applied to be a Reception teacher?" The question took me by surprise. There was an emphasis on why I wanted to teach young children and not why I wanted to teach. The Chair of Governors was a fat, obnoxious man with dark rimmed spectacles and a receding hair line. "I want to teach kids to read and write and give them a really good foundation." When chatting to other candidates, I realized that they hadn't been asked this question. That realization made me feel uneasy.

After the interview there was a torturously long wait. Suddenly, I was startled out of my thoughts. "Tom, the Head is ready to see you." Walking toward his office, thoughts raced through my mind. "Your application for this post has been unsuccessful." I didn't get the job. "We don't think you will fit into a school like this. We're in a very middle-class area and the parents here are really fussy." My mind was flooded with emotions. Was it because they knew I was gay? Did they think I was too camp? Did they dislike the way I walked or talked? Why had the Chair of Governors asked me that question? Did they think I was a pedophile? I was the best student on my 4-year teacher training degree. I achieved distinctions in all of my teaching practices and I won the course prize for academic achievement. Why would I not fit in? I had never experienced rejection like this before.

Then came an about-turn. Dianne contacted me 3 days later. She had been one of the teachers who had interviewed me. "Tom, that job was yours. You scored the highest points in the interview." The Chair had blocked my appointment. "We cannot have a homosexual teaching in this school. What will the parents think?" Dianne thought that I should know.

I was absolutely furious. I was not taking this news lying down. I wasn't going to let someone who knew nothing about education ruin my career. A career that I deserved! I contacted the local authority and asked for the interview records to be recalled and scrutinized. I had been discriminated against and I had to make a stand. I felt it was my duty to all the other teachers like me. Teachers who wanted to commit their working lives to education. I eventually received an embarrassed apology from the local authority and was offered the job. I didn't want to work there but I needed the job so reluctantly I accepted. There must have been some serious hand slapping that week although to my dismay no one lost their job.

Despite the challenges he faced in securing a teaching post, Tom felt reassured. He knew he could separate his personal and professional life and that he would not need to discuss his sexuality with colleagues and students. Hiding the truth gave Tom a safety net. He felt a sense of protection. He remained in that school for a decade and only disclosed his sexuality to colleagues he felt he could trust. He then moved into an academic career in higher education where he was able to openly disclose his sexuality and merge his personal and professional identities.

## Jack

It was 1996 and Jack was looking to secure his first teaching post. He had lived in Manchester for most of his life though he knew he could never work there. He was only applying for posts in Leeds. It was an easy decision for Jack to make. He felt he needed a role on the other side of the Pennines so that he could separate his personal life from his job. He felt unable to bring the two together. When he had been looking for jobs, he never considered any in Manchester. After several years of working as a primary teacher, he moved schools and became a senior leader. He did not come out in his new school. The thought of doing so made his heart race. He feared that members of staff and governors might have an issue with it. He couldn't afford that. In 1996, the culture was very different under Section 28. He felt that his sexuality might be an issue for staff and children. He never told them. As a Deputy Headteacher and Headteacher, Jack had responsibility for staff recruitment. In this vignette, he describes an incident he will never forget.

Early in my career as a Head we used a local authority pool system for teachers to apply for jobs. Teachers applied to a pool and could be recruited to work in any school in the authority. The local authority did the shortlisting and then the Heads looked at the application forms of those who had been shortlisted and offered interviews in their schools. I remember in 2005 going down to the teachers' center to look at a batch of shortlisted

application forms. We needed a newly qualified teacher and I was desperate to appoint someone to the role. I pulled out one application form and I was puzzled why someone had drawn a big star and a circle on it. I questioned what this meant. "What do these annotations mean?" The local authority officer replied straight away without hesitation. "The candidate was worthy of being interviewed but the shortlisting panel felt it necessary to draw attention to the fact that the candidate was obviously gay."

In a heartbeat, memories and feelings came flooding back to me. It was 2005 and the local authority officers were endorsing homophobia. Section 28 has been repealed but its legacy still cast a shadow. I was appalled and scared. I am gay. I need to be careful. Section 28 was repealed in 2003 and I saw very little in terms of change. There was very little change at that time anyway, but I knew that Ofsted would not have prioritized LGBTQ+ inclusion without Section 28 being repealed. Some changes did happen, though these took many years. Equality legislation and the revisions to the Ofsted framework provided some momentum. When Section 28 was repealed, people were still scared. Schools could now talk about gay people, but many were too frightened to do so for several years.

Jack has now led his current school as Head for 10 years. He decided to come out to staff and students immediately after his appointment. At that time, he had never anticipated being able to drive an agenda to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion. He knows that attitudes have changed significantly in recent years although the fear of parental backlash has stayed with him for 10 years. He now seeks protection through his role as Head. He knows that there is no one higher than him to halt the work he is doing to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion. Jack describes his work in this vignette.

We started this work 5 or 6 years ago. Back then, things were different. "You're gay." "That's so gay." The word "gay" was used by students as the insult of choice. It meant rubbish, bad, broken, and stupid. Boys who were not interested in football were often subjected to homophobic bullying. The culture was toxic. The bullying was endemic. We had to act. I felt the weight of responsibility. I had to lead this change and I was now responsible for its success. We worked with an LGBTQ+ charity to develop staff confidence. Our work raised the profile of LGBTQ+ inclusion and some bullying stopped although I continued to drive change with commitment and momentum. Kids stopped using the word "gay" because they knew that there would be consequences. We tried to normalize LGBTQ+ identities as much as possible. The governors were on board and they believed in our final destination. They shared my vision and they had responded well to LGBTQ+ training. Initially, we didn't highlight this work to parents. It was on our website, though I was too scared to make a thing of it.

We are now building a snowball. Each generation is more accepting than the previous generation. LGBTQ+ visibility in society continues to improve and this drives further advancement. People are beginning to understand how LGBTQ+ identities can exist within family structures. Parents are less likely to complain. My school is in an area of social deprivation. Some parents come from black African heritage and wanted me to explain the work we were doing. Some of my parents are racist. They know it is not acceptable to be racist on school grounds

and it is exactly the same for LGBTQ+. I am not going to stop advancing inclusion simply because they do not like it.

Jack now collaborates with other schools who are developing their LGBTQ+ inclusion policies. Although he has developed and advanced LGBTQ+ inclusion in his own setting, he knows that the national picture remains variable and inconsistent. His work with other schools continues to reveal staff resistance and that many schools are facing challenges. In this final vignette, he describes the fear factor.

I work in other schools. There is still some apathy from staff. "We don't have a problem here." Getting some staff to see the value of this work can be a challenge sometimes. It can be difficult to get them to realize that it is not just about doing a one-off lesson. It is about the ethos, culture and the curriculum of the school. It is not about ticking a box. I ask big questions to support their thinking and reflection. "What challenges do you face in relation to LGBTQ+ inclusion." "The parents." It is in the Ofsted framework yet there is still a fear factor.

In 2018 we ran a rainbow day. We showed the children videos of Pride and we hosted a whole school Pride parade. We had posters and banners. I was worried at the time that it would end up in the Daily Mail. A couple of parents came into school to complain about our "themed days." One of them said he had an "issue" with it. I told him about the law and Ofsted. "If you are not happy then you can take your child elsewhere."

## William

It was late 1990s and William was teaching in the independent sector. It was a boarding school and he lived in the boys' boarding house. He didn't lie about his sexuality if people asked him although he did try to keep it low key. He came out to some colleagues and he knew he could never tell pupils. His school was supportive though he sensed that if he pushed it too far the school would pull him in for a conversation. Everything was always at stake. He constantly worried that he could be dismissed for being gay. The secrecy was always there. In this vignette, William describes his move into middle leadership.

I moved into a middle leadership role after 9 years. It was another independent school and the year was 2010. I just thought to myself "this isn"t good enough; I'm not going to edit myself'. When I got the job a small group of evangelical Christians had spoken to the Head about my appointment. "We think you have just appointed a gay and we are not happy about it." The Head was horrified and ordered them out of the office. When I arrived, I treated them kindly. I wanted to watch the fear behind their eyes. I am from a faith background and my husband is from India so I want people to understand that you can have a religion and also be gay.

I am completely open about my sexual orientation and this school has been wonderful. My husband and I got married in the school. I sometimes experience a little bit of homophobia. It is the casual language that pupils use. "That's gay." "This is gay." I pick up on it calmly. "As a gay man I find that offensive and I'd rather you didn't say it." One boy spent a whole week trying to apologize to me. I have experienced a bit of resistance from staff. Some have implied that I have a personal agenda. It doesn't bother me because I have support from the Head and Deputy.

I talk about my personal life with my husband in school. If it is acceptable for a heterosexual colleague to bring their personal lives in to school, it is also acceptable for me to do the same. Our personal and professional lives overlap because this is a boarding school. We spend a lot of time with our pupils and they like to get to know us. Some colleagues have told me to keep my private life separate from my work life. I always give the same response. "You don't, why should I?" Sometimes I get excluded from heterosexual conversations, so I tell people straight that they are excluding me. I often tell people that it is okay for them to ask me questions about my life. Sometimes they treat my life as a taboo subject, which it isn't.

William now leads LGBTQ+ inclusion in his school. He's led surveys with parents, pupils and staff and he implemented an LGB policy and a separate transgender policy. He believes that the repeal of Section 28 made no difference to LGBTQ+ inclusion. In this vignette, he explains how the Equality Act (2010) gave him opportunities to advance inclusion.

The Equality Act in 2010 reversed the damage of Section 28, not its repeal. As a result of the Equality Act I have done a lot of work on LGBT inclusion in the school. We have embedded LGBT identities into the curriculum to increase visibility. I have invited LGBT role models into the school. I am a Stonewall school champion now and I support other schools with LGBT inclusion. Sometimes I get backlash from parents. I always refer to equality legislation during my conversations with parents. We introduced a gender-neutral dress code and one father complained. "All the boys will be wandering around in fishnet tights." "That says more about how you feel about women than anything else." I have organized a knowledge-exchange conference for schools to come together and share ideas and I invited LGBTQ+ students.

We don't do things that are over the top, such as launching a drag show! We have not created an LGBT group because this just becomes a gay ghetto and excludes those who are not ready to come out. Instead, we have set up an equality group which includes LGBTQ+ pupils. We write an annual report to governors and audit school policies to make sure they are LGBTQ+ inclusive. We have trained all staff in how to respond to LGBTQ+ bullying and we have included books in the library that are written by LGBTQ+ authors, address LGBTQ+ experiences and LGBTQ+ identities. We don't do drop-down days as we embed it through the whole school. We have changed application forms to make them gender neutral and we create opportunities for LGBTQ+ role models to visit the school. I want it to be boring, routine, and humdrum so that it is ordinary and just run of the mill. You need someone in the school to drive it. It doesn't have to be an LGBTQ+ person, but it kind of does! You need someone to lead it who understands the issues. It has to be part of their lived experiences. You can do it hypothetically but there is an emptiness to it. It would be a bit like having men trying to organize a women's rights movement.

William knows he's lucky to work in a school that proactively promotes LGBTQ+ inclusion. In this final vignette, he describes the current challenges that many schools still face.

The biggest issue is lack of time and finding the space to do this essential work. I have spoken in Muslim schools, schools in areas of social deprivation or schools where there are gypsy

pupils. In those schools I have faced higher levels of resistance and aggression. I know a colleague who works in a Catholic school and they [senior leadership team] have told her not to speak about her sexuality. They have forced her into the closet. She has experienced homophobic abuse from pupils because they [senior leaders] are covertly condoning it. Some people think that addressing issues of sexuality is teaching pupils about sex. We are not sitting kids down and telling them to have gay sex. We are teaching them about identity.

## Oliver

Oliver started teaching in the late 1990s. His identity as a gay man doesn't come into his work and he has never been open about his sexual orientation. In this vignette, Oliver vividly recounts some painful memories.

When I was appointed as a Deputy, I filled in the equal opportunities form and identified as gay. I was then asked directly in the interview if I was gay. Another colleague told me that I should have walked out at that point. In 2015 I was appointed in an interim Head role and both Executive Head Teachers were black. "I noticed on the form that you are gay, don't go flaunting it around." I didn't last long in that role because her values clashed with my own.

In my current school I am not able to be open. My Vice Principal is also a lesbian and she is not out. We are not a faith school, but the pupils are predominantly Muslim, and there are cultural traditions in the community. It is an area of high crime so we must prioritize other things such as behavior and safety. It is a small school so the capacity of the staff to do things is seriously stretched.

My sexual orientation does not come into my teaching. My focus is to educate and teach! As a Head I would not be comfortable being out, due to the role I'm doing and the community that we serve. One pupil came into our school and he was openly gay. He was teased and taunted. There was a lack of respect toward him. We have a high percentage of Muslim students. It is fine to be gay as long as you are not practicing the faith. I have never been out with my students. I'm happy to do LGBTQ+ history and LGBT Pride but that is about it. I am not out to all staff. There are some staff who I would not trust.

I experienced homophobia in my first middle leadership role in an independent school. I once went for an interview and there was one Asian candidate, one black African candidate and one white British candidate. It made me think about whether I was being judged for the role on my merits or whether they were just trying to tick boxes. I wonder how many Heads are LGBTQ+ because that is never talked about. However, we need to represent diversity in school leadership teams.

I know that my students suspect and have said things behind my back. Some of the staff in my school see LGBT as a taboo topic and are not happy to teach it. Some of the male Muslim staff have some issues with specific protected characteristics which they are not prepared to promote. I am not prepared to lead on LGBTQ+ inclusion. The Vice Principal leads on it. Sometimes it is done through a token gesture by addressing LGBT history month or doing an assembly on it. The curriculum has to serve the context

of the school so LGBT inclusion is not a priority for me. The focus is on keeping the children safe!

## DISCUSSION

The themes of identity, agency, and resilience were identified as common themes across the four narratives. Four decades ago, Goodson (1980) stated that "in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is" (p. 69). It has been argued that 'professional work cannot and should not be divorced from the lives of professionals' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 71).

### Teacher Identity

It has been argued that teacher identity is neither static nor coherent but that it is fragmented and always in a state of flux (Smith, 2007). Thus, teacher identity is not a stable entity. Instead, it is continually reconstructed as a product of conflicting practices and discourses (Sikes et al., 1985; Day et al., 2006). It is "always deferred and in the process of becoming—never really, never yet, never absolutely there" (MacLure, 2003, p. 131).

Tom, Jack, and William's had actively chosen to intertwine their personal and professional identities and had decided to use their personal identities to advance LGBTQ+ inclusion within their schools. However, Jack, William, and Tom all separated their personal and professional identities when they started teaching in the 1990s. In the initial stages of their careers, they felt restrained by the force of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990) which was upheld by Section 28. They experienced a culture of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) and their stigmatized identities were displaced (Vicars, 2006). They negotiated their sexualities in school in various different ways. These included being selectively out to colleagues but not students (William) or covering up (Goffman, 1963) their sexuality and personal identities (Tom and Jack).

They made a deliberate decision to intertwine their personal and professional identities later in their careers, following changes to legislative and other regulatory frameworks which provided them with protection and permission to advance LGBTQ+ inclusion within their educational contexts. Literature has highlighted how teacher agency and identity are inter-related (Barcelos, 2015). Tom, William, and Jack were able to allow their personal and professional identities to overlap. They used their identities to support their efforts to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion. In contrast, Oliver maintained a division between his personal and professional identities which restricted his agency.

Seminal work on teacher identity has illustrated how the professional and personal selves become integrated to produce a coherent self (Nias, 1989) whereas other work has highlighted the tensions that exist between substantial and situational selves (Sikes et al., 1985; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). Although Tom, Jack, and William had integrated their personal identities to produce a coherent teacher identity, this was not the case for Oliver who felt compelled to hide his personal identity due to strong religious community that his school served. Teaching assigns on educators a social identity which links teacher effectiveness with the ability to maintain a commitment to improving educational

outcomes (Jeffrey and Troman, 2012). For Oliver, this social identity was more significant to him than his sexuality. Oliver believed that his primary role as a leader was to focus on raising educational standards rather than focusing on his own sexuality and advancing LGBTQ+ inclusion. Clarke (2009) argues that teachers have an ethical obligation to reflect on their identities and to engage in identity work by "claiming" their identity. However, this is not always possible, and this was evident with Oliver who, despite legislation which offered him protection, felt it necessary to maintain a clear separation between the different aspects of his identity, resulting in a fragmented and non-authentic identity during his work as a teacher.

Webb and Vulliamy (2006) have demonstrated how teachers are able to subvert, reject, and recast the dominant political versions of what it means to be a teacher, thus enabling them to assert their own professional values on their identity. Clarke (2009) argues that it is possible for teachers to author their own identities and William, Jack, and Tom each managed to do this successfully, despite having their identities constrained in the early stages of their teaching careers. The equality legislation and inspection framework supported their confidence in disclosing their personal identities in school, advancing LGBTQ+ inclusion, and negotiating parental resistance. It therefore seems that identity formation is a continual process of negotiation and "a potential site of agency" (Clarke, 2009, p. 187) but the extent to which teachers are assigned agency is influenced by the contexts in which teachers work.

### Agency

Pantić's model of teacher agency (Pantić, 2015) includes four factors that influence agency. Firstly, the teacher's sense of purpose is critical to their agency. Tom, William, and Jack all demonstrated a clear sense of purpose which was centered on promoting equality and social justice. Secondly, teacher competence facilitates or restricts agency. All participants had achieved senior or middle leadership positions in education. Although Oliver's agency was restricted by religious discourses, William, Jack, and Tom were assigned agency because they were competent teachers who were capable of developing whole institutional approaches to LGBTQ+ inclusion. Thirdly, autonomy was identified as a critical aspect of teacher agency. Tom, William, and Jack were given considerable autonomy to develop their work on LGBTQ+ inclusion. They were trusted by their line managers and the degree of autonomy which they were assigned allowed them to be agentic. This was not the case for Oliver. Finally, the model includes reflexivity which denotes the ability of the teacher to mediate or overcome barriers that obstruct their sense of purpose. This emerged strongly in William's narrative when he encountered staff and parental resistance to his work. His ability to resist these obstacles meant that his agency was not restricted. Jack also skilfully challenged parental resistance to his agency so that his sense of purpose was not detrimentally affected.

### Resilience

Greenfield (2015) model of teacher resilience demonstrates how resilient teachers have a sense of hope, purpose, and belief

in themselves as teachers (self-efficacy). These core beliefs are individual characteristics which play a critical role in resilience. The model demonstrates how resilient teachers form meaningful relationships with others within their setting and undertake actions to effect change and mediate the challenges they face. The model demonstrates how wider systemic factors also influence resilience.

Tom, Jack and William demonstrated a deep commitment to equality and social justice. This motivated them to advance LGBTQ+ inclusion within their contexts. All four participants were highly successful educators and in relatively powerful positions. Their teacher-efficacy was high, and this supported them to be resilient to the challenges they faced. Relationships with colleagues were critical to their resilience and the work they undertook (actions) within their schools was critical to sustaining their motivation. Jack and William both faced challenges from parents and William also faced challenges from other staff with strong religious views, but the protection they were provided by the Equality Act (2010) and by the Office for Standards in Education Ofsted (2018) Framework enabled them to be resilient to these challenges. In contrast, Oliver's resilience was detrimentally affected by the religious context of the school in which he worked.

## Minority Stress

All participants had experienced a degree of minority stress at specific points in their careers. In some cases, distal stressors were caused by the actual experience of prejudice or discrimination. Tom was bullied for being gay and experienced direct discrimination during his interviews for teaching posts. Oliver was directly asked about his sexual orientation during a teaching interview and instructed to repress it. William experienced discrimination from other staff upon his appointment and Jack had experienced prejudice from parents. All participants had experienced the pressure to negotiate their sexuality during their early teaching careers and anticipated negative reactions to disclosures of their personal identity (proximal stressors).

All participants drew on the support from family, friends, or other networks to mitigate the effects of stress. The Equality Act (2010) and the Ofsted inspection framework resulted in Tom, William, and Jack feeling confident in merging their personal identities with their teacher identities. All participants had secured leadership positions in various sectors of education, and this gave them high levels of teacher efficacy which mitigated the effects of minority stress. The protection offered by the legislative context increased their resilience and reduced the effects of minority stress, with the exception of Oliver who experienced minority stress as a result of the religious context in which he worked. The positive institutional ethos and culture which Tom, Jack, and William experienced mitigated the effects of minority stress.

The findings suggest that it may be possible to adapt Meyer (2003) model of minority stress by including a wider range of coping strategies which mitigate the effects of minority stress. Meyer (2003) included social support as a coping mechanism but the data suggest that legislative and other policy frameworks (for example, inspection frameworks) can increase resilience and mitigate stress. The data also suggest that high levels of self-efficacy and positive institutional cultures can also mitigate stress.

## CONCLUSION

The narratives demonstrate that Section 28 had a detrimental impact on the teacher agency of all participants. Consequently, in the early stages of their teaching careers, the participants were forced to conceal or negotiate their sexualities in school. The repeal of Section 28 did not immediately result in greater teacher agency, nor did it allow them to intertwine their personal and professional identities to produce a coherent teacher identity. Greater agency was assigned following the introduction of equality legislation and regulatory frameworks for school inspections. These developments supported Tom, Jack, and William to author their own identities as teachers by merging their personal and professional identities They also enabled them to stay resilient in the face of hostile reactions from parents or colleagues, either in relation to their sexuality or in relation to the work they were doing in school to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion. In contrast to the others, Oliver's account demonstrates the tensions between religion and sexuality and highlights how these tensions can constrain teacher identity, agency, and restrict resilience.

Existing literature is dominated by accounts which position queer teachers as victims. We were concerned that this locates them within a victimized framework. Although the accounts that we have presented illuminate negative experiences, the narratives are largely positive, in contrast with existing literature. There is a need to re-conceptualize queer teachers to by locating their experiences within positive narratives which re-position them as resilient, skilled professionals who are active agents with potential to contribute to the advancement of inclusion and social justice within education. The repetition of victimized accounts which dominates existing literature only presents a partial account of the experiences of queer teachers. There is a need to create stories of empowerment which highlight the contribution that queer teachers can make to inclusion and social justice rather than repeating narratives of discrimination and prejudice.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Leeds Trinity University Research Ethics Committee. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Thriving or Surviving? Raising Our Ambition for Trans Children in Primary and Secondary Schools

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As more trans children find the confidence to make themselves known in our primary and secondary schools, school teachers and administrators look for guidance on how to best support trans pupils. This article synthesises findings from global literature on trans children in primary and secondary education (K1–12 in the US), extracting key themes and conclusions. It then examines the most recent UK school guidance documents on trans inclusion, assessing which lessons and recommendations from global literature are represented. The article highlights existing good practices in visibility and representation and in protection from violence and harassment. Several areas where additional effort is needed are identified, including action on environmental stress and cisnormativity, addressing barriers to school trans-inclusivity and institutional accountability. A number of important shifts are called for: from adaptation on request to pre-emptive change; from accommodation to a rights-based approach; from pathologisation to trans-positivity. Finally, the article raises expectations on what it means to be an ally for trans children in education.

Keywords: trans, transgender, child, school, education, youth, primary, secondary

## INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has seen a global movement away from pathologisation of gender diversity (Bryant, 2006, 2007; Ehrensaft, 2012; Menvielle, 2012; Spack et al., 2012). Gender affirmative approaches to supporting trans children are becoming mainstream (Hidalgo et al., 2013; CASW ACTS, 2015; Ehrensaft, 2016; Murchison et al., 2016; Lopez et al., 2017; Oliphant et al., 2018; Rafferty et al., 2018; Turban and Ehrensaft, 2018). This shift toward gender affirmative approaches is underpinned by evidence of the damage to trans children caused by childhood abuse and rejection, including the harm of conversion therapy (Roberts et al., 2012; Ashley, 2019b; Turban et al., 2019).

There is now strong evidence that socially transitioned children who are supported have good levels of well-being and mental health (Ehrensaft, 2016; Olson, 2016; Durwood et al., 2017; Ehrensaft et al., 2018). Factors associated with improved well-being in trans children include family functioning (Katz-Wise et al., 2018), family support (Travers et al., 2012; Simons et al., 2013; Klein and Golub, 2016), and use of chosen name (Russell et al., 2018). Informed by global healthcare best practices (Oliphant et al., 2018) trans children are increasingly likely to receive love and support in childhood (Ehrensaft, 2016), including transitions at or before primary school (Miller, 2016a; Davy and Cordoba, 2019). Many trans children are aware of their identity at a young age (Jones and Hillier, 2013; Telfer et al., 2015; Fast and Olson, 2018) meaning a majority of educators will at some point work with trans pupils, although teachers may not be aware of the trans children

in their classroom (Rands, 2009; Meyer and Leonardi, 2018). Educators can look to a variety of trans inclusion school guidance documents to shape their support for trans pupils of all ages. It is important that these guidance documents are informed by the most up to date literature on trans children. This paper aims to review whether best practices from research literature on trans children in education is feeding through into guidance on supporting trans children in our schools.

Until recently, trans children have been almost invisible in both academic literature and public consciousness, with gender diversity problematised and hidden (Brill and Pepper, 2008; Gill-Peterson, 2018). A majority of older literature on trans children was pathologising and cisnormative[1] (Ansara and Hegarty, 2012). There has been a recent growth in trans positive research on trans children, looking at the identities of young trans children (Olson et al., 2015; Olson, 2016; Fast and Olson, 2018; Olson and Enright, 2018; Olson and Gülgöz, 2018; Rae et al., 2019; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020), reflecting on social transition (Turban, 2017; Whyatt-Sames, 2017; Turban and Keuroghlian, 2018; Ashley, 2019a,c), and trans children's experiences in education (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a). Research is now examining the external challenges experienced by trans children and families (Capous-Desyllas and Barron, 2017; Alegría, 2018), including the impact discrimination, and structural cisnormativity[2] (Hendricks and Testa, 2012; McBride, 2020). This builds upon wider work on the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003); the ways in which experiences of prejudice, stigma and discrimination negatively impact on mental health. Modern, trans-positive research on trans children in education looks at cisnormativity and the structural and systemic barriers to trans children having equality of opportunity in our schools (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a; McBride, 2020).

In this paper the term "trans children" will be used. Trans children includes transgender and or non-binary children, also described as "gender diverse children" (Keo-Meier and Ehrensaft, 2018). "Cis" is a term for non-trans or cisgender people. Where all ages under 18 are included (including the youngest pre-primary and primary school children) the term children will be used. Where necessary this will be divided either into trans children and trans adolescents and where appropriate the term trans young people or trans youth will be used, with the term youth excluding younger children and including young adults (UNDESA, 2013).

A trans-emancipatory approach informs this research, aiming to proactively avoid pathologisation or cisnormativity, recognising the rights of trans children to equality of opportunity in education. Additional research standards are needed for

research on trans communities "because of a long history of intolerance, bias, and psychopathological stereotyping in this specialty" (ITHF, 2019, 1). Vincent (2018) outlines six categories to consider when working on trans-related research including nuanced language use and recognising trans histories. Ethical research needs to consider and address the long and continuing pathologisation of trans children, including past and continuing rights violations, producing research that respects the needs and rights of trans children in education today.

I write this as a parent of a trans child of primary school age and an advocate for trans children's rights. Our trans children are brilliant and spectacular and ordinary—in many ways they are exactly the same as their cis classmates. Yet too often trans children are failed by our cisnormative systems and priorities, too often these children face prejudice and ignorance, too often they shoulder the burden of educating the adults around them. Past generations of trans children have been abused and harmed—lessons need to be learnt today, to build a better world for tomorrow's trans children.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

This paper comprises two strands, responding to two sequential research questions.

1. What are key themes, findings, and recommendations from research literature on trans children in education?
2. Which of these research driven themes, findings, and recommendations are being prioritised in trans-related school policy and guidance documents?

These research questions are timely for a UK audience, as schools move toward LGBT inclusive primary school Relationships Education (Department of Education, 2019). These research questions are also timely globally, in a period where trans inclusive education is under threat in countries across the world, from anti trans legislation targeting trans children in the US, through to toxic political and media driven debates on trans inclusive education in Australia, Canada and beyond (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a).

Part one of the research involved an extensive review of global literature on trans children in education. Databases including Educational Research Abstracts Online, Education Research Information Center (ERIC), and Web of Science were searched using paired key words including: transgender*/trans* and school*, reviewing articles published between 2005 and 2020 inclusive. An in-depth review of article bibliographies supplemented through researcher expertise enabled identification of additional articles (McBride, 2020). Inclusion criteria on literature type were kept broad to include grey literature studies, and to include commentary, review and analysis articles. Only articles published in English were included, and only articles relating to primary and secondary education, with articles on tertiary education excluded. This search identified articles that provide quantitative or qualitative insights on trans pupils' experience in education, looking at literature on trans children under 18, with literature from the

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[1]Cisnormativity is the assumption that everyone is cisgender or should be (Keo-Meier and Ehrensaft, 2018). Serano talked about the concept as a societal double-standard that conveys social and legal legitimacy on cis people's identities, with cis identities "taken for granted and considered valid in a way that trans people's are not", providing cis people with an advantage (Serano, 2011, 29).

[2]Structural cisnormativity exacts disproportionate harms on trans people, threatening their health, reducing their security and limiting their opportunities (Newbury, 2013). Daily, unpredictable, distressing encounters with structural cisnormativity, leaves trans people in a "constant state of alert" that "manifests as a persistent level of stress unknown to their cis counterpart" (Newbury, 2013, 2).

**TABLE 1 |** List of trans-inclusion school resources.

| | |
|---|---|
| Brighton (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2019) | Trans inclusion schools toolkit |
| CofE (Church of England Education Office, 2019) | Valuing all god's children: guidance for Church of England schools on challenging homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying |
| EANI (Education Authority Northern Ireland, 2019) | Guidance for schools, EOTAS Centres and youth service on supporting transgender young people |
| Equaliteach (Equaliteach, 2020) | Free to be: embedding lgbt+ equality and tackling homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying in primary schools |
| Leeds (Leeds City Council, 2018) | Guidance on supporting children and young people who are trans or who are questioning their gender identity for all schools and children and families services settings |
| LGBT Youth Scotland (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017) | Supporting transgender young people: guidance for schools in Scotland |
| NEU (National Education Union, 2018) | Supporting trans and gender-questioning students |
| Orthodox Jewish Schools (Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, 2018) | The wellbeing of LGBT Pupils a guide for orthodox jewish schools |
| Stonewall BPG (Stonewall, 2018) | Best practice guide: how primary schools are celebrating difference and tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia |
| Stonewall Next Steps (Stonewall, 2020) | Next steps in inclusive education |
| Stonewall Primary (Stonewall, 2019) | Creating an LGBT-inclusive primary curriculum |
| Trans Inclusion Toolkit (Trans Inclusion Toolkit, 2019) | Trans inclusion toolkit for schools |

last 5 years prioritised. All identified literature was coded using Nvivo software, identifying themes related to trans children's experiences in education. Eight main themes emerged and these are presented in the literature review section.

Part two of the research analysed a selection of guidelines on trans inclusion in education, examining the degree to which themes from the literature review were profiled in the school guidance documents. Relevant primary and or secondary school guidance documents were identified, selecting those which made specific reference to trans inclusion. This included guides on trans children, trans young people, LGBT young people or guides on HBT (Homophobic, Biphobic, Transphobic) bullying. School guidance documents published prior to 2017 were excluded; the most recently released or updated guides were prioritised. Whilst part one took a global overview of literature on trans children in education, part two narrowed the scope to UK school guidance documents—though the findings here are likely to have relevance for educators interested in supporting trans children in any country.

Twelve guidance documents were selected for review, and these are listed in **Table 1** below. One guide that is actively transphobic[3] was excluded. The review did not aim to provide a

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[3]See https://www.stonewall.org.uk/node/62946

forensic analysis of any specific guide, but rather to see how well key themes from the literature are represented in school guidance documents. Several of these guides were produced by civil society organisations. Two were from religious organisations (Church of England and Jewish Orthodox). Several were produced by English councils, two were associated with regional devolved government and one was produced by the National Education Union. The 2019 Trans Inclusion Toolkit produced by multiple English Councils is currently facing challenge from groups opposed to trans equality, and later versions of this toolkit currently being revised by local authorities may be significantly different to the 2019 version reviewed here. Notably missing from this list is any England and Wales government endorsed resource, though guidance from the Equalities and Human Right Commission for England Scotland and Wales is anticipated.

## GLOBAL LITERATURE REVIEW ON TRANS CHILDREN IN EDUCATION

This section highlights eight themes derived from a systematic analysis of global literature on trans children's experience in education. The themes include (1) Pathologisation and victim narratives (2) Discrimination and violence (3) Environmental stress and cisnormativity (4) Individual accommodation on request (5) From school panic to affirmation and representation (6) Teacher barriers to action (7) Ambition and allies (8) Child voice and child rights. These themes and findings should shape the ways in which schools support their trans pupils, acknowledging the weaknesses of the current literature including limited consideration of non-binary children, and limited consideration of intersectionality.

## Pathologisation and Victim Narratives

There is a long history of pathologisation, misgendering and invalidation of trans children that cuts across all spheres of society including our schools (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018; Gill-Peterson, 2018). Ansara and Hegarty (2012, 152) highlight the ways in which pathologising or cisnormative language can "dehumanize, silence and erase." This pathologisation directly affects trans children's experience in school. Riggs and Bartholomaeus (2018) provides an example of a parent of a 5 year old trans girl being asked by a school to provide a psychiatrist report and have genetic testing before the school might accept her. Pathologising approaches can also be expressed in more subtle ways which nevertheless erase and delegitimise (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018), such as when trans children's identities are denied, or replaced with pathologising and delegitimising terms. The avoidance of the word trans when referring to trans children is a form of erasure, that denies trans children "self-intelligibility" (Kennedy, 2018, 135).

There is a tradition of stigmatization and problematisation of trans children (Pyne, 2014; Kennedy, 2018) with trans children defined through their association with trauma (Marx et al., 2017). Educators also need framings that centre joy, romance, laughter, strength, and resilience (Marx et al., 2017; Shelton and Lester, 2018). Trans pupils, living in cisnormative environments, may

develop particular strengths, types of cultural capital (Pennell, 2016a). This can include navigational capacity, being able to navigate through systems not designed for trans pupils; linguistic capacity, challenging linguistic norms that marginalise, erase or other trans pupils; familial capacity, finding support from trans peers, trans communities and trans-led narratives; and resistant capital, being able to fight against discrimination and advocate for equality (Pennell, 2016b).

Descriptions of trans children and youth often centre a victim narrative (DePalma and Jennett, 2010), framing them as in need of protection (Marx et al., 2017). This singular and simplistic framing as "at risk" (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018) homogenises, pathologises and others trans youth as inherently separate from healthy cis peers (Miller, 2016c; Marx et al., 2017; Blair and Deckman, 2019). A victim framing also individualises the challenges trans pupils face (Shelton and Lester, 2018), overlooking the structural inequalities harming them (Smith and Payne, 2016).

## Discrimination and Violence

Trans children face multiple areas of overt discrimination, including segregation and denial of access to appropriately gendered spaces (Kennedy, 2013; Kosciw and Pizmony-Levy, 2016; O'Flynn, 2016; UNESCO, 2016; Kuvalanka et al., 2019; Neary, 2019). School-based anti-trans discrimination targeting trans pupils of all ages is apparent in a number of surveys, with trans pupils prevented from using their name or pronoun at school, and forced to use inappropriately gendered facilities (Kosciw et al., 2016, 2018). Harm is compounded when schools enable trans children to be drawn into public debates on whether schools should actively discriminate against trans pupils (Herriot et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2018; Sinclair-Palm and Gilbert, 2018).

Evidence from diverse locations continues to show trans pupils experiencing hostile school climates (Greytak et al., 2009; Grant and Zwier, 2011; Taylor and Peter, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2012, 2016, 2018; Peter et al., 2016; Ullman, 2017; Fayles, 2018; Human Rights Campaign, 2018) with high incidences of verbal harassment, bullying, physical abuse, and sexual harassment (Reed et al., 2010; Human Rights Campaign, 2014, 2018; Kosciw et al., 2016; Peter et al., 2016; Bradlow et al., 2017). Kosciw et al. (2018) found a steady increase in negative remarks about trans people in schools between 2013 and 2017, highlighting that progress is neither linear nor guaranteed. Trans pupils report lack of safety across multiple locations, including in primary schools (Meyer et al., 2016) especially in gendered spaces like changing rooms and bathrooms (Kosciw et al., 2016, 2018). In a 2017 US survey of over 5,000 trans adolescents, only 16% reported that they always feel safe at school (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

A hostile school climate can have extensive consequences for trans pupils' ability to thrive (Greytak et al., 2009). Trans pupils experiencing harassment and transphobia are less likely to be able to concentrate in class (Robinson et al., 2014), have lower educational aspirations and poorer educational attainment (Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2014; Fayles, 2018). Trans pupils report hiding at lunch times, avoiding gendered spaces like bathrooms and changing rooms (Jones and Hillier, 2013; Robinson et al., 2014), and not

participating in extra-curricular events and activities due to lack of safety (Jones and Hillier, 2013; Kosciw et al., 2016). Trans youth have high levels of school absenteeism due to harassment (Greytak et al., 2009, 2013; Taylor and Peter, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2012, 2016; Robinson et al., 2014). Lack of affirmative or safe school environments is also associated with trans pupils dropping out of education or transferring schools (McGuire et al., 2010; O'Flynn, 2016).

In-school victimization and harassment are known to have significant psychological and social consequences (Poteat and Espelage, 2007), including negatively affecting psychological well-being (Kosciw et al., 2012), and contributing to high levels of depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation (Jones and Hillier, 2013). In a 2017 UK survey of around 500 trans pupils aged 11–19, 45% reported that they had attempted to take their own life, and 84% reported self-harm (Bradlow et al., 2017). A negative school climate (combined with wider systemic oppression), leaves trans pupils with low levels of optimism about their chances of future success and happiness (Human Rights Campaign, 2014).

## Environmental Stress and Cisnormativity

Cisnormative school climates place trans pupils under persistent psychological stress (Ullman, 2015b; Miller, 2016c; McBride, 2020). Institutionalised cisnormativity (Bauer et al., 2009) negatively affects trans pupils, delegitimising their identities and making their lives harder in multiple and systemic ways (Miller, 2016c; McBride, 2020). Trans pupils experience persistent microaggressions which they recognize as symptoms of deeply embedded structural inequality and violence (Woolley, 2017), yet schools are likely to view them as individual isolated acts. Schools may already be aware of overt, individualised, intentional acts of transphobia or violence, but they need to also be aware of the compounding effects of subtler acts of cisnormativity, including systemic practices that are not intended to cause harm to trans pupils (Riggs and Bartholomaeus, 2018). Beyond physical safety, trans pupils need to feel emotionally safe and welcome in school (Brill and Pepper, 2008). In the words of one parent of a young primary school aged trans child (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013, 30):

"*I needed to know if he would be physically and emotionally safe; feel welcomed, respected, and fully embraced; and be able to focus on learning.*"

A persistently stressful and hostile school climate can make school about survival rather than success and fulfilment (Miller, 2016c), with environmental stressors detrimentally affecting educational achievement and well-being (Ullman, 2017). The educational disadvantage trans youth experience is not individualised, but structural and systemic (McBride, 2020). Trans pupils experiencing macro and micro aggressions (Miller, 2016a) are forced to develop defensive strategies (Greytak et al., 2013; Bowers et al., 2015; Ingrey, 2018; Kennedy, 2018) which are emotionally and cognitively difficult, reducing well-being and the ability to learn and thrive.

Areas of gender segregation can increase the stress felt by trans pupils (Greytak et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2013; Bowers et al.,

2015; Ingrey, 2018), placing them under additional surveillance and pressure to conform (Woolley, 2017). Socially transitioned children who have not disclosed their gender modality—that they are trans-carry an additional stress (McGuire et al., 2010) as they navigate systems which assume they are cis[4].

Approaches that prioritise an individualised anti-bullying discourse, including the UK Government's approach (Carlile, 2019), overlook the systemic nature of the challenge faced by trans children in schools (Ansara and Hegarty, 2012), and distract from the systemic reforms needed to ensure trans children are welcomed as equals at school (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018; Riggs and Bartholomaeus, 2018). We need to move beyond an exclusive focus on safety, on violence and on individual bullies and victims, to understanding and dismantling the systemic operation of cisnormativity in our schools (Payne and Smith, 2014; Miller, 2016c; Frohard-Dourlent, 2018).

## Individual Accommodation on Request

Few schools provide trans-inclusive adaptations prior to having a known trans pupil (Davy and Cordoba, 2019). Many schools only take reactive actions to accommodate a trans pupil on request (Omercajic, 2015; Davy and Cordoba, 2019), often prompted by informed parent advocacy for their trans child (Neary and Cross, 2018; Riggs and Bartholomaeus, 2018; Davy and Cordoba, 2019). Schools often only accommodate access to appropriate bathrooms after pupils or parents request such access (Ingrey, 2018). This approach means trans pupils' access is to be requested, negotiated and permitted. Ingrey (2018) highlights the rights violation of requiring trans pupils to apply for access, rather than the system proactively making trans pupils welcome. Trans pupils are "subjected to an approval process for a simple act of accessing a suitable washroom space; this process is humiliating, pathologising and alienating, and ultimately transphobic" (Ingrey, 2018, 781).

A individualised "accommodation on request" approach leaves the status quo intact, maintaining an "artificial hierarchy" (Serano, 2016, 13) where the dominant gender (Ingrey, 2018) is validated as "natural," in the process pathologising trans pupils' gender modality (that they are trans—Ashley, 2019d) as requiring approval and exception from the "norm." Trans pupils' right to identity and basic dignity is dependent on them submitting themselves to a pathologising and daunting process of justifying their needs and their identity to cis teachers or school administrators (Ingrey, 2018). This accommodation may be particularly hard for children who are gender fluid or non-binary (Omercajic and Martino, 2020)—though it needs to be noted that the current literature has little consideration of non-binary children (Airton and Koecher, 2019).

Meyer and Leonardi (2018) conducted interviews with teachers, which found reluctance to make trans-affirmative school changes unless, and until, they personally knew a trans pupil. This is born out in the wider literature, with numerous examples of schools only making changes when forced to do so, when they encountered their first known trans pupils (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2014; Baldwin,

2015; McBride, 2020). These pioneer children may "shoulder an immense responsibility as singular sites of all learning and change," becoming "sacrificial lambs" (Meyer et al., 2016, 9), whose privacy and right to equality of education are neglected in order for the school to commence incremental adaptation. Meyer et al. (2016, 9) discuss the "ethical dilemma of this pedagogy of exposure," and how to prompt trans inclusive school changes without a trans pupil or family being required to expose themselves as educator of an unprepared school.

Supportive parents and carers are relied upon to advocate for their trans children (Neary, 2019), educating their children's teachers, and advising on inclusive policies and curricula (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a). Families of trans children cannot just presume their children will be safe and welcomed in schools, and instead need to be constantly vigilant, to protect and advocate for their children (Hill and Menvielle, 2009; Johnson et al., 2014; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Rahilly, 2015; Riggs and Bartholomaeus, 2018; Neary, 2019). Parental advocacy on behalf of trans children is an ongoing requirement, with support for trans inclusivity not automatically sustained or replicated across a school (Johnson et al., 2014; Riggs and Bartholomaeus, 2018). Effective inclusion needs to be embedded in clear trans-affirmative policies and procedures (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a), which are developed proactively, rather than enacted upon request (Baldwin, 2015).

An individualised approach—listening to a child's voice, hearing their needs and being guided by a child's own individual path—is absolutely critical to child-centred care (Whyatt-Sames, 2017). Where families are supportive of their trans child, a collaborative trusting relationship between families and schools can help ensure an effective child-focused path to providing a friendly, welcoming school (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013). However, this individualised approach should not be a way of shifting responsibility onto pupils (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018) and is not a substitute for proactive structural changes to ensure trans children are made welcome in our schools (Omercajic and Martino, 2020). Frohard-Dourlent (2018) imagines a future where trans pupils don't need to self-advocate, because schools are already set up to recognise their existence.

## From School Panic to Affirmation and Representation

There is a pervasive culture of silence (Ullman, 2014; Ullman and Ferfolja, 2015; Frohard-Dourlent, 2016); around trans lives at school that has a negative impact on trans children (Ryan et al., 2013). This culture of silence is reinforced through multiple means, from formal legislation against LGBT inclusion in school[5] (Carlile, 2019), to teacher self-censure (Roberts et al., 2007), through to approaches that police offensive language without empowering teachers to provide alternative positive narratives (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a).

A culture of silence is also promoted by cisnormativity, wherein any trans representation is perceived through a lens of hyper-visibility (DePalma and Atkinson, 2006). Trans (and LGB)

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[4]Cisitude—the state of being cis—the antonym of transitude (Ashley, 2018)

[5]Section 28 was a statute in place in the UK between 1988 and 2003, that banned the "promotion" of same-sex relationships in schools (Carlile, 2019).

equality can be seen as controversial in a way that does not extend to other equalities (Atkinson and DePalma, 2008) with some commentators considering children "too young" to learn about their trans classmates (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a). The presence and increasing visibility of trans children in primary and nursery classrooms (Riggs and Bartholomaeus, 2018) forces primary school educators to face up to the silence surrounding trans lives (Payne and Smith, 2014). Unprepared schools can enter into "school panic," when a culture of silence comes up against the reality of trans children's lives (Smith and Payne, 2016; Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a).

> "*When marginalised groups begin to challenge society's expectation that they will remain invisible and silent, they are faced with a choice between invisibility (where they have traditionally been assumed not to exist) and surplus visibility (where their mere presence seems excessive).*" (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009b, 887).

Schools need to adopt a "usualising" approach to trans inclusion, where trans people are destigmatised to the point that their visibility is no longer of note (Iskander and Shabtay, 2018; Carlile, 2019). Trans people can be made part of everyday life through incorporation into different parts of the curriculum (Mitchell et al., 2014) moving trans lives in schools "from surplus visibility to ordinariness" (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009b, 884).

Curricula remain cis-dominated (Miller et al., 2018) with trans identities nearly invisible (Miller, 2016a). Many children do not see any representations of trans people at school (Mitchell et al., 2014; Peter et al., 2016). Erasure of trans visibility delegitimizes trans identities (Miller, 2016c), forming a systemic macro-aggression where trans pupils need to continuously self-advocate and educate to be read as valid (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018). When schools do not affirm or represent trans identities, this impacts on trans children's self-image, belonging and sense of worth (Ullman, 2014; Miller, 2016a). Exclusion from the curriculum gives a message that trans identities are inferior (Miller, 2016c; Shelton, 2016). Marginalisation and exclusion at school and in wider society teaches trans pupils that there is no place for them in the school or the wider world (Ryan et al., 2013; Ullman, 2017).

Affirming trans-positive school environments are vitally important for trans pupils, improving mental health, well-being, self-esteem, school engagement, and sense of belonging (Olson, 2016; Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a; Day et al., 2018). Children who are affirmed at home and at school have positive academic and emotional outcomes (Davy and Cordoba, 2019). Miller (2016a, 6) highlights the importance of schools being affirming with a "pedagogy of recognition" where trans pupils can see that they are valued, not merely tolerated. Trans representation can also have huge importance for gender questioning children, with access to the word trans, and knowledge of the existence of trans identities opening doors to self-discovery (Kennedy, 2018). Most pupils do not see any trans representation in schools (Bradlow et al., 2017), and the representation that does exists is mostly negative, framing trans people as "at risk" (Bittner et al., 2016). In these contexts trans pupils can gain confidence and self-esteem from any positive trans representation (Snapp et al., 2015).

An inclusive curriculum explicitly tackles the misconceptions that underpin transphobia (Meyer et al., 2016) and reinforces peer acceptance (Kosciw et al., 2012; Ryan et al., 2013), with increased peer support creating a more positive school climate for trans pupils (Kosciw et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2016). Trans representation in the classroom sends pupils a message that teachers support them, that they have a right to be safe in school (Kosciw et al., 2012; Peter et al., 2016), that they are not alone (Miller et al., 2018). A trans-affirmative curricula builds a more supportive, welcoming school climate (Peter et al., 2016; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2017), and improves well-being of trans pupils (Greytak et al., 2013; Kahn and Lindstrom, 2015).

Trans pupils who feel able to fully participate as an equal in school, being open, when they choose, about their identity and being able to discuss "transitude" (Ashley, 2018, 4) at school, had a greater sense of belonging (Greytak et al., 2009). Trans pupils having a sense of belonging at school correlates to pupil well-being, academic motivation and academic achievement (Kosciw et al., 2012; Ullman, 2015b).

Trans inclusion is needed in education about bodies and puberty (Jones et al., 2016), though with care not to limit inclusion to Relationships and Sex Education, which can be pathologising (Formby, 2015; Carlile, 2019). Trans positive representation in literature provides a "pedagogy of possibility" (Bittner et al., 2016, 2) that disrupts cisnormativity (Cumming-Potvin and Martino, 2018) showing trans people "as part of vibrant, supportive communities, living fulfilling, and productive lives" (Parsons, 2016, 11). Trans representation in history, showing historic fights for rights and visibility, helps validate and give hope to trans pupils, whilst also raising acceptance from cis peers (Snapp et al., 2015).

## Teacher Barriers to Action

Trans pupils can experience bullying, transphobia, ignorance and hostility from teachers and school staff (Reed et al., 2010; Taylor and Peter, 2011; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Formby, 2015; Bartholomaeus et al., 2017), causing significant harm (Robinson et al., 2014). Teachers can also contribute to a hostile climate through inaction when pupils are facing transphobic harassment (Greytak et al., 2009; McGuire et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2014; Bowers et al., 2015; Ullman, 2015b, 2017; Kosciw and Pizmony-Levy, 2016). Trans pupils who do not feel supported by their teachers are more than four times as likely to leave school if they encounter discrimination (Jones et al., 2016), with teacher failure to intervene seen as a violation of trust (Meyer and Stader, 2009).

Teachers have enormous power to "affirm or belittle the existence of youth in their classrooms" (Kearns et al., 2017, 12). Some teachers and school administrators are positive, well-informed and affirmative, and even just one supportive and trusted teacher can make a profound impact on a trans pupil's experience of school (McGuire et al., 2010; Mulcahy et al., 2016; Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a; Ullman, 2017; Palkki and Caldwell, 2018). In schools where teachers were protective and affirming (Meyer et al., 2016), consistently intervening to disrupt marginalising behaviour, pupils experienced lower rates of bullying (Greytak et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2016), had lower rates of school absenteeism (Ullman, 2015b; Jones et al., 2016),

and higher rates of happiness and self-esteem (Kosciw et al., 2013; Ullman, 2015b). Perceived acceptance from teachers matters as much as protection (Ullman, 2014), with teacher positivity about gender diversity significantly correlated with pupil well-being (Ullman, 2015b, 2017). Trans pupils spoke of the importance of having at least one adult who could advocate for them, help them understand their rights, and help them navigate cisnormative institutional cultures and regimes (McGuire et al., 2010).

A key barrier to trans inclusion is teacher willingness, with some staff not believing it is their job to include or affirm trans youth (Meyer and Leonardi, 2018), or having "barriers to empathy" (Blair and Deckman, 2019, 2). Bowers et al. (2015) notes that school staff will be shaped by negative attitudes, misinformation or transphobia endemic in society. Teachers who were willing to refer to LGB identities in their classroom were less willing to include trans people (Formby, 2015), considering the topic taboo (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015), too complex (Mitchell et al., 2014), or too difficult (Cumming-Potvin and Martino, 2018). However, once teachers tried trans and LGB inclusiveness, they were surprised to find children capable of engaging sensitively and thoughtfully (Carlile, 2019). School staff can be overwhelmed by inertia, aware of the need to support trans pupils, but holding on to pre-established prejudices of trans as an undesirable "deviation" (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018). Teachers and school administrators may wrongly assume the existence of transphobic institutional and legal regulations where discriminatory regulations do not exist (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016).

Teacher lack of knowledge remains a barrier (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Bartholomaeus et al., 2017; Carlile, 2019). Ill-informed teachers can do harm, by relying on stereotypes that reinforce prejudice (Mitchell et al., 2014). Teachers may also experience fear and anxiety at the presence of trans children in their classroom (Payne and Smith, 2014; Smith and Payne, 2016; Blair and Deckman, 2019), the arrival of a trans child forcing teachers to become aware of (but not necessarily challenge) cisnormative assumptions and practices. Teachers lacked confidence in how to identify school practices that harm trans pupils, or in how to identify transphobic or cisnormative stereotypes, bias or prejudice in teaching materials (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a). Teachers preferred to focus on "the problem" of fitting trans pupils into a cisnormative school, prioritising individualised actions like name change, rather than considering wider trans-inclusive adaptations (Smith and Payne, 2016).

Teachers and school staff who have undertaken specific training on working with trans pupils, and those with trans friends or family, had more positive attitudes and greater confidence in working with trans pupils, and were more likely to advocate for their trans pupils (Bowers et al., 2015; Bartholomaeus et al., 2017). Staff who had knowingly taught at least one trans pupil had more positive attitudes on trans inclusion (Bowers et al., 2015; Bartholomaeus et al., 2017), building confidence with experience (Davy and Cordoba, 2019), However, a majority had not knowingly taught a trans pupil (Bowers et al., 2015). Mentorship arrangements between staff with prior experience and staff who are new to this were found helpful in raising confidence, though such support is rare, especially in primary schools (Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013; Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a; Davy and Cordoba, 2019).

Another barrier was teacher concern about wider community or parental opposition to support for trans pupils. Teachers were likely to assume parents as a whole would disapprove of LGBT inclusion (Depalma and Atkinson, 2010) and used this as justification for not acknowledging gender diversity in their teaching. Without school-set expectations, some teachers were likely to focus on the perceived preferences of trans-antagonistic parents, rather than centring the needs of trans children (Malins, 2016).

Teacher fear, underpinned by the impacts of anti-trans and anti-LGBT legislation, is a significant obstacle (Carlile, 2019), with teachers feeling they needed courage to deliver LGBT inclusive curricula (Atkinson and DePalma, 2008; Carlile, 2019). Teachers avoided the topic (DePalma and Atkinson, 2006; Cumming-Potvin and Martino, 2018), believing they needed explicit permission to talk about it (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a). Teachers need a network of support to enable and encourage trans inclusivity (Malins, 2016). DePalma and Atkinson (2009a) emphasizes how teachers aiming for LGBT school equality may need extra cross-school support, as they can feel isolated and worry about being perceived as "subversive."

In locations like the UK, with a history of LGBT-exclusionary school legislation, proactive policy, and school-wide efforts are needed to ensure teachers gain confidence that trans inclusion is not controversial or unusual, but essential and routine (Mitchell et al., 2014). Similar efforts are needed when schools come under the pressure of conservative campaigns against trans-inclusion in education, campaigns that put pressure on schools in many countries to overlook their responsibility toward trans pupils (Jones et al., 2016; Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a).

Reference to legal mandates and government or educational guidance is an important support for teachers and school administrators, making the connection to obligations to provide equality of opportunity safety, and physical and emotional well-being for all children (DePalma and Atkinson, 2009a; Mitchell et al., 2014; Carlile, 2019). Leadership, policies and guidelines from national or sub-national government are particularly helpful to ensuring school commitment (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017b). Governments need to fulfil their responsibilities in providing clear legislation and guidance to uphold the rights of trans children in education (Riley, 2012). Unfortunately, governments are frequently slow on delivering this leadership (Riley, 2012; Neary and Cross, 2018), failing in their duty of care for trans children.

Martino and Cumming-Potvin (2018) reference the ways in which teacher action or inaction in support of trans pupils is influenced as much by media landscape as by formal policy, or the ways equality-related policies are framed and understood through media narratives. In contexts where national policy or media landscape is hostile to trans pupils, schools, and teachers having an ethical commitment to caring for their trans pupils becomes even more important (Miller et al., 2018). Leadership and support at school level are critical for teacher action (Malins, 2016). Class teachers look for assurance that they have their head

teacher's backing (Mitchell et al., 2014). In many schools, head teachers (principals) are proactively working to ensure equality of opportunity for trans pupils (Meyer et al., 2016). Equality motivated school board members can play a critical role in ensuring teachers and school leadership have a clear mandate to support their trans pupils, ensuring teachers understand and tackle cisnormativity, providing a welcoming school (Meyer et al., 2016).

## Ambition and Allies

The literature challenges the ambition we should have for trans-inclusivity in our schools, shifting from a focus on protection to school environments that affirm, validate, and welcome trans pupils as equals (Case and Meier, 2014; Snapp et al., 2015; Meyer and Leonardi, 2018; Sinclair-Palm and Gilbert, 2018); The literature emphasises the importance of teacher allies (Meyer et al., 2016) and the need to raise our imagination of what teachers and school administrators are able to do to support their trans pupils (Atkinson and DePalma, 2008; Frohard-Dourlent, 2016). Our ambition for teacher allies needs to move beyond protection of an individual pupil, to being willing to dismantle cisnormative structures, policies, and approaches that delegitimise and marginalise trans pupils (Case and Meier, 2014; Meyer et al., 2016; Peter et al., 2016; Marx et al., 2017; Meyer and Leonardi, 2018).

The systemic inequalities experienced by trans pupils represent a significant human rights issue (Greytak et al., 2009; Ullman, 2014; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2016), necessitating a shift from trans inclusion to trans emancipation in our schools (Mayo, 2007). Where there is a systemic injustice, as is the case for trans pupils in schools today, allies have a responsibility to act as advocates for social justice (Gonzalez and McNulty, 2010; Kearns et al., 2017). As well as mentoring and supporting empowerment of individual trans pupils to assert their rights, teacher allies can ensure there is clear communication across the school on trans equality, sponsor LGBT groups, educate school staff, and advocate for pupils' rights and well-being across the school and beyond the school gate (Gonzalez and McNulty, 2010; Case and Meier, 2014).

Teacher education and training needs to move beyond basic education on the existence of trans people and on transphobic bullying (Meyer and Stader, 2009; Parsons, 2016; Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a). Trans pupils wanted teacher training to help ensure staff take action to tackle cisnormativity in educational systems and classrooms, improving equality of opportunity for trans pupils (McGuire et al., 2010; Frohard-Dourlent, 2018). Trans pupils often have a good understanding of the structural factors underpinning the challenges they face in school, and wanted school staff to acknowledge and be proactive in tackling these systemic barriers (McGuire et al., 2010). Training needs to help school staff understand the ways in which school cisnormativity marginalises trans pupils (McGuire et al., 2010), positioning trans pupils as lesser or other (Miller, 2016c; Marx et al., 2017). Trans pupils also wanted school educators to be more active in speaking up for trans rights in external processes and policy fora, helping them overcome areas of structural oppression that impede their access to justice and equality in education and beyond (McGuire et al., 2010).

Bartholomaeus and Riggs (2017a) highlight the many examples of cisgender teachers and school administrators who are already effectively advocating for, and standing up with, trans pupils in schools (Ryan et al., 2013; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2017). Feeling safe at school needs to be recognised as the bare minimum to expect for our trans children (Ullman, 2015a) with educators needing to go further and ensure schools are inclusive and affirming (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017a) places where trans pupils belong, where they are loved, where they succeed and thrive (McGuire et al., 2010; Miller et al., 2018). Miller (2016b) aspires to a future where trans pupils are commonplace and normalised, where gender diversity does not lead to macroaggressions or marginalization, where there is trans representation across all school materials and curricula, where schools support and embrace trans pupils of all ages.

## Child Voice and Child Rights

A child-rights informed approach centres trans children's right to an educational experience that is safe, inclusive and affirming, a right to "gender legibility" (Miller, 2016c, 34), in schools where they can have an equitable experience to their cis classmates. Trans children have a right to privacy, to gender marker change, and a right to choose if, and how, and when, to disclose their gender modality (that they are trans) (McGuire et al., 2010). Trans children also have a right to be visible in schools, open about their transitude to their classmates and school. Riggs and Bartholomaeus (2018) provide an example of a parent feeling their child and family had been pushed toward not disclosing their transitude, to simplify the situation for the school and other parents, rather than centring the needs and rights of the child.

There remain incidences where trans children's existing legal rights are not respected and where schools fail in their legal duty toward trans children (Taylor and Peter, 2011; Ingrey, 2018). In countries where trans children have legal protection, schools need to ensure administrators, teachers and pupils are aware of these rights, and mechanisms need to be in place to hold schools accountable when these are not fulfilled (Schindel, 2008). Schools also have a responsibility to advocate for trans children's needs and rights, including through educating unsupportive or unenlightened parents (Grossman et al., 2009). Trans children and supportive parents need to know their rights in order to claim them (Davy and Cordoba, 2019), and in order to challenge where there is ongoing inequality and injustice (Schindel, 2008). Meyer and Keenan (2018) outline the limitations of legally mandated protection of trans children, arguing that beyond an individual trans child's rights, there must be a focus on a school's responsibilities, ensuring there is institutional accountability for systemic change.

LGBTQ clubs (GSA in North America) can provide trans children with peer support in an affirming and safe space, and an escape from ignorance and cisnormativity (McGuire et al., 2010; Taylor and Peter, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2012, 2016; Marx and Kettrey, 2016). Trans youth with access to a GSA report more welcoming school climates, lower rates of victimization, greater feelings of school connectedness, and less school absenteeism (Greytak et al., 2013). GSA members report a greater sense of empowerment (Poteat et al., 2016), can come together to jointly challenge systemic injustice and advocate for changes at school

(Greytak et al., 2009; Gonzalez and McNulty, 2010), increasingly prioritising trans related advocacy (Poteat et al., 2018). Trans pupils who feel empowered and know their rights, who framed the discrimination they endure as related to societal and systemic prejudice, were more likely to respond with activism, and more likely to feel optimistic about being able to contribute to social change (Jones and Hillier, 2013; Jones et al., 2016). Luecke (2018) discusses components of a "Gender Facilitative School," with an emphasis on empowering all children to be advocates and supporters of their gender expansive peers.

Many studies note the resilience of trans pupils, their agency to resist injustices and advocate for themselves and their peers (McBride, 2020). Wernick et al. (2014) emphasise that marginalised youth need to identify and drive their own solutions, including through educating peers to join them in collective action. Kjaran and Jóhannesson (2013) highlight the importance of an emancipatory approach that prioritises listening to trans pupils' stories, including their experiences of encountering and resisting cisnormativity and structural violence. However, minority youth cannot be left to single-handedly challenge ingrained and dominant systems of cisnormativity, and the institutional and systemic discrimination that affects their lives (McBride, 2020).

## REVIEW OF UK TRANS-INCLUSION SCHOOL GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

This section summarises an analysis of a sample of recent UK school guidance documents, examining the degree to which themes, findings and recommendations from global literature are represented. It reviews the eight themes from the global literature, finding varied representation of these themes in UK school guidance documents.

### Varied Commitment to Depathologisation and Trans-positivity

Many of the guidance documents contained instances of pathologisation of trans children. Four types of pathologisation were noted: delegitimisation, problematisation, medicalization, and deficit framing. Guidelines on trans inclusion need a stronger commitment to avoiding pathologisation of trans children within their text, alongside working toward depathologisation of trans identities across our schools.

Across the guides there are a number of examples where language and phrasing others and pathologises trans children. There are examples of misgendering with Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019, 11) describing trans feminine children as "birth assigned males." Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019) delegitimises younger trans children, referencing an older research study on desistance[6], that has been heavily criticised by modern research literature as flawed and pathologising (Ehrensaft et al., 2018; Newhook et al., 2018b; Turban and Keuroghlian, 2018). A number of the guides completely avoid the term "trans children" in a way that marginalises and delegitimises

younger trans children, for example talking of children who "want to live in a different gender" LGBT Youth Scotland (2017, 10), using the phrase "trans young people" throughout (Equaliteach, 2020) or "children who are questioning their gender identity" (Stonewall, 2018, 12). Each of these phrases has a place, as long as it is alongside and not instead of acknowledgment of the existence of trans children. Other guides including Leeds City Council (2018), Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) and the Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019), confidently use the term "trans children," an important step in combatting erasure, stigmatisation and pathologisation. Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) normalises the term trans children across its guide, stating that many trans people are aware of their identities at (or before) primary school. The Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) outlines the importance of affirming trans children.

There are a number of examples where guides problematize trans children. Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019, 7) has a section "We do not know exactly why people are transgender," without asking why people are cisgender, an inherently othering frame. Brighton and Hove City Council (2019, 7) is clear on the need to avoid problematisation of trans pupils: "Avoid seeing the trans or gender-questioning child or young person as a problem and instead see an opportunity to enrich the school community." There are a number of areas in which trans children are medicalised and pathologised, with Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019, 8,37) making reference to a "clinical condition," and the suggestion that "medical advice may be sought" when responding to younger children. EANI adopts a pathologising and medicalising framing to social transition, whereas the Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) has a depathologised and demedicalised section on social transition, making clear it is not linked to medical services.

Many of the guides frame trans children as inherently at risk and in need of protection, devoting significant space to statistics on bullying, abuse, school drop-out and suicidality amongst trans pupils. Some guides make clear that these negative outcomes are not intrinsic to being trans—Brighton and Hove City Council (2019, 11) states: "many of these problems are not caused by being trans but by society's attitude toward people who are trans." The Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019, 12) makes clear that risk factors for mental health are "a result of unsupportive social contexts and responses that they encounter due to prejudice and lack of understanding." LGBT Youth Scotland (2017) emphasises the pathologisation that underlies much parental rejection of trans children, arguing that schools have an important role to play in depathologising trans identities.

### Strong on Transphobic Bullying—Varied on Protection From Discrimination

Basic guidance on avoiding illegal discrimination is prioritised in many of the school guidance documents, outlining the school's obligations to allow name changes or access to appropriately gendered bathrooms, with many making a connection to relevant legislation including the 2010 Equality Act: "so trans girls because they are girls, can use the girls' toilets" (Trans Inclusion Toolkit, 2019, 25). The guides vary in how clearly they

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[6]Itself a problematic and pathologising concept (Newhook et al., 2018a).

prioritise protecting trans pupils from discrimination, especially in situations where others want to exclude or segregate them. LGBT Youth Scotland (2017, 18) prioritises protecting trans children from discrimination: "If a learner feels uncomfortable sharing facilities with a transgender young person, they can be allowed to use a private facility such as an accessible toilet, or to get changed after the trans young person is done. A transgender young person should not be forced to use alternative facilities simply to make other young people feel more comfortable." Conversely, Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019, 34) does not fully support trans pupils, suggesting staff need to consider "the needs of other pupils." Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019) also suggests that a trans pupil's own safety can be a reason to deny them access to their preferred facilities, penalising a pupil for their school's failure to keep them safe. This can be contrasted with guidance from LGBT Youth Scotland (2017, 21) which is clear that "risk assessments should not be used to exclude a transgender young person."

Many of the guides focus heavily on bullying—in fact several of the sampled guides are specifically on HBT (Homophobic, biphobic, transphobic) bullying. There has been a significant UK investment in work to tackle HBT bullying, including pilot initiatives and an evaluation of the effectiveness of different approaches to HBT bullying (Case and Meier, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2016). There needs to be awareness that HBT guides may not go beyond this topic, into other areas which are critical for trans inclusion and trans equality.

All of the guides discuss transphobic bullying, particularly in terms of intentional transphobia and a focus on a single, peer, bully to victim dynamic. Several guides commit to policing abusive language, though do not prioritise action to address underlying views or education to replace transphobic frames with trans-positive ones. The Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) meanwhile emphasizes the need to explore and explain when pupils ask inappropriate questions or use transphobic language. Many of the guides associate transphobia with extreme overtly abusive language. The Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) on the other hand centres the voices of trans children, who share their experiences of subtler harassment, providing an annex of trans children sharing examples of inappropriate and invalidating questions.

## Minimal Consideration of Cisnormativity

The school guidance documents have minimal consideration of cisnormativity, or the ways in which persistent cisnormativity manifests as continuous microaggressions, making trans children stressed, unwelcome and emotionally unsafe at school.

A wide number of the guides do not even mention the term cisnormativity (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2019; Trans Inclusion Toolkit, 2019; Stonewall, 2020), and whilst others (Equaliteach, 2020) provide a definition, they do not devote space to unpacking how cisnormativity affects trans children's well-being at school.

Overall, the guides give very limited consideration to the systemic changes which are needed to make trans children welcome in our schools. Most of the guidance documents consider the support needed at the point of a pupil's social

transition, but appear unaware of ongoing adaptations that trans pupils may need to tackle institutional cisnormativity (Stonewall, 2020). Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) mentions that trans inclusion requires a whole school and community to shift their thinking and understanding, but does not consider implications in terms of shifts in behaviour or systems. Leeds City Council (2018) mentions the need to build trans youth resilience, without considering school responsibilities to ensure trans youth are not living under stress and discrimination.

Many of the guides, particularly for primary schools (Leeds City Council, 2018), do talk about systemic change when discussing the need to challenge gender stereotypes, including the reduction of gendered restrictions and practices. Although this work is useful to all pupils trans and cis, there needs to be recognition that work on gender stereotypes alone is insufficient to overcome the structural cisnormativity that can make schools a hostile environment for trans children.

## Reactive Rather Than Proactive Approach to Trans Inclusion

Many guides place an important emphasis on listening to each individual child, hearing and understanding their individual needs and preferences. However, most of the guides do not mention the burden an individualised and reactive approach places on the shoulders of trans children. LGBT Youth Scotland (2017) refers to the extent trans pupils have to self-advocate throughout their time in education and the Trans Inclusion Toolkit includes a quote from a trans pupil illustrating the burden when they are forced to educate an unprepared school.

Few of the guides explicitly talk about trans children's rights at school. Stonewall (2020) gives a transition check-list that does not mention explaining to a trans pupil their rights. Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019) particularly fails to centre child rights in suggesting a school's commitment to trans inclusive adaptations will depend on a school's ethos and financial resources. Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019, 19) also fails to centre a child's right to an affirming name or pronoun, framing decisions on pronoun change as a "significant change" to be decided by the school rather than the individual pupil. LGBT Youth Scotland (2017, 28) puts each young trans person at the centre "Ask the young person how they would like you and the school to support them." Without first explaining to a trans child their rights, they may not be aware of how many accommodations they can ask for, especially given the power dynamics at play between cis adults and trans children.

Many of the guides suggest trans inclusion starts at the point of a school knowingly having a pupil ask about transition. The Trans inclusion toolkit emphasises that schools need to provide a trans inclusive environment regardless of whether they knowingly have trans pupils, considering children who have not yet transitioned, as well as pupils who have already transitioned but not disclosed their gender modality. Many of the guides expect trans pupils to make individualised requests before accessing appropriate facilities and expect trans pupils to submit to a review process before gaining permission (National Education Union, 2018; Brighton and Hove City Council, 2019; Trans Inclusion Toolkit,

2019). The guides do not outline the importance of ensuring trans pupils know their rights, or the importance of proactively communicating trans inclusive policies to the school community. Brighton and Hove City Council (2019, 7) is clear that trans pupils should not be made to feel like they are privileged for getting basic accommodations "No trans pupil or student should be made to feel that they are the ones who are causing problems or that they owe anything to their school in return for changes made to support them."

Many of the guides talk about individualised discussions for school and curricular adaptation to an individual pupil—for example Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) talks positively about working with a parent to adapt a lesson on reproduction to ensure it was trans inclusive. There is no consideration of how to ensure adaptations are embedded and sustained, no consideration of the pressure this places on individual pupils or families at a time when pupils and families may be unclear on their rights, and no consideration of the inefficiencies of each trans child negotiating individualised solutions rather than learning from existing good practices. The Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019, 6) makes reference to the burden shouldered by trans pupils tasked with negotiating their own trans-inclusive adaptation—one child expressed hope that the trans inclusion toolkit "will take the responsibility for educating people off me."

## Moderate Emphasis on Inclusion and Representation

Stonewall (2020) and LGBT Youth Scotland (2017) are strong on arguing that an absence of trans representation in our schools sends a negative message, whereas a trans inclusive curriculum embeds positive messages about trans people into regular teaching, normalising trans people as a usual and valued part of our communities. LGBT Youth Scotland (2017, 32) makes clear the case for representation: "Transgender young people typically wait 4 years before talking to someone about their gender identity. During that time, they may not see or hear anything about transgender people, identities or topics at school." They also include a quote from a trans pupil "Definitely there needs to be more transgender inclusion in education—we didn't even get a single mention of being trans at my school" (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017, 32).

The suggested examples of trans inclusion can be limited, with some LGBT guidance documents failing to mention trans examples (Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, 2018). Stonewall (2019) includes a number of examples, but further consideration could be made on how to ensure teachers conduct discussions in a way that affirms trans pupils. Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) commits to inclusive SRE including in teaching on body parts and puberty—ensuring this is validating both for trans pupils and in the impression conveyed to their cis peers.

There is a suggestion across numerous guides that early years and primary work on gender stereotypes equals support for trans students. All pupils will benefit from work on gender stereotypes, but younger trans pupils, who may or may not be gender non-conforming (Olson and Enright, 2018), need additional areas of action. The Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019, 17) is very clear on the point at which trans inclusion is appropriate: "The appropriate age to discuss the existence of trans and LGB people

is the same time it is appropriate to talk about the existence of heterosexual relationships and the existence of boys and girls." This can be contrasted to Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019) which talks about age appropriateness, controversy, and recommends inclusion at secondary school—age 11+.

LGBT Youth Scotland (2019) recommends talking about trans professionals in light of their professional achievements and commenting in passing at the end of a lesson that they are trans, normalising trans people and demonstrating inclusion in action.

## Varied Attention to Teacher Barriers

Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) mentions that school staff can deliberately misgender trans pupils, and are clear that this is a serious concern, an act of harmful behaviour toward a child; as well as highlighting how teachers can inadvertently cause harm through inappropriate questions. Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) explains that poor relationships with teachers can be a risk factor for trans children experiencing poor mental health. LGBT Youth Scotland (2019) provides an example scenario and recommended actions if a teacher is deliberately using the wrong pronoun.

Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019, 6) also highlights a trans child explaining where teachers can make a difference "If one person in school asks the right questions, uses the right name and the right pronouns it can make such a huge difference to a young person. It can help them carry on and live another day." LGBT Youth Scotland (2019, 9) "expects all teachers to be positive role models to all young people in showing respect to transgender young people."

Trans inclusion toolkit ends with an annex of trans child quotes which really highlight the impact when schools fail in their duty of care to trans children, including the ways in which impacts on mental health and self-esteem are undervalued: "*I don't drink all day at school so that I don't have to go to the toilet which means I'm always dehydrated and I get headaches all the time and UTIs. Teachers need to know this because it's easy to ignore all the consequences when it's just our mental health but when it's physical they suddenly listen.*"

Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) mentions importance of training to ensure "all teachers feel confident to support trans children." Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) provides scripts for potential difficult questions from wider parents, but does not examine the prejudices, fears or misconceptions that may impede teachers from being supportive.

Very few of the guides explicitly identify and address barriers that may impede teachers from effectively including and affirming trans pupils. LGBT Youth Scotland (2019) simply states that if staff are reluctant they should be reminded of their duty of care to all learners. The Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019, 6) alludes to teacher related challenges in a quote from a trans child "This toolkit will help people who are scared and sadly, all too often, unwilling to do the right thing."

Equaliteach (2020) dedicates space to identifying and addressing barriers to teachers creating affirming schools, including ensuring support for younger trans children. Equaliteach (2020) considers mandate, leadership, governance, staff support, working groups and efforts to institutionalise and sustain change.

## Low Expectations for Allies and Outcomes

The documents presented a fairly low bar on teacher and staff expectations, with ambitions framed primarily in terms of being a supportive listener and intervening in transphobic bullying. There was little discussion of practical steps teacher allies can take to disrupt cisnormativity, to reduce the stress carried by trans pupils navigating a cisnormative world.

Equaliteach (2020) framed teacher allies as people who would challenge a HBT incident, who are aware of their legal duties and who understand basic trans related terminology. The level of ambition in LGBT Youth Scotland (2017) in terms of standing up for trans children in primary schools is also very low, prioritising avoidance of gender stereotypes. Stonewall (2020) is a document on next steps in LGBT inclusion, but it is still very basic in its ambition on trans affirmative education. It largely focuses on gender stereotypes, on the fact trans people exist and on supporting pupils who transition to access their legal minimum rights, without commitment to more systemic change.

Brighton and Hove City Council (2019, 6) sets its ambition higher on "developing whole school policy and practice that will allow trans children and young people to achieve at school." However, the included parent case studies imply satisfaction at basic accommodations of trans children in schools, giving an impression that a school not discriminating against trans pupils is a success. One case study written in a partially positive way included examples of significant school failure—a child never going to the toilet at school—suggesting low parental expectations.

Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019, 13) calls for higher ambition, emphasising that poor outcomes are not intrinsic to being trans and that schools have a crucial responsibility: "It is vital that schools and education settings don't present negative outcomes as expected futures to children and families. Staff should work to mitigate risk, safeguard children and families and support the development of positive outcomes."

## Varied Commitment to Child Voice and Child Rights

The school guidance documents vary in how effectively they centre trans children's rights, and in how much they listen to trans children's voices, experience, concerns, and priorities.

The guides vary in their commitment to child rights. Several guides reference the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Trans Inclusion Toolkit, 2019), outlining that trans pupils "should be involved in all decisions affecting them, understand any action which is taken and why; and be at the centre of any decision making" (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017, 8). Several guides reference trans children's right to privacy (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2019; Trans Inclusion Toolkit, 2019), and their right to an education free from discrimination and prejudice (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017). Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) states categorically that trans children have the right to access correct facilities, though in one section appears to qualify this right: "As far as possible, trans pupils and students should be able to sleep in dorms appropriate to their gender identity."

The degree to which guides centre child rights is central to their approach to social transition. Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019, 19) describes their approach as informed by a child rights based approach, yet balances a trans child's wish to transition with "the need to protect the child from the negative reaction of others." Decision making around transition is thus put in the hands of adult staff—likely to be cis. A genuinely child-centred approach is found in LGBT Youth Scotland (2017), which is clear that decision making on transition timelines is in the hands of the trans pupil, stating that "delaying a transgender young person's wish to transition could negatively affect their mental health." Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) and the Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) both emphasise that a school's duty when working with parents or guardians is to represent the interests of the child, to ensure the child's voice is heard and to be their advocate.

The guides vary in how much they centre trans children's voices, with the Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) strong on including trans children's quotes throughout. Brighton and Hove City Council (2019) is a third edition that has been developed and informed by "the voice of trans children, young people, adults and their parents and carers." In terms of giving platforms for trans children to share their experiences, Stonewall (2020) includes an example of a secondary school where confident trans pupils are invited to give assemblies to all students on their experiences and how others can help. However, the example from a primary school is just on gender stereotypes, leading to a question on whether there is prioritisation on hearing the voice of younger trans pupils.

Many of the guides explicitly prioritise asking pupils prior to a social transition their views on their needs and preferences in terms of their individual transition. There is not a similar commitment to asking trans pupils who have already transitioned to share their views on systemic changes that would make the school better for themselves and current and future trans pupils. Education Authority Northern Ireland (2019) however, did include examples of gaining the views of trans pupils through meetings with the deputy head and through a confidential survey.

The Trans Inclusion Toolkit (2019) has a trans inclusion checklist for a school to self-complete, likely from the perspective of cis teachers or school administrators who do not directly experience the challenges that trans pupils face in a cisnormative school. It would be more ambitious if schools sought a trans pupil perspective on whether the school is matching up to its ambitions on trans inclusion.

## CONCLUSION

In terms of trans-positivity, many, but not all, of the recent school guidance documents are prioritising affirmative language when writing about trans children. Language plays an important role in how school staff understand and engage with trans children and adolescents, and efforts to avoid pathologisation and ensure trans-positivity are critical. The majority of documents included emphasis on trans visibility and representation, though only few of them outline the reasons for the importance of visibility. Some

schools provide visibility targeted at trans pupils, so they can see a positive future for themselves, while failing to note the equal importance of trans visibility for cis pupils, to increase the legitimacy of trans lives, and to reduce the burden on trans pupils to educate and explain themselves to their peers. For trans pupils in our nursery, primary and secondary schools, questioning and ignorance exert a daily toll, a burden that is unreasonable for young shoulders to carry. Visibility and representation have multiple important benefits, letting trans pupils know that they are not alone, giving reassurance that the school supports and will stand up for trans pupils, providing a sense of school belonging to trans pupils, and legitimising trans pupils in front of their cis peers.

The literature identifies some shifts needed in trans inclusive education. At the heart this represents a shift in expectations and ambition for trans pupils, from aspiring for resilience and protection from violence and abuse, to aspiring for self-confident, secure pupils who are validated and represented both in daily school life and across the curriculum, children with equality of opportunity to their cis peers, pupils who can excel and thrive at school. In one interview a school head teacher approvingly remarked that trans pupils weren't looking for basic safety or basic access to facilities, they "wanted everything to change" (Sadowski and Jennings, 2016, 83). Given the growing numbers of trans children confident to come out in our schools (Telfer et al., 2015), schools need to give greater consideration of how they can ensure the well-being of these children, helping them grow up as happy, healthy and supported members of our schools (Neary, 2019).

One critical shift is from a narrow definition of school safety to a focus on emotional safety. Violence and transphobic abuse remain serious concerns for too many trans pupils. Yet, even in contexts where schools have a commitment to protection from transphobic bullying, trans pupils experience cisnormative microaggressions that impact on their well-being. Commitment to tackling intentional transphobic bullying is very important, but it is only a first step toward a positive school climate for trans pupils, not an end goal. Underpinning this shift is commitment to understanding the ways in which trans pupils experience and are negatively impacted by systemic cisnormativity, the additional burden this places on trans pupils' shoulders and the cumulative toll it takes. Cisnormativity contributes to minority stress (Meyer, 2003), negatively impacting on well-being and mental health.

A second key shift is in acknowledging the barriers to trans-emancipatory education. There are pressures and disincentives to trans-inclusive practice that need to be recognised and strategically addressed. These barriers include the culture of silence surrounding LGBT and especially trans lives in schools, with educators in the UK still constrained by the after-effects of discriminatory legislation such as section 28. Teacher attitudes and confidence combine to create a second barrier that needs to be addressed, with a complex interplay between teachers who are prejudiced, teachers who feel creating a trans inclusive atmosphere is political (in a way that cisnormativity is not considered political), teachers who deprioritize the needs of trans children in view of assumed parental conservatism, and the teachers who feel under-trained or under-supported to act. Clear leadership is essential, and in the absence of strong

trans-inclusive leadership at national level this leadership and commitment needs to be shown by governors, head teachers and individual members of staff.

A third shift that is needed is from individualised accommodation to proactive adaptation. Many school staff undergoing trans-inclusivity training perceive it as not directly relevant to their practice as they do not knowingly have a trans pupil in their class. However, given prevalence estimates, most teachers will have taught a trans pupil, they may just not have been aware. At present, trans-inclusive adaptations are too often prompted by a specific pupil, a "sacrificial lamb" who sends a school into "panic," and for whom individualised adaptations are made, adaptations that may not be sustained or transferred to wider classes. The pressure that this individualised approach puts on pioneer children and families is immense and unreasonable. The current emphasis on following an individual child's needs and preferences is absolutely critical, but this should not be a replacement for schools making pre-emptive and sustained changes to benefit current and future trans pupils.

The fourth shift that is required is from accommodation to a rights and responsibilities based approach. Current emphasis in schools is on asking trans students what they want and seeing what adaptations can be accommodated, a "negotiation" approach. Trans pupils and families may not be aware of their rights, or may be uncomfortable claiming their rights. A child rights based approach emphasizes the entitlements that trans pupils have, and is clear that these rights are neither negotiable or limitable. There also needs to be a shift from individual rights to institutional responsibilities, ensuring schools are fulfilling their duty of care to trans pupils.

Lastly, we must raise our ambition of what it means to be an effective ally to trans pupils. The bar needs to be raised from a basic level of respect—using correct pronouns, not discriminating against trans pupils, intervening in cases of abuse—to shifting the systemic injustices that harm trans pupils. Integral to this is an understanding of cisnormativity within education systems and cultures, and the ways in which cisnormativity privileges cisgender individuals and makes life harder for trans pupils. Trans pupils shoulder a triple burden of persistent often unintentional delegitimisation; having to, often single-handedly, educate about gender diversity and cisnormativity; and having to self-advocate for their right to a trans-inclusive school. In the absence of effective and informed allies, trans pupils face this challenge alone. This burden is even harder to bear for the many trans pupils facing additional stresses, including those who have unsupportive or abusive families, those facing harassment and hate inside and outside of school, and those with wider intersecting axes of marginalisation including disabled trans children, neurodiverse trans children and trans children of colour.

## LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study has relied on secondary data, including analysis of existing literature and school guidance documents. The literature review provides limited insight on intersectional experiences,

for example on the experiences of disabled, neurodiverse or black trans children. The literature has limited consideration of non-binary or gender fluid children, and limited data on trans children who are not supported at home. Finally the literature has limited first-hand accounts from trans children of their experiences, especially from younger pre-adolescent trans children. The conclusions and recommendations in this study can be strengthened through interviews and analysis with key informants including teachers, youth workers and parents of trans children. The research can be further improved by targeted interviews with trans children, gaining their insights into the findings and recommendations outlined above,

additional steps that will be part of ongoing PhD research by the author.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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# Correlate Attitudes Toward LGBT and Sexism in Spanish Psychology Students

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The present study evaluates the correlations between sexism, homonegativity, binegativity, pro-trans attitudes, political affiliation, contact with LGBT individuals and perceived stigma among psychology students. A study was conducted with 655 cis women (471 heterosexuals, 179 bisexuals and lesbians) and 174 cis men (120 heterosexuals, 54 bisexuals and gays). Descriptive, multivariate analysis of variance, bivariate correlations and multiple regression were used. In general, the groups of men and heterosexuals obtained higher negativity scores and lower acceptance scores, with significant correlations being more frequent in the heterosexual group. Predictive models confirmed the literature on social and ideological conservatism.

Keywords: homonegativity, binegativity, pro-trans, sexism, *ex post* facto study

## INTRODUCTION

One half century after the famous Stonewall uprising in New York City, the violence faced by lesbians (L), gays (G), bisexuals (B), and trans individuals (T) continues to be a social reality. In Spain, one of the countries where LGBT individuals enjoy the greatest number of rights (ILGA, 2019) and where more than 80% of the population supports education on the subjects of gender identity and sexual-emotional diversity (Eurobarometer, 2019), the situation has not always been ideal. For example, in 1975, according to a survey done by the *Revista Guadiana* magazine, 83% of the population believed that homosexuality and everything associated with it (such as trans) should disappear (Mora, 2018). Despite progress, concerns remain about the threat to LGBT rights. In fact, since 2011 Spain has dropped 10 spots to eleventh place due to the absence of legislation that guarantees protection (ILGA, 2019). According to the Eurobarometer (2019), the low perception of discrimination held by the population (between 39 and 54% according to the area) contrasts with an increase in hate crime incidents: from 169 in 2015 to 271 in 2017 (Ministry of the Interior, 2018); or from 107 in 2015 (Martín-Peréz et al., 2016) to 623 in 2017 (Rebollo et al., 2018).

There are no clear numbers about incidents in the university context, although some studies have cautioned that Spanish universities are not violence-free areas (FELGTB, 2013; Rebollo et al., 2018). Incidents involving Spanish professors (Borraz, 2018; Peñalver, 2018) and campaigns carried out by organizations opposed to educational coexistence and inclusion (Arribas, 2019) serve as more general indicators of these systems of violence.

Because of the possibility of differentiating hate crimes or incidents against the LGBT community from others, the motivation can be deduced: LGBTphobia, a motivation based on a

set of beliefs that result in abuse and discrimination. An incident is the more visible consequence of imperceptible attitudes. The study of attitudes, however, has received less attention. While institutions focus on consequences that expose an urgent social problem (Cvetkovich, 2018), there are other forms of hate that do not manifest themselves in the form of an incident or crime: the expression of negative attitudes.

The discourses of the various social and health sciences have also been imbued with these negative attitudes, in particular psychology. Inside this discipline, the clinical branch monopolized the study of working with LGBT individuals. In Spain, the discipline maintained a pathologizing discourse until the mid-1980s (Mora, 2018). However, an international evolution, guided by American psychology, had several phases. Beginning in the 1930s and until the 1970s, within the paradigm of differences in personality features, a wide range of theories and tools were developed to justify the inferiority of women and to detect and/or correct deviations in gender expression, orientation and identity (López-Sáez et al., 2019). It was not until 1975 that the American Psychological Association supported eliminating homosexuality as a disorder, one year later than its psychiatric colleagues working on the DSM-II. Four years later, the same situation occurred with transsexuality in the DSM-III. While in theory, homosexuality and transsexuality officially disappeared as disorders, in reality, they continued to be pathologized in other categories (Grau, 2017). The evolution of the two "sick-making" processes (homosexuality and trans) followed the same course in that the malaise was attributed to not following the cisheteronormative patterns used as diagnostic indicators of identity disorders. Moreover, until quite recently, Spanish psychologists continued to employ instruments with items whose contents were used to "diagnose" this split (Marano, 2009).

However, as observed in the recent literature on the subject (Meyer, 2003; López-Sáez et al., 2019), thanks to criticism from social psychology and other disciplines, some transformations took place. The perspective of the pathologizing diagnosis that placed responsibility on the transgressor of the norm (traditional, heterosexual and cisgender femininity/masculinity) using tools to evaluate personality features was replaced by one that problematized those who penalized the transgressions using evaluations. The scientific literature has described these attitudes as phobias or negativities. Although some authors currently defend the use of an umbrella term like "sexual prejudice" (Herek and McLemore, 2013), this study prefers to recognize differentiation, linkages and the idiosyncrasies of different LGBT individuals.

The order in which the studies of each negativity regarding dissident identities emerged is not arbitrary in a scientific tradition that has focused on male homosexuality. The tradition of measuring homonegativity is more extensive when compared to binegativity or transnegativity. Initially, consistent with Alfred Kinsey's polarized classifications and Michael Storms's dimensional focus, works concentrated on looking at phobia toward gays and lesbians (Smith, 1971; Weinberg, 1972).

The term "phobia" in and of itself has been the object of theoretical discussion, since the fear and apprehension linked to its meaning limits the inclusion of a wide range of negative connotative inferences, cognitions and feelings (Hudson and Ricketts, 1980; Fyfe, 1983; Haaga, 1991; Logan, 1996). Given this, a proposal was made to use "homonegativity" (Hudson and Ricketts, 1980) to define the valence of the type of attribution, and "heterosexism" (Herek, 1992; Nakayama, 1998) to reveal the place of heterosexual privilege. However, the term that continues to be most often used on a colloquial basis is "homophobia" (Borrillo, 2001). On the basis of the given definitions, homonegativity can be summarized as attitudes prejudiced against gay-lesbian identity or anything associated with it. "Anything associated with it" is understood to refer to deviations from the coherence between gender expression, erotic desire and assigned gender identity. Therefore, homonegativity is not only experienced by LG, but also by other individuals whose deviation is associated with homosexuality, for example, an effeminate man or a masculine woman (Guash, 2006).

Some studies have argued that socialization in heterosexual masculinity is in and of itself homophobia, since it views male femininity as a threat (Worthington et al., 2002; Warriner et al., 2013). In that respect, a number of previous studies have found connections between those who inhabit a gender identity as men, sexism, homophobia and conservatism (Warriner et al., 2013; Worthen, 2013; Dierckx et al., 2017; Rye et al., 2019).

Looking back, the first tools that measured homonegativity – although this was not their objective – were the masculinity scales of the 1930s (López-Sáez and García-Dauder, 2020). However, the first instruments explicitly created for that purpose began to appear in the 1970s, when the paradigm shifted and specific tools to detect manifest negative attitudes were developed (Hudson and Ricketts, 1980; Aguero et al., 1984). During the 1990s and beyond, the emphasis was placed on detecting more subtle beliefs (O'Donohue and Caselles, 1993; Wright et al., 1999). Currently, the academic debate is focusing on searching for theories and instruments to provide information that can detect more imperceptible and modern forms of homonegativity. According to Morrison and Morrison (2002), one of the most often cited works, some of the most prominent beliefs that characterize these less visible forms argue that: the question of inequality is outdated, rarely encountered today and is not serious; demands for rights are exaggerated and radical; and homosexuality is tolerable, as long as its expressions are not aired. In addition, the results found by Morrison and Morrison (2002) showed higher scores for heterosexual men than for women and support the presence of correlations among political conservatism, sexism, and homonegativity.

Recent works have found additional connections on which new beliefs are based: sexist perspectives that establish spheres of masculinity and femininity are related to considerations regarding the supposed suitability of gays and lesbians for specific stereotyped roles (Walls, 2008); being part of cisheterosexual privilege correlates with disinterest (willful ignorance) of LGBT realities (Brownfield et al., 2018); and the false respectability of any orientation, as long as it is kept outside the family (Walls, 2008).

The interest in attitudes toward bisexuals has been much more recent in the empirical literature (Mulick and Wright, 2002), despite their being a majority in the LGBT community

(Copen et al., 2016), having worse mental and physical health (Shearer et al., 2016) and being more affected by stressors like abuse and cyberabuse (Kann et al., 2018). The term "biphobia" did not appear until 1992 (Bennett, 1992) and although the authors of the most widely used scale were still using it in 2008 (Mulick and Wright, 2002), in the 2012 revision, Yost and Thomas recommended using "binegativity," for reasons similar to those surrounding the use of "homonegativity." The delay was due to the categorization of biphobia as part of homophobia. This explanation is based on the idea that desire for the same gender identity is read as transgressing the heterosexual norm. However, although homophobia and biphobia share some roots because of the heteronormative split, bisexuals also break from the monosexuality implied by gay-lesbian desire. Biphobia is the result of a dual delimited dichotomy between heterosexual-homosexual and men-women (Hertlein et al., 2016). Bisexual invisibility is a consequence of the belief that defines bisexuality as an invalid or unreal orientation (Burke and LaFrance, 2016), confusion or indecision (Dyar et al., 2017) or transition (Alarie and Gaudet, 2013) in the best of cases. The first scales that approached binegativity as a separate entity outside the umbrella of homosexuality focused on the attitudes of the heterosexual population (Eliason, 1997) and later included gays and lesbians (Mulick and Wright, 2002). Mulick and Wright (2002) were the first to highlight the importance of sexual orientation in measuring biphobia, raising the possibility that negative attitudes come not only from heterosexuals, but also from gays and lesbians. Their results showed a higher level of biphobia among heterosexuals, correlations among homophobia, biphobia and conservative beliefs, and a higher intensity of correlations in the heterosexual sample. Current studies continue to investigate the nuances of sexual orientation in the negative assessment of bisexuality: from the heterosexual perspective, bisexual women/men are "lacking in real desire"/"embarrassing to manhood," and from the lesbian-gay point of view, they are "traitors and heterosexuals"/"not daring to face stigma and true gays" (Matsick and Conley, 2016; Matsick and Rubin, 2018). Yost and Thomas (2012), in turn, highlight the importance of considering gender identity as a key variable for a better understanding of the construct of binegativity. Their results indicate greater binegativity against bisexual men among heterosexual men.

Alongside these deviations from the paths that guide desire toward heterosexuality and shape correct gender expressions (Ahmed, 2019), others have emerged that question the medical identity assigned at birth (Fausto-Sterling, 2006). These trans and gender diverse (fluid or non-conformist) individuals experience more violence, as different axes of oppression, such as sexism, homophobia and the like, intersect in them. This was highlighted by data in the report "Being Trans in the EU" (FRA, 2014), which found that trans individuals experience greater discrimination in the workplace, education and healthcare, among other areas. They are subjected to violence that depends on performative success according to cisheteronorms (CIDH, 2015).

The amount of violence contrasts with the lack of systematic research into the attitudes that generate it (Hill and Willoughby,

2005; Kanamori et al., 2017). Nonetheless, the first studies of this phenomenon appeared a decade before studies on homonegativity. Initial interest in measuring transphobia can be explained by theories on the subject of the paradigm of gender identity developed by Robert Stoller and John Money in the 1950s and 60s. The first instrument sought to explore "negative attitudes toward trans" among health professionals (Green et al., 1966). However, it was not until 2002 that Hill used the term "transphobia," conceptualized as hatred or emotional repugnance toward those who do not meet the cisheteronorm imposed by a stereotyped dualist ideology (Hill, 2002). In the same vein, other studies refined the measurements and components that form part of transphobia. Furthermore, these studies brought clarity to the connections between the prejudices that share roots in terms of gender transgression (whether expression, roles or sexuality), as shown by the positive and significant correlations among transphobia, LGBnegativity, sexism (Hill and Willoughby, 2005; Tebbe et al., 2014) and political conservatism (Nagoshi et al., 2008). Additionally, according to Nagoshi et al. (2008), gender identity is an important variable that differentiates men from women in that women were less transferable and their transphobia could be predicted on the basis of benevolent sexism.

In 2017, Kanamori et al. (2017) preferred to speak of "attitudes toward trans" and added culturally important elements like advances in civil rights and beliefs associated with biology and conservative and religious moralities. In this way, they proposed an approach focused more on the acceptance of trans people and less on negativity. Their results indicated that the gender identity of the evaluators makes a difference, with men scoring lowest in trans acceptance on all dimensions.

As seen above, various negative beliefs pervade the narrative about LGBT in the form of emotional inferences and attributions and conduct. Through them, an amalgam of explicit and/or subtle rejections are reflected that comprise ambivalence patterns that change over time. This structure is similar to the construct of sexism, where different models have posited a more modern, subtle, benevolent bidimensionality on the one hand, and a more traditional, explicit and hostile one on the other (Glick and Fiske, 1997). Sexism is defined by beliefs that justify the supremacy of the male over the female; delimit the roles, characteristics and behaviors suitable for men and women; establish heterosexuality as obligatory and necessary for the maintenance of power; and consider any opportunity for equality to be excessive and unnecessary. Consequently, the analogy between sexism and other constructs seems to comply with an ideology that establishes situations of subordination and subjugation for those who depart from the prescribed course.

Therefore, it is no surprise that, as with sexism, male subjects tend to score higher and correlate positively with the different constructs that define negative attitudes toward LGBT people. In other words, based on previous literature, gender identity has been a key variable in determining the levels of LGBTnegativity and sexism. However, this is not the only variable, since sexual orientation intersects with gender identity, configuring normality and queer. LGBT people may display negative attitudes toward any of the acronyms in their group and even against their own,

due to an internalization of cisheteronorms. However, few studies have advanced in fully understanding attitudes toward LGBT individuals (with a measurement that takes into account more than one or two of the constructs seen) and the importance of the intersection of gender and sexual orientation (Worthen, 2013; Tebbe et al., 2014).

All of the scales and theories about negativities share connections, being based on conservative ideological and sexist concepts. A large number of studies view political conservatism and sexism as predictor variables when it comes to anticipating anti-LGBT attitudes (Warriner et al., 2013; Austin and Jackson, 2019). Other studies indicate a lack of contact with LGBT individuals as a variable that is closely connected with levels of negativity (Lytle and Levy, 2015; Badenes-Ribera et al., 2016; Dierckx et al., 2017).

The aim of this study, carried out with heterosexual and LGB individuals, is to promote an understanding of the correlations among each of the constructs examined above, as well as their connection to sexism, political conservatism, contact networks and perceived or experienced stigmatization. The analysis is situated in the current Spanish context where, despite advances, social, professional and academic arguments in the field of psychology continue to be made that endorse discriminatory positions (De Benito, 2005; Ruíz, 2019; Villascusa, 2019). Furthermore, studies of attitudes toward LGBT individuals in the context of education have barely mapped the Spanish university situation (Penna, 2012; Varo et al., 2015) and even less so in the field of psychology. In the Spanish context, it is noteworthy that there are no compulsory classes on gender, diversity and health in the psychology degree, particularly given that the basic degree allows graduates to practice professionally as psychologists with all the legal competencies and functions of the profession. Therefore, and more than ever, the recommendations found in the APA (2012, 2015) guidelines and other organizations are relevant. They call for a review of the attitudes of future generations of professional psychologists (Kite and Bryant-Lees, 2016). We argue that have an understanding of the collective thinking regarding sex and gender diversity and better comprehending the relationships between negativities and the factors that underpin them, is essential for an initial screening of the situation in Spain.

# MATERIALS AND METHODS

## Participants

A representative sample of 831 students from three public universities in Madrid who are studying psychology took part. Regarding the academic year, 50% belonged to the first cycle (first and second academic years) and 50% to the second cycle (third and fourth academic years).

## Instruments

Except for the questionnaire on sociodemographic aspects, the scales used a response format from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) in order to avoid neutral answer trends and to homogenize the survey information.

## Sociodemographic Questionnaire

This included gender identity, sexual orientation, age, academic year, nationality, socioeconomic level, political affiliation, contact and perceived stigma.

For gender identity, although the student sample had originally been selected on the basis of the data provided to each university, the question was asked again to avoid any inaccuracies. The self-report provided several closed options (cis man, cis woman, trans man, trans woman, fluid gender, non-binary gender) and one open option that could be filled in (for people who did not choose from one the above categories).

For sexual orientation, like gender identity, several closed categories were offered (heterosexual, gay-lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, demisexual) and one open one that could be filled in.

For the academic year (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th) and for nationality, closed categories were offered with the full range of options. For age, participants wrote down the number that corresponded to them.

For political affiliation, a single-element measurement was used (Gerbner et al., 1984), based on a 4-point Likert scale (left = 1, center-left = 2, center-right = 3, right = 4) and the political affiliation variable appears as "political conservatism or right-wing political".

For contact, three items were used that asked about the existence or lack of contact with LG, B, and T individuals in some social circle. These items used a dichotomous response format (yes = 1, no = 2) and the contact variable appears as "lack of contact or no contact".

Perceived stigma was determined by the question used by Hertlein et al. (2016): "Is it ever easier or preferable to not self-identify your sexual orientation in certain situations or with certain people?" The response option was dichotomous (yes = 1, no = 2).

## Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

In its short version, this consists of 12 items to evaluate sexism using two subscales that measure hostile sexism (ASI-HS) and benevolent sexism (ASI-BS). Rollero et al. (2014) report a good alpha coefficient of internal consistency (ASI-HS, $\alpha = 0.85$; ASI-BS, $\alpha = 0.80$). In this study, the internal consistencies were 0.84 and 0.70, respectively.

## Modern Homonegativity Scale (MHS)

This 24-item scale measures contemporary negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians. The items "gay men/lesbian women who are 'out of the closet' should be admired for their courage" were found to be particularly ambiguous and were, thus, eliminated. The highest scores indicate greater contemporary negativity. Morrison and Morrison (2002) report alpha coefficients with optimal internal consistency for gays ($\alpha = 0.91$) and lesbians ($\alpha = 0.87$). In this study, the internal consistencies were 0.87 and 0.88, respectively.

## Biphobia Scale (BphS)

This scale consists of 30 items that provide a measurement of negative attitudes toward bisexuality. Despite including items

that touch on cognitive, emotional and behavioral factors, it is unidimensional. The higher scores indicate greater binegativity. Mulick and Wright (2002) report an alpha coefficient of internal consistency of 0.94. In this study, the internal consistency was 0.81.

### Transgender Attitude and Belief Scale (TABS)

This 29-item scale measures attitudes toward trans individuals through three dimensions: interpersonal comfort; beliefs regarding gender identity; and human value. High scores indicate a greater degree of acceptance of trans diversity. The items were adapted, replacing the term "transgender" with "trans," since that picks up on a greater variety of identities and gender expressions that diverge from the gender medically that was assigned at birth (for example: transgender, transsexual, gender fluid or non-binary, queer, etc.) Kanamori et al. (2017) report an optimal alpha coefficient of internal consistency ($\alpha$ = 0.98). In this study, the internal consistency was 0.88.

## Procedure

A stratified random sampling was used with proportional allocation for each of the three universities. Out of a total population of 3,745 students, the sample size was determined for a confidence level of 95%, a maximum variability and a maximum error of ±3%. The groups for each level were selected randomly. The selection of participants followed proportional criteria according to gender identity (men, women) and the academic year recorded in the academic records of each university. The rejection rate of the selected individuals was 30%. At two of the universities, the selected individuals were contacted when attending one of their face-to-face classes. At another university, people were contacted by email. In any case, all participants accessed an online questionnaire. All the participants received the same instructions and were informed that their participation was voluntary and their responses confidential. Before beginning, they had to read and accept the informed consent. The study was approved by the Autónoma University Research Ethics Committee, which coordinated the study.

## RESULTS

## Descriptive Statistics

In total, 79% of the participants were cis women and 21% cis men. Due to the low sample size ($N$ = 2), trans students were excluded from the analysis for this study. Among the cis women, 72.7% identified themselves as heterosexual, 25.8% as bisexual and 1.5% as lesbian. Among the cis men, 69% identified themselves as heterosexual, 13.8% as bisexual and 17.2% as gay. The ages ranged from 17 to 60 (asymmetry = 6.09, Mdn = 20, Mo = 19). Almost all the participants self-identified as middle-lower class (36.1%) or middle-upper class (57.3%), while very few considered themselves either lower class (4.7%) or upper class (1.9%). With regard to political affiliation, 42.2% identified with the left, 35.7% with the centre-left, 19.5% with the centre-right and 2.5% with the right.

Due to the small sample size of gay ($N$ = 30) and lesbian ($N$ = 10) individuals, when segmenting by gender identity, they were grouped with the bisexuals, leaving one LGB group ($N$ = 233) and one heterosexual group ($N$ = 596). Additionally, the homonegativity scores toward gays and homonegativity scores toward lesbians were averaged to obtain a single score in order to prevent problems of collinearity and to be able to make comparisons with the other scales that did not provide a specific negativity according to gender identity.

Descriptive statistics were obtained for each variable, along with a visual examination of histogram and normality tests. The scores for each dimension were calculated by averaging the items.

**Table 1** presents the means and standard deviations by gender identity (men/women) and sexual orientation (heterosexuals/LGB) for MHS, BphS, TABS, ASI, political conservatism, lack of contact, and perceived stigma.

## Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Differences in gender identity and sexual orientation were analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The scales related to political conservatism, lack of contact and perceived stigma were considered dependant variables, while gender identity and sexual orientation were the independent variables.

The results from the MANOVA indicated significances in the interaction (gender identity/sexual orientation) $F(10, 816) = 3.64$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$.

In MHS, the interaction between gender identity and sexual orientation was significant [$F(1, 825) = 5.50$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.007$]. This type of interaction requires simple-effects analyses to be interpreted without error (see León and Montero, 2015). The simple-effects analyses for gender identity showed that significant differences existed between heterosexual men and women [$F(1, 594) = 21.09$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$] and LGB [$F(1, 231) = 4.45$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$], with men scoring higher. The simple-effects analyses for sexual orientation showed that for both women [$F(1, 653) = 80.58$,

**TABLE 1 |** Means and standard deviations by gender identity and sexual orientation.

| | Heterosexuals | | | | LGB | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Men | | Women | | Men | | Women | |
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |
| Homonegativity (MHS) | 2.38 | 1.04 | 1.91 | 0.75 | 1.52 | 0.60 | 1.38 | 0.40 |
| Binegativity (BphS) | 1.27 | 0.39 | 1.16 | 0.22 | 1.16 | 0.21 | 1.07 | 0.10 |
| Pro-trans (TABS) | 5.37 | 0.68 | 5.64 | 0.42 | 5.65 | 0.46 | 5.79 | 0.22 |
| Hostile sexism (ASI-HS) | 2.15 | 0.99 | 1.53 | 0.63 | 1.39 | 0.54 | 1.30 | 0.50 |
| Benevolent sexism (ASI-BS) | 2.26 | 0.98 | 1.98 | 0.70 | 1.99 | 0.71 | 1.76 | 0.60 |
| Right-wing political | 2.04 | 0.87 | 1.97 | 0.83 | 1.43 | 0.63 | 1.42 | 0.65 |
| No LG contact | 1.23 | 0.43 | 1.09 | 0.29 | 1.04 | 0.19 | 1.04 | 0.21 |
| No B contact | 1.27 | 0.45 | 1.20 | 0.40 | 1.06 | 0.23 | 1.04 | 0.21 |
| No T contact | 1.93 | 0.25 | 1.82 | 0.39 | 1.50 | 0.51 | 1.61 | 0.49 |
| Perceived stigma | 0.03 | 0.18 | 0.07 | 0.25 | 0.83 | 0.38 | 0.82 | 0.39 |

$p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.11$] and men [$F(1, 172) = 31.32$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.15$], heterosexuals scored higher than LGB for homonegativity.

In ASI-HS, the interaction between gender identity and sexual orientation was significant [$F(1, 825) = 18.01$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$]. The simple-effects analyses for gender identity showed significant differences between heterosexual men and women [$F(1, 594) = 70.88$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.11$], with the men scoring higher. However, among LGB individuals [$F(1, 231) = 1.34$, $p = 0.25$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.006$] there were no significant differences. The simple-effects analyses for sexual orientation showed that for both women [$F(1, 653) = 20.42$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$] and men [$F(1, 172) = 28.03$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.14$], heterosexuals scored higher than LGB for this type of sexism.

The interactions between gender identity and sexual orientation were also significant regarding lack of LG contact [$F(1, 825) = 7.14$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.009$] and T contact [$F(1, 825) = 8.86$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.011$]. The simple-effects analyses for gender identity showed significant differences between heterosexual men and women in the lack of LG contacts [$F(1, 594) = 17.63$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$] and T contacts [$F(1, 594) = 9.50$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$], with men scoring higher. However, there were no significant differences among LGB individuals [LG, $F(1, 231) = 0.06$, $p = 0.81$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.0002$; T, $F(1, 231) = 2.03$ $p = 0.16$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.009$]. The simple-effects analyses for sexual orientation showed significant differences among both women [LG, $F(1, 653) = 4.36$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.007$; T, $F(1, 653) = 33.25$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$] and men [LG, $F(1, 172) = 10.55$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$; T, $F(1, 172) = 57.37$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.25$], with heterosexuals scoring higher.

In ASI-BS, BphS and TABS, both gender identity and sexual orientation showed significant primary effects. The primary-effects analyses for gender identity in ASI-BS [$F(1, 825) = 14.51$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$] and BphS [$F(1, 825) = 22.83$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$] showed significant differences between men and women, with men scoring higher. The primary-effects analyses for sexual orientation showed significant differences between heterosexuals and LGB individuals [ASI-BS, $F(1, 825) = 13.18$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$; BphS, $F(1, 825) = 19.22$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$], with heterosexuals scoring higher. Similarly, but conversely, in TABS, the primary-effects analyses for gender identity [$F(1, 825) = 25.01$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$] and sexual orientation [$F(1, 825) = 27.38$, $p < 0.001$ $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$] showed significant differences between men and women and between heterosexuals and LGB individuals, with women in both groups and LGB individuals scoring higher.

Finally, the primary-effects analyses for sexual orientation in political conservatism [$F(1, 825) = 62.50$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$] and lack of B contact [$F(1, 825) = 30.13$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$] showed significant differences between heterosexuals and LGB, with heterosexuals scoring higher. Conversely, in the primary-effects analysis for sexual orientation in perceived stigma [$F(1, 825) = 853.71$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.51$], LGB individuals scored higher.

## Correlations and Multiple Regression Analysis

A bivariate correlation analysis was done using the same variables. The correlations were estimated using Spearman's ρ coefficient due to the violation of the assumptions of continuity or normality in all of the pairs of variables. **Table 2** shows the correlations for MHS, BphS, and TABS with themselves and with ASI-BS and ASI-HS, political conservatism and perception of stigma for heterosexual men and women and LGB individuals.

Additionally, a multiple regression analysis was carried out using the stepwise method. The model analysis was done separately for four groups according to gender identity and orientation. Moreover, and according to the pertinent literature, homo-binegativity (MHS and BphS) and pro-trans attitudes (TABS) were predicted based on sexism (ASI-BS and ASI-HS) and political conservatism. The predictive potential of the models was done using the adjusted $R^2$ statistic, while the predictive potential of each predictor was evaluated using its standardized dependent variable with confidence intervals of 95%. The assumptions were evaluated using collinearity statistics, Q-Q and residual plots and the Durbin-Watson statistic.

The results in **Table 3** present the analyses of the model for men and women for the MHS, BphS, and TABS predictions.

As the tolerances for all the variables introduced were above 0.10, multicollinearity between the predictors was discarded.

Among the heterosexual women, both sexism (ASI-HS and ASI-BS) and political conservatism were predictor variables on the whole for MHS and BphS and negatively for TABS. On the contrary, among LB women, only ASI-HS was a predictor for MHS and BphS (since TABS had no predictors).

Among men, the components of the predictor models were more heterogenous. Among heterosexual men, ASI-HS and political conservatism were positive predictors for MHS, and both sexisms (ASI-HS and ASI-BS) for BphS, while both sexisms and political conservatism were negative predictors for TABS. Among GB, both sexisms positively predicted MHS and negatively predicted TABS. All the determination coefficients were above 0.35, with most of the cases having moderate to high level predictions.

## DISCUSSION

This study has made it possible to explore the correlations between constructs and analyze their behavior and the differences between heterosexual men and women and LGB individuals. It also contributes to the theoretical postulates regarding predictor variables related to LGBT-negativity.

The results affirm that sexual orientation is a determinant variable with regard to the degree of LGBT-negativity. In this respect, LGB individuals show less sociopolitical conservatism (with a political affiliation inclined toward the left and fewer sexist beliefs) and less homo-binegativity, as well as attitudes that are more favorable toward trans individuals, more contacts with LGBT individuals and a lower perception of stigma. Moreover, regarding MHS, ASI-HS and the lack of LG and T contacts, gender identity indicated significant differences. While

**TABLE 2 |** Correlations and correlations by gender identity and sexual orientation.

| | Heterosexuals | | | LGB | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Homonegativity (MHS) | Binegativity (BphS) | Pro-trans (TABS) | Homonegativity (MHS) | Binegativity (BphS) | Pro-trans (TABS) |
| **Men** | | | | | | |
| Binegativity (BphS) | 0.46** | | | 0.50** | | |
| Pro-trans (TABS) | −0.59** | −0.63** | | −0.54** | −0.46** | |
| Hostile sexism (ASI-HS) | 0.72** | 0.41** | −0.52** | 0.48** | 0.24 | −0.36** |
| Benevolent sexism (ASI-BS) | 0.31** | 0.30** | −0.34** | 0.34* | 0.01 | −0.24 |
| Right-wing political | 0.50** | 0.27** | −0.40** | 0.21 | −0.05 | −0.22 |
| No LG contact | 0.23* | 0.27** | −0.36** | 0.05 | −0.04 | −0.10 |
| No B contact | 0.25** | 0.32** | −0.27** | 0.03 | 0.15 | −0.05 |
| No T contact | 0.05 | 0.06 | −0.17 | 0.17 | −0.17 | −0.08 |
| Perceived stigma | −0.03 | −0.01 | 0.01 | −0.13 | −0.09 | 0.17 |
| **Women** | | | | | | |
| Binegativity (BphS) | 0.41** | | | 0.20** | | |
| Pro-trans (TABS) | −0.54** | −0.43** | | −0.17* | −0.28** | |
| Hostile sexism (ASI-HS) | 0.57** | 0.29** | −0.35** | 0.47** | 0.12 | −0.07 |
| Benevolent sexism (ASI-BS) | 0.42** | 0.24** | −0.27** | 0.19* | 0.06 | −0.10 |
| Right-wing political | 0.50** | 0.28** | −0.38** | 0.27** | 0.12 | 0.18 |
| No LG contact | 0.03 | 0.11* | −0.06 | 0.06 | 0.17* | −0.04 |
| No B contact | 0.18** | 0.27** | −0.25** | 0.10 | < − 0.01 | −0.10 |
| No T contact | 0.11* | 0.01 | −0.15** | 0.07 | −0.02 | −0.07 |
| Perceived stigma | −0.13** | −0.01 | 0.07 | −0.27** | −0.21** | 0.26** |

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

**TABLE 3 |** Multiple regression in terms of sexism and political conservatism.

| | Homonegativity (MHS) | | | Binegativity (BphS) | | | Pro-trans (TABS) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | βa | $R^2$ | Change | βa | $R^2$ | Change | βa | $R^2$ | Change |
| **Heterosexuals** | | | | | | | | | |
| *Men* | | | | | | | | | |
| Hostile sexism (ASI-HS) | 0.61 | 0.52[a] | 0.52*** | 0.35 | 0.35[b] | 0.11*** | -0.33 | 0.29[a] | 0.29*** |
| Benevolent sexism (ASI-BS) | – | – | – | 0.37 | 0.25[a] | 0.25*** | -0.24 | 0.34[b] | 0.06** |
| Right-wing political | 0.24 | 0.57[b] | 0.04** | – | – | – | -0.23 | 0.38[c] | 0.04** |
| *Women* | | | | | | | | | |
| Hostile sexism (ASI-HS) | 0.37 | 0.31[a] | 0.31*** | 0.14 | 0.17[c] | 0.02** | -0.20 | 0.20[b] | 0.05*** |
| Benevolent sexism (ASI-BS) | 0.16 | 0.43[c] | 0.02*** | 0.21 | 0.11[a] | 0.11*** | -0.12 | 0.21[c] | 0.01* |
| Right-wing political | 0.32 | 0.41[b] | 0.10*** | 0.19 | 0.16[b] | 0.04*** | -0.27 | 0.15[a] | 0.15*** |
| **LGB** | | | | | | | | | |
| *Men* | | | | | | | | | |
| Hostile sexism (ASI-HS) | 0.49 | 0.28[a] | 0.28*** | – | – | – | -0.33 | 0.32[b] | 0.11** |
| Benevolent sexism (ASI-BS) | 0.26 | 0.34[b] | 0.06* | – | – | – | -0.42 | 0.21[a] | 0.21*** |
| *Women* | | | | | | | | | |
| Hostile sexism (ASI-HS) | 0.40 | 0.28 | 0.28*** | 0.37 | 0.14 | 0.14*** | – | – | – |

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. [a]First predictor. [b]Second predictor adding the previous one. [c]Third predictor adding previous ones.

the differences between heterosexual men and women were greater, for LGB men and women, they were not. However, being a man or woman was significant among LGB individuals. One sign of this was the higher level of ASI-BS among GB men. This is consistent with the earlier literature that defines masculinity by the negative assessment of any otherness associated with feminity (Worthington et al., 2002; Warriner et al., 2013; Ahmed, 2019). Despite forming part of a group that is subject to violence, the pyramid of privilege that demarcates sexist spheres allows for stigmatization and the negative assessment of those left behind (Glick et al., 2015). The importance of gender identity is also significant in the differences in BphS and TABS, which seems to indicate a stagnant, binary perspective on the part of men.

The correlational findings confirm the relationship between the different constructs, with ASI-HS having the most significant correlations with the other variables. Additionally, the correlations between TABS and BphS were high, which could be

consistent because of the proximity between constructs that posit non-monosexual or non-monoidentity possibilities.

In the heterosexual sample, all the variables had significant correlations with each other, except for the lack of contact and perceived stigma. The correlations regarding the lack of contact were uneven between the men and women. For both groups, the lack of B contacts correlates positively with MHS and BphS, but negatively with TABS. The lack of LG contacts has these correlations in the case of men, while for women the lack of T contacts was significant. These differences between heterosexual men and women are consistent with models of identity construction and socialization. Accepting gender identity as a stagnant, biological category generates perspectives that promote heteronormativity and are alert to any performativity. In this way, heterosexual men avoid any proximity or association with "gay influence" (Goldstein and Davis, 2010). In addition, as guardians of gender essence, some women reject trans pronouncements that alter biology (Butler, 2017).

In the LGB population, the correlational differences between men and women had different connection patterns. For men, sexisms correlated significantly with MHS and TABS, while for women, only ASI-BS did so with MHS. One explanation for this is that in GB men, sexist beliefs prevent any confusion with women. As GB men have been socialized to reject effeminacy, their "homoerotic desire" must be homonormativized without this entailing any loss of privileges (López-Sáez, 2017). However, according to the findings by Warriner et al. (2013), LB women may assess the loss of status that comes with heterosexuality as more threatening than a change in gender identity.

Comparing the heterosexual and LGB samples, there are no significant correlations between sexisms and BphS among LGB individuals. Among heterosexual and LB women, for the former, sexisms correlated with all the constructs (MHS, BphS and TABS), while for the latter, sexisms only significantly correlated with MHS. These correlations may be due to the threatening self-perception of the status that LB women have of their own sexuality. This is even more true for LB women with conservative political beliefs, whose values argue for maintaining the traditional spheres of masculinity and femininity in line with particular expressions of desire. In this respect, there was a correlation between political conservatism and MHS. In contrast, the diffusion of correlations between political conservatism and BphS and TABS may be related to mythologized beliefs that view bisexuality and trans as "partial" or "temporary" breaks.

However, this is not the case for conservative heterosexual women, who appear to consider bisexuality and trans as not part of "the right thing." These differences between LB and heterosexual women help to explain how orientation and gender identity intersect in perceived stigma. As observed by Brownfield et al. (2018), heterosexuality constitutes subjects of privilege who generate stigma of which they are not aware. In contrast, LB women do perceive and experience this stigma, and they engage in it less (less LGBT-negativity).

Comparing heterosexual men with GB men, political conservatism loses significance with all the constructs. This seems to indicate that among heterosexual men, conservative belief systems are more determinant when assessing LGB as a threat. As Warriner et al. (2013) explain, sharing conservative political beliefs lays down certain guidelines about the role that men should play that prevent any deviation from cisgender and heterosexuality.

The regression analysis provides important information to add to the correlations. Confirming the earlier literature, models that combine sexist and political conservatism are predictors of LGBT-negativities. This is seen among heterosexual women and, with some variations, among heterosexual men, where components of the model alternate. In the LGB sample, political conservatism lost its predictive potential. One explanation for this is that LGB individuals show less political conservatism and less variability in their political affiliation. Finally, the lack of predictors for TABS and BphS may be related to mythologized beliefs about the partial or temporary nature of the situation that does not require a complete break with having sexist and conservative values.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study serves as a first step in exploring these constructs among psychology students in the Spanish context. It helps to better explain the complexities of the beliefs that underpin LGBTphobic discrimination, observing the differences according to sexual orientation and gender identity. However, it is only the beginning of a long road that must accept intersectionality as the essential foundation for its development. For that reason, more research is required to help explain the complex articulations of LGBT-negativity. Future studies should also expand the size of the LGB sample in order to explore the differences with bisexuals in detail. It would also be interesting to develop longitudinal studies that could include a retrospective perspective as knowledge of psychology is acquired. Moreover, despite having carried out a probability sampling with a considerable sample size, the results are only representative of the public university system. Additionally, the population of psychology students is clearly feminized, represents mid-to-high socioeconomic levels and shares ideological patterns that are not very conservative. These patterns may be different in the case of private secular and religious universities. Similarly, the low racial mix, with a predominance of Caucasians, may have had an influence on certain nuances. Future research should therefore explore the connections established in more heterogeneous probability samples.

Finally, with regard to practical consequences, we must consider how negative attitudes toward LGBT people signal less competence in every type of psychological intervention or accompaniment. This is not only true in the work done with the LGBT population itself, but with the general population. The APA (2012, 2015) guidelines have been scrupulously clear in this respect, indicating the importance of training in the LGBT field for personal review and the recognition of privileges and prejudices. The Spanish National Agency (ANECA, 2005) has asserted that it is essential for psychology students (particularly certain profiles) to receive training in sexual-emotional diversity,

specifically, and to fully understand human diversity in general in order to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

National and international guidelines suggest that the use of novel approaches in the evaluation of training programs in psychology may significantly assist in detecting deficits. Analyses and studies that address attitudes toward sexual orientations and gender identities will make it possible to map educational processes and materials for psychology students and implement changes in the curricula.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation, to any qualified researcher.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Comité de Ética de la Investigación de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

ML-S was the principal author and the one who has contributed most to the manuscript presented here, was elaborated the theoretical framework that supports the article, as well as the realization of the different analyses that were presented. DG-D was one of the contributors who have focused on making contributions to the theoretical framework and the final discussions. IM was one of the contributors who focused on making contributions to the statistical analysis and discussions derived from it. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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# Running Scared? A Critical Analysis of LGBTQ+ Inclusion Policy in Schools

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This article provides an overview of the UK government policy in relation to relationships and sex education in schools. It focuses on the latest statutory guidance which requires primary and secondary schools in England to teach pupils about different types of relationships, including same-sex relationships. We outline the current policy frameworks and present a rationale for why Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ+) identities and relationships should be present in the curriculum. We critically interrogate the government response and we present a framework to support the implementation of a whole school approach to LGBTQ+ inclusion. We draw on Meyer's model of minority stress to explore risks to children and young people if they are not provided with an LGBTQ+ curriculum.

Keywords: sexual orientation, LGBTQ+, schools, education, relationships and sex education

## INTRODUCTION

In 2019 the UK government released statutory guidance for relationships and sex education in schools (Department for Education, 2019) following a period of consultation. The guidance was a radical update of previous guidance which was issued in 2000 to more accurately reflect societal issues in the twenty-first century. The guidance included a requirement for primary and secondary schools to teach children about LGBTQ+ identities and different kinds of relationships, including same-sex relationships. Although societal attitudes in relation to same-sex relationships have improved in recent years, and even though some countries have taken steps to legalize same-sex relationships, the inclusion of this content in the school curriculum was considered by some to be controversial. For example, in 2019 parental opposition in Birmingham and other cities to LGBTQ+ curricula in primary schools dominated the media headlines in England. The apparent tensions between religious beliefs, sexual orientation and gender identity fueled parental protests outside primary schools that had adopted an LGBTQ+ curriculum. Subsequent government guidance in England to support schools with the advancement of LGBTQ+ equality has been weak and arguably this has demonstrated a lack of political commitment to equality.

This paper uses Meyer's model of minority stress (Meyer's, 2003) as a conceptual lens to support the analysis of the policy. As a conceptual lens, this model is particularly useful in that it helps to frame the experiences of individuals with minority identities. For example, LGBTQ+ youth may be exposed to a range of stressors both in society and in school and these can impact on their ability to thrive within educational environments and lead to mental ill health (Meyer's, 2003). The model identifies that individuals with minority identities are exposed to two additional stressors in addition to the general stressors that everyone experiences; distal stressors are the direct experience of prejudice and discrimination as a direct result of one's minority identity. Proximal stressors occur when

individuals anticipate that they will be exposed to distal stressors which can result in concealment of one's identity and internalized homophobia (Meyer's, 2003). This paper argues that an inclusive relationships and sex education curriculum, which provides validation and positive affirmation of different identities, has the potential to reduce minority stress in young people who have non-normative gender identities and sexual orientations. In addition, we argue that government policy of delaying the introduction of inclusive relationships education will potentially increase minority stress in young people with these minority identities. We therefore argue that a curriculum which addresses inclusive relationships and sex education is a useful tool for reducing the effects of minority stress in LGBTQ+ youth.

## POLICY CONTEXT IN ENGLAND

Sexual orientation and gender identity are two crucial components on an individual's identity, although the Equality Act (2010) in England specifically refers to "gender reassignment." In England, sexual orientation and gender reassignment are identified as "protected characteristics" in the Equality Act (2010). Schools and other public institutions must therefore ensure that LGBTQ+ individuals are protected from both direct and indirect forms of discrimination. In addition, the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010) requires schools to advance equality of opportunity between individuals with and without protected characteristics and to foster good relations between these two groups.

In 2017 the UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, delivered a keynote speech at the Pink Awards:

> Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia have still not been defeated and they must be. Bullying in schools and on social media is still a daily reality for young LGBTQ+ people, and that has to stop. Trans people still face indignities and prejudice when they deserve understanding and respect… being trans is not an illness and it shouldn't be treated as such.

She emphasized the importance of introducing inclusive relationships and sex education into Britain's schools. Of course, 2017 also marked 50 years following the partial decriminalization of homosexuality through the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. The direction of travel was a stark contrast to Section 28 in 1988 which was introduced by the former Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Section 28 was a controversial piece of legislation which stated that local authorities "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality or promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship." It silenced schools from discussing homosexuality and forced LGBTQ+ teachers further into the closet. Section 28 was eventually repealed in 2003. However, its existence demonstrated the role of educational policy in maintaining a dominant heteronormative discourse, thus leading to the marginalization of LGBTQ+ people.

The parental protests in England in 2019 also demonstrated how religious beliefs can also seek to maintain discourses of heteronormativity and also highlighted the ways in which one protected characteristic (religion or belief) can clash with other protected characteristics (gender reassignment and sexual orientation). During these protests, parents objected to LGBTQ+ curricula in primary schools on the grounds that this curriculum was in direct conflict with religious beliefs. Following a protest at a school in Birmingham, these were repeated in other schools in other parts of the UK. These examples of resistance serve to demonstrate the controversial nature of this topic and in particular the apparent tensions between religion, sexuality and gender identity. However, despite these objections it is important that schools leaders respect different opinions, and religious beliefs, but also explain to parents why it is necessary for all young people to learn about different types of relationships and family structures.

It should be emphasized that the statutory guidance for relationships and sex education (Department for Education, 2019) does not seek to promote a particular lifestyle. An effective LGBTQ+ curriculum enables children and young people to know that LGBTQ+ people exist and that it is legal to be LGBTQ+. It supports them to understand different family structures and to know that under the rule of British law it is legal to both enter into same-sex relationships and get married. It is critically important that all children are taught to respect all forms of difference. It is also important to acknowledge to young people that although LGBTQ+ identities and relationships may not be permitted within the context of a religion, in the UK they are permitted under the rule of law. Given that LGBTQ+ people exist within all walks of life (in families, schools, colleges, universities, the workplace, and the community) it is important that young people learn to respect people's differences, regardless of personal or religious beliefs. Education should play a critical role in supporting all children and young people to understand that prejudice and discrimination are wrong, both from a legal and a moral perspective. Critical pedagogy serves a powerful role in advancing social justice through educating young people about all forms of discrimination. It offers hope for creating a better and more equitable society in the future and supports young people to be responsible future citizens.

Research has found that LGBTQ+ policies and initiatives in schools which promote queer-straight alliances are distinctly and mutually important for fostering safer and more supportive school climates for young people and may reduce prejudice-based bullying (Poteat et al., 2013; Ioverno et al., 2016; Day et al., 2019). Lessons which address inclusive relationships and sex education are one example of these alliances. Creating safe spaces in which all young people can discuss inclusive relationships may therefore play a critical role in fostering positive attitudes, creating positive school cultures and reducing homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying. Research by Russell et al. (2009) found that safe queer-straight alliances led to three inter-related dimensions of empowerment: personal empowerment, relational empowerment, and strategic empowerment. When these three dimensions are experienced in combination, teachers of inclusive relationships and sex education can facilitate

individual and collective empowerment which can lead to social change in schools.

# A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STATUTORY GUIDANCE

In 2019 the Department for Education (DfE) published statutory guidance for the teaching of inclusive relationships and sex education in schools in England. The DfE is a government organization that enforces policy in schools. The guidance replaced previous guidance which was published 20 years earlier and schools in England are required by law to implement the guidance from 2020. Schools which do not implement the statutory guidance will face penalties during school inspections. The guidance was refreshed to address current societal issues and addresses topics such as consent, domestic abuse and online relationships. It also explicitly mandates the teaching of LGBTQ+ identities and relationships in primary and secondary schools. However, in relation to LGBTQ+ content the guidance might be interpreted in ways which effectively permit schools to opt out of delivering this content, particularly to younger children. The quotations from the guidance below particularly provide schools with a rationale for not delivering LGBTQ+ related content, despite the statutory nature of the guidance. We argue that these opt-out clauses are not acceptable and may potentially result in LGBTQ+ identities not being validated or positively affirmed.

The Relationships and Sex Education States:

- In all schools, when teaching these subjects, **the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account** when planning teaching, so that the topics that are included in the core content in this guidance are appropriately handled. Schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act (2010), under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics (Department for Education, 2019, para, 20, p. 12).
- In particular, **schools with a religious character may teach the distinctive faith perspective on relationships**, and balanced debate may take place about issues that are seen as contentious (Department for Education, 2019, para, 21, p. 12).
- Schools should ensure that all of their **teaching is sensitive and age appropriate** in approach and content (Department for Education, 2019, para, 37, p. 15).

In response to the parental protests, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced the following guidance for schools:

- In all schools, when teaching Relationships Education, **the age and religious background of all pupils must be taken into account** when planning teaching (Department for Education, 2020a, p. 11).

We have added emphasis to the text to draw attention to some key concerns. Schools will not be compliant with the Equality Act (2010) if young people are not taught to respect different religious

beliefs. However, there is a danger that schools with a religious character will use these statements to avoid including LGBTQ+ identities and relationships into the curriculum. It is worrying that the policy permits schools with a religious character to teach "distinctive faith perspectives on relationships" given that some of these perspectives may not align with the principles of the Equality Act (2010). It is also a concern that the teaching of LGBTQ+ relationships and identities is acknowledged within the policy framework as a "sensitive" aspect of the curriculum. This phrasing is unhelpful because it further stigmatizes LGBTQ+ individuals whose identities should be validated and celebrated. The phrase "age-appropriate" is also potentially damaging. It suggests that younger children need to be somehow protected from this content, thus suggesting that it may be potentially harmful and damaging. LGBTQ+ people exist within families and communities. Young children in nursery schools may have same-sex parents, siblings or members of their wider family who are LGBTQ+. To deliberately avoid addressing this in the early years is likely to lead to young children in same-sex families or those with LGBTQ+ family members feeling excluded. This does not foster a sense of belonging and it does not provide validation of children's families particularly in cases where children have LGBTQ+ parents or siblings.

From 1 September 2020, relationships education is compulsory for all primary school pupils and relationships and sex education (RSE) is compulsory for all secondary school pupils (Department for Education, 2020b). However, as a result of the impact of Covid-19 schools have been given additional time to implement the statutory guidance. The government has insisted that secondary schools will risk negative inspection reports if the statutory guidance is not implemented from the start of the summer term 2021. In stark contrast, primary schools will not be penalized for avoiding the teaching of LGBTQ+ content, provided that they can demonstrate that appropriate consultation has taken place with parents:

*Before the start of summer term 2021, if a primary school does not teach about LGBT relationships, and does not yet have adequate plans in place to meet the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance by the start of the summer term 2021 (for example, if it has not consulted parents and has no plans to do so before then), inspectors will comment on this in the inspection report. This will not, however, impact on the leadership and management judgement except when inspectors consider it relevant to the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements (Department for Education, 2020b).*

*From the start of summer term 2021, if a primary school does not teach about LGBT relationships, this will not have an impact on the leadership and management judgement as long as the school can satisfy inspectors that it has still fulfilled the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance. If it cannot do this, for example if it has failed to consult with parents, inspectors will consider this when making the leadership and management judgement. The school will not ordinarily receive a judgement for this better than requires improvement (Department for Education, 2020b).*

*Before the start of summer term 2021, if a secondary school does not teach about LGBT relationships and does not have adequate plans in place to meet the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance*

*by the start of the summer term 2021, inspectors will comment on this in the inspection report. This will not, however, impact on the leadership and management judgement except when inspectors consider it relevant to the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements (Department for Education, 2020b).*

*From the start of summer term 2021, if a secondary school does not teach about LGBT relationships, it will not be meeting the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance. Inspectors will consider this when making the leadership and management judgement. For state-funded schools, this only applies to section 5 inspections. For independent schools, this only applies to standard inspections. The school will not ordinarily receive a judgement for this better than requires improvement (Department for Education, 2020b).*

Given that prejudice is often established before children start the secondary phase of their education, we feel that it is critical that the teaching of LGBTQ+ content in primary schools should be mandatory. This latest "opt out clause" permits parental beliefs (and parental prejudice) to determine curriculum content. This is not only selling LGBTQ+ pupils in primary schools short, it is also selling all pupils short. It effectively provides schools that are reluctant to address this content with a license not to address it. Large-scale survey data from Stonewall in 2017, the organization which champions equality for the LGBTQ+ community, demonstrates the extent of homophobic bullying in Britain's schools. The data demonstrated the large prevalence of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying in Britain's schools. We argue that inclusive relationships and sex education in primary and secondary schools which provides positive affirmation of different identities will reduce the prevalence of prejudice-based bullying.

## THEORETICAL CRITIQUE

Meyer's (2003) minority stress model has been used by mainstream psychologists to explain how minority status can impact on mental health outcomes for individuals who identify as part of a minority group. The model has been applied to individuals who identify as LGBTQ+.

The model identifies different types of stress that minority individuals experience. These are summarized below:

- General stressors apply to all individuals as a result of environmental circumstances.
- Distal stressors: the direct experience of stigma, prejudice, discrimination, victimization and bullying by others based on an individual's minority status produces distal stressors. These experiences can be shaped by structural forces (for example, racism, heteronormativity/heterosexism) which result in structural disadvantage for minority groups.
- Proximal stressors: these relate to an individual's perception or appraisal of situations. The expectation or anticipation that a person with a minority status may experience rejection, discrimination, victimization, or stigmatization based on one's previous experiences of this can result in self-vigilance and identity concealment. People who identify as LGBTQ+ may anticipate negative reactions to their sexual orientation or

gender identity in specific situations due to their previous negative experiences. To reduce the likelihood of negative experiences occurring, self-vigilance and concealment are employed but these tactics can result in fear of discovery, psychological distress, internalized shame, guilt, anxiety, and social isolation.

Not addressing LGBTQ+-related content in the primary curriculum is likely to result in exposing children to distal and proximal stressors. If their identities are not discussed and not made visible through the school environment and the curriculum, they are more likely to conceal their identities and to internalize the homophobia to which they are exposed. The aim of an LGBTQ+ curriculum is to validate identities of difference and to teach children the importance of respect. If this validation of identities is not evident, there is a risk that children with non-normative identities in primary schools will be exposed to prejudice, violence and other forms of discrimination.

International research continues to demonstrate that heteronormative and heterosexist cultures are entrenched within schools (Kjaran and Kristinsdóttir, 2015). Even in countries known for their liberal attitude toward sexuality, such as Sweden, heteronormative attitudes continue to prevail within schools (Lundin, 2015). The revision of policies and legislation signal the UK government's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion (DePalma and Jennett, 2010). However, despite this, research continues to evidence the scale of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying in Britain's schools (Bradlow et al., 2017). Whilst the reasons for this are complex, multifaceted, and often misunderstood (Formby, 2015), research by Bradlow et al. (2017) does illuminate the disconnect between the government's expectations and the lived experiences of those within the LGBTQ+ community.

## CONCLUSION

Data from Stonewall (Bradlow et al., 2017) demonstrates the prevalence of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools in Britain. Nearly half of lesbian, gay, bi and trans pupils (45%)—including 64% of trans pupils—are bullied for being LGBTQ+ at school. The majority of LGBTQ+ pupils-—86%—regularly hear phrases including "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" in school. Nearly one in 10 trans pupils (9%) are subjected to death threats at school. Seven in 10 LGBTQ+ pupils (68%) report that teachers or school staff only "sometimes" or "never" challenge homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language when they hear it. Two in five LGBTQ+ pupils (40%) are never taught anything about LGBTQ+ identities at school. Three in four LGBTQ+ pupils (77%) have never learnt about gender identity and what "trans" means at school. More than half of LGBTQ+ pupils (53%) say that there isn't an adult at school they can talk to about being LGBTQ+. Two in five pupils who have been bullied for being LGBTQ+ (40%) have missed school because of this bullying. Half of bullied LGBTQ+ pupils (52%) feel that homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying has had a negative effect on their plans for future education. More than four in five trans young people (84%) have self-harmed.

For lesbian, gay, and bi young people who aren't trans, three in five (61%) have self-harmed. More than two in five trans young people (45%) have attempted to take their own life. For lesbian, gay, and bi young people who aren't trans, over one in five (22%) have attempted to take their own life (Bradlow et al., 2017).

Avoiding teaching LGBTQ-related content in primary schools is likely to result in a worsening of these statistics. In addition, many young children in primary schools have same-sex parents or they may have siblings or know other people who are LGBTQ+. Silencing LGBTQ+ identities is likely to alienate these children if they start to feel that their daily realities are not reflected in the school environment or through the curriculum that they are taught. Avoiding teaching LGBTQ+ related content to young children is likely to result in minority stress and mental ill health (Meyer's, 2003), especially if queer identities are not recognized, not provided with validation and not positively affirmed.

## ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are aimed at school leaders:

- All primary and secondary schools should provide children with an inclusive relationships education curriculum which addresses LGBTQ+ identities and same-sex relationships.
- All primary and secondary schools should teach children to respect LGBTQ+ people.
- All schools should consult with parents in relation to LGBTQ+-related content but consultation should not lead to a veto on the curriculum.
- Penalties should be applied by the school inspectorate to primary schools that do not teach children about LGBTQ+-related content.
- All schools should ensure that their legal obligations in relation to the Equality Act (2010) are met.
- All schools should have a clear policy which addresses LGBTQ+ inclusion.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JG outlined the policy context and offered a theoretical critique. SS contributed the review of statutory guidance. All authors identified recommendations and edited and approved the article.

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# Book Review: Safe Is Not Enough: Better Schools for LGBTQ Students (Youth Development and Education Series)

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**A Book Review on**

**Safe Is Not Enough: Better Schools for LGBTQ Students (Youth Development and Education Series)**

Michael Sadowski (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press), 2016, 232 pages, ISBN: 978-1-61250-943-3

Two suggested state policies in the United States will include specific security for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ). These new regulations have been introduced in response to several state and school system efforts to identify and enforce laws or initiatives aimed at ensuring the protection of LGBTQ students in educational institutions. Over the last 10 years, studies have revealed that LGBTQ teenagers are a disadvantaged demographic, and that their traumatic school encounters often add to that insecurity. This public policy paper discusses the study that has been conducted on certain federal, regional, and national regulations and practices. The author reviews the studies on sexuality formation, with an emphasis on the rising proportion of adolescents who "come out" or reveal their LGBTQ sexuality to everyone else throughout their time at school. Educational institutions are mostly threatening settings for LGBTQ students; such data is weighed against studies on the effects of impaired academic performance, cognitive, and mental well-being (Chan et al., 2021). We then examine interventions in teaching and learning that have been linked to LGBTQ (as well as all) students' welfare (Chan, 2021b). Safe Is Not Enough demonstrates that school systems should provide extensive resources for the healthy growth of LGBTQ students in order to foster more supportive classroom cultures. Michael Sadowski in this book discusses current approaches like developing an LGBTQ-friendly syllabus, promoting a welcoming environment throughout the entire school for LGBTQ students, having grown-ups who could serve as counselors and authority figures, as well as implementing appropriate household and neighborhood engagement campaigns, incorporating case studies from classes, campuses, and regions around the nation.

For more than two decades, researchers have reported that LGBT adolescents face increased levels of abuse, rejection, and violence in educational institutions than their straight counterparts. Such adverse events have been published in the United States and a number of different European nations (Palkki and Caldwell, 2018; Scannapieco et al., 2018). These analyses recognized four distinct types of abuse: anti-gay words, oral ridicule, mental oppression, and actual violent behavior, and established that most LGBTQ students face name-calling, abusive behavior, intimidation, and violence at school. For instance, in the GLSEN's National School Climate Survey, Kosciw et al. (2012) discovered that

almost all LGBT students encountered offensive comments at school, with more than 75% hearing them regularly or intensively. Additionally, the writers discovered that more than 80% of LGBT students revealed experiencing oral harassment, more than 40% revealed experiencing bodily harassment and more than 20% revealed experiencing physical assault as a result of their gender identity.

Though improvement on LGBTQ problems in educational institutions has been sluggish, schools in certain areas of the nation have taken steps to create healthier and more accepting environments for LGBTQ students. Usually, colleges and universities do so by updating their anti-bullying guidelines and creating gay-straight student alliances (GSAs). However, transforming campuses into environments in which LGBTQ students could reach their full capacity requires not just a reactive strategy. Sadowski discusses ways in which teaching staff could render their classrooms more conducive to LGBTQ students' healthy growth as well as educational attainment in Safe Is Not Enough.

This book begins by introducing audiences to three prominent LGBTQ programs in educational institutions that concentrate on child protection: supportive anti-bullying programs, Safe Zones (which is demonstrated by Safe Zone markings), and Gay-Straight Alliances, known as GSAs. Although every one of them is critical for students, Sadowski suggests that teachers strive for even greater inclusion through activities like integrated syllabuses, effective psychological well-being strategies, and enhanced career advancement. The audience is subsequently guided by a slew of examples highlighting specific services, educational institutions, and regions in which LGBTQ integration extends past basic security concerns. All contexts are vividly depicted with the use of an incredibly simple narration format. The audience is further directed to an index that contains the complete list of resources employed in a variety of examples. On the whole, the book concisely illustrates instances of educational institutions moving past sheer security for LGBTQ students, while also introducing services which can be utilized by a broad range of academic staff, such as teachers, supervisors,

student groups, and campus psychological support specialists (such as curriculums for a Common Core-compliant LGBTQ integrated course, and an overview of an LGBTQ academic therapy community). Context details are presented in a concise manner. Sadowski begins by defining the term LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning), followed by a short section explaining why this word was chosen. He further debunks many myths of bisexual and transgender rejection in LGBTQ literary works.

NPR commonly employs the term LGBT to apply to individuals that identify as "lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender." Sadowski prefixes "queer" with a "Q." This study does the same thing. Sadowski's book contains several accounts. He is a specialist in teenage personality formation with a particular emphasis on students who identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer). Sadowski interviewed teaching staff across the United States to discover how they are incorporating LGBTQ-friendly strategies into their institutions' syllabuses and environments. Sadowski also attacks tactics which include protection as the ultimate target. Safety is a crucial aim, and he describes it as "a critical baseline from which all subsequent work must follow."

"Safe is not enough: Better schools for LGBTQ students" should be studied by both teachers and education administrators and should be used in college learning and social service practice. Indeed, considering the increasing prominence of LGBTQ individuals as involved (Chan, 2021a), valued, and visible fellow citizens, this book is especially important since it addresses the causes and consequences of LGBTQ discriminatory practices (Chan, 2021c). I definitely appreciate it because it promotes community cohesion and inclusion in the academic environment.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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# Book Review: The Educator's Guide to LGBT+ Inclusion: A Practical Resource for K-12 Teachers, Administrators, and School Support Staff

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**A Book Review on**

**The Educator's Guide to LGBT+ Inclusion: A Practical Resource for K-12 Teachers, Administrators, and School Support Staff**

Kryss Shane and EBSCOhost (London; Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers), 2020, 232 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1787751088

Harassment, absenteeism caused by the absence of protection in schools, and ensuing suicidal thoughts are all dramatically higher among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (or sometimes questioning) (LGBT+) adolescents than among non-LGBT+ adolescents. Consequently, numerous K-12 students in the United States are struggling unnecessarily, while numerous educators have yet to figure out how to deal with the problem. LGBT students experience bullying, such as violent acts, alienation, ridicule, or even death threats, leading to a sense of insecurity, skipped learning time, and lower likelihood of educational excellence (Santos et al., 2020). LGBT adolescents are more likely than anyone to attempt suicide as a result of such harassment in school environments. The issue is addressed in this text (Tilley et al., 2020). This relatable and simple book directs instructors, educators, leaders, and school personnel toward effective and validated approaches to establish positive academic settings, adjust educational policies, improve syllabuses, and more successfully serve LGBT+ adolescents while they study, by spelling out guiding principles and providing expert advice for fostering LGBT+ inclusive learning in classrooms.

This book, which includes actual experiences and examples, a checklist, and additional materials, allows experts across a wide range of educational disciplines to incorporate basic principles into their daily encounters with learners, parents, and colleagues in order to foster a general learning atmosphere that cultivates a supportive, inclusive, and accepting community for everyone. This book might be seen by observers, administrative groups, as well as the whole school districts as part of their lessons. Shane offers a powerful framework for K-12 teachers in this text. Her book is a helpful resource for students and staff looking to increase cultural awareness and incorporate guiding principles that benefit LGBT+ learners, households, and employees.

Shane teaches people how to avoid discriminating against LGBT+ individuals in various contexts. She specifies expressions, examines the significance of acceptable and offensive words, and discusses how to talk compassionately to and about LGBT+ individuals. Shane gives a straightforward, concise description of social status and power dynamics in an objective way that piques people's interest in further examining the issue. Hence, Shane offers examples involving people and their circumstances. Such events are based on actual events which occur

in school districts and frequently frustrate inexperienced teachers. Shane propose a new strategy, encouraging people to view the events from the point of view of individuals, decision-makers and district authorities, and from the angle of the established practices and guidebooks used by school districts. She subsequently offers a "Guidance" chapter about every case, which includes LGBT+ good practices criteria.

The final portion of this text attempts to put information into practice. It offers teachers advice and guidance for recognizing their capabilities and creating a strategy to tackle locations in which their culture has been developing. Shane also provides template emails to communicate with a principal or district leader in order to initiate a dialogue about transition. She offers a comprehensive appendix with a wealth of tools for teachers, such as texts for learners across all levels of education. Such tools and tactics lay the groundwork for campaigning.

Shane's book is a great resource for students and staff. School counselors, student volunteers, and human services mentors who are training new groups of social workers can obtain valuable material to meet the demands of LGBT+ learners, households, and schools. Shane's book, which was influenced by her own doctoral experiences in education and public assistance, serves as a basis for counselors to interact with academic contexts. This information could be adopted by social workers to educate educators, supervisors, and school officials. The material may be utilized in organized lectures or reading groups to progress on the possible circumstances and develop improvement strategies. With case studies, the events offer a deeper level of understanding of micro-level approaches. Within those obstacles, many school counselors would identify themselves as well as respective school districts. More importantly, Shane offers a chance for campaigning and analysis on mezzo-macro approaches which could alter school culture.

Years back, the LGBT+ group was marginalized, but now, the LGBT+ population is demanding equal rights. Religion and tradition have a significant impact on all individuals, and their viewpoint on LGBT+ is accepted by the general public. The LGBT+ culture is one-of-a-kind, and often people fail to realize that these individuals are far more valuable than they historically assumed. Several approaches are not directly applicable to LGBT+ individuals (Chan, 2021). For example, in an educational setting, LGBT+ children sometimes encounter verbal or physical abuse and humiliation. LGBT+ learners are more vulnerable to unfavorable academic consequences when faced with substantial challenges such as bullying, violence, and the absence of good examples to follow. Nonetheless, LGBT+ learners have to have allies. Inclusion, dignity, affection, and thoughtfulness must be upheld in educational institutions. This text, I presume, will assist policymakers in developing a more accepting school atmosphere for LGBT+ learners. Building a positive atmosphere for LGBT+ learners enhances learning results among all students besides those who are classified as LGBT+. This text may put a spotlight on the despair of the marginalized LGBT+ community and the unreasonable rejection of them within the academic context. Therefore, ongoing development in the field is obviously required to guarantee that every single student is seen as having the right to an education that is pleasant, inclusive, and devoid of discrimination, and that LGBTQ-inclusive education is an integral component in building those environments (Chan, 2021).

Eventually, Shane's book, The Educator's Guide to LGBT+ Inclusion: A Practical Resource for K-12 Teachers, Administrators, and School Support Staff, provides a chance for counselors to assist school environments via a thoughtful framework of rationality and practice for building more positive academic cultures for LGBT+ individuals. To achieve a meaningful and comfortable life, it is important to maintain self positive mental health (Chan et al., 2021). This book ought to be read by all educators and school leaders, and it must be part of the curriculum in undergraduate education and community services training. This text is particularly significant as it discusses the roots and effects of LGBTQ discrimination. I highly recommend it since it advocates the concept of social inclusion in the educational system.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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# Walking the Talk: LGBTQ Allies in Australian Secondary Schools

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Sexual culture(s) are an active presence in the shaping of school relations, and LGBTQ issues have long been recognized as a dangerous form of knowledge in school settings. Queer issues in educational domains quickly attract surveillance and have historically often been aggressively prosecuted and silence enforced. This paper examines the intersections of straight allies in promoting an LGBTQ visibility and agency in Australian secondary schools. Drawing on interviews with "straight"-identified secondary students, a narrative methodology was utilized to explore the presence of student allies for making safe schools. Drawing on straight secondary students' responses to LGBTQ issues in their schools, firsthand accounts of intervening in heteronorming school cultures focus on experiences of being an ally to address LGBTQ inclusivity in Australian secondary schools.

**Keywords: secondary school, Australia, school culture, LGBT, ally**

## INTRODUCTION

The problematic nature of social and academic participation in school communities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) youth often involves how stigmatizing relational dynamics become the dominant narrative during the compulsory years of schooling Callingham, 2018. However, as attitudes and expressions toward (homo)sexuality are being increasingly influenced by and connected to wider discourses happening beyond the school gates, the increased representation of sexual identities in the public domain suggests the significance of popular culture in peer cultures for providing teachable moments about LGBTQ lives. Dyer (1992, p. 161) notes how, "It is within culture that homosexual identities are formed," and as sexual diversity is increasingly made visible in mainstream popular culture, the presence of LGBTQ identity, it could be argued, is increasingly queering the quotidian. The diaspora of queer characters flowing off the screen into living rooms is, as Eng (2003, p. 4) notes, "providing new ways of contesting traditional…kinship structures of reorganizing…communities based on the assumption of a common set of social practices." The emergence of the "new" pro-gay as a performative construction (Gorman-Murray, 2013, p. 222) is illustrated in the recent Canadian TV sitcom *Schitt's Creek*, which received critical acclaim and community praise for its representation of inclusion. Sexual diversity is introduced with the initially pansexual/gay character of David Rose, who as he goes about his everyday business, represents the normalization of homosexuality in a community that articulates new discursive configurations of embodying a pro-gay straight identity. This re-textualization, we suggest, not only queers the disciplining spaces of everyday life, but could be read an illustration of "acts of activism…within 'everyday' places" (Hickey-Moody and Haworth, 2009, p. 80).

The notion of re-/textualization as a pedagogical context started us thinking about how gay–straight alliances and associations among youth in schools offer up "spaces of possibility for new kinds of action, new kinds of learning, and newly emergent subjectivities" (Mayo, 2017,

p. 1). We started to wonder about how being an LGBTQ ally could be read as "acts of activism [for interrupting homophobia]...within 'everyday' places" and what that could mean within Australian school communities (Vibert and Shields, 2003; Jones and Hillier, 2012). Does the presence of LGBTQ allies in schools interrupt narratives of the sexual "norm" and create the space to be different?

In Kjaran's (2017) study of heteronormativity in Icelandic high schools, the reproduction of the sexual norm was explained by a gay participant in terms of how

> The kids at school talk very openly about their sex life [of heterosexual students] and of others and it was expected that I did the same. I couldn't do this, I couldn't participate in this kind of discussion, and I felt therefore somehow different, like I was less valued as a man (Kjaran, 2017, p. 99).

Being is, as Barker (1989) notes, a transforming relation and is often "a mode of response to the very forms of power that each day reproduces it" (p. 88). Being is invariably a dialogic experience, and in this paper, our thinking about being an LGBT ally was framed by the effects of intra-action for re-textualizing the everyday spaces of schools. Our aim in this paper is to consider the interruption of microflows of heterosexism and homophobia by "straight"-identified LGBTQ allies in Australian secondary schools, and guiding our enquiry was our interest in hearing insider experiential accounts of affirming LGBTQ sexuality in Australian high schools. There are few documented narratives of straight-identified allies, and as narrative researchers, we are naturally drawn to stories about people and their place in the world. It has been discussed that narratives about people and their lives act "as both a means for knowing and a way of telling about the social world" (Bochner, 2001, p. 155), and we purposefully decided to keep the investigation broad. In doing so, we invited the participants to reflect on and retell their lived experiences of encountering and resisting heteronormative and homophobic expressions in their school communities. We were cognizant that the stories we were going to be told would not purely be concerned with the self and considered the participant narratives as not only biographical accounts of life events, but also as interpretations that communicated "a way of understanding and analyzing, the involvement of self with others within their combined discourses" (Chang, 2008).

In starting to think about the axiomatic, regulatory norms of the pedagogy of social and cultural practices in educational domains, we acknowledge how heterosexism and homophobia are all too often tacitly institutionalized at the macro level in Australian schools (Cumming-Potvin and Martino, 2018) and, as a narrativizing practice, the importance of addressing the wider sociocultural conditions in which this study is located are now addressed.

## IT AIN'T NO MARDI GRAS HERE: A (BRIEF) AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

It is difficult to provide a "grand" narrative of homosexuality in Australia due to the geographical and legislative differences that characterize federation. It is a notable feature of the Australian context how changes in legislation have followed a change in public attitudes toward homosexuality, but these attitudes have varied widely from state to state. Contextualizing the legislative variances to which LGBTQ individuals have been subject makes it possible to understand the checkered history of homosexual law reform and experience in Australia. In 1973, Australia decriminalized consensual homosexual acts that took place in private domains; however, it took 22 years for all Australian states to enact the repeal with Tasmania being the last state to remove sexual acts between consenting adults as a criminal offense in 1997 (Power, 2011; Willet, 2013). Positive attitudinal shifts across Australia toward homosexuals did not advance uniformly or were widespread, and a further reinforcement of the Australian government's staunch antihomosexual stance was made easier in the 1980s due to the pervading presence of the HIV virus, which had started to permeate a moral panic narrative within Australian society. Gay men, specifically, during this decade were universally represented by the media as "AIDS carriers" responsible for the infection of "innocent" heterosexual people through their reckless sexual activity (Lupton, 1999, p. 51). This moral panic reflected public sentiment and was echoed in the rise of vigilante antigay groups, who took to the streets and "gay bashing" as a form of retribution (Robinson et al., 2014; Schenkel, 2017). Moral panic and fear-mongering by religious groups and conservative sectors of the media called for a return to Victorian-era values and strict adherence to biblical notions of chastity and fidelity.

In 1993, the gay panic defense was called into question in Mudgee, New South Wales, when Malcolm Green murdered Donald Gillies because he alleged that he entered his bedroom naked and made sexual advances toward him. In the ensuing legal battle Green was found guilty of manslaughter, a reduced conviction, due to what his defense team argued as reasonable provocation. The Honorable Justice Kirby, an openly gay man in the judiciary, was only one of three sitting judges to dispute the finding and warned of the implications of such a decision. He remarked that, in a heterosexual case of a similar nature, such an excuse for violence would be unacceptable.

Legislative battles around the issue of homosexuality emerged once again in the Australian public domain in 2004 with the battle for the legalization of gay marriage. Debated by a predominantly heterosexual Australia, the argument garnered divisive media commentary. The then Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard, declared that the institution of marriage was a sanctity that could only take place between a man and a woman. The idea of legally recognized same-sex relationships for conservative heterosexuals, according to Edwards (2007), attacked the core of idealized notions of masculinity and patriarchy and created fear that both could become redundant. In 2017, 61.6% of the Australian population voted affirmatively for gay marriage; however, the debate that preceded the ruling was unrelenting and damaging with many LGBTQ individuals reporting "stigma-related stress" as a result of homophobic reporting, advertising, and discussion (Ecker et al., 2019, p. 213). Nadal et al. (2010) study the effects on the LGBTQ community during the Australian gay marriage plebiscite and report that interpersonal microaggression, which refers to day-to-day forms of subtle or unconscious discrimination often articulated in language, was

heightened during the lead up to the vote (Perales and Todd, 2018). The detrimental effect on LGBTQ people was described by a participant in the Chonody et al. (2020, p. 58) study, who said, "This postal farce has done nothing but erode the Australian people's sense of community and turn what were once friendly neighbors against one another."

As Australian public attitudes on homosexuality vary from state to state, legislation continues to be produced that has the potential to diminish the lives of LGBTQ people. In 2013, the federal government passed the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Intersex Status Amendment Act with an exemption that continues to allow religious schools and organizations to discriminate based on sexual orientation. In 2019, in Queensland, the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 (QLD) was passed by a narrow majority. Although this legislation prohibits shock therapy treatments for LGBTQ youth, it does not ban conversion therapy that takes place outside of healthcare domains. Despite small legislative wins, there continues to be policy presented to parliament designed to impede the rights of LGBTQ people. In 2020, Mark Latham, the ex-leader of the Australian Labor party and the current New South Wales leader of the One Nation Party, introduced the Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill 2020 (NSW), which, if instated, will prohibit the teaching of gender fluidity in schools across the state of New South Wales.

The regulation of schools in matters pertaining to sexuality has had a powerful and long-lasting impact and has shaped the formulation and adoption of educational cultures in Australia. Reading the regulation of sexuality from a critically queer perspective can reveal what lies beneath the surface of everyday discourse and leads us to consider how compulsory heterosexuality, a pervading feature of the psyche in Australian culture, is situated in Australian educational domains (Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2001).

## WHAT LIES BENEATH: LGBT IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

The promotion of normative sexuality in the Australian educational domains offers a framework of legitimacy that inevitably produces symbolic and material exclusion as evidenced in 1979 with the then Victorian Minister of Education memorandum that was sent to all schools in the state ordering principals not to stock any books or materials that encouraged or promoted homosexuality (Marshall, 2014). Ferfolja (2007, p. 148) writes how in "Australia, Western discourses of childhood prevail, constructing youth as innocent, vulnerable, asexual, unknowing, in need of protection from moral turpitude, and in binary opposition to adults." Epstein et al. (2002) argue that this notion of "innocence" was developed as a way of maintaining power of authority over and ignorance of sexual behavior and identity, and as young people traverse the corridors of school, the regulation of matters pertaining to sexuality becomes subject to the panoptic gaze and interpellations of moral entrepreneurs. Surveillance and regulation have meant that the expression of sexuality when conjoined with young

people continues to be considered as a dangerous form of knowledge in school settings and to be the target of political, social, educational, and legal regulations (Epstein and Johnson, 1998). Although it should be noted that, despite changing attitudes in society at large, little headway has been made in producing more positive and engaging educational experiences for LGBTQ students in Australian school domains. Even though the study of sexuality in Australian educational domains has a relatively recent history (Rasmussen, 2004, 2006; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2011; Lea et al., 2014; Ullman, 2015; Grant et al., 2021), educational research throughout the 1990s and 2000s consistently demonstrates how LGBTQ+ youth in Australian schools were at risk, with suicidal behavior and self-harm tendencies at disproportionate levels to their heterosexual peers (Castro and Sujak, 2014). The Hillier et al. (2010) study of LGBTQ+ youth in Australian schools demonstrates and documents the urgent need for an inclusive and focused curriculum to support the needs of LGBTQ+ students and their friends, and research continues to indicate the incidence of negative experiences for Australian LGBTQ+ students (Loutzenheiser, 2015).

Although a comprehensive critical examination of the power and effect of heteronormativity in Australian schools remains unaddressed, counternarratives are emerging (Marshall, 2011; Ullman, 2015; Jones and Hillier, 2016; Ward, 2017; Jones, 2020). However, when steps are taken toward a progressive and inclusive approach to teaching and learning, they are usually short-lived, and in 2010, in the Australian state of Victoria, the Safe Schools Coalition was formed and implemented Australia-wide in 2013. The program aimed to provide

> Professional development for school staff;
> Guidance and support for teachers around specific issues and concerns or for schools to support individual students upon request;
> Printed and digital approved resources for teachers that provide the information and tools to respond to bullying and discrimination;
> Support to ensure the school's curriculum and practices are inclusive to students who are same sex attracted, gender diverse, or intersex;

Support for schools in reviewing or introducing antibullying or diversity policies to be safer and more inclusive.

(http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au/from-a-safe-schools-coalition-australia-ssca-spokesperson-6) (Safe Schools Coalition Australia, 2020).

However, a backlash by Australian conservative groups put pressure on the program's funded viability and contributed to the subsequent withdrawal of it as a national program in 2016.

It is not the aim of this paper to provide a detailed account of the literature that addresses LGBTQ inclusion/exclusion in Australian schools, but to set the scene for what Ferfolja (2007) argues: how heterosexuality is privileged in many aspects of curriculum although non-normative sexualities are tacitly hidden and framed as the "educational other" (Slee, 2013).

At an individual level, the category of educational other comprises students who are disenfranchised and marginalized

within schools through social divisions and hierarchies of worth (Gergen and Dixon-Roman, 2014). At a systemic level, the educational other is routinely perpetuated by an education system that inscribes narrow conceptions of what schooling is and does. Othering has a primeval genealogy, which can make belonging a tricky path to navigate. De Beauvoir (2010, p. 26) writes that "no group ever defines itself as One without immediately setting up the Other opposite itself; and Otherness is therefore, bound by power relations where the 'known and unknown' are set apart and cast as opposites" (Creutz-Kämppi, 2008, p. 297). The reductive action of "othering" habitually involves a linguistic interpellation of difference, and Guralnik and Simeon (2010, p. 407) discuss how interpellation is "the very mechanism through which ideology takes hold of the individual [and is] the authoritative voice of the State [that] recognizes the individual and hails him into social existence" while simultaneously casting out the other. This interpellation of deficit and the development of a pejorative nomenclature functions as a means of division and boundary making, of "them from us." Rothmann and Simmonds (2015) study of preservice education students demonstrates how the use of linguistic tools objectify LGBTQ identities and maintain the separation between "them" and "us." Participants in their research consisted of fourth-year education students who were given a fictitious scenario that centered around teaching LGBTQ students despite being religiously opposed to the idea. The participants' collated responses demonstrated that a large proportion used objectifying terms, such as "it," "things," "stuff," "they," "issue," and "them," in relation to LGBTQ+ people, and the lack of intersubjective connection emphasized the focusing on differences rather than the intersections of connectedness (Okolie, 2003).

If, as we suggest, essentialist notions of sexuality and gender are strongly interwoven into the fabric of Australian school life, then these become the structures that support how heteronormativity becomes institutionalized. The processes and culture that keep it in operation are tacitly understood by those who inhabit and reify the "norm in a country in which, it could be argued, the derogatory 'poofter,' is the preferred interpellation of stigma that brings a weighted pressure to conform to and perform cis-gendered heterosexuality" (Dowsett, 2003). Studies that have mapped a social geography of homophobia identify locations within schools where heteronormative practices are most frequently and aggressively prosecuted. Pejorative schoolyard jokes and jibes about "queers" habitually inculcate heteronormative scripts (Ellis and High, 2004; Vicars, 2005, 2008a). Rofes (1995) indicates how words such as "poofter, gay, queer, homo, lezzy" are highly meaningful in that they continue to constitute what is and is not considered "normal" within daily school life and peer culture, and Woodford et al. (2013) notes the causal relationship of hearing heterosexist language and feelings of social isolation

It goes without saying that LGBTQ lives are made up of a finite number of crucial interactions, and the significance of interpersonal relationships within social networks extend an influence on how individuals think about themselves and their peers. Putnam (2004) suggests the connections of individuals in and between groups can be substantially beneficial to members.

Cassity and Gow (2006, p. 44) find that the biggest challenge for all secondary students was to "seek out a community to which they could safely belong," and for LGBTQ students, this can still be a troublesome task. Grant et al. (2021, p. 2) note the "dearth of Australian research exploring the impact of LGBTQ student groups on school cultures," and this may well be to the emergent nature of such groups in Australia. To the best of our knowledge at the time of writing, there is only one gay–straight alliance reported in operation in Australia, and it started in 2016 at a Victorian Grammar school.

## ALLYSHIP: WHAT IS IT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Schooling can often be a rite-of-passage milestone for LGBTQ students in which they get read as dislocations in the normative discourses of practice (Robinson et al., 2014). For many of us, the experience of being the gay kid, the gay student, the gay sibling, the gay friend is drawn from the vagaries of our encounters and interactions and is shaped by the verities of existence. We have written elsewhere how the most powerful parts always go to heterosexual protagonists for reinforcing or resisting the heteronormative script in everyday life:

> Throughout my childhood and into my adolescence, I became accustomed to not making sense. Having a growing awareness of not being straight enough, involved me rethinking "I" in relation to the wider communities in which I sought belonging. I am conscious how I am/was often perceived as being "too gay" which invariably means being "too queeny," "too flamboyant," "too visible" (Vicars, 2012, p. 55).
> I began to realize that my brother was not like the other boys that I had encountered as soon as I entered the institution of school. My brother refused to accept the binary social enforcement of gender. He expressed himself in a socially taboo manner rejecting shades of color and clothing which we had been taught from a young age were suitable for boys. He learned ballet, enjoyed the theater of "dressing up" and refused to play the "holy" sport of football. He was subjected to taunts, physical harassment and societal disapproval. My brother was a minority residing in a town which displayed disapproval and in many cases overt loathing toward his determination and inclination to self-express and be gender fluid. As his sibling, I also became victim to this treatment (Van Toledo, 2018, p. 113).

Although Tillmann-Healy (2001) research into gay and straight friendships and Gorman-Murray's (2013) study on gay–straight friendships demonstrate the power of proximity and situatedness for enacting attitudinal change and advocating for LGBTQ issues, it would, we suggest, also have an effect on how allies position themselves within their existing social networks (Smith, 2015). Being visible as an ally, it seems, is not only an act of world re-/making, but also of self re-/making. The participants in their stories speak of how their adoption of an ally role was constructed through daily school experiences and involved a conscious taking-up of a positionality/identity in specific moments and in encounters with others (Grzanka et al., 2015). A couple of the participants spoke of how often this could be a balancing act between providing support, interrupting stigmatizing behaviors,

and resisting the suspicion of being queer themselves. These "complex associations" of being an ally of which Mayo (2017) speaks have been suggested to be in the negotiation of straight privilege and queer exclusion in educational domains. The risks that come with speaking out affirmatively for LGBTQ peers is, as Mayo (2017, p. 121) notes, appearing in "contexts or are known to publics in ways they cannot control," and perhaps the most telling difference between being an ally for LGBTQ peers and formal gay–straight alliances is in the formal and institutionalized structure that supports and scaffolds the latter.

Studies that examine the impacts of gay–straight alliances attest to the positive impacts on academic performance and social well-being their presence has in schools (Kosciw et al., 2010; Walls et al., 2010; Toomey et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2014; Poteat et al., 2015; Baams et al., 2020; Lessard et al., 2020a,b), and although there are resource materials on how to be an ally, there is a paucity of scholarship on the experience of being a straight ally. Grzanka et al. (2015), in examining the concept and identities of straight LGBTQ activism, sought to understand how "a straight ally identity is produced in the social worlds of those who identify as allies and how they came to this identity by way of interactions" (p. 166). The study notes the misleading conflation of being a straight ally with LGBTQ activism and advances a consideration of how straight allyship "represented a form of identity choreography, that was both deeply affective and intricately intentional" (p. 177). Coining the term "identity choreography as way to think through (1) how individuals integrate meanings and knowledge from otherwise discreet social orders, (2) how those meanings are anchored in personal, self-reflexive narratives about identity," (p. 177) the study notes that the category of ally "should not be rendered monolithic or singular in either form or content" (p. 179) but is contoured as Valentine (2000, p. 257) notes,

> "within the context of peer group culture highly embodied and [for young people] predicated on adult notions of heterosexualized gender identities."

As each of the participants' told their experiential stories of what often lies beneath and beyond the macro surface of school and is seldom immediately visible to the teacher or educational researcher, the instrumental complexities of taking up of an ally positionality was routinely located in the participants' relational interactions with others.

## METHODOLOGY

Four participants, three females aged between 15 and 21 and one male aged 16, were snowball sample recruited from within a friendship group and a colleague's young adult family member. The defining characteristics of the sample were the participants' pro-gay views, concerns that negative attitudes toward LGBTQ students were becoming further entrenched in their schools, and how school operations and processes did not meet the needs of LGBTQ students. All of the participants had LGBTQ-identified friends and were already invested in being an ally. They all shared a set of ideological beliefs and values that stand against the heteronormative cultures in school. The participants all came from middle-class backgrounds and had attended or were attending independent selective high schools/selective state grammar schools. They were invited to participate in a 20-min recorded Viber interview, and the purpose of the interview was to identify themes connected to the participants' perceptions and views of what it meant for them to publicly identify and be a LGBTQ ally. The participants were not asked to respond to an explicit research question but were invited to reflect on their school experiences connected to LGBTQ-identifying students. At the start of the interview, the participants were invited to tell their stories from their own perspective. They were informed that the interview would be recorded and edited into a grammatically correct version and represented verbatim.

The small-scale sample of participants was a deliberate part of the study's design, which had the aim to convey rich, thick, detailed "ethnographic miniatures" of lived experiences (Geertz, 1973, p. 318). The interviews drew upon the biographic-narrative interpretive method approach (Wengraf, 2001) to draw out narratives from a participant's own cultural and emotional perspectives. We purposefully chose to move away from the structured interviewing format due to how questions that are devised by the researcher often come from assumptions about what participant's lives might be like (Jones, 2003). We were aiming to gain insight into the unique experiences and positionality of participant's lives in their own words and from their own perspectives (Jones, 2003; Bochner, 2012), and as St. Pierre (2021, p. 6) suggests, "The concept data collection is itself problematic because it points to an ontology that assumes data are separate from human being and so can be 'collected.'"

Working from an "ethics of care" (Glen, 2000), we explained to the participants the interpretative naturalistic purpose and scope of the interviews as a context for them to speak freely. To ensure anonymity of the participants and their school, any identifying details were changed and pseudonyms utilized. As with any research interview, consideration of power dynamics and consent are an abiding issue but are especially important when conducting research with young people (France, 2004; Mishna et al., 2004; Morrow, 2008). We were mindful of the power dynamics in play that are created by the binaries of adult/child, researcher/participant and that the something at stake in research inquiry (Smith, 2001, p. 5) can often be "the participant."

Noting the importance of the ethics of representation, Stanley (1993, p. 43–50) suggests how the "'autobiography'...of the sociologist becomes epistemologically crucial no matter what particular research activity we are engaged in" and in declaring our "position" as queerly situated educational researchers, we made it clear to the participants how our personal experience was informing our professional interests (Vicars, 2006). Blackman (2016) notes that researchers often feel that they must maintain an outsider's perspective by not revealing their own personal and emotional connections within research, but we believe such an ontologically situated approach can usefully problematize the research process. Sparkes (1996) and Young (2012) advise that researchers should not be afraid to reveal themselves, their experiences, or investments within their work. Sharing

our beliefs and values with the participants, some might argue, presents a problematic bias, but as Sandelowski (1991) notes, the interconnectedness of the stories of participant and researcher rooted in the subjectivities of both works toward building rapport and ease between the interviewer and interviewee and lie at the core of ethical interviewing.

Although Coffey (1999, p. 133) notes, that there remains considerable debate over the degree to which autobiographical "texts should represent the field, the self or both," we set out with the conviction that a "truth" would be told (Sikes, 2000, 2009, 2010). Stories we suggest are interpretations of the world that require an audience to make its own meaning, and throughout the interviews, the importance of participant and researcher relationality and positionality to the issues affecting LGBTQ students in high school domains became a telling relation.

## ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Sikes (2001) points out how stories told are subject to time, place, and personal involvements, but so too is interpretation, and in analysis, we drew upon the framework of queer theory for thinking about how identity and subjectivity becomes *materialized and inscribed* within social encounters and for understanding how ways of being are made visible within intricate relations with others and are sites of identity formation, self-definition, and affiliation.

In analysis, we utilized the trope of the rhizome from which to understand the significance of interpersonal relationships within social networks for countering LGBTQ microaggressions. We endeavored to understand how the participants subjectivities as allies were negotiated by being "embedded in webs of relationships with others" (Davies, 2015, p. 680). The rhizome that has been suggested is:

> unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 21).

It proved useful for addressing the problems inherent with speaking out of a cultural context and positionality and afforded a means for acknowledging location. The participants in their stories narrated how

> meaning emerges not from the thing-in-itself but from its relationships to an infinite…number of things. In this complexity we understand from another angle that there is no….final meaning of anything; meanings are always evolving in light of new relationships… new horizons (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 214).

The rhizome, as St. Pierre (2021, p. 4) notes, is "deliberately anti-method" but useful for "reorientating thought," and in the following stories, the participants addressed how their ally behaviors were contoured between the problems of individual expression connected to their participation in the wider school community. Their stories are of interpersonal relationships and

social networks and in the telling show the gestalt involved in the expression of being an LGBTQ ally.

## WALKING THE TALK: DOING SEXUAL DIVERSITY AS AN EVERYDAY THING

Sophie, a 21-year-old university student studying a postgraduate degree in arts, had attended both a mixed-gender public high school and a selective high school in predominantly middle-class, affluent suburbs. Reflecting back on the differences in attitudes between the schools, she spoke of how,

> at my local public high school, any thing to do with being gay wasn't discussed, and it was a derogative thing to be called, but I changed schools in year 10 and went to a selective all-girls school, and it was so different—there were these lesbian couples openly dating. There was a group called SSFYF: Same sex attracted youth and friends that was held once a week after school. It was kinda like a support group, and they had a display board in school where they would post stuff. Being at single-sex school was a very different experience; it was much more open and more switched on to LGBT issues. At school assemblies, they talked about being gay and about the importance of being out.
>
> Coloring all of this was that, in our school, there were some openly gay teachers, and this made the environment feel more diverse and accepting. There was this one teacher who presented as very masculine. She was quite androgynous, and we loved her as she was quite active in changing the school attitude toward LGBT. The school was very supportive in terms of allowing student gay–straight clubs and societies and publicly talking about LGBTQ issues and getting the message across to everybody in the school. There were a few people that had come out as Trans, and in a single-sex school, that could have been an issue, but it really wasn't. The school population were quite switched on, and it wasn't just LGBTQ issues that were being discussed, there were numerous clubs that were talking about a whole range of issues. There were feminist clubs, climate change clubs—you get the idea? We thought about ourselves as progressive and powerful women, and we spoke of ourselves as being smart women.
>
> Attitudes toward LGBTQ were part of a wider ideology that was happening at that school. These were mainly coming from the student body, and even though there were examples of it being okay being gay or trans, at the same time, I and other people were still scared. There are a lot of my friends who are now 'out' that were not 'out' at school, and I think that is because, at our other schools—the ones we had been to before—people would openly demean gay people, and discrimination happened. I think people were waiting it out 'till they could be sure it was safe. Even though it was accepted then, it is not as accepted as it is now. What was happening at the school was good, but I don't think it would have changed people's inherent biases that they had internalized growing-up.
>
> People were still unlearning, and in general, the politics of queerness was changing really quickly at that time—public attitudes were changing, and there were things that people would say 10 years ago that are now not acceptable. Programs like Modern Family had started when I was in high school, and popular culture was becoming quite queer, and all that stuff on the TV was quite shaping how people at school were behaving and what they were saying. My learning around gender and sexuality happened mainly in friendship groups at school. My friend transitioned during our final year at school. He sent an email around saying he was transitioning

and that he was changing his name to Paul and could we please use he/his pronouns and address him as Paul. I was very happy that I and my friends could show support by using his preferred pronoun and you know just being visibly on his side. At the end of year prom, he won the best-dressed guy category at the school ball, which is voted for by the student body and usually someone's random date would win it. This was a real validation for him, and when he won it, everybody just burst into applause and was genuinely happy for him. I didn't really think about showing support for LGBT students, it was something that was not really questioned in my friendship group, it was just something that we did. Why wouldn't we? That would just have been stupid.

Ruth, a 15-year-old, year 9 high school student at a selective fee-paying Melbourne school in an affluent middle-class suburb of Melbourne initially commented on the "pack mentality" in her school and how it frames what is and is not possible in countering homophobic commentary:

When 15-year-olds get in packs, they have the most offensive humor possible. The more people realize that the things they say can hurt people, they might actually look and take a step back and think about their actions. When they are in a big group, they get caught up in the whole "Oh, when I say this, people laugh" and "this is what everyone is doing." Phrases such as "that's so gay" are gotten away with because, when they are called on it, they are like "oh no, it's a joke—I didn't mean it." A lot of my year group kind of decide not to see the problems that they cause and that are behind what they say and whether that means they are promoting stereotypes. Those comments such as "that's so gay" are really bad if you are gay or struggling with your sexuality or even if you are out. It really does matter, and so do rumors. I have had some friends who have been badly hurt by some antigay stuff that people have said, and you need someone to challenge it. I'm not the only one who does that.

There are quite a few people in some of the groups I mix with that take it on as some people they mix with that speak in a derogative way about the LGBTQ community without even realizing it. It's very normalized at school, so I feel like the more you can make that not normal and call it out, then whenever you do that, it might actually get in to their heads that it is not alright. There were a couple of people who were friends of mine at first, and then they made anti-LGBTQ jokes and comments and were watching other friends of mine who are constantly watching how some of the boys in our group who are a bit effeminate are doing and what they were saying. They then make jokes about them. I think being a girl makes it easier, especially in high school, to challenge that as boys are much more pressured to appear cool. I've always had strong opinions, and ever since year 7, I have made my views seen on human rights issues and that kind of thing. I jokingly got called a "feminazi" as everyone in my year group knows what I do. People know not to make those kind of jokes—anti-LGBT jokes around me 'cos if they, they will antagonize me, and then I will say something back. People know that I will challenge stuff that is offensive, and 'cos they are aware they don't make those kinds of jokes when I am around. There haven't been any consequences for me speaking out, and there are some people who have said, since you said X, Y, Z, I have actually thought about it, and you had a point. One of my friends is out, and she is not afraid to deal with people if they are being homophobic or sexist. She does get teased but not to her face… not many of my year group would directly say anything. I don't know if that makes it

better or worse as the name calling is all very much behind people's backs. I have never been bullied for speaking out. Joe, one of my friends, does a really good job of closing negative stuff down, and he does it in a quiet way. He is in a couple of friendship groups, one of which is the jock/sporty group, and there are three individuals that are seen to lead the charge on saying anti-LGBTQ stuff. Joe says things like "Hey, that's not okay," or he redirects the conversation. He always takes it on. I am in a friendship group with three gay kids, and they are happy and positive about school. They are quieter than my other friends, and they are not in the big circles of kids that hang around the school. They find the big groups uncomfortable and they say if they are ever stuck in a situation with a lot of kids they don't know or with the jocks that are known to make snide comments, they feel nervous.

I don't think the teachers are good at dealing with comments that are made and that they hear. It has got to the point where those kids who say stuff about gay people don't care because the teachers just give them a slap on the wrist. Whilst the teachers don't tend to make it seem like its okay, they might not really know what to do about it, and they pass it off as if those people are not laughing about sexuality but something else. They (the teachers) want to look like they are supporting us, but really it's not anything more than them saying, "Don't say that's gay, we're all part of the school." Unfortunately, 15-year-olds don't exactly listen to that. At our campus, the year 9 is split off from the rest of the school, and the main school has got really good stuff going on, but it is mainly student organized, but teachers are supportive of it. There are LGBT posters, displays, and on a couple of teacher's offices, there are rainbow flags and helpline flyers for LGBT youth. Support on the main campus is made clear. With social media, Pride month was everywhere at school, and a lot of kids know June is Pride month. In my age group, everyone knows the rainbow flag is the LGBTQ symbol. During Pride months, we (me and some of my friends) got rainbow badges that we pinned on to our blazers, and I've still got mine on. People I know came up to me and said, "People will think you are gay with that on your blazer," and I responded "Is that really such a bad thing?" During Pride month, me and my friends made a speech at the Year 9 assembly as we realized we hadn't done anything asa year group to acknowledge Pride month. We wanted to tell our year group what it is about and why people should do something for it. I talked a lot about making sure schools are the most comfortable environment given that a lot of us could be questioning who we like and who we are, and a negative comment could be detrimental to that. Some people came up to me after the assembly and said they really liked what I had said. The head of year 9 came up to me and said that what we had done made her emotional, and quite a few of the teachers congratulated me for organizing it. Our presentation was positively received, and there was no gatekeeping by the school. At the main campus, they even put rainbow flags, and they also had a speech at their assembly. My year 10, 11, 12 friends have started an LGBTQ youth support group, and we get together to talk about how the school could be more supportive. In the older year groups, there is a great community and a lot more kids are "out." The year 10–12 teachers are starting to talk with the kids that identify as LGBT1 and are asking them what they can do to help. They are saying things like "We want to learn from you guys." "What could we do to help more?" My friend Sage has started to transition, and everyone in my friendship group uses her new name and makes a real effort to acknowledge they are gender neutral. Sage's transition has, on the whole, been positively received, and no one has questioned her pronouns or anything like that, but I think that is more due to trans ignorance.

Joe, a 15-year-old male friend of Ruth's who attended the same school and was in the same year and friendship group, articulated an experience of how being a male ally is made more problematic.

*We have a couple of kids that have come out this year, and so far, the response has been Okay. Nobody gives them direct flack, but behind the scenes, there is a lot of homophobic remarks made in my sporty friendship group, stuff like "He's a faggot." They say it when they won't get caught as nobody wants to be in the direct line of fire, they are too scared of being homophobic to those kids' faces as they afraid to cop the consequences. I have two friendship groups, the sporty group in which there is a lot of homophobic behavior and the friendship group, which Ruth is part of. Ruth has kind of rubbed off on all of us, and we have learnt from her that there is nothing wrong with being gay. In the sporty group, it is harder to challenge as they tend to give shit to people who stand up for gay people, and they accuse them of being gay too. If you do say something back, it can get quite dark, so the choice is don't say anything and go along with it or get yourself subjected to verbal slurs. Ruth's group is totally different, we all have similar beliefs, and it is known around school that it is not cool to say antigay stuff. That group has a vibe around school, and we are tight.*

*Schools could improve by putting the word out more to stop homophobic language as that is so normalized, and I hear it so often, and it is hard to question it with some people. I feel if teachers took more of stance, I could have more of an impact by picking people up on what they say, and I should. I would shut people up if I knew someone was gay and they were getting shit in a group. I have a responsibility.*

Nina, a 20-year-old University student who attended a public high school in 2017 in an affluent middle-class suburb of Melbourne commented,

*I get really offended by homophobia. I don't understand it—I really don't understand it! There are lots of LGBTQ kids at my school, which is in a progressive suburb, and I think there is a socioeconomic difference. I don't know how to say this, but less academic kids tend to use more pejorative language, and I think being gay is more of an issue for them.*

*My school was very accepting, and it celebrated Pride day, which was a whole school initiative that tried to make us more literate about LGBTQ issues. The school wanted LGBTQ students to feel welcome, and posters were put up around the school, and there was a special assembly, but it never got introduced in the curriculum, so it never became a learning objective, so it felt a bit like the checking of boxes.*

*My friends were/are gay, and my best friend was out at school in year 11/12 and is non-cis. Our friendship group put a lot of effort in to updating the wider school community on the use of pronouns after they told me they wanted to be addressed as "they/their." We started a campaign to get the school to put in gender-neutral toilets, but they refused, which was so bad. I am cis presenting, and there is nothing obvious about me that others can latch onto, so I have had a smooth ride 'cos I fly under the radar even though I now identify as bisexual. I don't see coming out as being all that useful even no, as being queer can get you othered and puts you into other people's boxes.*

# DISCUSSION—STRAIGHT BUT NOT REGULAR

The participant stories show how the taking-up of an ally positionality was representative of a mindset that had much to do with their negotiation of their identities as young adults. Advocating for LGBTQ+ issues and being an ally appears to be grounded in and affected by the participants' relational interactions with others. Articulating a pro-gay sensibility was, for all of the participants, grounded in a context of a commitment to social justice issues and embodied speaking back a truth to power. Such a stance bears the features of what Foucault (2001) calls parrhesia, an act of speech that is characterized by a commitment to speak freely with openness and honesty and with criticality and that has the capacity to cause offense and be a risky endeavor. Parrhesia as a knowing and telling relation to being in the world speaks of a deep personal engagement, interaction, and investment with the "what" and "how" of the material-discursive is put to work.

Ruth's comment on the pack mentality in schools echoes Joe's understanding of the personal investment required in countering homophobic commentary. She explained how adopting an ally stance to refute homophobic discourse required taking up a position in which it was impossible to maintain a psychic distance and detachment from name-calling. Ruth, in her narrative, spoke of herself as a summoned subject: "the self constituted and defined by its position as respondent" (Ricoeur, 1995, p. 262), which is echoed across the participant's stories. Ruth explained how adopting an ally stance required actively taking up a position in which it was impossible to maintain a psychic distance and detachment from name-calling and often involved overcoming of personal discomfort and could incur social consequences.

The affective aspect of belonging in and to friendship groups and how gender determined how being an ally is made easier or more difficult is illustrated in Joe's reflection. Joe, a young straight male, straddled two social groups and spoke of, in the wider school population, how his countering of homophobic commentary in the dominant sporty group meant he had to be a "quiet ally" for fear of the repercussions. Athanases and Comar (2008, p. 13) note how

Much of the bullying nature of name-calling is tied to power, position, and peer pressure. Language is pragmatic, purposeful, and meaningful—and deeply related to social interactions, to relationship formation…Name-calling among youth, for example, establishes in-group affiliations and is a form of bullying and aggression often intended to establish a public identity. Boys exhibit more overt direct bullying behaviors than girls [and] Policing gender norms is key, especially in adolescent males' homophobic speech that tends to target other males.

Joe's understanding of being an ally was connected to his understanding of the personal consequences of transgressing hegemonic social and cultural roles aligned with normative expressions of gendered sexuality. In all male sport-orientated social groups, Joe had to negotiate separation in the ways that he belonged, acted, spoke out, and represented himself as a straight

male and an ally. His narrative reflection on the complexity of his lived experiences makes material the deconstruction of the self as subject caught between the binaries of gay/straight, belonging/not belonging and exposes the contingencies of identity and subjectivity (Warner, 1999). To move beyond these binaries is always problematic, and his vigilant attendance to how the self is made problematic was framed by what it is possible to be and do within the governing structures of peer groups. Ruth commented on how *being a girl makes it easier especially in high school to challenge that as boys are much more pressured to appear cool* and as Seidman (1993, p. 130) note,

> "The logic of identity is a logic of boundary defining…The social productivity of identity is purchased at the price of logic of a hierarchy normalization and exclusion."

The importance and centrality of gender as a governing pedagogy in the participants' stories situate it as a key factor in how belonging is constituted in peer groups and how it determines the ease of taking up of an ally position. It is interesting to note how Sophie's experience in a single-sex school provided a very different narrative and indicates avenues for future exploration.

Nina raised how socioeconomic differences framed attitudes toward LGBTQ issues in schools and suggested how, within her mainly middle-class "progressive" suburb, LGBTQ was positioned by the school as being part of a social justice agenda. All of the participants had attended or were attending fee-paying selective schools in affluent middle-class suburbs, and the context of class and parental attitudes on the reproduction of and resistance to homophobia has to be considered as an attributing factor.

Literature that has examined sociocultural attitudes toward sexual minorities (Adamczyk, 2017; Powell et al., 2017) asks whether family socialization is instrumental to the "forming and norming" of attitudes or if educational attainment was significant. People from more progressive backgrounds, it is suggested, can be more likely to affirm a sexual minority identity (Schnabel, 2018), and such an assertion suggests that the formation of attitudes intersects with other emblematic indicators. The situated sociocultural capital of the participants' home environments was progressive thinking, affluent middle class in which the average level of parental education was tertiary. If the formation of pro-gay attitudes is situated within social, cultural, and geographical locations, then as (Valentine, 2007), notes attitudes toward exclusion/inclusion are informed by and within the intersections of people's lives and identities. Vicars (2014) understanding of how context, temporality, and positioning can determine adolescent experiences points toward the instrumental role that families play in the development and enactment of doing gender and sexuality in childhood. Brandt (2001, p. 12) suggests "how that which is felt internally as 'personal experience' is intimately connected to the institutions outside the self that foster and promote such feelings, and if the particularities of parenting became a telling relation(ship), then the 'family' as a site of a discursive set of social practices inevitably has to account for the broader social and cultural dynamics in which childhood and adolescence gets done" Britzman (1997, p.

194). Invested in the discursive reproduction of the traditional Western family is the making material of discourses that discipline or not (homo)sexuality as a deficit or risky enterprise. Surtees and Gunn (2010, p. 42) note how "Families routinely inscribe normative identity work and further research is needed into how the habits of hearth and home can be an influencing factor in how social inequalities and injustices are negotiated in family practices" (Taylor, 2012; Chan and Erby, 2018).

Although the influence of individual school profile, suburb, socioeconomic status, and parental educational attainment cannot be discounted as underlying factors in the formation of how the participants came to embody an ally identity, they all indicate how being an ally involved the institutional structures and teacher's professional practices. Nina noted that LGBTQ needs to be embedded in school culture and in the teaching and learning curriculum content. She suggested how school engagement with LGBTQ could have been done better and that the commitment to creating inclusive practices in schools was mainly occurring in and emerging out of student-led efforts. Joe reinforced the importance of senior leadership critically engaging with sexuality related diversity to promote inclusive environments and connected how the macro structures of school influence what he feels he could achieve as an ally. Ruth remarked on the importance of effective leadership on LGBTQ issues by teachers and how teachers should be seen to address exclusionary practices and create an environment and school culture that ensures that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is unacceptable and is challenged. Sophie noted how a lesbian visibility among staff set a tone for making sexuality equality visible that maximized awareness of the presence of gender and sexual diversity in the school and was instrumental in changing perceptions, hearts, and minds. These perceptions echo much of the existing research into the importance of effective leadership on LGBTQ issues in educational domains (Griffin and Ouellett, 2002; Barnet et al., 2006; Vicars, 2008b; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Branch et al., 2013; Boyland et al., 2016; Lee, 2020) and highlights the importance of school leaders/teachers making visible that which often lies beneath and beyond the surface of the everyday business of school. Articulating a counternarrative that interrupts the silencing is connected to teachers overcoming personal discomfort, and the Ezer et al. (2019) study of Australian teachers reports how their participants often expressed feeling confused and hesitant in dealing with the negative impact of heteronormativity on LGBTQ students. Payne and Smith (2013, p. 2) note how

> …individuals' behavior or attitudes create a "negative" school climate where student safety and belonging are threatened. Understanding schools in this way does not account for institutional heteronormativity, which is a fundamental organizational structure through which schools function and the people who occupy school spaces interact with one another.

Such experiences can be interrupted when same-sex attracted people have a strong community connection (Hanckel and Morris, 2014; Swannell et al., 2016), and such connections can

disrupt the discourses and practices of the LGBTQ educational other (Slee, 2013).

In Ruth's case, she took it upon herself to actively educate her year group school community, and affirmative visibility has long been recognized as important in countering stigma and providing inclusive experiences for LGBTQ youth in schools. Bird and Akerman (2005, p. 24) noted 15 years back how

"educational and social interventions aimed at addressing social exclusion may lead to changes in individual self-concept, increased well-being and more developed social networks."

From the participants' stories, there has been some movement in the macro interruptions to the everyday discourses of normalcy in their secondary schools, and this appears to be connected to the change in discourse beyond the school gates. Sophie referenced the role that popular cultural representations played in her friendship group in reference to the wider epistemic shifts informing attitudinal changes toward LGBTQ. Ruth described how she received teacher support for delivering a year group assembly to mark Pride month and how the visible display of LGBT posters and rainbow flags signaled on campus LGBTQ support. As an index of the changing material reality of LGBTQ+ visibility Ruth referenced how drawing on LGBTQ artifacts from the wider community was an important part in maximizing awareness of attitudes toward gender and sexual diversity in schools. Nina spoke of how Pride day became a whole school initiative, and the presence of artifacts and celebration of Pride and LGBT history month the participants expressed were significant for assisting them to interrupt performatives of hetero-normalcy and to "provoke a critical social realization" in the wider school community (Alexander, 2005, p. 411–412).

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

To fully understand the complexities of straight-identified youth taking up an ally position in secondary school communities requires more research. The participants' stories show the biggest challenge in enacting allyship and pro-gay transformations in their schools was as Cassity and Gow (2006, p. 44) note, to "seek out a community to which they could safely belong." Belonging and the shaping presence of gender appeared to be central to how they made visible an "ally identity" in their relationships with LGBTQ friends and normalized sexual diversity in the wider school domain. Foucault (1977, p. 176) suggest how, "if sexual Otherness is habitually positioned in relation to what is considered as the norm, and in doing so legitimates the norm as the ideal, normalization becomes one of the greatest instruments of power, the power of normalization [that] imposes homogeneity." The participants' experiences of negotiating friendship, affirmation, and inclusion are messy and are as Cvetkovich (2003, p. 2) notes "…connected to other histories." Unearthing a genealogy of allyship is beyond the scope of this paper, but it would fair to say that being an ally has become a significant and defining moment in the lives of the participants. Giroux (1988, p. 292) claimes, "The pedagogical value of resistance lies, in part, in the connections it makes

between structure and human agency on the one hand and culture and the process of self formation on the other." Speaking out about the interface of straight culture on queer sexuality, Sedwick (1994, p. 2) notes,

"The knowledge is indelible, but not too astonishing, to anyone with a reason to be attuned to the profligate way this culture has of denying and despoiling queer energies and lives…Everyone who survived has stories about how it was done."

Heteronormativity and homophobia maintain an affirming presence in Australia, and in this paper, we have endeavored to tell stories that are not usually heard and that we suggest are instrumental to making visible LGBTQ discourse in Australian schools. The participants pro-gay relational interactions with others are, we hope, a promise of an emerging change in school communities and an indication it just might be possible to start to think of a time when the presence of LGBTQ+ allies in schools' render sexuality-related diversity and inclusion as "fairdinkum" and as "Aussie" as Vegemite.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The contribution this article makes to the academy is in the reflection on how young adults position themselves as allies in Australian secondary schools to interrupt heteronormative discourses. The paper suggests how such positioning is contoured by and in social friendship groups, is gendered, classed and connected to wider social and cultural discourses. Drawing on first hand accounts that describe the experiences of countering stigmatizing and heteronormalcy in school domains, the notion of being an ally is contextualized within the wider Australian landscape of legislative frameworks and attitudinal shifts toward LGBTQ. The article invites the reader to consider the relationship between the macro and the micro and the importance of relationality for resisting homophobia in secondary schools.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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# Diversity and Inclusion: Impacts on Psychological Wellbeing Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Communities

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For scholars, practitioners, and legislators concerned about sexual minority adolescents, one of the main goals is to create more positive and inclusive learning environments for this minority group. Numerous factors, such as repeated patterns of homophobic bullying by classmates and others in school, have been a significant barrier to achieving this goal. In addition, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) adolescents encounter substantial inequality across a broad spectrum of wellbeing and education consequences. Compared with their heterosexual counterparts, LGBTQ adolescents experience more anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, antisocial behavior, poorer academic performance, less school attachment and protection, and a weaker desire to finish their studies. Such discrepancies based on gender and sexuality were linked to more maltreatment encountered by LGBTQ adolescents. It is crucial to recognize the backgrounds and expectations of LGBTQ adolescents to offer them the best resources. To overcome the inequality and obstacles faced by these LGBTQ adolescents, it is essential to examine tools and techniques that can be utilized. This study examined the literature that explains why society fails to provide enough support to LGBTQ students. Specifically, mechanisms explaining how LGBTQ adolescents interact with others in the learning environment and how such discrepancies arise will be examined. Following that, violence and prejudice, which are fundamental causes of psychological problems among LGBTQ adolescents, will be explored. This review paper thus provides supportive strategies for schools to develop more inclusive learning environments for LGBTQ adolescents.

**Keywords: social inclusion and exclusion, discrimination, LGBTQ students, mental health, psychological impact**

# INTRODUCTION

Globally, schools play an essential role in enabling students to acquire college credentials and knowledge, become familiar with the culture, learn about interpersonal relationships, ideals, and standards, and develop survival skills and expertise abilities (Skovdal and Campbell, 2015). When individuals attend schools and colleges and receive a comprehensive education, their chances in life are improved. The community requires their expertise, and they are well equipped to serve it. Given the many roles and advantages of education, school environments need to be protective, stable, inclusive, and pleasant to all students to maximize learning opportunities for everyone to guarantee that school goals are met. Regrettably, colleges and universities worldwide may not be a safe environment for LGBTQ students, who face intimidation, maltreatment, rejection, and other types of discrimination and exploitation (Poynter and Washington, 2005; Fields and Wotipka, 2020; Kurian, 2020). These experiences lead to agony, distress, and anxiety and could have a detrimental effect on LGBTQ students' physical, psychological and educational wellbeing (Mateo and Williams, 2020; Mallory et al., 2021).

# THE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN DISCRIMINATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

There are different forms of discrimination, including verbal abuse, physical aggression, burglaries, accommodation discrimination, and sexual assault (Flores A. R. et al., 2020). Adolescents who identify as LGB experience more severe peer harassment and maltreatment than their straight counterparts (Kolbe, 2020). In the United States, 34% of LGB adolescents experienced bullying at school in the surveyed year, compared to 19% of straight adolescents (Johns et al., 2020). It has been reported that maltreatment of children based on their sexuality has occurred at an early age, as young as eight and nine years old (Evans-Polce et al., 2020).

Proximal minority stressors may negatively affect the lives of LGBTQ individuals. They include internalized homonegativity, societal exclusion expectancies, and the concealment of one's sexual identity (Delozier et al., 2020). Individuals who have a greater degree of internalized homonegativity express more unfavorable sentiments about themselves due to their sexual orientation (Ocasio et al., 2020). Additionally, LGBTQ people may suffer stress or lack self-confidence due to their sexuality (Minturn et al., 2021). Since sexuality can be concealed from others and that marginalization of LGBTQ people may not be immediately apparent throughout most human relationships (Kachanoff et al., 2020), LGBTQ people need to determine whether, when, how, and to whom they disclose their sexuality (Alonzo and Buttitta, 2019; Lo, 2020). Multiple declarations of their socially marginalized identities might be required, increasing their stress (Daniele et al., 2020). Substantial evidence suggests that bisexual youngsters are at an even greater risk of developing psychological problems than gay/lesbian adolescents (Savin-Williams, 2020), given experiences of stressors associated

with "double discrimination" (i.e., exclusion from both the heterosexual and LG populations) and dismissal of one's self-image as "just a phase" (Ramasamy, 2020).

It should also be noted that LGBTQ students who identify as members of other oppressed groups (for example, racial and cultural minorities, non-Christians, and members of the lower class) may face heightened instances of discrimination in educational institutions. According to The Trevor Project's 2019 national study on LGBTQ psychological wellness, 71% of LGBTQ youngsters encountered prejudice due to gender and/or sexuality. Additionally, two-thirds of the LGBTQ adolescent interviewees reported that they had been persuaded to alter their sexuality. A survey found that 78% of transgender and non-binary adolescents faced prejudice due to their gender and sexuality, while 70% of LGBTQ adolescents experienced discrimination against their gender expressions. Another study (Platero and López-Sáez, 2020) found that 58% of transgender and non-binary adolescents experienced being discouraged from using the restroom that matched their gender preference.

In addition, study findings indicate that LGBTQ individuals may have serious psychological issues due to their sexuality. A study showed that 39% of LGBTQ interviewees reported actively contemplating suicide in the surveyed year, a majority of them aged between 13 and 17 (Higbee et al., 2020). An astounding 71% of LGBTQ adolescents reported experiencing despair or depression for no fewer than 14 days during the surveyed year (Higbee et al., 2020). While significant progress has been achieved in terms of LGBTQ inclusion over the previous decade, this poll demonstrates that the LGBTQ community, especially younger members, continue to face challenges directed at their sexual identities (Standley, 2020).

# CURRENT QUANTITATIVE STUDY

The effects of loneliness, marginalization, and inequality on psychological health and the assessment of health determinants have been examined in a number of quantitative studies conducted with LGBTQ adolescents (**Table 1**). The prevalence of suicidal ideation, depression, and drug abuse among LGBTQ adolescents is considerably higher than that of their heterosexual counterparts, highlighting the seriousness and frequency of LGBTQ adolescents' experiences of inequalities (Price-Feeney et al., 2020). It has been found that LGBTQ adolescents have higher incidences of aggression and victimization as well as more despair and suicidal behavior. These adolescents are also more likely to develop psychosocial disorders, such as alcohol and drug problems and eating disorders (Lannoy et al., 2020). Associations have been established between peer victimization and adverse psychological wellbeing indictors, such as depression, distress, and suicidal tendencies, along with liquor and drug misuse and compromised academic performance, including reduced school involvement and interruptions to academic paths (Brown et al., 2020).

Quantitative analysis has also centered on defining vulnerability and preventive variables for the psychological wellbeing of LGBTQ adolescents, resulting in the establishment

**TABLE 1 |** Summarizes the findings of several academic trials and their connection with the mental health impacts on LGBT students in review.

| Authors/Studies | Year | Country | Methods | Sample/Participant | Prevalence | Major psychological impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grossman et al. (2009) | 2009 | United States | Grounded theory | $n = 31$ Age: 15–19 Gender: Male ($n = 19$, 61%), Female ($n = 12$, 39%) Sexual orientation: Lesbian ($n = 6$, 19.4%) Bisexual ($n = 12$, 38.7%) Gay ($n = 8$, 25.8%) Male-to-female transgender ($n = 5$, 16.1%) | Two themes generated: 1. Lack of community 2. Lack of empowerment with a concurrent lack of a sense of human agency in school | 1. No sense of being apart in school 2. No sense of being a human agency in school |
| Walls et al. (2019) | 2013 | United States | Survey | $n = 7261$ Age: 13–21 (Mean age = 16.3) Gender: Male ($n = 1930$, 33.7%), Female ($n = 3263$, 56.9%), Transgender ($n = 314$, 5.5%), Others ($n = 223$, 3.9%) Sexual orientation: Not mentioned | 1. Victimization related to sexual orientation & gender expression: Physical harassment was highly correlated with verbal harassment (r = 0.62 for both types) and physical assault (r's = 0.72 and 0.71, respectively) 2. Structural equation modeling showed that victimization contributed to lower academic outcomes and lower self-esteem | 1. Lower academic outcomes 2. Lower self-esteem |
| Van Bergen et al. (2013) | 2013 | Netherlands | Survey | $n = 274$ Age (Mean ± SD): 16.77 ± 0.80 Gender: Male ($n = 106$, 38.7%), Female ($n = 168$, 61.3%), Sexual orientation: Not mentioned | 1. Suicidal ideation (63.9%) A significant association with victimization at school (Adjusted OR = 1.66, 95% CI = 10.6, 2.6) 2. Suicidal attempt (12.8%) victimization at school (Adjusted OR = 1.98, 95% CI = 1.08–3.62) | 1. Suicidal ideation 2. Suicidal attempt |
| Proulx et al. (2019) | 2019 | United States | Survey | $n = 50,072$ Age: High school students in Grades 9–12 Gender: Not mentioned Sexual orientation: Bisexual ($n = 3372$, 6.7%) Gay/lesbian ($n = 1259$, 2.5%) Heterosexual ($n = 43331$, 86.5%) Not sure ($n = 2110$, 4.3%) | 1. Bisexual youth reported the highest frequency of past-year depressive symptoms (62.8%), suicidal thoughts (44.6%), and making a suicide plan (39.3%). 2. Gay/lesbian youth reported the highest frequency of bullying victimization on school property (34.2%) | 1. Depressive symptoms 2. Suicidal ideation 3. Suicidal plan 4. Bullying |
| Walls et al. (2019) | 2019 | Colorado, United States | Survey | $n = 9,352$ Age: 15.8 (mean) Gender: Male ($n = 4486$, 48%), Female ($n = 4866$, 52%) Sexual orientation: Bisexual ($n = 704$, 7.5%) Gay/Lesbian ($n = 164$, 1.8%) Heterosexual ($n = 8,161$, 87%) Not sure ($n = 323$, 3.7%) | 1. Depressive symptoms ($n = 3,077$, 33%) 2. Suicidal attempt (one attempt: $n = 497$, 5.3%; two or more attempts: $n = 506$, 5.4%) 3. School bullying ($n = 2,087$, 22.3%) 4. Online bullying ($n = 7,655$, 18.2%) | 1. Depressive symptoms 2. Suicidal attempt 3. Bullying |
| Wilson and Cariola (2020) | 2019 | China | Online survey | $n = 732$ Age: 20.3–20.9 Gender: Male ($n = 512$, 69.9%), Female ($n = 174$, 23.8%), Transgender ($n = 46$, 6.3%) Sexual Orientation: Bisexual ($n = 126$, 17.2%) Gay ($n = 441$, 60.2%) Lesbian ($n = 123$, 16.8%) Not sure ($n = 42$, 5.7%) | 1. Disagreed or strongly disagreed that LGBTQ students are treated with as much respect as other students ($n = 234$, 32.9%) 2. Suicidal thoughts ($n = 293$, 40%) 3. Depressive symptoms ($n = 622$, 85%) | 1. Depressive symptoms 2. Suicidal ideation 3. Not being respected |
| Hackman et al. (2020) | 2020 | United States | Qualitative | $n = 20$ Age: 18–25 Gender: Male ($n = 7$, 35%), Female ($n = 11$, 55%), Transgender female ($n = 2$, 10%) Sexual orientation: Bisexual ($n = 5$, 25%) Gay ($n = 5$, 25%) Lesbian ($n = 3$, 15%) Queer ($n = 3$, 15%) Asexual and bisexual ($n = 1$, 5%) Pansexual ($n = 1$, 5%) Homoflexible cupiosexual ($n = 1$, 5%) | Six major themes identified: 1. Interpersonal concerns about disclosure 2. Consequences of sexual assault 3. Hesitance to engage with institutions following sexual assault 4. Sense of LGBTQ+ Community 5. Cisheteronormativity 6. Changes to improve institutional support | 1. Feeling of being isolated 2. Negative coping 3. Self-blame |
| Ybarra et al. (2015) | 2015 | United States | Online survey | $n = 5542$ Age: 13–18 Gender: Male ($n = 2260$, 40.8%), Female ($n = 2840$, 51.3%), Transgender/gender non-conforming ($n = 442$, 7.9%) Sexual orientation: Bisexual ($n = 655$, 11.8%) Gay, Lesbian, and Queer ($n = 1282$, 23.1%) Questioning, unsure, and others ($n = 225$, 4.1%) Heterosexual ($n = 3380$, 61%) | 1. Suicidal thought 39% bisexual; 31% gay, lesbian, 24% questioning/ not sure of their sexual identity; 10% heterosexual [p < 0.001] 2. Victims of bullying were five times more likely (OR = 5.61, 95 % CI = 4.11, 7.64) and victims of peer harassment were two times more likely (OR = 2.06, 95 % CI = 1.53, 2.79) than non-victimized youth to report recent suicidal ideation | 1. Suicidal ideation 2. Bullying 3. Peer harassment |

of mitigation, diagnosis, and recovery guidelines, as well as shaping legislation and policy (Lockett, 2020). Family affirmation, for example, provides a protective factor against depression, drug misuse, and suicide among LGBTQ adolescents and young adults. It increases self-esteem, support networks, general wellness, and is a buffer against depression, drug misuse, and suicide (Reyes et al., 2020; Lampis et al., 2021). Thus, household initiatives that inspire and support parents, care providers, and other close relatives have been identified as a beneficial paradigm for preventive strategies. This highlights the strengths and positive impact of constructive parent-child dynamics. Additionally, a recent comprehensive study (Flores A. R. et al., 2020; Flores D. D. et al., 2020) found that elevated degrees of community protection were correlated with a healthy ego while a shortage of community protection was linked with increased levels of stress, anxiety, guilt, alcohol and substance consumption, practices of unsafe sex, and lower levels of self-esteem. McDonald et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of acceptance by family and caregivers and a feeling of connection to a friend/community in LGBTQ youth's psychological wellbeing.

## IMPACT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER STUDENTS

Mental health entails a positive relationship with people and the pursuit of a productive and fulfilling existence. It has been shown that those who have a high level of mental health tend to be more lighthearted and lead more energetic and pleasant lives (Chan et al., 2021). Owing to their heightened likelihood of experiencing psychological challenges, LGBTQ adolescents are among the most disadvantaged populations in the community (Detrie and Lease, 2007; McGlashan and Fitzpatrick, 2017). According to figures on the LGBTQ community, New Zealand has an estimated 8% of LGB adolescents, the United States has an estimated 7–8% of LGB adolescents (Wilson et al., 2014). According to Aranmolate et al. (2017), LGBTQ adolescents' psychological health difficulties are associated with a lack of familial recognition and experiences of harassment. They are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to encounter violent conditions at home and in the larger community, and are exposed to overt and implicit discrimination, violence, vulnerability, and injustice, all of which have a negative effect on psychological wellbeing (Bertrand et al., 2005; Matebeni et al., 2018; Simons and Russell, 2021).

A recent study (Lucassen et al., 2017) found that LGBTQ adolescents were three times more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to exhibit depressive conditions and twice as likely to harm themselves. In the study, 20% of participants attempted suicide, and over half considered it. LGBTQ adolescents were more likely than their non-LGBTQ counterparts to seek therapy in the previous 12 months, at 41.0%. Additionally, the Youth 2000 Survey (Archer et al., 2021) indicates that LGBTQ youth face a higher risk of alcohol or substance usage. In Scotland over the given time, 40% of LGBT adolescents registered as having a psychological disorder, compared to 25% of non-sexual

and gender marginalized adolescents and bullying was described as a significant source of anxiety among LGBT participants (Bradbury, 2020; Pachankis et al., 2020).

LGBTQ adolescents, in general, have distinct risk factors, and when such specific threats are associated with common stressful events, this minority group tend to experience increased self-harm, suicidal tendencies, and emotional instability (Eisenberg et al., 2020; Hatchel et al., 2021). These risk factors persist throughout adulthood, with Sexual/Gender Minority (SGM) person 400% more likely to commit suicide and both males and females 150% more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and drug abuse (King et al., 2008; Lothwell et al., 2020). In a 2011 article (Chakraborty et al., 2011), it was found that gay/lesbian individuals experience elevated degrees of psychological discomfort in comparison to straight people.

According to previous studies engaging with minority stress theory (Cyrus, 2017; Fulginiti et al., 2020; **Table 1**), the rising likelihood of psychological health problems among LGBTQ adolescents is a result of increased social stress, which includes stigma, discrimination, bias, and victimization. Adolescence is a crucial period in cognitive growth, with elevated impact of pressure on psychological wellbeing and an increased susceptibility to substance use (Tavarez, 2020; Fulginiti et al., 2021). At this critical juncture, experiencing discrimination at the hands of academic, clinical, or religious establishments, or internalizing victimization as a consequence of discrimination, transphobia, or biphobia, will create substantial mental difficulties for LGBTQ adolescents (Budge et al., 2020; Formby and Donovan, 2020). Marginalization, loneliness, alienation, bullying, and a lack of supportive grown-ups and spaces all contribute to social tension among LGBTQ adolescents (Grossman et al., 2009; Hafeez et al., 2017).

Stigma establishes individual obstacles for vulnerable adolescents, stopping them from seeking resources (Cortes, 2017). According to Hackman et al. (2020), humiliation, guilt, and apprehension of judgment are all factors explaining why LGBTQ adolescents stop accessing psychological health care. LGBTQ adolescents who are homeless, remote, or drug addicts experience greater obstacles to obtaining assistance (Lucassen et al., 2011, **Table 1**). If parental or specialist assistance is unavailable, LGBTQ adolescents may seek assistance from peers and resources on online platforms (LaSala, 2015; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020; Town et al., 2021).

Recognition by family members has also been described as a significant factor influencing the psychological wellbeing of LGBTQ adolescents (Afdal and Ilyas, 2020; Buriæ et al., 2020). According to Strauss et al. (2020), familial engagement is represented by openness and sensitivity to the demands of a child. As LGBTQ adolescents feel welcomed and respected, they are more likely to reveal their non-normative identities to family members (Hagai et al., 2020; Endo, 2021). Nevertheless, a huge percentage of LGBTQ adolescents are homeless, indicating that family exclusion is a major risk factor for poor psychological wellbeing (Travers et al., 2020; MacMullin et al., 2021). Durso and Gates (2012) released the findings of a nationwide internet study in the United States and discovered that nearly 68% of their LGBT homeless clients had encountered family abandonment and over 54% had encountered domestic violence.

Adolescence is a transitional stage during which adolescents discover their identity, and for LGBTQ adolescents, it is also the period during which they gain an awareness of their own gender identity and sexual preference (Prock and Kennedy, 2020). Research has shown shifting relationships throughout adolescence and young adulthood, with a corresponding change in commitment to friends and social classes apart from the family, as well as to entities such as education, colleges, religious or political communities (Huang, 2020; Jordan, 2020). Recognition by support communities is a powerful preventive mechanism for LGBTQ children and adolescents (Call et al., 2021). A LGBTQ-friendly climate has a profound impact on their psychological development and well-being. Perceptions of social integration with grown-ups help LGBTQ adolescents overcome challenges, especially during the precarious developmental phase when they are developing their sense of self (Proulx et al., 2019).

## THE SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

The interaction between a person and his or her environment affects personal growth and development according to the social ecological model. The risk of suicidal behaviors among LGBTQ adolescents is influenced by a number of contextual factors including schools. Institute of Medicine asked for further research in 2011, focusing specifically on the impact of protective school policies and students' perceptions of their school environments on their health and well-being (Ancheta et al., 2021). Much research pointed out that schools are well-positioned to address health disparities by creating safe and supportive school climates for LGBTQ youth (Gower et al., 2018; Woodford et al., 2018; **Table 2**). Evidence shows that a safe and supportive climate is related to lower odds of student bullying involvement, some types of risky alcohol use and drug use, and victimization. A safe climate event may reduce LGBTQ adolescents' risk of suicidal thoughts (Konishi et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2013; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014; Gower et al., 2018). Having a supportive school environment and a sense of belonging to school were associated with lower levels of minority stress and better academic results, health, and wellbeing among LGBTQ students (Denny et al., 2016; Perales and Campbell, 2020). Research has suggested multiple strategies for school-based support, including policies, supporting LGBTQ students organizations, educator intervention and LGBTQ related curriculum (Konishi et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2013).

More inclusive policies could contribute to the school climate at the macro level. These policies include antidiscrimination policies (Woodford et al., 2018) and anti-homophobic bullying policies (Konishi et al., 2013). Compared with students at schools with generic policies or no/unidentified policies, LGBTQ students in districts with sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression (SOGIE) protections in their policies reported greater school safety, less victimization based on their sexual orientation and gender expression, and less social aggression (Kull et al., 2016). Moreover, a greater number of

SOGIE-focused policies was associated with lower truancy for all students (Day et al., 2019).

Furthermore, gay–straight alliance (GSAs) has been one of the major sources of support in high schools in the United States and Canada. GSAs are student-led, school-based clubs that aim to provide a safe environment in the school context for LGBTQ students, as well as their straight allies (Toomey et al., 2011. In recent decades, the number of GSAs in schools has increased dramatically, with over 4,000 GSAs registered in the United States (Toomey et al., 2011). Research has suggested that a high school with a GSA can decrease LGBTQ students-risks for using illicit drugs and prescription drug misuse and reduce their burden of minority stressors (Heck et al., 2014). GSAs foster inclusive school environments not only for LGBT + students but for all students, thereby contributing to lower levels of homonegative victimization, fear for safety, homophobic remarks and multiple forms of bias-based bullying (based on body weight, gender, religion, disability, gender typicality, sexuality) (Marx and Kettrey, 2016; Lessard et al., 2020).

Educator intervention and LGBTQ related curriculum also constitute prevention strategies of inclusive schools. Teachers and school staff—in particular, the medical staff—could be provided with LGBTQ sensitive training and LGBTQ medical curricula, which are important for supportive climate building and LGBTQ students' wellbeing (Gower et al., 2018; Tollemache et al., 2021). By strengthening teachers' analytical awareness of alienation experienced by children and adolescents, teachers may flourish in school, promoting equal opportunity principles and teaching students about love and consideration, justice and freedom (Glazzard and Stones, 2020). Willging et al. (2016) demonstrated that RLAS (Implementing School Nursing Strategies to Reduce LGBTQ Adolescent Suicide) is applicable to novel nurse-led intervention to address LGBTQ youth suicide and health-related concerns of other students. All these strategies have shown the importance of structural initiatives on campus in protecting LGBTQ students from discrimination (Woodford et al., 2018).

## DISCUSSION

Around the world, the importance of an inclusive school climate to LGBTQ student has been suggested and advocated for reducing the risk of violence and discrimination and enhancing their psychological wellbeing. However, most quantitative studies were concentrated in the Northern America, particularly the United States. There remains a lack of research about LGBTQ students' wellbeing in developing countries. Moreover, much research used the data from health or psychological surveys to state that policies, GSAs club, educator intervention, and LGBTQ related curriculum could improve the school climate; nevertheless, less experimental research could provide evidence and specific methods to guide schools. Further, due to the disparities among LGBTQ students, a 'one size fits all' approach to school policy might not fit all LGBTQ students. Day et al. (2019) have demonstrated that SOGIE-focused policy may support LGBTQ youth more than transgender youth.

**TABLE 2** | The supportive strategies/services and implication with inclusion studies in review.

| Author/Study | Country | Supportive strategies/Service | Sample/Participants | Study Findings | Implication |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gower et al. (2018) | United States | Student-focused (e.g., GSA), staff-focused (e.g., professional development), and a combination (e.g., point person for LGBT student issues). These programs include some elements of professional development, classroom activities, more formal curriculum, and school-wide communication of inclusive norms through stickers and posters. | Student-level data: 8th ($n = 121$), 9th ($n = 121$), or 11th ($n = 119$) grades ($n = 176$ schools in total) completing the 2013 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS). Assuming a 5% LGBQ rate. School-level data: $N = 31,183$ students in 103 schools. | This study provides promising evidence that school efforts to promote safe and supportive climates for LGBQ youth through multiple practices are associated with lower odds of student bullying involvement | Findings support school-wide efforts to create supportive climates for LGBQ youth as part of a larger bullying prevention strategy |
| Kosciw et al. (2013) | United States | Safe school policies, supportive school personnel, and gay–straight alliance (GSA) clubs | $N = 5,7630$ lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students between the ages of 13 and 21 ($M = 16.3$ years) | School-based supports contributed to lower victimization and better academic outcomes | A hostile school climate has serious ramifications for LGBT students but institutional supports can play a significant role in making schools safer for these students |
| Woodford et al. (2018) | United States | Using SEM, indicate that antidiscrimination policies that enumerate both sexual orientation and gender identity (vs. only sexual orientation), offering at least one for-credit course on LGBTQ topics, and the ratio of LGBTQ student organizations to the student body size | $N = 268$, 58% undergraduates; 25% students of color; 62% gay/lesbian from 58 colleges completed an anonymous online survey addressing experiential heterosexism and psychological well-being | Colleges can work to decrease heterosexist discrimination on campus by utilizing multiple strategies: policies, formal educational resources, and by supporting LGBTQ student organizations | The results underscore the importance of particular structural initiatives on campus in protecting LGBQ+ collegians from discrimination and highlight the value of studying specific structural initiatives when investigating structural stigma and inclusion |
| Willging et al. (2016) | United States | "RLAS" (Implementing School Nursing Strategies to Reduce LGBTQ Adolescent Suicide), builds on the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, and Sustainment (EPIS) conceptual framework and the Dynamic Adaptation Process (DAP) to implement EB strategies in U.S. high schools | Compared the LGBTQ students and their peers in RLAS intervention schools ($n = 20$) with those in usual care schools ($n = 20$) | The conceptual framework and methods for this novel nurse-led intervention are applicable to addressing LGBTQ youth suicide and the health-related concerns of other pediatric populations in schools as well | Through its collaborative processes to refine, improve, and sustain EB strategies in these systems, the RLAS represents an innovative contribution to implementation science that also addresses a pressing public health challenge |
| Konishi et al. (2013) | Canada | Gay-straight alliances and anti-homophobic bullying policies | A population-based sample of students in grades 8 through 12 from the British Columbia Adolescent Health Survey of 2008 ($N = 21,708$) | Gay-straight alliances and anti-homophobic bullying policies were linked to significantly lower odds of some but not all types of recent risky alcohol use and past-year harms from alcohol or drug use, but almost exclusively in schools where the policies or gay-straight alliances had been established for at least 3 years; and among lesbian, gay and bisexual adolescents, only for girls | Our findings suggest that these school-based strategies (gay-straight alliances and anti-homophobia policies) to reduce homophobia and foster school inclusion may be beneficial in reducing problem alcohol use among all students, not just sexual minority students |
| Heck et al. (2014) | United States | GSAs | $N = 475$, LGBT high school students ($M$age = 16.79) who completed an online survey | LGBT youth attending a high school without a GSA evidenced increased risk for using illicit drugs and prescription drug misuse. GSAs help foster school environments where the burden of minority stressors is reduced | The importance of providing LGBT youth with opportunities for socialization and support within the school setting |

*(Continued)*

**TABLE 2 |** (Continued)

| Author/Study | Country | Supportive strategies/Service | Sample/Participants | Study Findings | Implication |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day et al. (2019) | United States | Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) policy | 2013–2015 California Healthy Kids Survey ($n$ = 113, 148) | The number of SOGI-focused policies in schools was associated with less victimization and SOG-based bullying for LGB youth and with higher grades for transgender youth. A greater number of SOGI-focused policies was associated with lower truancy for all students. The policies operate differentially for LGB and transgender youth, though are associated with positive school experiences for both | A "one size fits all" approach to school policy may support LGB youth more than transgender youth. Policies are directly responsive to the unique experiences and needs of transgender youth may be necessary to reduce these disparities |
| Tollemache et al. (2021) | United Kingdom | LGBT teaching within the undergraduate curricula of United Kingdom medical schools | 37 United Kingdom Medical Schools with students currently enrolled in a primary undergraduate medical training course were asked between December 2019–March 2020 to complete a cross-sectional online survey comprised of 30 questions | A significant variation in the amount and breadth of content within the undergraduate curricula of United Kingdom medical schools, which is a good degree of coverage in topics that serve to address the areas identified by Stonewall as being important to LGBT patients | The study provides suggestions for undergraduate curriculum development leads about how to improve the level and range of LGBT-associated content in their course |
| Ybarra et al. (2015) | Canada | LGBTQ-inclusive education strategies | They present quantitative and qualitative results of a national survey of more than 3,700 Canadian high school students undertaken in order to investigate what life is like at school for sexual and gender minority students | The findings show that even modest efforts to shift the balance of heteronormative discourse on behalf of LGBTQ students can have profound effects on the experiences and perceptions of sexual and gender minority youth, which we argue would go a long way in reducing incidents of suicidality among LGBTQ youth. In many jurisdictions across Canada, LGBTQ-inclusive policies have attempted to improve school climates and reduce the effects of homophobia and transphobia in schools | These initiatives, along with the work done by Eagle Canada to create a National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, are important steps in addressing the needs of LGBTQ youth |
| Kull et al. (2016) | United States | Antibullying policies that explicitly prohibit bullying based upon a student's sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression (SOGIE; i.e., SOGIE-inclusive policies) | Data from a national survey of LGBT students' school experiences (7,040 LGBT students from 2,952 unique school districts) | LGBT students in districts with SOGIE protections in their policies reported greater school safety, less victimization based on their sexual orientation and gender expression, and less social aggression than students with generic policies or no/unidentified policies | Antibullying policies explicitly enumerating SOGIE protections can improve LGBT school experiences and that generic policies may not sufficiently protect LGBT students from bullying and harassment |

*(Continued)*

**TABLE 2** | (Continued)

| Author/Study | Country | Supportive strategies/Service | Sample/Participants | Study Findings | Implication |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proulx et al. (2019) | United States | Gay-straight alliances (GSAs) | N = 62,923 participants in 15 primary studies | GSA presence is associated with significantly lower levels of youth's self-reports of homophobic victimization, fear for safety, and hearing homophobic remarks | The findings of this meta-analysis provide evidence to support GSAs as a means of protecting LGTBQ+ youth from school-based victimization |
| Lessard et al. (2020) | United States | Gay-straight alliances (GSAs, also referred to as gender-sexuality alliances) | A sample of diverse sexual and gender minority adolescents (N = 17,112; Mage = 15.57) | Lower levels of multiple forms of bias-based bullying (based on body weight, gender, religion, disability, gender typicality, and sexuality) at schools with versus without GSAs, and in turn higher perceived school safety, as well as higher grades and reduced school suspension (due to less weight- and sexuality-based bullying) | The findings shed light on the broad-reaching stigma-reduction potential of GSAs |
| Hackman et al. (2020) | United States | Curriculum and a Gay-Straight Alliance | N = 1415 students in 28 high schools in California from the Preventing School Harassment (PSH) Survey | When schools included lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues in the curriculum and had a Gay-Straight Alliance, students perceived their schools as safer for gender nonconforming male peers | The findings suggest that school administrators, teachers, and other school personnel who implement safe schools policies and practices need to be intentionally inclusive to the needs of gender nonconforming students |
| Hatzenbuehler et al. (2014) | United States | School climates | Data on sexual orientation and past-year suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts were from the pooled 2005 and 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Surveys from 8 states and cities. | School climates that protect sexual minority students may reduce their risk of suicidal thoughts | |
| Denny et al. (2016) | New Zealand | Supportive school environments | A nationally representative sample of students (N = 9,056) and teachers (N = 2,901) from 96 high schools in 2007 | Teacher reports of more supportive school environments for GLBT students were associated with fewer depressive symptoms among male sexual minority students but not for female sexual minority students. Students reported a more supportive school environment, male sexual minority students reported fewer depressive symptoms, and less suicidality than in schools where students reported less favorable school climates | Schools play an important role in providing safe and supportive environments for male sexual minority students |
| Van Bergen et al. (2013) | Australia | School belonging | Data from an Australian national probability sample of 14–15-year olds (Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, n = 3204) | The support and belonging variables were responsible for 49–70% of the associations between sexual minority status and the health/well-being outcomes, with school belonging being the most important mediator | These findings have important implications for health equity policy and practice |

Toomey et al. (2011) have pointed out that students perceived their schools as safer for gender nonconforming male peers when schools included LGBTQ issues in the curriculum and had GSAs. Given the growing significance of LGBTQ people as active, respected, and noticeable members of society (Chan, 2021b), it is critical to promote LGBTQ acceptance within and beyond campus (Stones and Glazzard, 2020). LGBTQ students are more likely to report negative school performance when confronted with significant obstacles such as bullying, assault, and a lack of role models. Schools should uphold diversity, decency, compassion, and consideration (Chan, 2021c). Additionally, deans of medical schools have suggested to increase teaching materials related to LGBTQ issues in order to improve medical services in schools (Van Bergen et al., 2013).

This article has collected and analyzed the existing literature to indicate violence and prejudice as fundamental causes of psychological problems among LGBTQ adolescents and identify supportive strategies for schools to build a LGBTQ-friendly environment. However, it is limited because previous studies still primarily focus on developed countries and offer limited insights into possible interventions in different contexts. This study has suggested how treatments should be further developed to guarantee lasting welfare and inclusion of LGBTQ adolescents.

## CONCLUSION

As LGBTQ individuals are becoming a more dedicated, respected, and observable component of humanity (Chan, 2021a), schools play a crucial part in ensuring that all children and adolescents realize that prejudice and discrimination are unacceptable. By teaching young people about all kinds of discrimination and their negative impact, critical pedagogy plays a crucial part in

advancing human rights. It inspires optimism for the potential creation of a more just and fair society and empowers young people to be ethical new generations (Glazzard and Stones, 2021). Mental health problems faced by LGBTQ youth are largely associated with discrimination, prejudice, and a lack of support from family, schools, and society at large. Increasing levels of support and acceptance for LGBTQ youth will most likely require political and social change in today's world, such as legalizing same-sex marriage and liberalizing cultural norms. Future research should continue to attend to LGBTQ students' health and educational needs and identify possible interventions in order to enhance their wellbeing.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

AC and DW carried out the outline of this manuscript. AC wrote the manuscript with support from JH and IL. EY and IL gave valuable comments and suggestion. EY helped to supervise the whole manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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