

**Visibility and School Leadership Support: A counselling psychology
exploration of the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers working within English
Secondary Schools**

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**Visibility and School Leadership Support: A counselling psychology exploration of the accounts of
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ABSTRACT

Background: Research exploring LGBQ+ teacher experiences are limited within England, though this field is slowly developing. In the past two decades, the UK has undergone significant changes in areas such as, legislation and policy on sexuality. However, within institutional settings, namely education, the literature suggests that secondary schools perpetuate heteronormativity, thus limiting the visibility of LGBQ+ representation in schools. Therefore, being a visible non-heterosexual teacher encompasses complex and multidimensional processes. The literature further indicates that this culture continues to negatively impact LGBQ+ teacher experiences despite changes to legislation and policy.

Objectives: This study explores the accounts and perceptions of LGBQ+ teacher experiences in English secondary schools, specifically examining the visibility of LGBQ+ teachers within schools and how their accounts and perceptions may influence their visibility. This research further investigates teacher perceptions of school support regarding matters of sexual identity and what is needed going forward. **Methods:** A qualitative design was adopted to explore the experiences of 7 LGBQ+ teachers working in English secondary schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcripts.

Findings: Five major themes and 15 sub-themes were generated, these include: 1) *Fear of persecution*; 2) *Strategies to maximise safety of sexual identity*; 3) *Expectations, extra work, and emotional costs*; 4) *School responses to LGBQ+ issues*; and 5) *"I think it depends on your school"*.

Conclusion: LGBQ+ teachers encounter various obstacles which they must navigate using strategies to conceal their sexual identity. Teachers describe the emotional impact of concealing their sexual identity, including feelings of guilt and frustration. Teachers vary in their perception of their school support; however, analysis suggests that many LGBQ+ teachers are burdened with additional work surrounding LGBQ+ matters without support from their Senior Leadership Teams. Teachers perceived school actions towards LGBQ+ visibility as 'tokenistic' and part of a tick box exercise to meet standards without genuine consideration. The implications of the study suggest that changes on a meso and macro level are required to implement change including, curriculum changes, changes to the physical structures within schools and a whole school approach to creating an inclusive culture for LGBQ+ individuals.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Dedicated to the memory of my dear friend, Sam L Chapman.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Within this thesis, I conduct a qualitative research study investigating the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers working in English secondary schools. In particular, I focus on their experiences around the visibility of their sexual identity within school. Further, I aim to gain insight into what support is offered to LGBTQ+ teachers and what is needed going forward. I begin this chapter by explaining my own positioning in relation to this research as well as conveying the reasons for my interest in understanding more about my chosen topic. Following this, I provide definitions and clarification of the key terms and how they are applied in relation to this thesis. Then, I explain the discipline of counselling psychology and why it is important for the profession to take interest in this research project. To finish, I outline my aims and objectives of the research project, as well as offering an overview of the thesis structure.

1.1 Researcher positioning

It is crucial for the understanding of the reader, as well as for the trustworthiness of this qualitative research project, to outline my position (as the researcher) in relation to this project (Levitt et al, 2018; Elliott et al, 1999). My interest in this research topic grew from my experiences as a gay, cis-gendered female in high school, surrounded by the understanding that heterosexuality was normal and non-heterosexuality did not exist. The invisibility of any other sexual identities meant that my high school experience left me feeling isolated and lonely. Unable to be open about my sexuality and yet highly aware that it was not 'normal' left me with discomfort, confusion and feeling obliged to conform to the norms of heterosexuality. After leaving high school and witnessing a world where non-heterosexual individuals were visible and acceptable, I began to again question my high school experiences. In more recent years, I have met with former students who have spoken openly about their experiences of feeling unable to be open about their sexuality within the school. This, I came to understand, also extended to teachers after bumping into a former teacher from my school, who shared how it was also difficult for them to be open about their sexuality in school. This made me question whether my experience as a student was unique, and incited questions as to whether there were more teachers who had experienced these issues. Additionally, I wondered about the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers in more recent times.

1.2 Aims and background

The aims behind this research project are to gain insight into the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers' experiences of the visibility of their sexual identity within English secondary schools. Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ within teaching profession have been described as "vulnerable" due to the pressures placed on them from their employers, parents, and the wider community, and LGBTQ+ teachers are viewed as particularly vulnerable (Piper & Sikes, 2010; p.572). Although there is a significant amount of research into the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers internationally (for example, Ferfolja, 2009; Neary, 2017; Wright & Smith, 2015) the research exploring the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers in England and in the present day is limited (Stones & Glazzard, 2020). The existing literature available suggests that LGBTQ+ teachers continue to experience greater difficulties compared with their heterosexual colleagues; this includes being subjected to homophobia and heterosexism in the workplace and difficulties navigating their sexual identity within a heteronormative environment (Edwards et al, 2016; Henderson, 2019). Through a qualitative exploration, I aim to gather a richer insight into the accounts of LGBTQ+ secondary school teacher experiences and contribute to the calls for research conducted within England. Furthermore, this research project is approached from a counselling psychology perspective, emphasising the importance of a social justice approach.

1.3 Defining key terms

1.3.1 Sexuality

It is important to define some key terms that will be used frequently and interchangeably throughout this thesis. When referring to the term 'sexuality', there are many interchangeable meanings in existence. Milton (2018) describes the varying ways in which 'sexuality', 'sexual orientation' and 'sexual identity' are used. Firstly, Milton describes sexuality as "one's sense of being a sexual person, of experiencing desire, of the urgency and assertiveness of those desires" (p.66). Sexual orientation focuses on "our relational preferences and those a person is attracted to", and sexual identity refers to the "identities based upon those desires" (ibid.). Throughout this thesis, I use the term 'non-heterosexual' interchangeably with 'LGBTQ+'. I argue that sexuality is socially constructed and over time, societies have created messages as to what constitutes sexuality and which sexual behaviours are acceptable, as well as which are not (Barker & Scheele, 2016). Considering the social construction of sexuality, sexuality is argued

to be an individual and unique lived experience, which shifts over time and cultural understanding. For example, 'homosexuality' was once classified as a diagnosis under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) by the American Psychology Association (Bayer, 1981). I will not be using the phrase 'homosexuality' to describe an individual's identity as this excludes those who identify otherwise under the LGBTQ+ banner, for example, bisexual, pansexual, and queer identities.

1.3.2 Transgender identities

Intersectionality is a prism for understanding the difficulties and complexities experienced by individuals who encompass multiple and overlapping identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Although this research project focuses primarily on non-heterosexual identities, sexuality cannot be separated from other social structures including gender, race, class, disability, ethnicity, age, faith and more (Barker & Scheele, 2016). Where applicable, I will refer to these other structures throughout this thesis, however, maintaining focus on sexual identity. For this reason, it is therefore noticeable that there is no focus on transgender matters throughout this research, as well as there being limited discussion of transgender identities within the literature review. It is imperative to state that this is not to exclude, neglect or diminish the importance of transgender research, in which on-going research is required (Pepper & Lorah, 2008). However, various research papers have claimed to investigate 'LGBT' matters where the focus has surrounded sexuality and without reference to transgender matters (Pepper & Lorah, 2008). Unfortunately, there were no participants who identified under the trans umbrella as part of this research, and I therefore believe it would be misrepresentative to use the acronym 'LGBT' as part of this research. Consequently, I will use the phrase LGBTQ+ throughout this thesis where applicable in relation to my own research. Within the literature review, I will only refer to the 'LGBT' or 'LGBTQ+' acronym where there were transgender participants involved within the research.

1.3.3 'Visibility'

Visibility refers to the extent to which one's sexuality is shared with others and can encapsulate the varying degrees between a person being open or visible about their sexual identity to not being open or visible about their sexual identity. However, there are differences between being visible or open and the ideas of 'coming out' or 'disclosing one's sexual identity'. I believe that

these phrases perpetuate a heteronormative way of thinking through the expectation that non-heterosexual individuals should inform others that they are different and therefore, 'Other' (Rasmussen, 2004). It is also important to note that because of a heteronormative culture, many LGBTQ+ individuals feel as though they are expected to announce their sexual identity if it differs from heterosexuality (Foucault, 1979). There were no requirements for LGBTQ+ teachers to be open about their sexuality as part of this project, in part to avoid these assumptions and expectations. Therefore, I interchangeably use the terms 'visibility', 'being open' and 'openness' to describe how an individual expresses their sexuality or not. It is also important to state that despite my interest in LGBTQ+ teacher experiences and the visibility of their sexual identity, there was no expectation or undertone that being open is a 'correct' way to be (Rasmussen, 2004). However, it is important to try and understand what impacts and influences a teachers' visibility of their sexual identity within school.

1.3.4 Teachers

This project will specifically explore teachers or 'educators' working in English secondary schools, however, within the literature review, I draw on literature including primary, secondary and college teachers, and name them appropriately where applicable. Further, I refer to international research studies as well as studies based in England.

1.3.5 Homophobia, Heterosexism and Heteronormativity

The visibility of non-heterosexual identities has long been stigmatised within society. In 1973, 'homosexuality' was removed as a diagnosis from the second edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) by the American Psychology Association (Bayer, 1981). Despite the changes in societal views towards non-heterosexuality over the past 50 years, many LGBTQ+ individuals have continued to experience some form of discrimination or prejudice. In more recent times, 'homophobia' is a term used to describe an intolerance, fear and/or dislike of those individuals who identify under the LGBTQ+ acronym (Sparkes, 1994; Edwards et al, 2016). Representations of homophobia can manifest as "verbal taunts, denigratory comments, physical aggression and even acts of physical violence" (Edwards et al, 2016; p.301). Heteronormativity refers to a cultural set of biases and assumptions towards heterosexuality including, the assumption that a 'natural' form of attraction lies between a man and woman who embody conventional gender roles and norms (Barker & Scheele, 2016; Warner, 1991).

Heterosexism has been described as “the climate for homophobia with its assumption that the world is and must be heterosexual and its display of power and privilege as the norm” (Pharr, 2000; p.431). These assumptions work to position heterosexuals as ‘superior’, thus leading to the oppression of non-heterosexual identities (Barnett et al, 2021). The concept of heterosexism allows us to understand that it is not solely homophobia that is difficult for LGBTQ+ individuals, but instances such as, having one’s sexuality assumed as straight and the decisions to ‘come out’ about one’s sexual identity are additionally problematic (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

1.4 Importance of this study for Counselling Psychology

Counselling psychology (CP) as a profession is rooted in humanistic values and ethics, which place value on the client’s unique individual experiences and the feelings and meanings attached to them (Cooper, 2009). Counselling psychology strives towards a holistic and developmental approach towards a client, rejecting a ‘one-size fits all’ approach (Cooper & McLeod, 2011). I believe that conducting this research from a counselling psychologist perspective could be useful because of its holistic approach and therefore its engagement towards building in-depth understandings into LGBTQ+ teacher experiences. Cooper (2009) bullet points six key principles that are important for the counselling psychology profession. These principles have guided my approach to this research project:

1. “A prioritisation of a client’s subjective, and intersubjective, experiencing
2. A focus on facilitating growth and the actualisation of potential
3. An orientation towards empowering clients
4. A commitment to a democratic, non-hierarchical client-therapist relationship
5. An appreciation of the client as a unique being
6. An understanding of the client as a socially and relationally embedded being, including an awareness that the client may be experiencing discrimination and prejudice.” (p. 120).

I argue that the six principles stated above are crucial considerations for CP practitioners and their understanding of LGBTQ+ clients. Firstly, the CP profession strives to have a greater understanding of an individual in their world from a social and relational context (Cooper,

2009). Therefore, it is imperative to be aware of the broader difficulties and challenges experienced within different populations, including discrimination and prejudice. Supporting this, it is documented that teachers face exceptional levels of stress compared with other occupational groups (Johnson et al, 2005) and are therefore more likely to experience burnout, anxiety, and low mood because of working within the teaching profession (Shackleton et al, 2019). Further, the research tells us that globally, LGBQ+ teachers have long faced discrimination and prejudice because of their sexual identity (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Neary, 2013; Ferfolja, 2009). As I describe later within the literature review, the tensions between the professional and personal identities of LGBQ+ teachers have resulted in many LGBQ+ teachers feeling unable to be open about their sexual identity within school (Edwards et al, 2016; Neary, 2013). Although counselling psychologists are likely to have an awareness more broadly of the difficulties and challenges experienced by those who identify as LGBQ+, such as, discrimination and its subsequent impact on psychological well-being; it is questionable whether we are fully attuned to the challenges experienced by LGBQ+ teachers and what obstacles may impact the visibility of their sexual identity. For example, a recent article described how many LGBTQ+ teachers do not feel able to be open about their sexual identity in school (Glazzard, 2018). In the same article, it was reported that alongside the on-going challenges of being a teacher such as, heavy workloads, LGBTQ+ teachers have experienced mental health issues because of the negative experiences involving discrimination on the basis of their sexual identity.

Considering the holistic approach that the CP profession takes towards an individual, counselling psychology is closely linked to and places importance in social justice (Cutts, 2013). Cutts offers a definition of social justice as:

“both a goal of action and the process of action itself, which involves an emphasis on equity or equality for individuals in society in terms of access to a number of different resources and opportunities, the right to self-determination or autonomy and participation in decision-making, freedom from oppression, and a balancing of power across society.” (p.9-10).

The emphasis on the importance of equity and freedom from oppression is particularly relevant for counselling psychologists in relation to this research project. A social justice agenda highlights the need to look beyond individual approaches to change and challenge wider structures on a 'macro level' (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003). A macro-level approach "...acknowledges the way in which oppressive structures in families, schools and communities can have detrimental impacts, and calls attention to economic, cultural and political forces" (Winter et al, 2016; p.469). On a socio-political level, there have been various policies and legislations set out in the UK that have had a negative impact on LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly within the educational setting. I discuss these policies and legislation within the literature review. Clarke (1998) describes homophobia as a "political practice", and this can be demonstrated through historical legislative policies activated over the years (p.146). Within education, LGBTQ+ teachers have experienced discrimination, and endured institutionalised heteronormativity (Rudoe, 2010; Lee, 2019a; Gray, 2013), which enforces the prolific silencing of LGBTQ+ visibility within schools (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006). Therefore, through conducting this research from a CP perspective, we can identify areas and/or resources required on a wider structural level to subsequently support those within education.

1.5 Overview of the thesis structure

This thesis is divided into 5 chapters, including this introduction chapter (Chapter 1) where I have explained key terms and concepts, my positioning within this research, counselling psychology and the importance that the profession should place on this area of research. In Chapter 2, I move on to the Literature Review. I aim to provide an overview of some relevant history surrounding sexuality, education, and legislation in the UK, as well as exploring these matters briefly on a more global scale. Further, I provide reference to relevant theoretical models, concepts and ideas related to issues surrounding sexuality and education before specifically exploring the already existing research surrounding LGBTQ+ teachers and the tensions between their professional and personal identities. In the Methodology section, in Chapter 3, I outline my philosophical positionings and explain how these have influenced my research design and methodology; describe my ethical considerations and commitments; and detail my research design. As various elements of this research project were impacted by the COVID19 pandemic, I offer explanations as to how and where parts of the research process were impacted by this. Finally, I offer a step-by-step insight into the processes leading up to

the data analysis as well as describing the measures put in place to ensure trustworthiness. Leading into the Data Analysis section in Chapter 4, I present the findings of the completed data analysis, including a detailed description of the major themes and sub-themes constructed through the data analysis. The themes are discussed using various excerpts from participant transcriptions that are relevant to the theme being discussed. In Chapter 5's Discussion section, I provide an in-depth discussion of the findings whilst making links to relevant existing literature and theory. I describe how the findings answer the original research questions asked and provide further reflexivity before highlighting the areas in need of further research going forward. To conclude, I summarise the details of this research project, outlining the contribution to knowledge and future recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I offer the reader a contextual understanding and review of the relevant theory and literature that situates this research project. Within this review, I will cite literature and theory that has been collected over my three years on the Doctorate of Counselling Psychology programme. The collection of these various articles came from multifaceted database searches including, but not limited to: PsycINFO, ASSIA, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. Some of the key terms that were used during searches included: LGBT, LGBTQ+, openness, visibility, sexuality, teacher, and educator. I chose these terms to not only capture a wider range of findings but also to encompass more global findings relevant to this research project. Further, articles used within this thesis are peer reviewed qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method research papers, book chapters or systematic reviews. I also incorporated government and charity reports, organisations' statistical reports and summaries, and any relevant newspaper articles. I did this to try and create a holistic perspective of the literature relevant to this research project.

2.2 Historical Context in England

A central starting point for this literature review is to have a contextual understanding of some historical legislation that has influenced the questions in this research project. One particular influence stems from Section 28 (also known as Clause 28), which was a British-specific Local Government Act of 1988. This Act stated that a local authority should 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." (Local Government Act, 1988; p.27). The Act was repealed in 2003. Before addressing the discriminatory use of language within this Act, it is important to note how this legislation came into place. Clarke (1996) describes how the Conservative government in power in the 1970s were emphatic about maintaining 'traditional' British family values. These 'traditional' family values often unified the ideas of a heterosexual family dynamic. However, with the growing visibility of non-heterosexual identities and a more progressive approach taken by local councils and schools regarding sexuality, there was a fear

of loss to these traditional family values (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2016). At this time, sexuality was perceived as becoming an “increasing threat” alongside the association of advanced HIV (formally known as AIDS), which was falsely deemed as a disease linked to sexual promiscuity and ‘homosexuality’ (Stacey, 1991; p.286). We can see within this matrix of change, a building picture of how Section 28 evolved into legislation as a method to maintain greater regulation around sexuality (Clarke, 1996). The wording of the Local Government Act (1988) states that schools should not “promote homosexuality”, echoing wider societal perceptions that sexual preference is a choice we make. Patai’s (1992) idea of ‘surplus visibility’ is useful here. Patai recognises how marginalised and powerless groups are expected to remain invisible and silent within society; for example, those who identify as LGBTQ+ experience the constraints of heteronormativity (Warner, 1991). However, if these groups challenge the expectations or norms placed on them by society, such as assumed heterosexuality (Butler, 1990), they move from silence and invisibility to gaining a surplus visibility, which is associated with being excessive (Patai, 1992). “Surplus visibility is also what allows (some) people to charge that humanities faculties have been taken over... [f]or it is always, and only, the out-group – as defined by the in-group - whose efforts are experienced as threats and thus are magnified, and whose behaviour, if not ‘in line’, demands justification” (p.36). Patai’s idea of surplus visibility is not only a helpful consideration in the understanding of societal responses to sexualities, but also the implementation of Section 28, as we can see from Clarke’s (1996) and Stacey’s (1991) observation that there was a perception of a threat to the heteronormative culture, thus leading to greater regulation by the government.

The research conducted during the active years of Section 28 demonstrates the tumultuous experiences endured by LGBTQ+ teachers. Clarke (1996) conducted a qualitative study into the on-going impact of Section 28 on lesbian identified training teachers during its implementation. The study highlighted the profound impact on these teachers who feared losing their job should their sexuality be discovered. Several studies have described similar findings including, the enduring state of fear experienced by LGBTQ+ teachers during the activation of Section 28 (see, for example, Squires & Sparkes, 1996; Epstein, 1994). Unsurprisingly, during a time where one’s sexual identity could result in serious repercussions, such as dismissal, it is likely to have a profound impact on the individual. This was also consistent with reports that many LGBTQ+ teachers experienced anxiety because of concealing

their sexual identity in their professional lives due to the fear of having their identity used against them in a professional context, such as losing their job (Squires & Sparks, 1996; Clarke, 1996).

The rippling effects of Section 28 extended to heterosexual teachers as well. In one study, heterosexual and non-heterosexual teachers described how they were unsure of what they could and could not say regarding non-heterosexuality and were further confused as to what constituted the 'promotion' of non-heterosexuality during this time (Greenland & Nunney, 2008). It was also reported that many participants were unaware of the repeal of Section 28. This study not only highlights the fears that heterosexual teachers held for their career, but through the lack of clarity from Section 28, we can observe the state of confusion this left teachers in to figure out what was deemed as 'appropriate' to discuss with children. Supporting this, Buston and Hart's (2001) research revealed how many teachers were left feeling scared of the legal implications on their careers if they were to speak about LGB issues during sex education, and therefore avoided the topic entirely. This demonstrates the uncertainty and confusion brought about by this "badly drafted" and "unenforceable" legislation (Epstein, 2000; p.387). However, as stated, the confusion and lack of awareness around the legislation indicates that Section 28 did not dominate school culture entirely. It also leaves questions as to how long teachers continued to work under the assumption that Section 28 was still in place and what the recommended guidance was going forward.

From these studies, we gather a glimpse into the direct impact of Section 28 on both heterosexual and non-heterosexual teachers. Research conducted during Section 28 also demonstrated the negative impact on students. Warwick et al (2001) conducted a survey which exposed how the impact of Section 28 left many teachers unable to meet and support the needs of their gay and lesbian students, including tackling homophobia. This resulted in many LGBTQ+ students feeling isolated and silenced. Alongside demonstrating the unchallenged homophobic bullying occurring in schools, it again indicates the impact on teachers. Warwick et al (2001) bring attention to the wider issues at play here, especially in relation to policy. They acknowledge how the Government's *'Anti-Bullying Pack for Schools'* guide (Department of Education, 1994) that was available at the time, did not make any specific reference to tackling homophobic bullying. This itself clearly demonstrates how homophobia

was viewed as an acceptable form of discrimination compared with other forms of discrimination (Warwick et al, 2001). Although this paper brings attention to the lack of support offered on a political level, it also places emphasis on changes required from teachers. Warwick et al's study describes teachers as "playing it safe" when addressing issues surrounding sexuality in school, which can be argued as placing blame on teachers instead of considering the wider constraints from government policies (p.139). It further negates the educators who fought to support the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals during Section 28 (Epstein, 2000), as well as those teachers who felt silenced and fearful because of the Act (Nixon & Givens, 2007). Further, those teaching during this time experienced a confliction between their moral and professional duties (Epstein, 2000).

So far, we know that Section 28 was problematic for various stakeholders within schools including, staff, teachers, and students during its active years. Following Section 28's removal, research suggested that the "legal force" of the Act continues to play a significant part in the continued silencing of non-heterosexual individuals within the educational setting (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; p.336). A study conducted by Nixon and Givens (2007) investigated the impact and significance of Section 28 on LGB teachers, during its implementation and following its repeal. The findings from this paper at the time illustrated multi-layered and shifting dynamics at play within schools regarding diverse sexualities. They describe how despite the perceived progressive thinking within school policies towards diversity, there is a perception that LGBTQ+ teachers are responsible for non-heterosexual matters within school, i.e. engaging in discussions about sexuality with LGBTQ+ students. Further, they describe how despite policy changes, the accounts of LGB teachers indicate that they continue to experience discrimination, including homophobia and heterosexism on an individual and institutional level. This research was conducted shortly after the repeal of Section 28, and although it provides a complex understanding into the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers, it is apparent that there was a shift towards change. However, the overwhelming message suggests that despite the repeal of Section 28, a culture of heteronormativity continues to dominate the education setting.

More recent studies have examined the longstanding impact of Section 28. Fifteen years following its repeal, Lee (2019a) offers some valuable insights from LGBTQ+ teachers who either

worked during Section 28 or began work after Section 28. Lee collected qualitative and quantitative data examining how LGBTQ+ teachers experienced their work environments in 2017-2018, as well as comparing the perceptions between these two groups. The findings indicate that the longstanding impact of Section 28 continues to significantly impact those teachers who taught during its active years. These teachers report feeling less likely to be open about their sexual identity to colleagues, pupils and parents compared with teachers who began teaching post Section 28. Consequently, these teachers also experienced a higher sense of incompatibility between their professional and personal identity compared with teachers who began teaching after Section 28. This suggests a shifting landscape for LGBTQ+ teachers who began teacher after Section 28, however, it also indicates the deep-rooted effects on those teachers who taught during. However, Lee's findings also revealed that 15% of teachers who began teaching after Section 28 had left a job due to homophobia or heteronormativity, whereas no teachers who taught during Section 28 reported leaving a job for these reasons. Despite the seemingly progressive changes, those who began teaching after Section 28 appear to experience issues even without a discriminatory legislation in place. Looking critically, Lee acknowledges that due to the changing climate, those teachers leaving roles are less likely to put up with homophobia or heterosexism within the workplace, compared with those who worked during a time where legislation did not support non-heterosexual identities (Lee, 2019a). Therefore, this begs the question as to whether there have been progressive changes for LGBTQ+ teachers or whether the tolerance for issues such as homophobia and heterosexism has decreased. Overall, this study highlights on-going issues for LGBTQ+ teachers, nearly two decades since the repeal of Section 28.

As acknowledged, it has been over 18 years since the repeal of Section 28, with newer legislation and action undertaken since. For example, The Equality Act 2010 protects and promotes the equality of non-heterosexual identities and gender recognition, whilst the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 allows non-heterosexual couples to be recognised as married under UK law. Further, a more progressive step towards the inclusion of non-heterosexual identities comes from the implementation of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) guidance (Department of Education, 2019), which was implemented across all UK secondary schools from September 2020 (Government Equalities Office, 2018). Although Section 28 is arguably a long sustaining factor in the difficulties presented for LGBTQ+ teachers

and their ability to be open in the UK, it cannot be the sole factor as research on a global scale demonstrates similar issues for LGBTQ+ teachers (Lee, 2019a). Alongside a growing body of research conducted in the UK in the last ten years, this is a significant amount of international research exploring LGBTQ+ teacher experiences such as, the US (for example, Simons et al, 2021; Haddad, 2019; Lineback et al, 2016; Wright & Smith, 2015), Australia (Ferfolja, 2009; Gray, Harris & Jones, 2016), Ireland (Neary, 2013; Neary et al, 2017) and South Africa (Msibi, 2019). Some US research revealed that, albeit a decrease, LGBTQ+ educators continue to experience and overhear homophobic remarks and language used within the classroom (Lineback et al, 2016). Research based in Australia demonstrated that heterosexuality dominates the educational setting, through the silencing and invisibility of non-heterosexual individuals, thus leading to homophobic prejudice and heterosexism (Ferfolja, 2007). Therefore, we must extend our understanding of LGBTQ+ teacher experiences to consider other possible influences, such as the ingrained impact of heteronormativity.

2.3 Queer theory and Heteronormativity

Queer theorists draw upon post structuralism, whereby knowledge and meaning are viewed as contextual and partial (Barker & Scheele, 2016). Queer theory explores the ideas of gender and sexuality through constructions, including societal and historical constructions (Seidman, 1994; Callis, 2009). Further, understanding the processes that enable heterosexuality to assert itself as the dominant narrative and sexuality within society is one of the key focuses within queer theory (Rothing, 2008). The idea that heterosexuality is the 'normal' or 'natural' sexual identity ties into the ideas of heteronormativity. Historically, the understanding of heteronormativity has developed over time through various queer and feminist scholars (Marchia & Sommers, 2017; Warner, 1991). Although the term 'heteronormativity' was first coined in the 1990's (Warner, 1991), the earlier origins of the idea of heteronormativity stem back to the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault (1978) brought attention to the various oppressions that non-heterosexual individuals experienced compared to heterosexual individuals.

Two scholars who have become frequently cited as part of queer theory are Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Despite Butler's focus leaning more towards gender and Foucault's towards sexuality, together their ideas provide a useful insight into heteronormativity. Collectively,

Foucault (1978, 1979) and Butler (1990) sustain the idea that assumed heterosexuality is a strategy used to maintain control over institutions such as, education and the family. For example, the political implementation of Section 28 reinforced the idea of heterosexuality as the norm within educational institutions (Nixon & Givens, 2007). Foucault (1979) also describes how heterosexuality as a sexual identity is not associated with sexual acts, whilst non-heterosexuality is associated with sexual desire, excess and sexual inappropriacy. As heterosexuality is viewed as the 'norm', non-heterosexual identities not only present as a deviance away from these norms but are also perceived as excessive and hyper-sexualised (Foucault, 1979). This again links to Patai's (1992) idea of surplus visibility whereby the growing visibility of sexualities within school becomes "excessive noise" (p.35), and subsequently attached to sexual inappropriacy (Foucault, 1979).

Furthermore, the ideas above can be illustrated within education through the "SEXualisation of sexuality" whereby non-heterosexual teachers are viewed as sexually inappropriate (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; p. 341). Clarke (1996) conducted a study exploring the ways trainee physical education (PE) teachers who identified as lesbians constructed and managed their identities within a secondary school during Section 28. Teachers described the strategic concealment of their identity to avoid the repercussions of losing their job and also attaining future jobs. What was particularly insightful was how they also reported taking extra caution on their physical proximity with students for fear of being viewed or labelled as a paedophile. Firstly, this reinforces the notion that non-heterosexual identities are linked with (deviant) sexual acts (Sears, 1999). Additionally, it highlights a perception that trainee teachers hold before entering the profession, emphasising the existing tensions between sexuality and sexual inappropriateness (Foucault, 1979). Supporting this, a recent study demonstrates similar tensions for non-heterosexual teachers. Edwards et al's (2016) study highlighted how secondary school PE teachers who identified as lesbian described a fear of the student's parents and their responses towards them if they were to know about their sexual identity. Further, they described the fear of parents associating their sexuality with sexual deviance. It is observable that both Clarke's (1996) and Edwards et al's (2016) study report similar findings using lesbian identified PE teachers. As the physical nature of the subject includes the body and physicality, as well as expectations for teachers to supervise gendered changing rooms (Clarke, 1996), PE teachers may perceive themselves in a more vulnerable position.

However, Piper et al's (2012) research indicates that heterosexual teachers also experience anxieties around their physical proximity and contact with students due to the perception that there is a growing "atmosphere of increased surveillance" for teachers (p.575). This could therefore indicate a wider cultural sensitivity to the safeguarding and protection of young people in education, one that concerns both heterosexual and non-heterosexual teachers (Piper & Stronach, 2008). While it can be argued that fears of being accused of sexual inappropriacy are experienced by individuals of various sexual identities, including heterosexual teachers, there is an underlying societal belief that it is inappropriate for non-heterosexual teachers to teach children (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). With this, DePalma and Atkinson's (2006) ideas around the perceived 'gay agenda' are useful. A 'gay agenda' suggests that there is a fear that non-heterosexual teachers hold a position in which they strive to recruit children towards homosexuality; this is reflected in the language of 'promotion' used within Section 28. Again, the ideas of assumed heterosexuality (Butler, 1990) and notion that non-heterosexual identities are sexually deviant tie into 'gay agenda' as notably, heterosexual teachers are not questioned about promoting heterosexuality. To reiterate, a queer theoretical understanding is helpful when reviewing the existing literature as it brings an awareness to constructions that enable heterosexuality to appear as the norm, especially within education. As the supporting research suggests, LGBTQ+ teachers continue to endure discrimination as a result of the perceived ideas of sexuality and sexual practices constructed by society. As societal views shift throughout time, including changes to attitudes, laws and practices, it leaves the question as to how LGBTQ+ teachers perceive their school's attitudes towards sexuality today.

2.4 Gender, sexuality, and education

Before moving towards a more in-depth review of literature regarding LGBTQ+ teachers, I begin by exploring some of the wider social structures that impact sexuality, including gender. As previously acknowledged, sexuality cannot be separated from other social structures including gender (Barker & Scheele, 2016). To ignore the impact and influence of gender on sexuality and vice versa, specifically around education, would be erroneous. The ways in which gender and sexuality are explored has provided a conflicting debate. For example, Foucault's work focuses more specifically on matters surrounding sexuality, whereas Butler argues that gender

and sexuality co-exist and interweave with each other. In their book *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) argues that sex, gender, and sexual identities are closely linked. Emphasising Butler's argument, if gender is socially constructed and not a biologically determined quality inherent to us, this suggests that gender is a performative action that we do, which infiltrates how we speak, act, and behave. Of course, this is not to propose that biological processes are redundant or non-existent. Butler does not dispute the existence of biological processes, but states that a binary view of sex as male or female is often oversimplified into two distinct categories.

As gender and sexuality intertwine, gender performances infiltrate into sexuality and expressions of sexual identities (Butler, 1990). As Butler reminds us, gender is something that we do and perform, however, gender performativity relies on pre-established norms that are already in place. As I discuss later, the norms of a heterosexual society or heteronormativity are examples of these pre-established norms (Barker & Scheele, 2016). Butler (2004) later adds that these norms can be useful in the organisation of the social world, yet at the same time, are exclusionary for those who do not fit into them. Considering how prevalent gender performances are on a day-to-day basis, the frequent repetition of gender and sexuality create an illusion of an identity core. However, those who fail to perform their gender roles are "regularly punished" through society, culture, and institutions (Butler, 1990; p.522). These failures include those who violate the gender binary in a variety of ways, including through disrupting normative links between sex and sexuality.

Narrowing our focus to how gender and sexuality permeate within the educational institution, we bear witness to the punishments inflicted on those who violate gender normative performances within schools (Cobbett, 2013). For example, school dress codes and 'gendered' subjects demonstrate the enforcement of performative gender roles, which are observable as early as primary school (Robinson, 2002). In a recent article, a headteacher in England condemned students' decision to petition for the right to allow high school girls the option of wearing trousers to school instead of skirts (iNews, 2021). Here we can see the perpetual drive to preserve the norms of masculinity and femininity within the school institutions and the attempted punishment for violating these norms. The expectations of gender regulations and performances are also enforced on LGBTQ+ teachers within their professional roles (Connell,

2015). Coda (2019) writes how for gay teachers, gender performance is not only a significant task within their day-to-day role as a teacher, but also an expectation to perform their gender and sexuality “correctly” (p.473). This exemplifies the interlacing impact of expected gender performances which imitate heterosexuality, reinforcing the idea that there is a ‘correct’ way to perform gender as part of a heteronormative environment (Butler, 1990; DePalma & Atkinson, 2006). Additionally, for LGBTQ+ teachers, there are tensions between expected gender performances and leadership positions (Lee, 2020) as often, masculinity is linked with strength and leadership, whereas femininity is linked with emotionality, passiveness, and weakness (Lee, 2019b). Therefore, we can see the acute challenges that LGBTQ+ teachers experience as this would suggest that lesbian teachers aspiring for leadership positions are limited by both their gender and sexuality (Fassinger et al, 2010). Clearly, it is conflicting for LGBTQ+ teachers who are expected to demonstrate a high level of professionalism and perform a heteronormative and gender normative role within the classroom (Connell, 2015).

Furthermore, research has illustrated issues surrounding sexism and sexuality that exist within the workplace. For lesbian teachers, there is the double issue of dealing with sexism because of their gender and homophobia as a result of their sexual identity. In one Australian research study, Gray et al (2016), describes the experience of a lesbian teacher who is referred to as a ‘dyke’ by a male student, highlighting how women who identify as or are perceived to be non-heterosexual are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment (Ferfolja, 1998). Although, non-heterosexual male teachers also experience difficulties within the profession because of their gender and sexual identity. For example, many male teachers have experienced prejudice and discrimination for wanting to engage in work with children in a profession that is stereotypically associated with females (King, 2004). This combined with identifying as non-heterosexual - whereby non-heterosexuality is linked to sexual deviance and promiscuity (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006) - adds to the notion of linking non-heterosexual male teachers to paedophilia (King, 2004).

2.4.1 Race

As previously mentioned, intersectionality is a framework for understanding the impact of having multiple social identities and how the amalgamation of these identities can compound experiences of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). Considering this, it is important to highlight

the impact of race and sexuality, however, this is not to suggest that other areas such as, socio-economic status, religion, disability, age and health status are not crucially important (Barker & Scheele, 2016). Further, it is not my intention to compare or suggest that other communities and/or groups are impacted to a greater or lesser extent. As stated previously, the aims of this research project are to focus on matters surrounding sexual identity, particularly exploring the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers and the visibility of their sexual identity. However, Rasmussen (2004) states that “people’s ability to continuously negotiate their identity is necessarily mediated by varying circulations of power relating to age, family background, economic position, and race” (p.147). Therefore, when trying to understand the barriers and difficulties that may impact the visibility of LGBTQ+ teachers, there are complex intersections to consider. For example, black women who identify as lesbian described the lack of control they felt in regards to race-related discrimination, yet there was a felt sense of agency in being able to control whether they were visible about their sexual identity or not (Akanke, 1994). Again, this highlight the importance of not placing expectation on those who identify as LGBTQ+ to be open about their sexual identity as there are various positions to navigate, including race related discrimination. Further, it emphasises the added negotiations that an individual must make when considering being open about their sexual identity with other intersections.

2.5 Minority Stress Model

A useful framework to consider is Meyer’s conceptualisation of ‘minority stress’ (Meyer 1995, 2003), which can be helpful for understanding the psychological impact and stress placed on LGBTQ+ teachers. A minority stress model offers a specific framework for understanding the psychological health disparities for those individuals who experience stress because of their social and minority position. Meyer notes how individuals from groups who experience stigma in society as a result of socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, or health status are likely to experience social stress. When describing ‘stressors’, Meyer (2003) conceptualises the idea of ‘distal’ and ‘proximal’ stressors. Distal stressors include external processes such as, prejudice, experience of stigma, discrimination or violence towards the individual. These external processes for LGBTQ+ teachers can include heteronormativity, homophobia or heterosexism (Stones & Glazzard, 2020). Proximal stressors refer to the individual’s perception of the situation, including the expectation or anticipation that they may experience discrimination. This can further result in exercising vigilance during interactions

with others or concealing one's sexual identity to reduce the risk of harm to themselves (Velez et al, 2013; Meyer, 2003).

Those who identify as LGBTQ+ continue to experience distress because of internalised negativity through societal messages about sexual identities such as the heteronormative silencing of LGBTQ+ experiences and existence (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006) sending a message that non-heterosexual identities are wrong. Therefore, the minority stress model can be useful for understanding LGBTQ+ teachers and their experiences of being visible about their sexual identity. For LGBTQ+ teachers working with usual stressors attached to their role as a teacher and personal stressors, the additional layer of a heteronormative environment is likely to produce an additional layer of stress (Stones & Glazzard, 2019). The ideas of the minority stress model highlight how additional stressors placed on minority groups, such as the impact of institutional heteronormativity on LGBTQ+ teachers, may exacerbate their stress levels. Consequently, the model suggests that this can lead to a negative impact including, affecting their psychological well-being. Therefore, this could further impact the visibility of their sexual identity as teachers may use concealment to avoid negative outcomes.

Meyer's (2003) model also considers factors that are protective for LGBTQ+ individuals, such as, social support. However, Lineback et al (2016) acknowledge that Meyer's (2003) model does not account for all of the demands faced by these teachers, including issues surrounding intersectionality and other professional issues. This model has further been critiqued as a conceptual tool for its emphasis on situating LGBTQ+ teachers within a "victimised framework" (Stones & Glazzard, 2019; p.8). By this, although the model is acknowledged as a useful conceptual tool, it is argued that the model accepts the existence of prejudice without offering any challenges to eradicate it, thus situating individuals as inevitable victims (Stones & Glazzard, 2019). Consequently, Stones and Glazzard (2019) adapt Meyer's original model to include important social support mechanisms that more accurately portray positive and negative mental health outcomes for LGBTQ+ teachers. They include the influence of legislation and regulatory frameworks as factors for positive mental health outcomes, and state that the Equality Act 2010 enables non-heterosexual teachers to feel protected in their workplace from sexual identity discrimination. Stones and Glazzard highlight useful factors that can impact the psychological outcome for LGBTQ+ teachers which Meyer's (2003) model fails to acknowledge,

including the school culture and ethos and teacher agency, which can be promoted through the implementation of non-discrimination policies. However, Stones and Glazzard (2019) fail to acknowledge the limitations that policies and legislation hold, including the ability to challenge heteronormativity or heterosexism, which present more subtly (Gray et al, 2016).

2.6 Visibility of sexuality within education

Nearly 50 years on from the depathologising of homosexuality, we have witnessed the repeal of Section 28, the inclusion of 'sexuality' as a protected characteristic under The Equality Act 2010, and an increased visibility of non-heterosexual identities within popular culture (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013). These significant moments offer insight into the cultural shifts and changes in response to non-heterosexual identities. However, it is arguable that non-heterosexual individuals continue to be stigmatised and also invisible within society (Stufft & Graff, 2011). These range from less visible matters such as, limited celebration cards for same gendered couples to major barriers including not having the option to record same-sex partners on official documents. To illustrate this, a recent UK news article reported the difficulties that two mothers encountered during the registration of their child's birth where the continued assumptions of heterosexuality meant that there was no option other than 'mother' and 'father' (Carr, 2021). When using the term 'visibility', it is not purely to refer to whether something is acknowledged or seen by society, but also *how* it is viewed within society. For example, various research studies have reported how students use the phrase 'gay' to describe a negative situation or something they dislike (DePaul, Walsh & Dam, 2009; Stufft & Graff, 2011).

Further, it is evident that the visibility of non-heterosexual identities has been lacking within education at a socio-political level. Prior to the implementation of the new RSE guidance (Department of Education, 2019) for all secondary schools within the UK, the previous guidance that was to be relied on dated back to 2000. In this document, RSE was defined as follows:

“It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and

sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching.” (Department of Education, 2000; p.5)

The implication from this guidance is that non-heterosexual identities and practices are not ‘appropriate’ nor something that should be visible within schools. It acknowledges marriage as an appropriate teaching and in 2000, only heterosexual marriage was legal. Further, the statement contradicts itself as heterosexuality is a sexual orientation, yet marriage is deemed (or indeed promoted) as appropriate. Again, we can see that within a heteronormative culture, heterosexuality as a sexual identity is not associated with sexual acts (Foucault, 1979). However, non-heterosexuality is associated with sexual desire, excess and sexual inappropriacy (Foucault, 1979). Further, the undertones from the Section 28 era permeate the 2000 RSE guidance through its emphasis on non-heterosexuality as inappropriate and ultimately, wrong. It is profound to consider that this was the only RSE guidance available for reference until 2019, which raises questions as to the speed at which we see cultural change and visibility of non-heterosexuality. The updated guidance, which came into force in 2020, includes a recognition of teaching about non-heterosexual relationships:

“At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT, they should ensure that this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson” (Department of Education, 2019; p.15).

Comparatively to the guidance set out in 2000, we begin to see a socio-political change in the recognition and visibility offered for non-heterosexual identities through the drive for LGBTQ+ matters to be incorporated as part of the curriculum. Although we can see a significant difference in the language used, the statement above still proves problematic through its reference to what is considered ‘appropriate’. The extract suggests that schools should include LGBTQ+ and transgender matters when deemed appropriate whereas, the teaching of heterosexuality has no marker for when it is deemed as appropriate. Despite heterosexuality being normalised from children’s early years through to adulthood, it appears that there is an ‘age appropriateness’ for when non-heterosexuality can become visible to students. This

newer guidance was only implemented in September 2020; however, the extent of RSE teaching was likely to have been impacted as result of COVID19.

Furthermore, with the aim to specifically promote visibility of non-heterosexuality within education, an action research project called *No Outsiders* was initiated to challenge heteronormativity within English schools (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009). Within this project, primary school teachers and researchers collaboratively explored ways to include non-heterosexual identities within the curriculum. Through a critical pedagogy, various methods to create visibility of diverse sexualities were used such as books, videos and poster that included non-heterosexual and non-gender conforming characters within their academic teaching. Overall, the aim was to create a visibility and normalisation of non-heterosexual identities within schools. Research conducted following this project found that children's attitudes and understanding towards LGBTQ+ visibility were markedly different (Atkinson, 2020).

2.7 LGBTQ+ teacher visibility

Shifting the focus towards LGBTQ+ teachers and visibility, the literature so far provides a complex understanding of LGBTQ+ teacher visibility within schools. To reiterate, this research does not argue that LGBTQ+ teachers should be open about their sexuality, or that it represents the correct way to be (Rasmussen, 2004). Nor is there an expectation that LGBTQ+ teachers should 'announce' their sexual identity in school, which arguably perpetuates heterosexuality as the norm (Barker & Scheele, 2016). However, there is a privilege afforded to heterosexual teachers in relation to sexuality, where there are no negotiations, adaptations or methods undertaken in relation to the visibility of their sexuality. The visibility of LGBTQ+ teachers is a key concern not only within the UK but on a global level (Neary, 2019; Neary, 2013; Ferfolja, 2008), as working within a heteronormative environment and simultaneously trying to maintain authenticity as an LGBTQ+ teacher is a difficult task (Neary, 2020). To critically examine the terrain of research exploring LGBTQ+ teacher identity and visibility, one must firstly consider issues of heteronormativity, heterosexism, and homophobia and how teachers navigate the visibility of their sexual identity around these.

2.7.1 Heteronormativity, Heterosexism and LGBTQ+ teacher visibility

Beginning with a discussion around heteronormativity, it is undeniable that Section 28 was a significant factor in the sustaining of a heteronormative environment within the educational setting through its 'normalisation' of heterosexuality as the only acceptable identity (Nixon & Givens, 2007; Edwards et al, 2016). However, this legislation cannot provide a complete understanding into the culture of heterosexuality as the norm but should instead be understood as a product of heteronormativity. As stated, heteronormativity has existed and dominated over many decades (Foucault, 1978). Heteronormativity within the educational setting can be defined as "organizational structures in schools that support heterosexuality as normal and anything else as deviant" (Donelson & Rogers, 2004, p. 128). A heteronormative culture therefore provides a catalyst for homophobia and heterosexism, and without understanding the wider systemic and cultural impact of heteronormativity, issues such as homophobia within schools cannot be eradicated (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Formby, 2015).

What this discussion has demonstrated so far is that instances of heterosexism still prevail within schools. As previously mentioned, Nixon and Given's (2007) study illustrated the issues of heterosexism experienced by LGB primary and secondary school teachers from students and other staff members. As well as attempting to gain insight into the experiences of non-heterosexual teachers, they also examined their experiences of cultural change within schools following the removal of Section 28. In their findings, Nixon and Givens (2007) describe how despite the repeal of Section 28, which perpetuated heteronormativity, a "hidden curriculum of a heteronormative discourse" continues to exist within schools. They add that the assumption of heterosexuality governs staffroom conversations including "who fancies whom" and announcement of staff engagements and weddings (p.464). From this, we witness the standards of acceptability for conversations within schools, whereby personal matters are appropriate conversations in the workplace, as long as they fit a heterosexual narrative. This creates an uncomfortable position for LGBTQ+ teachers as they are expected to both present as asexual beings within the classroom (Rudoe, 2010) and "act, dress, speak, and self-present according to normative gender and sexual expectations" (Connell 2015; p.65). Together these conflicting messages create part of a "heteronormative logic", whereby there is the simultaneous expectation for staff and children within school to remain asexual and heterosexual (Bragg, 2018; p.421).

This is not to suggest that heteronormativity is widely accepted within UK schools, in fact, there is a contradicting narrative at play within the UK whereby English schools subscribe to heteronormative practices yet acknowledge the need to recognise diversity (Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021). As described, the *No Outsiders* project was designed as a direct attempt to challenge heteronormativity with English primary schools (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009). However, it appears that despite extensive socio-political changes in the UK (and in other countries), and a persistent strive towards change, there continues to be a heteronormative discourse that renders LGBTQ+ teachers as 'other' within school institutions (Gray et al, 2016).

Examining more recent research, instances of heteronormativity and heterosexism continue to exist, although may appear as less obvious or subtle (Gray et al, 2016). Further, these more subtle instances may manifest in the form of micro-aggressions (Francis & Reygan, 2016). Micro-aggressions have previously been linked to issues surrounding race (Yosso, 2005), however, its idea can also be applied to those who identify as LGBTQ+ (Sue & Spanierman, 2020). Francis and Reygan (2016) summarise microaggressions to include: heterosexism, the sexualisation of non-heterosexual identities, and denying homophobia. To illustrate these subtleties, Llewellyn and Reynolds (2021) acknowledge a tension within the UK educational setting between becoming more inclusive towards diverse sexualities yet still perpetuating heteronormativity. They describe "the privileges of authenticity [that] are afforded to heterosexual people without question" (p.19) when describing one teacher's experience of feeling unable to present their wedding photos to students without serious repercussions from senior management. This demonstrates the subtle nuances of heterosexism experienced by LGB teachers including the heterosexist bias experienced by LGBTQ+ people (Francis & Reygan, 2016). Therefore, although we can argue that there is a shifting culture emerging within the educational setting towards greater inclusivity for non-heterosexual identities, LGBTQ+ teachers' experiences still differ greatly from their heterosexual counterparts through heterosexism in the workplace.

2.7.2 Personal and professional identities and visibility

For those who identify as LGBTQ+, being open about one's sexual identity is an enduring process of having to repeatedly explain that their sexuality differs from heterosexuality (Grace & Benson, 2000). Butler (1990) would describe practices such as the compulsion to 'come out'

as stemming from the rigidity of identity categories, which represent the “instruments of regulatory regimes” (p.13). For LGBTQ+ teachers, there is a myriad of complex dynamics at play that impact their ability to be open about their sexual identity. As I have previously discussed, within the educational setting, although there is a shift towards inclusivity, schools continue to subscribe to a heteronormative regime (Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021). It has been argued that to discuss sexual identity within school is not appropriate or relevant, which ties into the ideas that teachers and schools should present themselves as asexual (Epstein & Johnson 1998; Rudoie, 2010). Yet, teachers are also expected to uphold and regulate the values of their school’s community school which often subscribes to the heteronormative ideals (Ferfolja, 2010). Gray et al (2013) point out that heterosexuality is so normalised within school where heterosexual teachers can refer to their spouse using gendered terminology such as, husband or wife, whereas LGBTQ+ teachers cannot. Considering this, we know that there are various negotiations required for LGBTQ+ teachers to manage between their sexual and professional identities (Gray et al, 2013; Neary, 2013), likely impacting their ability to be open about their sexuality.

Research demonstrates that the fractures between the personal and professional identities of LGBTQ+ teachers continue to cause distress. Neary (2013) provides an in-depth insight into the struggles that LGB teachers experience between managing their professional and personal identities in Ireland. It was found that all teachers in the study experienced an identity conflict between their personal and professional lives, highlighting the tensions created if they were not to comply with the norms of heterosexuality. For example, many participants described the difficulties of wanting to be a good role model for students but how this led to concerns that they would be perceived as the LGBTQ+ teacher who is “recruiting for the LGBTQI community” (p.589). This is similar to DePalma and Atkinson’s (2006) description of the perception that those who identify as heterosexual perceive non-heterosexual individuals as pushing a “gay agenda” (p.340).

Furthermore, research indicates that LGBTQ+ teachers experience a sense of obligation to be visible about their sexuality within school. Teachers, as professionals, have often been associated as and expected to be role models for students (Carrington & Skelton, 2003). For LGBTQ+ teachers, there is an added perception of responsibility to provide support for LGBTQ+

students or act as advocates for LGBTQ+ matters in school (Henderson, 2019). In the UK, there has been a push for visibility of non-heterosexual identities within the classroom using LGBTQ+ teachers as role models, however, one must consider the impact and pressures that are attached to visible role models in the classroom (Henderson, 2019). For example, those teachers who are not open about their sexual identity may feel pressured by the expectations of the LGBTQ+ role model, leading to feelings of failure in their duty as a teacher and an LGBTQ+ individual (Rasmussen, 2004). However, not all teachers experience the position of being a role model for LGBTQ+ visibility as a difficulty. In fact, many teachers perceive the idea of being a role model as a positive position, where being open to their students is an opportunity rather than a barrier (Lee, 2019b). Clearly, the discussions around being a role model are complex and are likely influenced by a variety of other factors. However, it does indicate that the idea of being a role model is arguably a double-edged sword, as to be a role model requires a teacher to be actively open about their sexual identity.

Furthermore, research suggests that being a role model can come at a cost to LGBTQ+ teachers' workload, by having to present as a "super-teacher" as compensation for their sexual identity (Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021; p.19). This idea of a LGBTQ+ teacher going above and beyond to compensate can be illustrated by Msibi's (2019) description of "hyper-professionalism" (p.389). Hyper-professionalism is the idea that non-heterosexual teachers work to exceptionally high standards in their job to take focus away from their sexual identity, thus avoiding issues such as homophobia. In this South African study with black gay identified teachers, Msibi describes how non-heterosexual identities are not welcome within the South African heteronormative culture. As a result, many teachers adopt identity management strategies to maintain respect and credibility as teachers within school. To those observing, non-heterosexual teachers maintain credibility through their hard work, whilst subtly attempting to create a more inclusive environment through tackling homophobia in school. Msibi also reports how there was a negative backlash because of their hyper-professionalism describing how teachers were discriminated against by other staff and headteachers who felt threatened by their professionalism. Again, it is important to consider the intersections of race that could further compound this negative backlash, as Msibi's study involved black male teachers who identified as gay. Soudien (2016) describes the fundamental impact of apartheid that continues to influence racial, class and gender inequalities within South Africa's education

system. Despite this, Msibi (2019) highlights how these teachers were not powerless or fearful because of their school climate, but rather demonstrated their ability to strategically adapt under the circumstances. Llewellyn and Reynolds (2021) add to this as they examine UK based LGB teachers and how they position themselves within school regarding the visibility of their sexual identity. It was reported that exerting an exaggerated level of professionalism was a strategy used by LGBTQ+ teachers to minimise the potential negativity received should their sexual identity be revealed. However, many teachers reported lacking a feeling of authenticity and inability to present their true selves, unless they were actively open. Evidently, we can see a tension between the role as a teacher and the personal identity of an LGBTQ+ individual. Overall, it highlights a heterosexual “invisible privilege” as the tensions between a professional identity and personal identity are unlikely to clash for heterosexual teachers about their sexuality (Connell, 2015; p. 69).

Taking an alternative perspective on this, it has been argued that the management of personal and professional identities for LGBTQ+ teachers does not have to be associated with negativity or a lack of agency. Ferfolja (2009) argues that teachers who are not open about their sexual identity do not have to equate this with failure, oppression or obligation and highlights how they do have power and choice within these situations. Considering Butler’s (1990) theories on performativity, Ferfolja (2009) states how LGBTQ+ teachers who choose to not be visible or open about their sexual identity still undermine the norm of heterosexuality. For example, Lee (2019b) states, “[m]aintaining a silence is an act of considerable power because it troubles the presumption of heterosexuality by leaving identities unclear to others” (p.3). However, I would argue that although not being open about one’s sexuality should not equate with failure, heterosexuality is the assumed sexuality, which therefore provides heterosexual teachers with a privilege that non-heterosexual teachers do not have (Connell, 2015). Further, to state that the management of personal and professional identities does not have to cause a lack of agency does not take into consideration a variety of personal factors including, race, religion, and age as well as professional factors such as the school community and leadership (Rasmussen, 2004) and the perceived safety of LGBTQ+ teachers within their school.

The narrative of the literature so far has largely projected the historic and on-going difficulties experienced by LGBTQ+ teachers through a lens of discrimination, prejudice, and

heteronormativity. Arguably, this may present a partial story that focuses on the “tragic narrative of LGBTQ+ lives” (Stones & Glazzard, 2019; p.10). In fact, Stones and Glazzard argue that much of the existing literature surrounding non-heterosexual teachers provides only a partial account, which emphasises the position of these teachers as victims. In an article by Stones and Glazzard (2020), they aimed to move away from this partial narrative of viewing LGBTQ+ teachers as victims. They interview four gay identified male teachers in England with the aim of gaining a greater understanding of their experiences as gay teachers, what factors affect their resilience and how they manage their personal and professional identities. In their findings, they describe three major themes including teacher identity, resilience, and agency. A greater agency was identified for teachers following the implementation of equality legislation and regulatory frameworks implemented in schools, subsequently enabling these teachers to unify their personal and professional identities. This in turn assisted teacher resilience when subjected to hostility from parents or colleagues in relation to either their sexuality or discussion of LGBTQ+ issues in school. Stones and Glazzard emphasise that despite the negative accounts being described by these teachers, their narratives are largely positive and empowering as they are “active agents with potential to contribute to the advancement of inclusion and social justice within education” (p.12). What the research tells us so far is that LGBTQ+ teachers have experienced difficulties in the negotiation of their personal and professional identities (Neary, 2013; Msibi, 2019; Henderson, 2019). Yet at the same time, within a shifting culture, these teachers demonstrate power, agency, and resilience (Ferfolja, 2009; Stones & Glazzard, 2020).

So far, the research has not considered the impact of school leadership support towards LGBTQ+ teachers and the impact on the visibility of their sexual identity within school. As previously stated, it is not my intent to suggest that LGBTQ+ teachers should be visible about their sexuality. However, it is important to acknowledge that non-heterosexual teachers do not have the same privileges that heterosexual teachers have regarding their sexual identity (Connell, 2015). Therefore, considering that the research has illustrated the on-going challenges that LGBTQ+ teachers experience, I believe that it is important to consider what support is offered to LGBTQ+ teachers from their leadership management. I now move to explore the literature available on the impact and support offered by leadership teams for LGBTQ+ teachers in relation to their overall experiences and ability to be open about their sexuality within school.

2.8 School leadership and influence

As previously stated, CP endeavours to consider holistic approach to an individual and therefore considers wider factors and structures. Considering the complexities and difficulties experienced by LGBTQ+ teachers from the literature review so far, it begs the question as to what support is offered and available to LGBTQ+ identified teachers from the school, including senior management teams (SLT). Further, it is important to investigate whether LGBTQ+ teachers feel supported by their leadership teams and how this support is perceived by these teachers. When referring to the 'support' provided by leadership, this can include support in a myriad of ways, such as: the perceived and experienced safety of LGBTQ+ teachers, a sense of job security, support in attaining job progression, and strong school policies in place for disciplinary matters (Wright & Smith, 2015). However, when discussing the impact of school leadership support, this is not to place LGBTQ+ teachers within a victim narrative, nor to suggest that all negative experiences that LGBTQ+ teachers encounter are because of their school leaders. Previous research has suggested that teachers who feel safe within their work environment are able to work to a higher efficiency (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). Historically, non-heterosexual individuals, including staff and students, have reported feeling unsafe in the school environment because of the negative experiences endured, such as homophobia (Markow & Fein, 2005). Homophobia has historically been a significant issue within schools for students and staff (see Clarke et al, 2004; Nixon & Givens, 2004; DePalma & Jennet, 2010). For LGBTQ+ teachers, the experience or fear of harassment because of their sexual identity continues to influence their decisions around visibility (Ferfolja, 2007; Gray et al, 2016).

As discussed earlier, previous research conducted during Section 28 demonstrated that teachers feared losing their job should their sexuality be discovered or revealed (Clarke, 1996). However, following the implementation of The Equality Act 2010, employers now face legal repercussions if they discriminate based on sexual identity. Regarding the perceived safety of LGBTQ+ teachers, there is limited research available that specifically focuses on the safety of LGBTQ+ teachers in England, instead, a significant amount of research in this area is found within US literature (Wright, 2010; Wright & Smith, 2015). Wright et al (2019) set out to explore the current school climate in the United States and how non-heterosexual teachers perceived their safety in schools through the distribution of surveys. Wright et al's findings demonstrated

a shift in LGBT teachers' perceptions of their physical and emotional safety in the US school climates, which was argued to be influenced by the support of strong and supportive school leaders. What we do not know are the perceptions of non-heterosexual teachers in relation to their perceived safety and support from leadership within England. Considering different laws, legislations and policies implemented in different countries, we cannot assume that these shifting perceptions in the US accurately portray the conditions within England. Furthermore, senior leadership teams and headteachers are crucial for the safety of LGBTQ+ teachers (Wright & Smith, 2015). Wright and Smith conducted a US based longitudinal study, where they used two surveys to examine LGBT teachers' perception of their school climate and school leaders. The implications from these surveys suggested that there were minor improvements in the workplace environment in 2011 compared to 2007, and that this was partially due to an increase in the level of support offered to LGBTQ+ teachers. Further, it was reported that the level of support perceived by LGBT teachers from their school leaders enabled them to feel safer within their role, thus, having a positive impact on the students that they support (Wright & Smith, 2015). Furthermore, Jackson's (2007) study highlighted the impact and influence that headteachers have on the experiences of lesbian and gay (LG) teachers. This suggests that the environment for LGBTQ+ teachers is somewhat dependent on the subjective opinion of each school's headteachers, which further indicates that there cannot be a consistent approach to LGBTQ+ inclusivity from one school to another.

However, it would be incorrect to state that the entirety of adverse work experiences for LGBTQ+ teachers are solely the product of actions from leadership. It is important to not negate the influence of factors such as a school's community and geographical location. Lee (2019b) brings attention to the differences in visibility and acceptance of non-heterosexual identities in different geographical locations of schools in the UK. It was reported that there was a significant difference in the experiences of LGB teachers who worked in rural villages compared with the LGB teachers working in towns and cities. Additionally, participants working in rural areas were more likely to report this incompatibility as being a barrier towards their career progression. Although Lee's work provides a useful insight into the differences of experiences for LGBTQ+ teachers across different physical locations, it is arguably not solely the geographical location that sustained higher incompatibilities between professional and non-heterosexual identities. Ferfolja and Hopkins (2013) reported that it was not the geographical location of a

school that affected lesbian and gay teachers working experiences, but the 'micro-cultures' of the school where they were employed. Micro-cultures represent how a school manages, recognises, and celebrates socio-cultural differences, and therefore, schools that had a greater socio-cultural diversity provided a safe and more accepting culture for non-heterosexual identities. Ferfolja and Hopkins further highlight that these micro-cultures were largely influenced by the support of strong leadership who did not tolerate any forms of discrimination.

2.8.1 Considering power dynamics within education

The difficulties experienced by LGBTQ+ teachers do not solely come from within the school as there are various external stakeholders involved in the school, such as parents and faith communities. Within this section, it is worth considering the elements of power and powerlessness for LGBTQ+ teachers through the influence of external factors. In the UK, news headlines covered protests at a school in Birmingham which depicted scenes of parents – including many from a faith community protesting at the change in curriculum to include diverse family relationships as part of the primary school's relationship education class (Kotecha, 2019). Unfortunately, media representation focused its emphasis specifically on a Muslim community protesting LGBTQ+ matters, arguably fuelling right-wing anxieties around Islam and its attack on 'British values' (Khan, 2021). The concept of homonationalism (Puar, 2007) is relevant here. Puar would argue that homonationalism is an attempt to promote nationalist ideologies through the cover of fighting for liberal values, such as LGBTQ+ rights. To expand, this concept argues that homonationalism outwardly looks as though it is promoting and supporting LGBTQ+ rights with the underlying intention of pushing far-right ideologies such as xenophobia or racism. In this example, although the majority in protest of the inclusion of LGBTQ+ aspects within lessons were from a Muslim community, it would be incorrect to suggest that a resistance to the implementation of teaching around LGBTQ+ issues stems from any single religion. In the same instance, the tensions between faith groups and sexuality cannot be ignored. Religious beliefs and ideals around sexuality have a significant influence in the shaping of practices within the education setting (Love, 1998). For example, Neary (2012) describes how the power of the Catholic Church in Irish schools influence the curriculum with the disregard to teaching about non-heterosexual identities as part of primary RSE lessons. For LGBTQ+ teachers the impact of religion has been a problematic factor in the relationship

between sexual and professional identities (Ferfolja, 2009). Research further suggests that LGBTQ+ teachers working in religious schools hold the added pressure to manage these two identities to maintain the security of their job. With these additional pressures, we can understand that LGBTQ+ teachers are further silenced for the protection of their career in certain types of schools, e.g. faith schools (Fahie, 2016)

2.9 Research Rationale and Chapter Summary

As part of my research rationale, I have decided to focus on the exploration of secondary school LGBTQ+ teacher accounts. I believe that each account and experience will offer a unique and individual insight for each teacher, however, considering some of the previous discussions above, I believe that there are various differences between primary and secondary schools, which should therefore not be conflated. For example, the recent changes to RSE education within secondary schools differ to the changes made for primary schools within the UK (Department of Education, 2019). Not only this, but I argue that teacher experiences may differ based on the age and academic level of students they are working with. Although these differences may appear to be minor, it is arguable that these disparities should be examined separately.

The existing literature has indicated that LGBTQ+ teachers experience a multifaceted layer of difficulties when working within schools. Despite the removal of discriminatory UK policies, such as, Section 28 and the implementation of more inclusive policies, many LGBTQ+ teachers feel unable to be open about their sexual identity when in the workplace and continue to experience the influence of Section 28 (Edwards et al, 2016). Using a queer theoretical lens, research has highlighted the permeating influence of heteronormativity within schools and the on-going issues of homophobia and heterosexism (Ferfolja, 2007; Neary, 2013) indicating that discriminatory legislation is not a sole factor in the difficult experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers. Adding in the impact of gender normativity that is ever present within school (Butler, 1990), LGBTQ+ teachers are tasked with the added expectation to perform their gender and sexuality in line with norms of heterosexuality and gender normativity (Coda, 2019). The minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) further helps us understanding the additional stressors that LGBTQ+ teachers may experience alongside the everyday stressors attached to their role, such as the

negotiation of working within a heavily heteronormative environment which can result in negative mental health outcomes for LGBTQ+ teachers (Stones & Glazzard, 2019).

Moreover, studies have demonstrated how many LGBTQ+ teachers continue to not be visible about their sexual identity at school and often employ strategies to conceal their sexual identity (Rudoe, 2010). For those teachers who are visible within schools, the research has suggested that LGBTQ+ teachers not only take on the responsibility of being a role model for the benefit of students (Henderson, 2019), the pressures attached to the ideas of being a visible role model have resulted in teachers overcompensating in their role to maintain respect and credibility as though the visibility of their sexual identity hinders this (Msibi, 2019). This offered insight into the perceived incompatibility between teacher identities and LGBTQ+ identities (Neary, 2013). This incompatibility has been widely reported resulting in teachers reporting lacking a feeling of authenticity (Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021). The available literature on leadership support for LGBTQ+ teachers is limited within England. US research illustrates the importance of having strong leadership teams and how this correlates with a safer school climate for non-heterosexual identities (Wright & Smith, 2015). Although schools do not solely hold the responsibility for the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers, the school managements' attitude towards socio-cultural differences and the subsequent culture created from this is reported to create a safe and more accepting culture for LGBTQ+ teachers and students (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013). Considering the existing literature available, LGBTQ+ teachers experience ongoing difficulties, added emotional costs and considerations compared to heterosexual teachers. My aim is to gain a greater understanding into the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers' experiences regarding the visibility of their sexuality within English secondary schools. Further, considering the limited research exploring the influence and impact of school leadership teams, I further aim to consider the perceptions of LGBTQ+ teachers and how their school support influences them. Therefore, my research questions are as follows:

1. What are the accounts of LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers regarding the visibility of their sexual identity and how this influences their role as teachers?
2. In what ways do these LGBTQ+ teachers feel supported or unsupported by their school and what is needed going forward?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Having explored the existing literature surrounding LGBTQ+ teacher experience, this chapter will focus on the methodological processes used throughout this research project. 'Methodology' is the "articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data" (Ellen, 1984; p.9). Therefore, I articulate my philosophical positions and reasons for my methodological decisions throughout this section to aid the reader's understanding. The journey of understanding my methodological processes was a long but central process and I hope to explain my reflexive positioning throughout this chapter. Furthermore, I aim to explain the ethical considerations for this research project, including highlighting the ethical process. Overall, I try to convey how these decisions best aid my attempts to address my research questions.

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

My research project is explorative and aims to gain a greater understanding into the accounts of LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers. Ultimately the entirety of the project will be shaped through my own lens as well as my 'worldview' and beliefs about what constitutes knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). My stance is in line with a critical realist philosophical position. Prior to discussing my critical realist position, I begin by discussing the development of my research 'paradigm'. A paradigm refers to the netting of a "basic belief system based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; p.107), to which qualitative research can be particularly challenging through its lack of distinguished paradigms compared with quantitative approaches (Polit et al, 2001; Elliott et al, 1999). However, this is not to suggest that qualitative approaches lack research paradigms, merely that qualitative research considers different "ways of knowing" rather than an objective truth (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004; p.234). Therefore, it was crucial to ensure that I understood my own paradigm and further that it was congruent with my research design (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).

Ontology itself refers to an individual's own beliefs about the broad nature of reality and existence (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Pascale, 2011). Our ontological assumptions of what we believe constitutes valid knowledge means that we are subsequently able to access certain forms of knowledge, and dismiss other forms of knowledge (Pascale, 2011). Therefore, one's ontological assumptions about the world will strongly shape what they believe to be true (or a reality), which in turn shapes what can be understood about that reality, if it exists (Rohleder & Lyons, 2015). Ontologically speaking, my views align as understanding reality as something that exists independently of its observer (Bhaskar, 1975). Whereas ontology considers the nature of existence, epistemology refers to the justification of knowledge and "how we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998; p.8). Ultimately, epistemology is about how the researcher makes meaningful sense of knowledge and what they consider as legitimate knowledge (Pascale, 2011). Although my ontological assumptions align with a mind-independent reality, I argue that this reality can only be accessed through the perceptions and interpretations of individuals (Ritchie et al, 2013). During the preparation phases of this research, it was imperative to consider and understand my ontological and epistemological positionings beforehand to understand the assumptions and knowledge that I was bringing to the project. This is especially important to consider within the realm of qualitative research, due to the difficulties of disentangling researcher influence and assumptions from the research itself (Chamberlain, 2015).

In considering my own research paradigm, my philosophical stance falls between the two forces of positivism and interpretivism, known as critical realism (CR). Critical realism builds on both positivism and interpretivism in that it views reality as not entirely objective nor completely independent from human control or influence (Bhaskar, 1975). I believe it is helpful to the reader to initially explain some of the key philosophical paradigms including positivism and interpretivism and where my own philosophical paradigm sits regarding these competing stances. A positivist philosophy falls to one extreme of the spectrum assuming that reality is "context-free" and exists as an independent entity that cannot be influenced by humans (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; p.53). Positivists would argue that we as humans cannot create, alter or construct reality, for it exists in its own right. Positivism holds the ontological position of 'realism', which refers to an external reality in existence without the influence of humans' own beliefs and understanding (Ritchie et al, 2013). The epistemological position of positivism

is objectivism, which is where we can simply observe the world and produce knowledge without the experience of barriers to accessing or producing this knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, positivists would argue that reality remains unaffected through factors such as the research process and that it is therefore possible to objectively gather knowledge and understand it as fact, without it bearing any influence from the researcher (Willis, 2007). Conversely, an interpretivist paradigm falls on the opposing end of the spectrum to a positivist paradigm. Interpretivism refers to the idea that knowledge is relative and therefore contextual to different circumstances such as culture, history, time and subjectivity (Levers, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Considering this, interpretivists would reject the idea that a single, concrete reality exists and instead believe that there are multiple realities that we as humans create, rather than discover or unveil (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Therefore, interpretivism disputes the notion of an objective, external reality arguing that reality and our construction of knowledge is developed through human subjectivity and interpretation. Regarding research, interpretivism holds the view that it is not possible to detach from the research and that a researcher's influence is fundamentally part of the research process and outcome (Grix, 2004). Falling on the spectrum between these two, my views align with the idea that although an independent reality exists, it cannot exist or be objectively observed without the influence and input of the 'observable' world, i.e., through human understanding and perspective (Bhaskar, 1975). Considering this research, exploring the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers' experiences of the visibility of their sexuality, I argue that although we can access a form of reality and knowledge of their accounts and experiences, this reality is not without influence of my understanding and interpretation.

3.2 Ethical consideration

The research project has been carried out in compliance with the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2016) guidelines for ethical research. Further, I sought ethical approval from the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) prior to participant recruitment and data collection. After being granted research ethics approval by UREC, I proceeded with participant recruitment and data collection.

3.2.1 COVID19

It would be remiss to not disclose the impact of COVID19 on this research project, especially regarding the means to gaining ethical approval. The timing of the global pandemic meant that my ethical approval was significantly impacted having originally proposed that interviews be conducted face-to-face. The project had to be adapted to virtual means, however, further time and consideration were required due to the sensitivity of the project and to ensure the protection of LGBTQ+ teacher identities. Teachers, being key workers, were hugely impacted by the pandemic, with some working exclusively from home while others fluctuated between working remotely and being in the classroom. Also, whilst advertising for participants, teachers were informed that they had to prepare for a return to school in September 2020. This added further consideration for my project due to ever-evolving circumstances that teachers were in. Consequently, participant interest was affected by the governmental updates to returning to the classroom. With this, I felt that it was important to consider the stressful and ever-changing position teachers were in before proceeding with the research project. The impact of the pandemic will be explained in the following sections where applicable.

3.2.2 Obtaining approval

Research ethics are essential in ensuring the protection of both the researcher and participant (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and the process of obtaining ethics approval required several considerations, not solely the participant sample but the further impact of COVID19 on the participant sample. Initially, I sought ethical approval under the ethical risk level of 'medium' however, the study was described by the research committee as posing 'a significant risk of having an adverse effect on the personal, social or economic well-being of the participant', as well as covering topics 'which may cause a significant level of embarrassment distress, or fatigue' and involving a topic which is 'socially [or] personally sensitive' (*see Appendix 11*). I therefore resubmitted my ethics approval under the risk level of 'high', which required a full university research ethics committee (UREC) review and panel conducted via Zoom. Admittedly, due to COVID19 and the changes required to move research projects online, the process of obtaining approval took additional time. Following this meeting, final amendments required were made within the ethical report, particularly in adapting the procedures of the interviews to being carried out virtually. Please see the UREC Ethical Approval letter (*Appendix 12*).

3.3 Participants

I initially aimed to recruit between 8-20 participants for the research project as part of a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020), however, due to the impact of COVID, I was able to gather 7 participants in total. For the in-depth analysis that reflexive thematic analysis generates, between 6 to 10 participants are sufficient for small projects (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Considering the nature of the project, participants were recruited using a purposive sampling method with the intention of exploring participants' experiences from a range of perspectives within certain criteria i.e., non-heterosexual secondary school teachers (Etikan et al, 2016). There were 4 participants who identified as 'lesbian', 1 who identified as 'gay', 1 who identified as 'queer/lesbian' and 1 who identified as 'bisexual'. No participants who identified under the trans umbrella took part in the research. I emphasise that although the focus of the project explores matters concerning sexuality, those who identify under the trans umbrella were not excluded from the research. It was optional for participants to choose or associate their identity to a labelled term but was not compulsory within the optional questionnaire (see *Appendix 5*). As part of my ethical commitments to protect the identity of those who participated in the research, I provide a summary of each participant containing enough detail to offer the reader a contextual understanding without unveiling the identity of any participant. Please note that this information was optionally offered by participants.

3.3.1 Participant 1

Participant 1 identified as bisexual and worked at a secondary comprehensive state school in Lancashire. At the time of the interview, they had been teaching for over five years. Participant 1 stated that she was open about her sexual identity to her colleagues as well as the wider school community (including students and parents). Participant 1 references how in her experience, it was more difficult to be open about their sexuality to staff members. Overall, she described her own experience of being open about their sexuality as positive, however acknowledging that she was a major driver in promoting and campaigning for LGBTQ+ matters in her school. Participant 1's interview was the longest lasting for 1 hour and 1 minute.

3.3.2 Participant 2

Participant 2 identified as lesbian and worked at a public academy secondary school in Derbyshire. At the time of her interview, she had been teaching for one year, plus one year of teacher training. Participant 2 stated that she was open about her sexuality to staff members and had recently told one of her classes during a discussion around sexuality. However, she stated that she was generally not open to students. Overall, participant 2 described various difficulties in her experiences, citing issues of overhearing homophobic language frequently used on the corridors and subsequently stated her concern about her school's lack of response to these issues and denying issues of homophobia in the school. Participant 2's interview lasted for 41 minutes and 20 seconds.

3.3.3 Participant 3

Participant 3 identified as queer/lesbian and had worked at a secondary state school in Manchester for over 9 years. Participant 3 shared that she was open about her sexuality to staff but not the wider school community, especially students. She highlighted her concerns in regard to the responses from parents/community members should they come to know of her sexual identity. Participant 3 described how previous negative experiences of being discriminated against had left her with these concerns. Overall, participant 3 spoke of wider structural issues within her school and within educational institutions in general, touching on the enforcement of gender binaries and how this creates tensions with sexuality. She also shared her accounts and feelings regarding the pressures to be a role model and what the implications of this were. Participant 3's interview lasted for 38 minutes and 54 seconds.

3.3.4 Participant 4

Participant 4 identified as a lesbian and worked at an academy secondary school in Greater Manchester. She had been teaching for over 9 years at the time of the interview. Participant 4 was open to a select few colleagues but was not open to the students about her sexual identity. She described her fear of the repercussions of being open and how waiting until she becomes established within the school will make it easier for her to eventually be open to the wider school community. Participant 4's interview lasted for 31 minutes and 15 seconds.

3.3.5 Participant 5

Participant 5 identified as a lesbian and worked at an academy secondary school in Lancashire. She had been teaching for over 10 years. Participant 5 stated that she was open to her colleagues and the wider school community and spoke openly about the positive experiences she has encountered during her teaching career. Participant 5 spoke of the positive impacts she felt she could make through being open and how she received support from her school throughout. Participant 5's interview was the shortest interview in part due to the availability of conducting the interview and preparation required for returning to work amidst the COVID19 government updates and lasted for 19 minutes and 32 seconds.

3.3.6 Participant 6

Participant 6 identified as a gay man and worked at an academy secondary school in Nottinghamshire. He had been teaching for over 12 years at the time of the interview and noted that he had recently changed schools within the last 6 months. Participant 6 stated that he was open to staff and intended to be open with the wider school community but had not had a chance yet due to the school change and impact of COVID19. Participant 6 offered insight into his perceptions of school leaders and the school's expectations of LGBTQ+ teachers. He further described his passion for promoting visibility of LGBTQ+ identities and the progressive changes required for schools going forward. Participant 6's interview lasted for 36 minutes and 29 seconds.

3.3.7 Participant 7

Participant 7 identified as lesbian and worked in a state secondary school in Greater Manchester. She had been teaching for over 7 years at the time of the interview. Participant 7 stated that she was open to a select number of colleagues whom she felt comfortable with but that she was not open to the wider school community. Participant 7 offered insight into her perception of change in regard to the visibility of sexualities over time and reflectively considered her understanding of her decisions to maintain her sexual identity as private amongst students. Participant 7's interview lasted for 27 minutes and 14 seconds.

3.4 Recruitment process

3.4.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Participants

Participants were recruited between July 2020 and November 2020. There were certain criteria to be met for this study and additional requirements due to the impact of COVID19. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for this research project are described below:

Table 1 – Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Table for potential participants.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants teaching within a UK based secondary school.• Participants who identify as non-heterosexual (i.e. do not identify as heterosexual).• Participants who identify under the transgender umbrella.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers not teaching within secondary schools (e.g. primary school teachers, college or higher education teachers).• Teachers not teaching within the UK.• Teachers who identify as heterosexual.• COVID19: Participants unable to access a private or safe space to conduct the interview.

Implementing certain criteria was an important process within the designing of the research study, however, the specific inclusion criteria were applied to avoid a generalisation of findings between various groups. For example, previous studies conducted have used a variety of teachers, including primary, secondary, and higher education. However, this study sought to gain insight into secondary school teachers' experiences specifically, so included only secondary school teachers for representativeness (Elliott et al, 1999). Of course, this is not to suggest that the findings of my study represent all secondary school teachers yet having a greater focus on LGBTQ+ teachers working in secondary school could permit a deeper insight into their experiences within that setting. Additionally, the criterion to exclude teachers working outside of the UK stems from the limited existing literature exploring UK based LGBTQ+ teacher experiences. Further, to avoid generalisations, it felt pertinent to accurately portray the LGBTQ+ acronym when writing my thesis. As described earlier, those who identified under the trans umbrella were not excluded from taking part in this research, and it was regrettable that no trans individuals responded to the call for participants. With this in mind, it is important

to accurately represent the demographics of the participants within this research and therefore, I am using the acronym 'LGBQ+' where applicable.

Finally, research interviews were originally to be conducted face-to-face in a secure room within the University of Manchester, thus allowing myself to control the environment and ensure a secure and confidential setting. Considering COVID19 adaptations, it was essential to try and remotely control the safety and privacy of participants as a criteria requirement as much as possible. Consequently, this meant excluding those interested in the research but unable to gain access to a private or safe space. It was crucial to be aware of potential participants' living situations before engaging in the research, however, the ownership was also left with participants themselves. With this, it must be acknowledged as a limitation of the research due to a possible exclusion effect created.

3.4.2 Access to participants

Extensive considerations were taken throughout the process of determining how to access and approach participants. Alongside the considerations of protection and privacy, I attempted to avoid any negative repercussions or implications on their professional careers. I decided to not pursue recruitment of participants through school channels in the interest of avoiding 'outing' participants to their employers as their participation or interest in the research project could unveil this. Additionally, should schools have become aware that their employees were taking part in the research, it could have made it possible to identify participants from their accounts. Not only this, concerning the nature of the project and its interest in the topic of school leadership support, I wished to avoid channels that inform schools of their employees' involvement to further reduce the possible repercussions for participants. With this careful consideration, I recruited participants via the social media platform, Twitter. Twitter, a globally used platform with more than 330 million active accounts (Kastranakes, 2018) is readily accessed by teachers, educational organisations (Carpenter et al, 2019), as well as those who identify as LGBTQ+. This recruitment method appeared to be the most effective way of accessing participants whilst simultaneously avoiding school involvement. Following this, I found that a snowball sampling recruitment drive ensued with teachers who had already participated recommending and signposting the research to other eligible participants. Snowball sampling recruitment is especially advantageous in accessing participant groups who

may be socially stigmatised or as part of a hidden population, including those who identify under the LGBTQ+ umbrella (Browne, 2005). Further, through other participants' affirmations, those potential participants were able to develop a level of trust to engage in research pertaining to sensitive topics, including sexual identity (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Furthermore, due to the added remoteness of the research, I found that I was able to recruit participants from wider geographical locations, which would have been unlikely if interviews were face-to-face.

3.4.3 Consent

The research involved semi-structured interviews which made it impossible to inform participants of the exact processes of the interview due to the flexibility entailed (Lyons, 2015). Therefore, gaining informed consent for this study was a continuous process. To achieve this, at various steps I checked in with participants to ensure they were happy to be a part of the research, even following the return of signed consent forms. Consent forms were only sent to participants who had emailed the researcher to express their interest to take part in the research. Along with this form, participants were provided with information about the research project including what the research was about and what was expected of them if they were to participate, an example sheet of what questions would be asked and how their data would be published. I also ensured that each participant was aware of the process of data transcription and analysis and informed them that once their data had been transcribed and analysed, it would be impossible to remove their data after a certain date. Participants were informed during email exchange and at the beginning and end of the research interview of their rights to stop the interview and/or opt out of the study should they wish.

3.4.4 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was carefully considered and there were various measures implemented to ensure a high level of confidentiality for this project. Firstly, email exchanges with participants were deleted from my inbox after the interview had taken place with that specific participant. Participants were also advised to delete the email chain from their inbox at their discretion. Further, following the completion and safe upload of the required documentation (consent forms and demographic questionnaires), I ensured that any other copies were deleted. Participant consent forms and questionnaires were encrypted and kept separately from the

audio and transcribed data to reduce the possibilities of anyone being able to link the dataset to the consent form and questionnaire. Participants were informed that the optional questionnaire was only to be completed if they felt comfortable and that the questionnaires were only to offer a contextual understanding in relation to the findings.

3.4.5 Confidentiality using Zoom

I used Zoom as the interviewing platform as it offered a high level of security. Zoom provided the option of recording to a 'local device' and therefore only saved a copy of the recording to my device. To access the Zoom interview, each participant was sent a unique Zoom link with a passcode shortly before the interview. Zoom's 'waiting room' function ensured that no one could enter the meeting without my permission. Prior to starting the recording of the interview, participants were reminded that their data would be unidentifiable to all outside of the research team. To further protect their identity, participants were encouraged not to include details that could identify them or others (including of themselves, staff members, students, or their school). On occasion, participants would accidentally offer information identifying themselves, for example using their own name and this was later redacted within the transcript using an 'XXX' to highlight that a part of the data had been removed. During interview recordings, both cameras were switched off to add an additional layer of protection for the participant's identity in the unlikely eventuality that their interview recording was accessed by anyone other than the researcher. All participants assured me that they were in a safe and confidential space. In one instance, a participant was walking home from work, and I had to inform them that it was not safe to conduct the interview due to the potential lack of privacy. For myself, I ensured that all interviews took place securely within my home and I used headphones so that the interviews could not be overheard.

3.4.6 Participant recruitment process

To provide a detailed understanding of the process of recruiting participants for this project, I describe the step-by-step process below:

Step one: Firstly, I created and designed a Twitter account with the intention of promoting my research. Using this account, I advertised the research project by 'tweeting' a poster with a brief description of the research details and how to contact myself (*see Appendix 1*). To expand

my recruitment possibilities, I 'followed' various LGBTQ+ and educational organisation's accounts and messaged to request 'retweets' of my research. These organisations included 'LGBTed' and 'Courageous Leaders'. This enabled my project details to be viewed by a larger audience of Twitter followers relevant to the project. Other LGBTQ+ and/or educational academics also retweeted the project details throughout the recruitment process.

Step two: The recruitment process was initially slow but gradually gained momentum as more individual and organisational accounts retweeted the project details. Gradually I began to receive emails from those expressing initial interest. A snowball effect further expanded the reach of participants and I found that individuals had passed on the details of the study to other eligible participants. Once I received an email response from potential recruits, I responded with further details about the research attaching a participant information sheet, a copy of the questions that would be asked, a consent form and an optional demographic questionnaire (*see Appendix 2 and 3*). At this point, I found that it was easy to lose participant engagement during the email exchange process. On reflection, I believe that the significant amount of documentation sent to potential participants may have overwhelmed them. Further, the time consumption of these documents may have impacted engagement as teachers were preparing to return to school. Finally, those who expressed interest were sent details containing organisational contacts within the email exchange offering support should they find any parts of the interview upsetting (*see Appendix 2*).

Step three: Willing participants returned their consent forms prior to any further engagement with the research project. Once forms were returned and received by myself, I emailed the participant to mutually organise a set interview date and time.

Step four: Following paperwork completion and checks, I sent an individual passcode protected Zoom link to the participant shortly before the interview was due to take place. The 'waiting room' function was enabled for the duration of the interview allowing myself control over who could enter the virtual meeting room.

Step five: Once the participant was within the Zoom meeting room, there was an introductory period between myself and the participant. I set time aside to explain the nature of the study

and the practical elements of the interview, such as the preparation required before recording the interview. Specifically, myself and the participant turned our video functions off, leaving a black screen and only the audio function enabled. At this point, I completed a sound check to ensure the communication channels were audible on both sides. I ensured that the participant was still happy to take part in the research project and with their consent, I proceeded to record the Zoom meeting and the interview began.

Step six: Once the interview had finished, the recording was ended, and the participant was able to turn their video function back on if they wished to. Most participants turned their video camera back on at this point. I checked in with the participant, enquiring how they found the process of taking part in the research and answered any further questions they had. Finally, I aimed to ensure that each participant was feeling psychologically safe to leave the Zoom meeting and enquired about their emotional state asking, “are you feeling okay to leave this Zoom call?” No participants reported feeling psychologically distressed following the completion of the interview. I informed participants that when the research is completed, it will be uploaded to the University of Manchester’s Thesis page. Participants were then free to leave the Zoom meeting.

3.4.7 Reflection on debriefing participants

Following interview completion and the recording being switched off, I made sure to check in with each participant and gauge their reflections on the interview. Participants remarked on the experience of partaking in an interview about themselves citing it an “unusual but useful experience to reflect on being an LGBTQ+ teacher”. I believe it is important to add the concluding remarks from two participants as these are relevant to limitations and benefits later on. One participant said, “it was good, it felt a bit like therapy as I’ve never really thought about it all that much in depth before”. Another participant reflected their concerns “I really don’t want to come across as having a go at my school or having an issue with any faith community as that’s definitely not the case”.

3.5 The interview

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

As the research aimed to explore accounts and perceptions from LGBTQ+ teachers surrounding sexuality within schools, semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method to allow for explorative discussions. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to express their accounts in their own words, understanding and perceptions, which enabled me to develop a greater understanding of the participant's world (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Additionally, using a semi-structured interview approach enabled the participant to lead the discussion based on what was important for them. As I am not a qualified teacher, it was important to use this approach to help me get inside the world of a secondary school teacher to interpret their accounts and perceptions from within (Schwartzmann, 1993). I created a participant question sheet which acted as an interview agenda aiding to maintain a level of structure and focus for my research questions, whilst encouraging open and free speech from participants. Both the participant and I had access to the question sheet which was sent to them electronically prior to the interview when they showed interest in the project. The question sheet further acted as a guide for me to stay on track and ensure that I had asked all of the set questions within the time frame set out for the interview. Semi-structured interviews are widely used within the realm of qualitative research for collecting data due to their ability to be applied to a variety of data analysis methods (Willig, 2013).

3.5.2 Researcher reflexivity and conducting online interviews

Reflexivity is widely acknowledged as an important process within qualitative research; "a process that permeates the whole research endeavo[u]r" (Dodgson, 2019; p.221). I endeavoured to remain as reflexive as possible throughout this thesis and began to keep a research journal, which I continually used as a reflexive diary as well for noting developing research ideas and questions. When the pandemic began, my initial preconceptions around virtual interviewing led to feelings of pessimism and concern. Having ventured onto the Counselling Psychology Doctorate prior to the pandemic, I had fixed in my mind the use of face-to-face interviews as the best means for gathering data. In part my trepidations stemmed from ethical concerns of managing risk appropriately from a remote setting and further an ignorance to the online medium equivocating the standards of face-to-face interactions. The

evolution of online platforms has historically been approached with reluctance from the counselling profession yet following calls to reconceptualise opinion and mindset as well as the impact of COVID19, online research has become part of mainstream practice (Hanley, 2021). I journaled my experiences of conducting online research within my reflexive journal (*see Appendix 8*) and noted some of the benefits and limitations I experienced at the time.

Geography and flexibility

Firstly, without the ability to collect data using online mediums, it would have been impossible for this research project to take place during a global pandemic. Hanley (2011) describes how the internet has exceeded a 'physical geography', which meant that I was able to reach participants from a wider geographical field within the UK. Had face-to-face interviews taken place, it would have been likely that the participant population would be limited to participants working within the Manchester postcode, which may have further limited the number of eligible participants. Furthermore, as teachers were working through the pandemic, whether remotely or in schools, conducting online research allowed for a greater flexibility in manoeuvring around their busy schedules. It was significantly more convenient for myself and the participant to log into our laptops compared with physically attending a university building in the centre of Manchester, thus making it travel efficient too.

Benefits of anonymity

Although I later discuss a limitation that a level of anonymity brought to this research, I found that there were also certain advantages. The nature of the project explores the personal accounts of an individual's sexual identity as well as their professional identity as a teacher. Suzuki et al (2007) report how added layers of anonymity can allow for a deeper and more intimate interview, especially if it is a sensitive topic. At the end of interviews, some participants reported how the physical barrier at times enabled them to speak more openly about their experiences and made them feel more at ease. Therefore, at times I believe that deeper insights were offered by participants through the lack of face-to-face or video interaction. Further, there is the benefit of minimising power differences between researcher and participant through the participant being in their familiar environment and feeling more able to speak honestly (Robinson, 2001).

Building rapport and visual cues

Developing a level of researcher-participant rapport is integral to the qualitative research process (Rohleder & Lyons, 2015). Prior to beginning the actual interview, the five-minute window where I would greet the participant felt like the only opportunity to build any form of rapport with the participant. This is not to suggest that I was unable to develop any level of rapport with participants, more so that it was impacted through the lack of face-to-face interaction. In a few instances, participants were eager to learn why I had chosen to explore this research area and often allowed for a rapport to develop through mutual topics of interest. However, as the video camera function was switched off for the duration of the interview, I feel that this may have impacted some elements of the relational dynamics. For example, I found that there was often a forced stagnancy in communication and in moments of silence, participants would state, “if that makes any sense” or “maybe I’m wrong”. In my reflexive journal, I wrote how I perceived this as a nervousness from participants who may have felt daunted by the lack of response that is provided from face-to-face interaction. Within my reflexive notes, I highlight the strains of talking at a blank screen and the difficulties that the added layer of a faceless screen provided.

Visual cues

Additionally, I found that it was difficult to pick up visual cues, reactions and the emotions of participants due to the lack of a physical or video image presence. For example, during emotive discussions, it was difficult to gauge the emotional state of the participant without seeing their physical reactions. At times, I struggled to interpret their verbal cues, such as pauses in speech and tone of voice, and may have missed the significance of a certain point made by participants, which may have affected my interpretation. However, as a critical realist researcher, I argue that this research is influenced by my interpretation of the social world. Moises (2020) describes how the use of diaries and reflections is the next best thing without the ability to have direct visual observation. Although it was difficult to navigate interviews without having face-to-face interactions, I believe that I adapted to this process. Firstly, prior to starting the actual interview, I would acknowledge the difficulties that come with not being able to see each other’s face. I made notes in my reflexive journal when possible and recorded times where I felt that the participant demonstrated emotion or a change of tone. Further, I

repeatedly checked in with participants, acknowledging the difficulties of interpretation from their audio and asking questions regarding the impact of their statements.

Connectivity

Furthermore, difficulties of unreliable internet connections impacted the interview processes at times. In one instance, the internet connection would intermittently cut out resulting in an inaudible high-pitched noise for a few seconds, which overwrote the audio from the participant. I recall having to ask the participant to repeat what they had said throughout the interview on five separate occasions. As well as this being frustrating for both parties, it further disrupted the participant's flow of speech and on occasion, they forgot what they were going to say next due to the distraction. This was further exacerbated as my own concentration was affected by the breaks in connection and I could see within my transcripts that I had missed opportunities to follow up on crucial details for exploration with the participant (*see Appendix 8*).

3.6. Data Analysis

In the following section, I outline the process of data analysis starting with the transcription of data before moving to the rationale of using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and a detailed process of what this entailed.

3.6.1 Recording and Transcription

All interviews were conducted and recorded through Zoom. Participants were able to see a red flashing button on their screens indicating that the interview recording was in progress. Minimal notes were taken during interviews, this was to avoid being distracted from participant accounts (Willig, 2013). Transcription of interviews took place shortly after each interview's completion, especially whilst it was fresh in my mind. The process of transcribing oral dialogue to written text can lose much of the information, including the meaning behind it (Polkinghorne, 2005). Completing transcriptions as close to the interview as possible meant that I was able to record and cite significant moments that I felt at the time of the interview. Although minimal, the notes taken during interviews were used as reference points to remind me of significant moments. When transcribing the audio data, I attempted to stay as near

verbatim as possible to the participant's words by transcribing the audio word by word. However, I acknowledge that the process of transcription, "means to transform, to change from one form to another" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2019; p.2) and transcripts are artificial in nature due to the changes that occur through transcriptions. This involved transcribing all participant communications such as laughter, sighs and pauses. Transcription can lose information simply through the inability to accurately portray the nuances of an individual's speech (Polkinghorne, 2005). Therefore, I endeavoured to transcribe participants' dialectical mannerisms and nuances, for example, colloquial language and phrases such as, 'dunno' would be written as it was said rather than changing it. Further, participant pauses and deep breaths would be acknowledged and transcribed in brackets as '(pauses)' or '(exhales)'. Using my reflexive journal notes also aided me in staying as close as possible to the original interpretations of the interview, for example, noticing frustration or sadness. This was particularly important since the transcription could not express the tone in which the sentence was said, for example, portraying sarcasm. Transcription lines were numbered for ease of reference, and I highlight the number of minutes of the interview at various points throughout transcriptions.

3.6.2 Rationale for using Reflexive Thematic Analysis

I decided that the most appropriate method of analysis for this research was a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). I briefly offer an understanding into the development of reflexive thematic analysis as an analytical tool for context. Reflexive thematic analysis is an evolving method of analysis that is widely used within psychology research and beyond (Braun & Clarke, 2018). In the original paper, 'thematic analysis' (TA), as coined then, was defined as, "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (Braun & Clarke, 2006; p.77). Part of Braun and Clarke's motivation to evolve TA to reflexive TA was their own reflections on the inherent assumptions made in their 2006 paper, which led to criticism of the approach and poor applications of thematic analysis in other research studies (Braun & Clarke, 2019). These critiques questioned TA for its lack of reference to a specific method or theory (Terry et al, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) have previously highlighted the various criticisms of TA, describing it as a 'poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method' (p.77) and therefore lacking credibility as a qualitative method of analysis.

Since their original paper in 2006, they have worked to identify, reflect on, and evaluate the approach and understanding of thematic analysis. Consequently, reflexive TA incorporates the subjectivity of the research as an integral part of the analytical process, rather than viewing this as problematic (Braun & Clarke, 2019). They would further adapt their description of 'identifying' themes to the theme 'generation', which acknowledges researcher subjectivity and influence. In doing so, TA has become more structured and grounded in theory, achieving itself a 'brand recognition' similar to the likes of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al, 2009).

I believe that reflexive TA is the most appropriate method of analysis to use within this research project. As discussed, a reflexive TA approach acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher and therefore emphasises the importance of the researcher's reflexivity and engagement with the data and the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Reflexivity is also integral to the core values of counselling psychology. Further, Braun and Clarke add how, "qualitative research is about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as always context-bound, positioned and situated, and qualitative data analysis is about telling 'stories'" (p.591). From my critical realist perspective, this method of analysis aligns with my understanding of the construction of knowledge and belief that the researcher's subjectivity cannot be evaded within the research. As Braun and Clarke (2019) remind us, themes do not *emerge*, they are the active creations of the researcher. Further considering my critical realist positioning, I believe that reflexive TA is most suited to the methodological underpinnings of my research. Reflexive TA has been recognised in more recent times for its ability to explore and develop understandings of the experiences of specific groups and/or clients, particularly within the realm of psychotherapy and counselling (Braun & Clarke, 2018). I believe that this also applies to the understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers. Furthermore, a reflexive TA is applicable to this research topic for its explorative nature into the accounts and stories of LGBTQ+ teachers, which Braun and Clarke (2019) argue is part of the qualitative research process. However, reflexive TA does not simply offer stories or produce mass descriptive summaries, it enables the generation and analysis of human experiences in rich detail, thus allowing for a greater understanding into their experiences through interpretation.

One might question why other analytical methods, such as IPA, could not be applied to this research. IPA shares similarities with reflexive TA however it differs due to theoretical underpinnings held, which are phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). However, despite IPA's endeavours to understand personal lived experiences, it is bound by these theoretical pinnings (Smith et al, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Reflexive TA does not prescribe to one theoretical framework or assumption, nor does it place restrictions on any method of data collection, which I believe is more appropriate considering the broader exploratory nature of my research project (Clarke & Braun, 2014). Further, one of the theoretical underpinnings of IPA is the commitment to an idiographic level of analysis, which places focus on the *particular* and therefore looks to examine particular experiences in particular contexts (Larkin, 2015). One could argue that looking at the specific experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers in the context of their professional setting would make IPA a more appropriate fit to this research. However, IPA's idiographic analysis also focuses on the unique experience of individual participants, whereas reflexive TA examines the meaning across all participants (Clarke & Braun, 2014). Considering my research aims of seeking greater insight into LGBTQ+ teacher experiences - examining the meaning across participants – reflexive TA was identified as the most appropriate method of analysis for this study.

3.6.3 Approach to Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Within this section, I describe the process of my data analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process to reflexive TA, which I used for analysis of the interview data. It should be considered that the reality of reflexive TA is fluid and recursive (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and although the six-phase process outlined below describes a linear procedure, I moved back and forth between phases, which is a crucial part of the process. The process began with transcribing the data and I kept a reflexive journal during this process to try and maintain an awareness of my thoughts and reflections at the time (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The process of coding and analysis was approached largely as an inductive, or 'bottom up', process. Considering my ontological and epistemological positioning, it would be remiss to not acknowledge that my interpretations for coding and analysis were likely influenced through my previous theoretical knowledge. The six-phase process included:

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

Within this phase, immersing oneself in the data is crucial (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first phase of my analysis involved a rigorous process of absorbing myself within the data, reading and re-reading through the transcripts to ensure I was familiar with the data. Each time I read through each dataset, I made notes alongside the text of my thoughts and reflections, including highlighting any noticeable patterns and theme ideas. Additionally, I was able to further familiarise myself with the data as I transcribed the original audio recordings. This process involved carefully listening and re-listening to the audio data, which I believe was the most effective way to become familiar with the data. Research suggests that it should be integral for qualitative researchers to engage with the transcribing process (Bird, 2005). Considering my critical realist positioning, it is important to acknowledge that when listening to the audio-recordings and reading the transcripts, the process of interpretation had already begun. For example, when making notes alongside the transcripts, my thoughts and reflections took into consideration the participants' use of language, tone of voice, pauses and speed when speaking.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Having become familiar with the datasets, the second phase encompassed the process of generating 'codes', which can be termed as a 'sufficient label' that attempts to encapsulate key ideas and meanings from specific parts of the text (Braun et al, 2015). Initially, I printed off all datasets and systematically hand wrote initial codes along the side of each transcript and repeated this process several times and added additional codes (Clarke & Braun, 2014). I used different colour pens and highlighters for each dataset to make it easier for me to distinguish between them and ensured to highlight the surrounding data of the initial code (*see Appendix 9*), in order to give me greater context when referring back to the code. I attempted to highlight and label as many segments as possible that were meaningful within datasets and remained conscious of a 'good' coding process, which involves the researcher being open and inclusive throughout the coding process (Terry et al, 2017). This included incorporating parts of the data that may have appeared minor or insignificant at the time. Following this, I uploaded the datasets to an electronic software (NVivo) and inputted the codes I had generated from the paper transcripts (*see Appendix 10*). To clarify, I completed the coding process manually; NVivo

was used specifically to enable me to more easily manage and organise the codes, for example, being able to extract and link specific parts of the text to an assigned code.

Prior to engaging with the initial coding process, it was crucial to consider my approach to the data and analysis. Taking an inductive approach, whereby the coding and theme development are strongly linked to the data itself (Braun & Clarke 2006), I attempted to avoid being directed by existing concepts, theories or a pre-existing framework, taking what could be called a 'bottom up' approach (Terry et al, 2017). I believe that this was the most appropriate approach to avoid being led by other ideas and possibly missing or dismissing parts of the data available that was not embedded within theory. However, I acknowledge that it is never entirely possible to access data objectively without being influenced from my own personal experiences and perspectives (Javidroozi et al, 2018). Further, having completed various papers for university assignments on the topic of gender and sexuality, it would be naïve to suggest that my understandings have not already been influenced which may have likely influenced the coding process. However, as a researcher from a counselling psychology background and notably, not a teacher professional, there were elements of unfamiliarity and inexperience. This further ties into my consideration for the initial coding process, whether using a semantic or latent coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Semantic coding refers to the code identified reflecting the explicit and surface level content from the data, whereas latent coding involves an interpretative process, going beyond the surface level of what the participant has described and trying to identify the underlying meaning or story (Terry et al, 2017). I attempted to approach the codes on a semantic level, especially within the initial coding process to avoid my own interpretations influencing the identification of codes. Again, I believe that this approach was appropriate considering the nature of the research project, however, I acknowledge how my interpretation undoubtedly shaped the coding process. Reflexivity was crucial during this phase of the analysis, I tried to maintain awareness of my positioning and the various identities I hold and how they may impact the coding process.

Phase 3 – Searching for themes

Following the completion of code generation and collation of all datasets, the analysis shifted towards the broader development of 'candidate themes' (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al, 2017). During this phase, "different codes are typically clustered together to create each

potential theme, although a really rich and complex code may be ‘promoted’ to a theme” (Braun et al, 2015; p.102). I began by using the initial codes to develop theme ideas across the datasets and started to combine and collapse various codes that were similar in nature to construct broader themes. I used NVivo throughout this process, which allowed me to combine and separate codes with ease. Further, I began to consider different levels of themes including the overarching or ‘major’ themes and sub-themes within them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As there was a significant amount of rich data, it was also difficult to organise and distinguish between a major theme, a sub-theme and data that I interpreted as irrelevant for the project. Therefore, I utilised and considered three key questions set out by Braun et al (2015). Firstly, I deliberated over various codes and questioned whether they were centrally relevant to answering my research questions. Codes created that appeared to not be relevant to the research project were added to a miscellaneous group called ‘other’ but not discarded at this point. The second question to consider was whether possible themes were evident across more than one dataset, due to the emphasis on ‘patterned’ meanings. However, there were some themes generated that only appeared within one dataset and were included due to their significance in relation to answering the research question. Braun et al (2015) state that, “frequency is not the sole criterion for determining themes” (p.102). The final question to consider was whether I could encapsulate the core idea and meaning to each theme. I utilised my supervisory team to ensure that the theme ideas made sense. Having this outer perspective from someone not immersed in the data was extremely useful and aided my theme ideas and coherence. Overall, whilst addressing these questions, I endeavoured to ensure that the themes generated offered a rich understanding of LGBTQ+ teacher experiences whilst providing a flowing narrative throughout (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Phase 4 – Reviewing themes

After the construction of candidate themes, phase 4 involved reviewing and refining the generated themes, which included two levels of review proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Level one involved reviewing the collated extracts within each theme to ensure they created a coherent pattern. Once satisfied with the coherence, level two involved a similar process and reviewing the entire dataset, rather than purely reviewing the collated codes within the candidate themes (Clarke & Braun, 2006; 2014). Therefore, I reread through all themes and reviewed the extracts and codes assigned to them to ensure that they coherently fit and told

a story (Clarke & Braun, 2014). There were instances where I moved, collapsed, and split certain codes and extracts where necessary whilst ensuring that each theme and sub-theme captured the essence of the coded data. This process was significantly challenging in my endeavours to ensure that themes were distinctively different and did not overlap as well as remaining relevant to answering my research questions. It was important during this stage to maintain flexibility and awareness of the possibility for the analysis to change. Following this, I was able to check that no important codes or themes had been missed as well as ensuring that the themes generated offered a collaborative and meaningful construction of the datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2013). My supervisory team informed me if certain themes did not make sense or appeared convoluted in nature.

Phase 5 – Defining and naming themes

Phase 5 incorporated the defining and refining of themes in order to encapsulate the meaning and “essence” within each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006; p.92). At this point, I again utilised the support from my supervisory team to make sure that I not only captured the essence of each theme but that they were comprehensible to those not fully immersed within the data. This included ensuring that themes were coherent, clear and offered enough detail for readers to understand the nature of the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Further, I took time away from reviewing and refining the generated themes and returned to this process following a break, which enabled me to have a clear understanding and outward perspective of the theme names and what they captured. Before I moved to the final phase, I had a clear understanding of the major themes, sub-themes and how they formed together to create a collaborative understanding and story into the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers’ experiences.

Phase 6 – Producing the report

The final phase can be viewed as an inspection stage prior to writing up my analysis, however, writing up was interwoven throughout the entire process of analysis and changes were made when needed (Braun & Clarke, 2013). During this process, I continued to review the codes and themes to ensure that they provided an analytic narrative that went beyond a descriptive regurgitation of the data. Whilst writing, I tried to provide a coherent and in-depth story, stemming from the variety of themes as well as providing context within each segment so the

reader had a fuller picture of the participant and the situational context of what they were saying.

3.7 Quality

Engaging with evaluation and quality of qualitative research is equally important to evaluation and quality within quantitative research (Willig, 2013). Although quantitative researchers traditionally apply scientific measures as a form of criteria for providing 'good' quality research, measuring the quality of qualitative research requires an alternative approach resulting in much debate. Criticisms surrounding qualitative research quality have historically stemmed from there not being a clear set of criteria available to judge the research (Hammersley, 2007). Qualitative and quantitative research are fundamentally different and therefore cannot be addressed or critiqued in the same manner (Ryan et al, 2007). For example, disputes between qualitative and quantitative research surround the philosophy of knowledge and how knowledge is accessed and understood. Quantitative research often prescribes to positivism, which places its epistemology in the finding of objective truth (Elliott et al, 1999). Whereas quantitative researchers regard "truth" as objective, qualitative researchers consider "ways of knowing" and a subjective reality that is unique to each person (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004; p.234). Therefore, attempts to apply the criteria of quantitative research would understandably be incompatible. Over the years, many qualitative researchers have endeavoured to identify criteria to assess the quality of qualitative research. The holistic nature of qualitative research enables there to be different quality assessment criteria as there cannot be a single measure for subjective truth. Despite questions of the necessity of quality control in qualitative research (Hammersley, 2007), the use of a quality control is important to ensure that the research is "methodologically rigorous" and holds up to scientific reviews of the research (Elliot et al, 1999; p.217). Elliott et al's guidelines for trustworthiness are argued to provide a standard of quality for qualitative research, which I utilise within this research project and discuss in detail below. These guidelines distinguish and identify appropriate considerations for qualitative research specifically (Elliott et al, 1999) as well as incorporate a reflexive approach to the research, which is crucial considering my values, beliefs and assumptions will have undoubtedly shaped this research project (Willig, 2013).

3.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or rigor in research can be described as “the means of demonstrating the plausibility, credibility and integrity of the qualitative research process” (Ryan et al, 2007; p.742). In assessing the rigour of this research project, I used Elliott et al’s (1999) proposed guidelines, which are illustrated in *table 2* below where I demonstrate how I apply a rigorous approach to the research.

Table 2 - Summary of the application and process of trustworthiness using Elliott et al’s (1999) guidelines to publishing qualitative research

Owning one’s perspective

Owning one’s perspective incorporates the researcher’s ownership and awareness of their values, assumptions and position in regard to the research. Owning my own perspective not only enabled me to challenge, hold and reflect on my position and assumptions throughout the project, it informs the reader of the perspective taken by myself as the researcher, which provides others with a greater understanding and critical reflection of this research project (Willig, 2013; Elliot et al, 1999). I attempted to remain as reflexive as possible throughout this research project acknowledging, questioning and at times challenging my identities, the positions I hold and the influences of my biases. For example, considering the impact of my identities as a gay, cisgender counselling psychologist trainee as well as holding an awareness of my personal experiences within education as a student (and lack of experience as a teacher) and my motivations for pursuing this research project.

Situating the sample

Situating the sample involves providing context and detail of those who took part in the research project. This offers the reader a contextual understanding of participants involved and also how their positioning is relevant to the research including, gender, sexuality, social class, and religion (Elliott et al, 1999). It is important to acknowledge that I had to balance the rigour of this research project with my ethical commitments to protect the identity of participants. With this, I provide a description of each participant within the methodology section to offer a contextual understanding for the reader. However, I excluded details which could have had the potential to inadvertently identify participants. In conveying participants’

position in relation to this project, I included details of their school type (i.e. state, private, faith, academy schools), the length of time they had worked as a teacher, the area of their workplace and their sexual identity.

Grounding in examples

Grounding in examples references the importance for researchers to provide examples of the data and illustrate the processes and procedures undertaken during the data collection and analysis stages. This allows the reader to understand the processes of data collection and analysis, as well as enables them to consider alternative understandings and meanings from the data (Elliott et al, 1999). Within this methodology chapter, I offered a detailed step-by-step explanation of the processes of participant recruitment, data collection and transcription. I further describe the data analysis processes using Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2014) six-phase approach as part of a reflexive thematic analysis. Within the data analysis chapter (see Chapter 4), I provided numerous examples of the data within each theme and sub-theme.

Providing credibility checks

Providing credibility checks refers to the checks undertaken to improve the credibility of the categories, themes and accounts identified within the research. Elliott et al (1999) provide a variety of ways for providing credibility checks. One method involved contacting participants after interview completion to check their understanding. However, due to my ethical commitments, I did not keep participant contact details. Therefore, during interviews, I was conscious to reflect to participants what they had stated to check that my understanding was in line with their accounts. Additionally, Elliott et al recommend using more than one qualitative analyst as a method for reviewing the data. I utilised the support from my supervisory team to review my themes and check for overstatements, ambiguous findings and errors.

Coherence

Coherence requires a researcher to ensure that the research is logical, clear and fits together to create a "data-based story narrative" (Elliott et al, 1999; p.223). In order to create a

coherent and clear narrative for the reader, I again utilised the support from my supervisory team, who were not immersed within the research first-hand. Therefore, they were able to read through my findings with some distance and check that these were coherent and followed a logical and clear narrative throughout.

Accomplishing general vs specific research tasks and resonate with readers.

Accomplishing general vs specific research tasks involves the researcher having a good understanding about their research task. If the researcher is looking for a '*general understanding of a phenomenon*' then it is appropriate to research a broader range of situations. Whereas a *specific research task* aims to understand a particular or specific situation, then the researcher will have systematically studied the situation enough to provide an understanding for the reader. Although this research project is investigating a specific participant sample, namely LGBTQ+ teachers working within secondary schools in England, my focus is to gather a general understanding into the experiences of this participant sample. In doing all of the above, I hope that this will achieve the final guideline, which is to *resonate with readers*.

3.9 Chapter Summary

Within this methodology section I have explained my position from a critical realist stance and how this shapes my approach to the research. I highlight the ethical guidelines that my research is led by and further describe the ethics approval processes and considerations required. Then I move to a discussion of the methodological steps and measures taken throughout the research process, including participant recruitment, data generation and matters concerning confidentiality. I describe the advantages and limitations of conducting audio-based interviews whilst also discussing my own reflexivity of the processes involved and further highlight the impact of the pandemic where relevant. Following this, I move to describe the data analysis process and my application of reflexive TA. Finally, I explain in detail my methods to ensure quality and trustworthiness of the processes, including the application of Elliott et al's (1999) quality assessment criteria.

CHAPTER 4

Data Analysis

Within this chapter, I present the findings generated from the reflexive thematic analysis conducted. I begin by offering a table summary of the five major themes and 15 sub-themes, which can be seen in *Table 3*. In order to discuss each theme respectively, this chapter will be broken down in to five sections. After presenting the findings, the following chapter will provide a discussion and critical use of the literature in relation to the findings.

4.1 Presentation of findings

To help the reader in understanding these findings, I provide a brief descriptive overview of each major theme for context, using examples to capture the essence of the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following this, I offer an interpretive and analytic understanding of each sub-theme following a similar structure. There will be multiple quotes used to illustrate themes from various participant accounts. I use a variety of quotes to provide a detailed and nuanced insight into each theme, whilst also attempting to offer a collective and holistic understanding. Using multiple quotes also improves the trustworthiness of the research findings through “grounding in examples” (Elliott et al, 1999; p.222). Finally, to aid the reader, I offer a short description of the relevant demographics of the participant in relation to their quote for context.

Table 3. Summary of Major themes and Sub-themes from the Reflexive Thematic Analysis

<u>Major themes</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>
Fear of persecution <i>“What the hell are you talking about this in the classroom for?”</i>	○ Fear stemming from past and indirect experiences
	○ Fear of persecution from parents, students, communities and colleagues
	○ Fearful of being open about sexual identity for their career’s sake
	○ The impact of limited representation among LGBTQ+ teachers
	○ Importance of ensuring good relationships with students before discussing sexuality

Strategies used to maximise safety of self and sexual identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Weighing up the risks of telling others about their sexual identity
Expectations, extra work, and emotional costs <i>"You become the professional gay"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Waiting until established within their teaching role before being open ○ Using silence, avoidance, and other methods to conceal their sexual orientation ○ A sense of responsibility to create LGBTQ+ visibility ○ Feelings of guilt for not being open about their own sexuality
School responses to LGBTQ+ issues <i>"That's a lie, we don't have a problem'... the people at the top don't see it".</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of support for LGBTQ+ related issues from leadership ○ 'Tick box' and tokenistic use of LGBTQ+ staff ○ Tensions of working within heteronormative and gender normative structures and environments
<i>"It's getting easier all the time... but it's still got its challenges"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moving towards normalising sexuality through education, visibility, and support ○ "I think it depends on your school"

4.2 THEME 1: Fear of Persecution

"What the hell are you talking about this in the classroom for?"

The first major theme constructed related to participant descriptions of their concerns of being persecuted by others because of their sexual identity or for discussing LGBTQ+ matters within the classroom. As illustrated in *Table 3*, the fear of persecution was split into four sub-themes to convey the various ways this infiltrated into their experiences. Participants spoke about their concerns of the possible repercussions for speaking openly about their own sexuality, their concerns of being 'outed' by others, as well as promoting LGBTQ+ visibility in the classroom. Often participants used words such as, "worry" and described feeling "nervous", which can be illustrated throughout the entirety of this theme. To exemplify this major theme, one participant describes her worries about being open about her sexual identity in her school:

“Erm, so you’d think ten years on in the same place I probably would be a bit more open, but it’s never felt quite the thing to do. I’ve always been a bit worried about what might happen and why rock the boat when I don’t need to.” (Participant 3)

Participant 3, who identifies as a lesbian/queer teacher, is not open about her sexual identity to students at her school. She describes her sense of surprise about not being open considering the length of time she has worked at the school and also suggests that she feels that she should be open because of how long she has been working at her school. She explicitly states her concern when considering the possible repercussions of being open and indicates that this would likely result in a negative consequence when she says, *“why rock the boat”*.

4.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Fear stemming from past and indirect experiences

During interviews, participants shared their own personal accounts and experiences of identifying as LGBTQ+. Participants also spoke about the influence of media representation and societal attitudes towards sexuality in both their private and professional lives. Additionally, many spoke about how they came to understand their sexual identity and how they processed it at the time. Often participants referred to the past and their experiences of sexuality whilst they were high school students. Three participants made specific references to Section 28 within their interviews and the ongoing influence that this outdated legislation had on their own understanding of what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable regarding non-heterosexuality within school. Participant 6, who identifies as gay, had recently changed schools and therefore had not had the chance to be open about his sexual identity. He spoke about the personal impact of Section 28 on him as a student and how this continued to impact him as a teacher:

“I mentioned about Section 28 and growing up at a time with complete silence and invisibility which I think I retrospectively feel angry about more because, well you don’t think about it at the time, you only know silence and so what is that sort of saying?” (Participant 6)

This extract offers insight into the damaging impact of Section 28 for those who endured the absence and silencing of non-heterosexuality as students. Participant 6 later states that it is his

intention to be open about his sexual identity in his new school as an important change from the conditions enforced on those who lived through Section 28, which further indicates teachers drive towards change because of Section 28 legacy.

Participant 1, who identifies as bisexual and is open about her sexual identity at school, described the permeating impact of Section 28 on all teachers, not solely non-heterosexual teachers. She shared how after her school had implemented a diversity and inclusion scheme targeting the promotion of discussions around LGBTQ+ matters, she was approached by a staff member who was confused about what was deemed appropriate to discuss with students around sexual identity:

“Erm, even in terms of feeling comfortable about talking about gay people. So, one teacher approached me with the scheme and wasn’t sure whether she could actually talk about being gay and almost like promoting it, which I think reverts back to that Section 28 because she’s been a teacher for over 20/30 years.” (Participant 1)

Participant 1’s extract again offers insight into the ongoing impact of Section 28 and the language used within the original legislation, which explicitly required teachers to avoid ‘promoting’ non-heterosexuality (Local Government Act, 1988; p.27). This extract is indicative of her uncertainty and remaining confusion following Section 28, as well as illustrative of the additional responsibility placed on LGBTQ+ teachers to advise other staff on issues surrounding sexual identity.

Participants also spoke of the influence of media representation and how this impacted their decisions around visibility. Participant 3 made comparisons between the protests that occurred at a Birmingham school (*see section 2.9 for further details*) and her school:

“But then you look at what happened to that school in Birmingham that is a similar demographic that has a similar programme. But the difference was the head of that programme did come out and it didn’t go very well. So, that makes me quite nervous.”
(Participant 3)

Participant 3 explicitly expressed her concern that a similar scenario might occur at her school if she were to be open about her sexual identity and highlighted the similarities, with both schools having large faith communities. This extract illustrates LGBTQ+ teachers' fear incited through media influence and observation.

Participant 4, a lesbian identified teacher who is not open to students at school, described how observing other teachers experiencing homophobia impacted her decisions around being open. Shortly before this extract, participant 4 stated that it is important for her to be open about her sexuality in school and that it is a goal she is working towards:

"I know some of my colleagues are out and they have had to deal with, on top of your normal aggro from kids that want to be misbehaving, they also have on top of it, erm, homophobia which I think would upset me. And I'm not ready... So yeah, some of the students have called colleagues like 'faggot' and stuff, which I wasn't ready for that..."

(Participant 4)

Participant 4's awareness of the negative repercussions that may come with being open about her sexual identity appears to be a key factor in the decision to keep her sexual identity concealed. This extract further illustrates the vulnerability and emotional toll on LGBTQ+ individuals and how experiencing homophobia would trigger an emotional response.

4.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Fear of persecution from parents, students, communities, and colleagues

Parents and communities

Sub-theme 2 was generated during discussions around participants' reasons for and against being open about their sexual identity. Concerns of being discriminated against by specific groups and/or communities, including parents, religious communities, students, and colleagues, were often raised as a reason to not be open. Several participants highlighted the influence of the power dynamics between teachers and parents, citing their concerns of receiving complaints. Participants stated that there were concerns around how students might respond should they come to know about their teacher's sexual identity.

Participant 1, who is responsible for running her diversity and inclusion awareness week, offered an example where parents used their power to remove their child from lessons about sexuality:

“So, I think, I don’t know it’s probably just being a bit more aware and then obviously with things like diversity week, it’s just being aware that, erm, certain parents might not necessarily be okay with it. Like I say, they’ve already withdrawn their pupils from lessons.” (Participant 1)

Participant 1’s heightened awareness of the possible repercussions from parents for teaching their children about different sexual identities illustrates the power held by parents. From this extract, participant 1 describes an added sense of vigilance and an expectation of a negative reaction from parents when LGBTQ+ visibility is involved

Participant 3 brings attention to LGBTQ+ teachers’ concern towards parents should they find out about her sexual identity through the students:

“I think it’s the parents that worry me. Not the students.” (Participant 3)

From this extract, participant 3 indicated that her student would not respond negatively to knowing her sexual identity status but anticipated a negative response from parents should this be filtered back to them. Supporting the above extract, participant 4 described her perception of the school community’s attitude towards sexuality, again highlighting the influence of parents:

“There will be in their community where it’s not okay to... well not always, it’s not all of them... But there are some students where it’s not ok to be gay and if their parents found out, they would not be happy, and they do have homophobic views. So, if I came out as a gay teacher, some of the parents would have an issue with it.” (Participant 4)

Not only does this extract demonstrate LGBTQ+ teachers’ concerns to be open for fear of negative reactions from parents, but it also refers to a concern of receiving discrimination from

faith communities. This extract offers insight into the intersections between the perceived power held by both parents and faith communities.

Furthermore, one teacher offered an emotional account of being discriminated against by parents and the surrounding community because of her sexual identity whilst previously teaching at another school. Participant 3 described a form of ‘witch hunt’ from parents who actively set about to ‘out’ her sexual identity by searching her personal social media accounts:

“But there was a group of (pauses) Evangelical Christians that had an issue with a previous gay male deputy head in the school and seeing him in the London pride parade. And then the same group of people took a dislike to me being a lesbian and the students made it very very tricky, the parents kept complaining, wherever I went, so... That was my fear... and so they’d found pictures of me at pride parades, and I suppose I’ve always sort of been a bit burned by that situation and worried that it might happen again.”

(Participant 3)

The adverse nature of these events has continued to impact her as she described feeling “burned” by what happened. It was noticeable during the interview that this was an emotional and difficult account for participant 3 to recall. Participant 3 recognised the similarity in demographics between her previous and current schools, and fears re-experiencing persecution if she were to be open about her sexual identity in school. Again, this extract demonstrates the influence and power held by parents and communities, which subsequently influences an LGBTQ+ teacher’s decision around visibility.

However, a contrasting extract from one teacher demonstrates the differing responses by those within faith communities towards LGBTQ+ teaching and visibility. Participant 1 spoke about the protests outside of the school in Birmingham and how this differed from her own experiences:

“We have also got a big group of ethnic minority groups where stereotypically there is this idea that parents for example of our Muslim children won’t be accepting. Whereas,

I've had actually a really mixed response and that our Muslim pupils are like the most accepting and... the biggest advocates during things like diversity week.” (Participant 1)

This excerpt highlights an awareness of the public constructions around religion where those who hold religious beliefs are perceived as intolerant towards non-heterosexuality. Participant 1 recognises the mixed reaction to sexual identity from those who hold religious faith.

Finally, I believe it is important to present an extract from participant 3, who described feeling uncomfortable with the possible interpretation that her concerns surrounding faith communities meant that she was in any way persecuting or being disrespectful to those from faith communities:

“But I hope you don’t think, just a little caveat, when I talk about my school and its community, I genuinely love where I work and the context it’s in. I just to do worry when I talk about religion, I’m not in any way saying anything negative about those, if that makes sense?” (Participant 3)

Students

Students were frequently referenced during interviews where participants described their fear of their students’ reactions towards them if they were to know about their sexual identity. Participants’ fears stemmed from concerns of having rumours spread about them or being called derogatory and homophobic names. Participant 3 described her fear of students spreading rumours about her and her sexual identity and what could happen:

“But at the same time, it does worry me because it only takes one or two kids, and the wrong kids to find out and then these big rumours spread... I would never want to be confronted with it I suppose.” (Participant 3)

This extract offers an insight into the force of heteronormativity within schools as participant 3 highlighted how the novelty of knowing that someone identifies as non-heterosexual could lead to rumours being spread about them. The use of the phrase “confronted” further indicates teachers’ concerns of a negative response from students.

Conversely, participant 2's account offers a different reaction from students when she unexpectedly told her class that she identifies as a lesbian following a confrontation with a student who was using homophobic language. It was the first time she had been open with students and she initially feared their response:

"It was a bit scary because I wasn't sure how they would take it and then I thought oh next time I have that class, they're going to be like horrible to me or they're going to spread it around the school and everyone's gonna know and they're gonna like, erm, make fun of me and stuff. But actually, that didn't happen, and it just carried on as normal."

(Participant 2)

Participant 2's surprise at the lack of reaction from students appears to challenge her perceptions of student attitudes towards non-heterosexuality. This extract highlights the power of the possible negative repercussions, despite this not correlating with the actual response.

Colleagues

All but one participant stated that they were open to their colleagues. The findings so far have focused largely on teacher concerns surrounding the wider school community and students. However, many cited their concerns of being open about their sexual identity to colleagues and that this often required thought and consideration. Some participants stated that they had been discriminated against by their colleagues. Participant 1's account exemplifies this as she was subjected to homophobic bullying by another colleague, with derogatory comments made about her and her partner. She described the intimidation she felt and consequently did not formally complain to the school for fear of the backlash from her colleague.

"I had to make a formal complaint if I wanted anything to be done about it and at that point, I was still fairly new to teaching I felt quite intimidated, especially by the staff member who had said the comment, so I didn't formally complain, which now I would've done."

(Participant 1)

“Erm, I can almost put on a bit of a performance with the kids is what I think I’m saying. Sometimes I think... it is myself but I’m a lot more extroverted and I put more of a performance on with them. So, I think I was a bit more vulnerable in terms of coming out to staff in terms of, because I guess they know me more” (Participant 1)

Participant 1’s feeling of intimidation indicates the power tensions between herself and other colleagues, especially as a new teacher at her school which resulted in her not reporting the incident. Not only does this demonstrate an issue surrounding homophobia from other colleagues, but it also suggests that there is vulnerability for LGBTQ+ teachers who are new to the profession. The second extract offers insight into the vulnerability of LGBTQ+ teachers around colleagues compared with students as the performance of teaching can act as a protective layer to a teacher’s personal identity.

Moreover, participant 4 described confiding in another gay teacher about her sexuality and subsequently being warned about certain colleagues. She had previously stated that she experienced a significant amount of homophobia in her personal life prior to starting at her first school:

“And with my first school, I actually confided in another gay teacher and there was an individual that had specifically kind of lectured her somewhat about being gay and that it’s wrong. And on a religious stance she did it and... so obviously, instantly, that’s why I didn’t say I was gay cos she had already been through it and been through the aggro of having to deal with it for years.” (Participant 4)

In part, this extract offers an insight into a protective strategy used by LGBTQ+ teachers who share information regarding safe and unsafe colleagues to confide in. It again demonstrates LGBTQ+ teachers’ wariness and hesitancy around (heterosexual) colleagues before being open with them about their sexual identity.

4.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Fearful of being open about sexual identity for their career’s sake

This sub-theme focuses on teacher concerns of how the visibility of their sexual identity could impact their job security, applications for promotion and ability to stay at their school.

Participant 3 describes how she would only be open about her sexuality if she had an exit plan and was leaving the school:

“If I knew I was leaving the school I think I’d do it, but I don’t, I’m too scared about what the repercussions might be with the parents and therefore how that might change how I’m perceived by students if I knew I was going to stay there and say it. So yeah.”

(Participant 3)

This extract indicates a sense that the repercussions on her career could be so severe that she would not be able to stay at her current school, highlighting her perception that teacher identities and LGBTQ+ identities are not compatible within education.

Participant 6 described feeling as though discussing his sexuality could be viewed as inappropriate by those in senior management positions. Below, he describes his awareness of his former senior leadership team’s (SLT) attitudes towards sexuality after witnessing the disciplinary action taken in response to another teacher discussing LGBTQ+ matters in the classroom:

“And also, the backlash cos I know that some staff that have explicitly said that sort of thing, SLT have pulled them back and said, ‘what the hell are you talking about this in the classroom for?’... Erm, I’d like to think I’d have the bottle to do it, but I don’t know if I would.”

(Participant 6)

The impact of participant 6’s experience illustrates his initial reluctance to discuss LGBTQ+ matters in the classroom for fear of the possible disciplinary action that he could face. This extract also offers insight into his perception of the SLT’s attitudes towards sexuality.

4.2.4 Sub-theme 4: The impact of limited representation among LGBTQ+ teachers

The final sub-theme within this section was generated from participant acknowledgement of the lack of LGBTQ+ representation amongst other staff members and how this impacted their

decisions surrounding visibility. Teachers reported their awareness of how other LGBTQ+ teachers managed the visibility of their own sexual identity within school. One teacher highlighted the limited representation of teachers who are open about their sexuality to students. She jokingly remarked that *“there’s a grand total of three of us”* (Participant 1) to illustrate the lack of representation in her school. Meanwhile another teacher described her shock at being one of two LGBTQ+ teachers, both of whom are not open within their school:

“Erm, but in terms of like staff, I think there is me and one other that identifies as gay and that’s it which I find quite shocking but not in like a bad way just in kind of like ‘oh I thought I wouldn’t be the only one as well as one other person’.” (Participant 2)

Participant 2’s surprise that she and another teacher are the only LGBTQ+ representation amongst the staff suggests that there is something unusual about a lack of non-heterosexual visibility within their school. This could imply that there are other factors at play that influence LGBTQ+ teachers’ decisions to conceal their sexual identity.

Finally, participant 4 acknowledged the different responses that LGBTQ+ teachers may receive depending on their position in the school. She questioned whether she would feel that same level of safety if she held a senior leadership position from her understanding of other teachers in that position:

“I think... senior leadership, there’s a known lesbian in senior leadership who’s been there for a very long time and she isn’t out... So, I don’t know what it’s like in senior leadership to be gay. I know it’s a very safe thing within the normal teaching staff, but I don’t know if it goes up, would it be.” (Participant 4)

Participant 4’s experience of knowing a senior leader who is not open about their sexual identity suggests that there may be additional barriers and concerns for LGBTQ+ teachers in leadership positions. This further highlights the impact of a lack of representation and the ripple effect that this can have on other LGBTQ+ teachers’ feelings of security and safety around being open in school.

4.3 THEME 2: Strategies used to maximise safety of self and sexual identity

Theme 2 follows on from teachers' fear of persecution as they go on to describe the methods and strategies used to protect the visibility of their sexual identity. 'Safety' can include the sense of security that one feels within their job as well as referring to one's personal and professional well-being (Wright, 2010). This theme offers an in-depth understanding into the strategic management undertaken by LGBTQ+ teachers to avoid negative consequences to themselves or their career. Four sub-themes were generated from the data to represent some of these strategies.

4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Importance of ensuring good relationships with students before discussing sexuality

One strategy used by teachers was to develop and maintain good teacher-student relationships. Participants shared how having a good relationship with students often created a feeling of emotional security for them as teachers. Participant 4 illustrates this below:

"And I think I'm getting very very close [to telling students] because I have a rapport with the other 99% of the kids so therefore, I feel I'm in a safe environment now that if a kid was an idiot in a lesson, then I would have, (pauses) not the protection from students, but it wouldn't overspill my emotions to the point where it would hurt if that makes sense?"

(Participant 4)

This extract not only emphasises teachers' fear of persecution, but clearly indicates the weight and power of having support from students for their emotional protection, whilst further highlighting the importance for teachers to have protective strategies in place to ensure that they feel safe in the classroom.

Regarding building rapport with students, one teacher described the importance of simultaneously building strong relationships whilst maintaining boundaries around discussions of their personal lives. Participant 2 described how anything away from the 'norm', such as her sexuality, could impact not only her relationship with students but also student's ability to focus:

"...I just try and stay as private as possible in the first year or so until I can form that relationship because, erm, it just gets in the way of teaching I guess.... So, it's best to just kind of like leave it at the door and then once you get that kind of relationship and reputation around the school, then it doesn't really matter... I would quite like it if like someone was like 'oh miss is gay' and someone was like 'yeah we all knew that cos she's been at the school for like 5 years, no one cares' that kind of thing." (Participant 2)

This extract offers a conflicting tension between a teacher's desire to build strong relationships whilst at the same time maintaining a distance from students. It further indicates the difficult process of navigating conversations away from their personal life so as not to disrupt the student-teacher relationship. Again, it illustrates the heteronormative influence within schools whereby the 'novelty' of non-heterosexual identities could act as a distraction for students.

Furthermore, as part of building good relationships with students, participants described how they considered the age of students as a factor before being open about their sexual identity. Two contrasting examples below illustrate teacher considerations of what age group would likely respond maturely to knowing about their sexual identity:

"I would tell the older students first because I'd rather it trickled downwards than up. I'd rather not tell a year 7 and then it's Chinese whispers through students and then the year 11's asking me. I'd rather tell the year 11's and it trickle downwards the other way if that makes sense?" (Participant 4)

"...so maybe like year 7, 8 and 9, whereas the older ones are still in that world of 'oh that's so stupid, that's really gay' and they still use the term like that." (Participant 2)

These extracts offer insight into the thought process that LGBTQ+ teachers engage in to best protect themselves from discrimination. Participant 2 indicates that it would be easier to be open to the younger students who she perceives as more understanding and accepting of non-heterosexuality, whereas participant 4 suggests that more mature students are less likely to engage in spreading rumours. Further, these two extracts offer insight into the additional

considerations that LGBTQ+ teachers endure as they question when it is deemed appropriate to discuss non-heterosexuality. Arguably, heterosexual teachers do not have to consider age appropriateness at any point, further illustrating the impact of heteronormativity.

4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Weighing up the risks of telling others about their sexual identity

Participants described scenarios where they would weight up the risks of being open about their sexuality. Often participants debated between the benefits and risks of being open about their sexual identity as part of a sub-conscious thought process that they engage with each time they are confronted with a situation around their sexual identity:

“Yeah, I think it’s er, what a lot of LGBT people do without necessarily knowing that they do it. We were saying that the other day of just certain people you know, we wouldn’t bother coming out to. I think it’s just subconsciously thinking, ‘they might not be that accepting’, it’s not worth doing almost.” (Participant 1)

Participant 1’s account not only demonstrates the process of risk evaluation that LGBTQ+ individuals engage in to protect their identity, but also shows how this process is so common it appears to be second nature and a sub-conscious process.

Supporting the idea of a subconscious risk evaluation, participant 7 who identifies as a lesbian and is not open about her sexual identity at school, reflexively considered the influence of her own subconscious after stating that she does not believe sexuality has a place in school:

“I don’t think it has a place in school. I don’t think the pupils need to know about that. Erm, I talk about other family... (Pauses). Perhaps, sort of thinking about it now, maybe subconsciously (pauses) maybe subconsciously it is to avoid questions but it’s definitely a subconscious thing if it is the case” (Participant 7)

This reflection of whether her subconscious thought played into her statement that sexuality does not have a place in school can firstly be interpreted as part of schools’ historic attempts to appear asexual (Rudoe, 2010). However, participant 7’s pause and reflection on her original

statement can be interpreted as an internal conflict around the visibility of her own sexual identity.

Furthermore, participants spoke of the need to enforce added boundaries between themselves and parents, not solely as an attempt to maintain a professional distance but also in the eventuality that their sexuality was used against them. Participant 2 illustrates this finding below through describing the boundaries she places between herself and parents:

“Whereas with parents you always feel like you’ve got that barrier up. Erm not just in terms of like sexuality but also kind of like, erm, I don’t know with parents you kind of keep that distance... because sometimes parents can twist things or if you become too close to a parent, and you’ve just got to try and keep that distance, so I guess them not knowing my personal business is me keeping that like professional distance between parent and teacher.” (Participant 2)

Participant 2’s extract illustrates a pre-emptive process of consideration for the possibility that an upset parent could use her sexual identity as a weapon. This layer of consideration clearly indicates the additional strategies used by LGBTQ+ teachers to protect themselves from sexual identity discrimination.

Participant 7 describes her hypervigilance when speaking with students about LGBTQ+ matters by avoiding explicitly being open about her own sexuality and talking more generally instead:

“I think I probably indirectly deal with that situation possibly different to somebody that’s not part of the LGBT community because of that... I think I’ve probably referred indirectly to you know identified pupils who are perhaps struggling with their sexuality or openly struggling with their sexuality in terms of ‘I can relate’ without being as explicit to say you know.” (Participant 7)

Participant 7’s extract firstly highlights the additional role held by LGBTQ+ teachers in supporting students who are questioning their sexual identity, whilst further indicating the priority to be hypervigilant to protect their own sexual identity.

4.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Waiting until established within their teaching role before being open

Those participants who were not open about their sexuality to the wider school community (i.e. students and parents) often reflected on what would be required for them to feel comfortable and safe to be open in future. Teachers perceived being open as something that was important for them and a goal they were working towards. In achieving this, some participants described how being an established and well-respected teacher would give them the confidence to be open about their sexuality and that this was something that could be achieved the longer they had been teaching. Participant 2 and 4 illustrate the importance of time and establishment below:

“Yeah, coming up for three years in January and for me, I’m only just ready to come out.”

(Participant 4)

“I don’t know, it might take me a few years yet to come out to the whole school, but I think that’s just because I’m a new member of staff and I think that as the new generations come into the school, they’ll be more relaxed with it, and I’ll feel more comfortable.”

(Participant 2)

Both extracts demonstrate the weight that teachers place on the length of time that they have been at a school. Their accounts offer insight into the difficulties that newly qualified teachers or teachers starting at a new school may experience and how the length of time at one school provides teachers with a greater sense of security and comfortability in their role. Finally, participant 2 points to a cultural shift in attitudes towards LGBTQ+ identities, which she anticipates as having a positive influence on the attitudes of future students.

Participant 5, who has been teaching at her school for over 10 years and is open to everyone about her sexual identity provides support to participant 2 and 4’s extracts above. In her interview, she spoke largely of her positive experiences as an open LGBTQ+ teacher but acknowledged how her experiences could have been different depending on the school make-up:

“Like I think I’ve worked with the same group of people for a long time and I’m not sure how my experiences would have changed if I moved schools frequently or if I’d been in different parts of the city where it’s just different kids and people that you’re mixing with really.”

(Participant 5)

Here, participant 5 indicates that time is not the sole factor that has resulted in her positive experiences and suggests that factors such as geographical location and different students are all variables in influencing an LGBTQ+ teacher’s experience.

4.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Using silence, avoidance, and other methods to conceal their sexual orientation

The findings generated in this final sub-theme suggest that LGBTQ+ teachers use a variety of methods to keep their sexual identity private. Strategies such as deflection, avoidance, and silence were used to move conversations away from revealing their sexual identity when speaking with students. The heteronormative influence within schools is particularly notable from the language used by participants. Participant 6 exemplifies this below:

“It doesn’t happen very often but when kids asked if I was gay, it was just moving it along, or directing the conversation in a different way or even just toning things down.”

(Participant 6)

Here we can see an example of how LGBTQ+ teachers actively move the conversation away from discussions around their sexuality in the classroom. The use of the phrase *“toning things down”* further suggests that discussions of non-heterosexuality are perceived as somewhat inappropriate.

Participant 2’s account illustrates an LGBTQ+ teachers use of silence to deflect away from parents finding out about her sexual identity during a conversation at a parent’s evening:

“...then after the speech, one of the parents came up to talk to me and I was like talking to her and ‘blah blah blah me and my partner’ and she just presumably said ‘oh so does

he do this' and I didn't correct her, but I was kind of like, a bit apprehensive that if I corrected her it would be an issue, you know what I mean?" (Participant 2)

Participant 2's apprehension again touches on the subconscious risk evaluation that LGBTQ+ teachers use, concluding that it would be better to remain silent in these situations and avoid any issues.

As participants shared their own methods to protect their sexual identity, they also acknowledged how their heterosexual colleagues did not have to use these strategies. Participant 3 illustrates this through describing how she avoided discussions and questions around her wedding:

"...when I got married last year, they were all asking for photos from the wedding and I was really cagey about, you know, 'the photographers not sent them yet' or 'it wouldn't be appropriate for me to share that'. But then when you think about heterosexual members of staff, you know, their first PowerPoint in September to a new year group is, 'this is my family, this is my life'. Whereas I don't feel like I can do that." (Participant 3)

Here, participant 3's avoidance and deflection again illustrate the dominant heteronormative discourses within schools. Participant 3's frustration was audible during the interview as she highlighted the conflict between feeling as though her wedding images were inappropriate whilst her heterosexual colleagues can openly discuss their personal life on a PowerPoint.

Moreover, participant 5 spoke about her positive experiences of being an open LGBTQ+ teacher and how she would actively promote conversation around LGBTQ+ matters in school. However, there was a significant moment that I interpreted during the interview where she paused when asked whether she spoke about her sexual identity when around parents:

"... I've never spoke to parents about it really. It's never come up with parents... (pauses) yeah" (Participant 5)

During the interview, this moment appeared significant as participant 5 paused to reflect on how she had not spoken with parents about her sexual identity despite having had many conversations with staff and students. Her pause appeared to highlight a lack of discussion around sexual identity with parents compared with how comfortably she spoke about it with staff and students.

As previously stated, during participant 7's interview, she began to reflect on the possible influence of her subconscious and her efforts to avoid questions that could reveal her sexual identity to students. Participant 7's extract below highlights her thoughts and reflections on her possible sub-conscious motivations for concealing her sexual identity:

"I think just when you asked that question, I was thinking actually would I, when I talk about other friends, you know with pupils I wonder if subconsciously it is to avoid questions of 'who's she?' or 'I didn't realise that about you'. I don't know, I don't know if it is. Erm I actually don't know how I'd respond if somebody asked me directly or if a pupil asked me directly..." (Participant 7)

Here, participant 7 indicates that the use of deflection and avoidance can be a subconscious action and strategy for keeping her sexual identity protected and concealed.

Finally, participants brought attention to how sexuality can be read through a teacher's physical appearance and gender performances, including dress sense and mannerisms. Participant 6 acknowledges how his physical presentation and gender performances do not challenge the heteronormative norms and ultimately how this deflects attention away his sexual identity:

"Erm, so yeah I think I probably... I hate the word 'pass' it's bloody awful but I'm not massively effeminate maybe or perhaps it's not very obvious that I'm gay... But it's just, sexuality is read from gender performance normally isn't it? So I dress, well I wear a suit, I have a normal haircut, I look very smart. I look like a professional, I look like a teacher. And that's not challenging, you know, norms only reveal once someone challenges the norms and I've not challenged that norm particularly." (Participant 6)

Participant 6's ability to "pass" as heterosexual by appearing as a normative male can be interpreted as a strategy for protecting one's sexual identity but further illustrates the added performances that LGBTQ+ teachers must adhere to. It also offers insight into the perceived incompatibility between 'gay' and 'teacher' identities when he describes how he looks 'like a teacher', suggesting that there are certain ways a teachers should look.

4.4. THEME 3: Expectations, extra work, and emotional costs

"You become the professional gay"

Theme 3 was generated from participant descriptions of the expectations, additional work responsibilities and burdens endured as part of their job. Teachers highlighted how the task of educating others around matters concerning sexuality was left to LGBTQ+ staff members, adding further work to their already demanding roles. When issues surrounding sexuality were raised, participants described a sense of expectation from other members of staff that these issues were to be addressed by LGBTQ+ teachers. Participants also described the emotional toll this subsequently took on them. Two sub-themes generated as part of this major theme include: a sense of responsibility in creating LGBTQ+ visibility, and feelings of guilt for not being open about their sexuality. Participant 6 encapsulated this major theme when stating:

"You become the professional gay"

(Participant 6)

Participant 6's extract demonstrates how LGBTQ+ teachers are perceived to be the professional or expert person to go to whenever matters concerning sexuality arise within schools, illustrating the additional expectations placed on LGBTQ+ teachers.

In the excerpt below, the extra work and extensive labour endured by LGBTQ+ teachers are exemplified by participant 1 during her description of building her school's diversity and inclusion curriculum without support. During the interview, she detailed the extensive efforts she had gone to in creating LGBTQ+ policies and programmes and creating and leading educational LGBTQ+ workshops for staff members. At this point, she reflected on the support

she received during these projects and there was an audible sigh when she acknowledged that she was the only person leading these tasks:

“But yeah, in general, it’s very much just me erm, and I think yeah it’s just (sighs) mainly me (laughs) I’m not going to lie. It’s been a lot of work at the end of the year, especially as diversity week is at the end of the year mainly.” (Participant 1)

From this extract, we can see that the additional labour around promoting the visibility of sexuality within schools falls to LGBTQ+ teachers. It further demonstrates the lone responsibility, with tasks undertaken without support from other colleagues or senior leadership teams. Participant 1 later states that although her SLT are supportive towards her through funding and prioritising trainings around diversity, she acknowledges that this additional work and responsibility should be taken on by someone with a senior role:

“Erm but then also on another strand if you think about it, all these things that I’ve done have actually been like a sort of a senior leader role, but it’s not paid. Erm, I don’t get any time off timetable or anything like that to do these things or to plan these things either. So, (sighs) they’ve given a lot of money to it, but I suppose it might be because I’m doing it for free for them.” (Participant 1)

Together, both of participant 1’s extracts suggest that her school take advantage of her drive towards LGBTQ+ visibility without having to do the work themselves. Although her school outwardly supports and funds LGBTQ+ projects, she is simultaneously exploited by the added time, labour, and responsibility to implement these projects, which she understands is a job for someone in a SLT position.

Supporting this, another teacher described the expectations from other staff members towards LGBTQ+ teachers. Participant 3’s account demonstrates her awareness of how other staff members would direct students to speak to her should matters concerning sexuality be raised:

“But any sort of students that have disclosed to members of staff that they are part of the LGBTQ community. They sort of seem to get, not pushed that’s the wrong word, but encouraged to come and talk to me. And you know, ‘you can go and speak to this member of staff, you know if you want any support’ or ‘I know that member of staff has done a lot of charity work in that area’.”

(Participant 3)

Again, matters concerning sexuality appear to be deemed as the responsibility of LGBTQ+ teachers to deal with, indicating the lone responsibility that LGBTQ+ teachers face. Further, it suggests that LGBTQ+ teachers perceive their heterosexual colleagues as viewing LGBTQ+ related topics as not their responsibility. Following this, participant 3 described her perception of the lack of change and visibility of non-heterosexual identities within her school and what is needed for this to change:

“Yeah, because I can’t really see that things are gonna change unless people do start to rock the boat a bit more and do start to sort of be positive role models for young LGBTQ people. But at the same time, I also sort of sit there and think, ‘why’s it got to be me?’”

(Participant 3)

This extract indicates LGBTQ+ teachers’ frustration at the expectations that visibility and change must come solely from LGBTQ+ staff and not their heterosexual colleagues. Her account further indicates the complexities around the need for LGBTQ+ role models in schools and the compromising position this puts on LGBTQ+ teachers who are not open about their sexual identity within school.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: A sense of responsibility to create LGBTQ+ visibility

The perceived expectations and responsibilities appear to interweave with one another as this sub-theme further highlights LGBTQ+ teachers’ internal sense of responsibility for creating visibility of non-heterosexual identities and breaking down the heteronormative structures within their school. Participants described various ways of creating visibility including being a representative and visible LGBTQ+ teacher themselves, organising and delivering training to staff and students about LGBTQ+ matters, and incorporating LGBTQ+ visibility into their lesson plans. Again, participants indicated that this felt like a lone burden as it appeared this was not

a consideration or responsibility for their heterosexual colleagues. All but one teacher described the barriers and difficulties that came with this sense of responsibility and there are various examples described below to illustrate this sub-theme.

In the excerpt below, participant 6 spoke passionately of the responsibility to create visibility and understanding around LGBTQ+ matters. He brought attention to the difficulties that can come with this task and how he felt that regardless of the possible persecution it is his own sense of duty as an LGBTQ+ teacher. The excerpt below highlights this level of responsibility:

"...you sort of check in with yourself and remind yourself that what you're doing is for a greater purpose and you might get stick for it and you might get some comments for it and you might feel uncomfortable, but I think the purpose of it is greater."

(Participant 6)

Participant 6's extracts illustrate the weight of responsibility held by LGBTQ+ teachers to make non-heterosexual identities more visible even if doing so is to their own detriment. Participant 1 supports this when describing her commitments to creating LGBTQ+ visibility in her school:

...But in school I'm very much active. Especially, even if its 'stereotypical groups' that you think 'oh they might not be accepting of it'. I think it's almost more important to do it then so I sort of would force myself."

(Participant 1)

Like participant 6, participant 1 indicated that the weight of responsibility to challenge others' perceptions around non-heterosexuality outweighs her own feelings of discomfort when she stated, *"I sort of would force myself"*.

However, participant 1 also offered a contrasting perspective on being an open LGBTQ+ teacher when she described her experiences of students approaching her to discuss their own sexual identity:

"...actually, I think if anything it's sort of strengthened my teaching, erm, and it's built relationships with pupils as well. Erm, a lot of LGBT+ pupils come and chat to me as well. I am the only er known, well I was the first openly out person in the school and now

there's a grand total of three of us I think (laughs). Erm so a lot of the pupils do come to me in particular." (Participant 1)

This extract offers an interesting contrast to her earlier comment regarding the anticipation of negative responses for being open about her sexual identity. It further indicates that being open about her sexual identity has strengthened her student-teacher relationships rather than been problematic.

Below, participant 4, who had previously spoken of her fears of being open to students, described how another staff member asked her to tell students about her sexual identity for the benefit of the students in the school:

"I have been approached before to be asked to come out to the kids, but I wasn't ready, so I refused. But it would have been beneficial to the students who are struggling to have another person to go to." (Participant 4)

This extract demonstrates the pressures and expectations placed on LGBTQ+ teachers to be open for their students despite how this may impact the teacher themselves. It further reiterates the expectation, duty, and weight that LGBTQ+ teachers carry when dealing with matters concerning sexuality.

However, participant 5 who is open to everyone within her school offers an alternative perspective on this responsibility. She describes her position as an open LGBTQ+ role model to students as a positive experience and opportunity:

"Erm, like I said earlier, I see it as an opportunity to like voice that it's okay and if there are kids in front of me that are gay or might be thinking that they might be gay... erm I don't know I feel like... I feel like I've got my role as a teacher, I've got almost like a platform to kind of be like, 'yeah it's fine... I've done alright, I'm out, I'm gay and I'm just like a normal person'." (Participant 5)

Participant 5's extract also offers insight into the responsibilities held by LGBTQ+ teachers as she actively considers her influence on students who may be questioning their sexual identity however, her account does not demonstrate a sense of obligation or pressure in promoting LGBTQ+ visibility.

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Feelings of guilt for not being open about their own sexuality

Alongside the sense of responsibility, teachers described a feeling of guilt for not being open about their sexuality, especially in relation to their students. Those teachers who were not open to students described the ideal situation of being an open LGBTQ+ teacher role model to students but highlighted the pressures and barriers that interfered with this. Participant 4 described the conflict between her desire to be an open LGBTQ+ teacher and what restricts her from doing so:

"It could only be maybe 5 people within the school that are very homophobic but for me that's still great enough for me not to be... which is really bad... for me not to be a role model to the LGBT community in the school at the moment." (Participant 4)

Participant 4's extract suggests an internal conflict when she stated, "*which is really bad*" and indicates her feelings of guilt for not being an open role model. It further illustrates that the emotional toll and fear of being persecuted by others within her school outweighs the benefits of being open.

In the excerpt below, participant 5 described one of the reasons that it was important for her to be open about her sexuality and the implications that not being open might have had on her students. Although participant 5 is now open to her students, she indicates the moral dilemma and guilt she previously felt when she repeated, "*I can't lie*":

"I was getting married at the time and they were asking me, you know like, things to do with my husband or whatever and I kind of looked in the class in front of me and I thought, 'I can't lie, like I just can't lie. Like what if one of these kids is gay and I'm kind of hiding it'." (Participant 5)

Participant 3 spoke openly about her feelings of guilt, describing how there is a part of her life that is actively hidden from students through concealing her sexual identity. Her consciousness towards how her students would feel if they were to find out further indicated the emotional impact that not being open has on her:

“I really do feel I know them, I think they really feel they know me. But I've got like this whole bit to my life that I've just ignored that (pauses) they don't need to know about. It's not like I should be sharing all my personal life but I feel like they might feel a bit cheated if they find out, if that makes any sense at all?” (Participant 3)

This extract not only highlights the emotional impact of concealing her identity and what this could do to the relationship she has with students; it also illustrates a perception of a lack of authenticity for hiding this part of her identity. Following this, she described one of the barriers that interweaves with her feeling of guilt by stating her concerns that being open could impact her chances of being promoted to an SLT position:

“But because I am aspirational, and I do want to be an SLT and I don't think I'm far off getting that I don't want to mess it up. It's very selfish probably, well it feels very selfish to me. That's where that guilt thing kicks in again. But I think I'm doing as much as I can to support the LGBTQ+ students in my school and to try and change how people view LGBTQ+ people, without being out, as I can.” (Participant 3)

These extracts clearly demonstrate the complex negotiation processes that an LGBTQ+ teacher must navigate and the consequential emotional impact of having to consider her relationship with students alongside not only the safety of her identity but also her career progression.

4.5 THEME 4: School responses to LGBTQ+ issues.

“That's a lie, we don't have a problem'... the people at the top don't see it”

Participants were asked about how they perceived their school's attitude towards themselves as LGBTQ+ teachers and towards LGBTQ+ matters more generally. When discussing the 'school', participants referred to staff, SLT and the headteacher as a representation of the school. Five teachers highlighted issues including their school's attitude towards inclusivity of staff and

students, LGBTQ+ visibility within school, and the difficulties surrounding heteronormativity and homophobia. Due to the range of issues brought by participants regarding their school's attitude, this theme is split into three sub-themes.

In one account, participant 2 used an example to convey her perceptions of a lack of acknowledgement towards issues of homophobia within her school:

“Erm, but I think sometimes, the school thinks they’ve not got a problem like, erm, we just recently had Ofsted and one of the comments from Ofsted was that there was, er, like a problem with homophobia and the headteacher was kind of like ‘that’s a lie, we don’t have a problem’ but they don’t see it, the people right at the top don’t see it. It’s like the everyday staff that see it...” (Participant 2)

Participant 2's extract highlights the 'blind-spot' in her SLT's awareness of issues surrounding homophobia, which further indicates a disconnect between staff and SLT. I asked a follow up question to explore the impact that this had as I sensed a change of tone in the participant's voice. She described her own (as well as other staff members') frustration at the headteacher's dismissal, further illustrating that her leadership team were unaware of issues of homophobia within the school:

“Just really annoying because, when we were sat there, I was looking at other members of staff and even they were shaking their heads cos they’ve seen it in their classrooms as well.” (Participant 2)

One teacher illustrated how she perceived her school's attitude towards the inclusion of LGBTQ+ education for students. She highlighted how LGBTQ+ education is brushed over as part of a wider curriculum and that it does not receive the same amount of attention as other topics on inclusivity and diversity:

“...we’re very good at being inclusive in terms of race, being inclusive in terms of disability or accessibility. We do cover the LGBT spectrum, but it’s always sort of, it’s

just sort of 'in there', it's not something that I don't think it's embraced by the school."

(Participant 3)

Not only does this offer an understanding into the perceived disparity in the attention given to other important class teachings, it suggests sexuality is not viewed as high priority comparatively through the lack of time and resources offered.

4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Lack of support for LGBTQ+ related issues from their school

Within this sub-theme, participants described their perceptions of support, as well as accounts from their school regarding responses to homophobia, policy and guidance procedures and education for staff and students. Most participants acknowledged that their school offered some level of support for LGBTQ+ matters but also highlighted inconsistencies including a lack of support in tackling homophobia, guidance available for staff, support from leadership and the perceived SLT backlash should teachers raise these issues.

One teacher described her perceptions of how her school tackles homophobia. She highlighted that the prevalence of homophobia within school was not uncommon but questioned her school's action in response to these matters:

"Like homophobia is not a new thing, if you get what I mean. So, they should have been doing all that years ago, which, I don't know they could have been doing? Cos I wasn't there at the school at the time but in terms of like, what you hear sometimes in the corridor, you question whether they have or not."

(Participant 2)

Her observations of the school culture had ultimately left participant 2 questioning whether her school has attempted to address matters concerning homophobia, suggesting a lack of priority for addressing issues concerning homophobia and sexuality in general.

In the excerpt below, another teacher highlighted her school's good intentions towards creating an inclusive environment, however they lacked training and guidance to support staff who were met with issues surrounding gender and sexuality. In particular, she described the

lack of clear guidance when working with students who identify under the transgender umbrella:

“Erm (pauses) I think... on the surface, we are an LGBT friendly school. Erm, I do think at times, especially with, we have high proportions of trans kids and I sometimes think, it’s a very open school to be whatever you want to be but sometimes it might lack guidance.” (Participant 4)

Despite the school’s best intentions to be inclusive, the lack of guidance could refer to a lack of policy implementation within schools. Supporting this, participant 1 described the absence of policies for tackling homophobia and sexual identity bullying within her school and noted how this only changed following her input:

“I started looking at the policy I think it was like three years ago. I looked at the policy for even things like behavioural policy and there wasn’t even any mention of LGBT groups for example... I think before I actually started doing anything to do with LGBT, there wasn’t really anything in school.” (Participant 1)

Participants spoke about their perceptions of their leadership team’s attitudes towards LGBTQ+ matters and questioned the support they would offer for matters concerning sexual identity and homophobia. Similarly, this filtered into how LGBTQ+ teachers themselves responded to matters concerning sexuality. Participant 3’s extract below exemplifies this when discussing the possibility of being open about her sexual identity within school:

“I don’t think I’m sort of ready to turn round and go from an abstract idea to something that’s real and tangible (internet breaks). I don’t think I’m, well I know I’m not ready for that but it’s more for my career’s sake rather than the backlash. If I felt more supported by the school to get into leadership, maybe I would be more prepared to take on whatever I may or may not get as a result of that.” (Participant 3)

Participant 3 indicates a perception of limited support from her SLT, which subsequently impacts her decisions around the visibility of her sexual identity. Her reference to “backlash”

further indicates that she would not feel adequately supported by her SLT in tackling the repercussions she might face if she were to be open.

The excerpt below also highlights participant 6's perception and account of what he believes his leadership team expects from the teaching staff. He describes how he feels that if teachers bring 'too much' attention to certain issues within the school, such as sexuality and homophobia, it could be detrimental to him and other staff members:

"I know what leadership teams want, they want good staff, they get on with it and they don't cause a fuss and that's what I've always been. So therefore, they just crack on, but I know staff that ruffle feathers whether it's for LGBT reasons or whatever, they kind of (pauses), that's when they get on the radar of SLT." (Participant 6)

This highlights the perception that there is a 'good teacher' in the eyes of his leadership team and indicates that this involves teachers operating within the boundaries of heteronormativity. Participant 6 indicated that a 'good teacher' is one who carries out their duties without bringing up concerns about their well-being or sexual identity.

4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: 'Tick box' and tokenistic use of LGBTQ+ staff

During interviews, some teachers reported feeling as though their sexual identity was being used by their school to appear outwardly inclusive to benefit the image of the school. The words 'tokenistic' and being part of a 'tick box' were frequently used by teachers during interviews. One teacher described how, whenever her school launched new initiatives or programmes, she felt as though she was there as an entire representation of LGBTQ+ matters. She describes her awareness of her school's 'tokenistic' approach to her identity and the tensions and feelings of discomfort that this leaves her with:

"So, whenever they're introducing something, they now try and view that with a different strand. I was put on it just as I think the 'token gay person'. Erm, and my friend was put on it because she was the 'token Muslim person', she's like one of the two Muslim teachers within the school. It's a bit strange that my voice tries to represent all LGBT you know..." (Participant 1)

Participant 2's excerpt below illustrates the perception that her SLT uses LGBTQ+ identities to promote their diversity quotas. She highlighted her concerns of her sexuality serving as an advantage or disadvantage to her career progression. She referred to worries of her sexual identity having the potential to fit a diversity 'tick box' for her school and achieving progression through positive discrimination rather than through merit:

"I don't know, I guess in terms of things like promotions and stuff, it doesn't get in the way of them so I never think 'oh I can't go for this job because of my sexuality' or anything like that. Erm, but then I also don't want it to work in another way, so 'oh we will promote this person because they're gay so we need to tick that box' and stuff like that."

(Participant 2)

Supporting this point, participant 6 described his perception of his new school's reaction to gaining an LGBTQ+ staff member:

"...in their mind they probably thought 'oh great, that's a box ticked, we've got some diversity here. We've not only got a gay teacher, but we've got someone who's researching it and it probably looks good for our trust and for our maths and stuff'."

(Participant 6)

From this extract, there is a perception that his school capitalises on and benefits from having an LGBTQ+ teacher on superficial level. Instead of considering the needs of the LGBTQ+ teacher themselves or offering support, this perception illustrates the tokenism that LGBTQ+ teachers can provide for school images.

4.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Tensions of working within heteronormative and gender normative structures and environments

The final sub-theme generated from the data involved discussions around the tensions of working within a heteronormative and gender normative environment and the impact of this. Some participants spoke about the difficulties of not fitting into the binaries of either heterosexual or homosexual, or male or female. One participant reflected on her own gender

identity and the feeling of invisibility for non-normative identities within schools. She highlighted how the reinforcement of gender binaries within schools can lead to teachers feeling as though they do not have a place to exist within them:

“I just think it must be really hard to be a trans or non-binary teacher in that space. And previously having sort of questioned and considered my gender identity and I've settled back on what I was assigned at birth but, having gone through that, and thinking about whether there is a place in education, I certainly didn't feel there was. And someone who really, I mean it's a big part of someone's identity, I think your gender, maybe more so than your sexuality. It's something that's there every single day, in every single role, in every single situation and context. And if you don't feel like yours can exist in that space, I think that must be incredibly difficult and I don't think that the education has moved far enough for that yet.”

(Participant 3)

The extract above highlights the constant reinforcement of gender binaries within schools. Participant 3's acknowledgement and empathy towards those teachers who identify as part of 'non-normative' gender identities help to illustrate the incompatibility between those who identify outside of the 'normative' identities and the school environment. This extract further demonstrates how the amalgamation of sexual identity and gender are interwoven (Barker & Scheele, 2021) and compound the difficulties that these identities experience within education.

Similarly, another teacher described how sexualities or genders that exist outside of the binaries of 'heterosexual' or 'gay', 'male' or 'female', can create incompatibilities for LGBTQ+ individuals within schools. Participant 6 offered insight into how the existing structures such as gender segregated toilets and changing rooms, as well as gendered teacher pronouns, continue to enforce a heteronormative and gender normative environment:

“It's okay to be gay or straight but if you're bi-sexual or gender fluid or anything that doesn't present as one or the other, it just causes problems... And I just don't think schools are set up for it. Like, yeah there's inclusive gay and straight people and if you transition and present as one or the other then you're fine. But I think, any ambiguity,

schools don't know how to deal with it and that's structural, you've got toilets, you've got changing rooms, you've got the names sir and miss. Everything about school is binary, everything.” (Participant 6)

Participant 6's extract illustrates the invisible impact of how educational institutions are structured, which does not accommodate people who do not fit into those structures, ultimately excluding those people without noticing.

Following on from this, one teacher who openly identifies as bisexual described the common misconceptions she encountered from staff and students about her sexual identity:

“Erm, and others often think it's erm, sort of a phase, so this idea that like eventually I'll go back to men. I suppose because it's been so normalised. Erm, and yeah I think in general as well, a lot of the confusion when you're talking to the kids about it, is that they often mix up gender and sexuality as well and things like that, so they often don't know the difference between the two.” (Participant 1)

Participant 1's extract illustrates the lack of understanding about gender and sexuality from students and staff. Her reference to the common misconception that bisexuality is a “*phase*” further illustrates the added difficulties of identifying as bisexual.

In the excerpt below, one teacher described his awareness of gender and what is ‘preferred’ by his school regarding being in a leadership position. He highlights a link between sexuality and gender performances, suggesting that one's ‘performance’ at school must match one that reflects a heteronormative and gender normative ideal:

“... well sexuality is read from gender performances often isn't it? So I think often its toning things down in certain environments and I don't overtly do it and actually try and do the opposite erm, now. But I'm definitely conscious of it in the past and er, I'm just conscious observing it, especially in leadership teams, masculinity is kind of favoured in terms of a leadership style whether you're male or female.” (Participant 6)

Not only does this extract illustrate a protective strategy used by LGBTQ+ teachers of actively altering their gender presentations and performance, but it also illustrates the perception of what is expected and favoured by senior leadership teams. Again, examining this extract through an intersectional lens, it suggests that LGBTQ+ teachers are not only aware of how their sexual identity can lead to discrimination and/or disadvantage in the workplace, but the influence of sexual identity and gender performances collaboratively can act as a barrier towards career progression.

Adding to this, teachers cited their awareness of the significance of their gendered presentations. Participant 3 stated that her hair and clothing style draw attention to her sexuality as they go against the normative expectations of female dress:

“I mean until recently I’ve always had short hair, I’ve always worn men’s suits the whole time I’ve worked at the school. You know I do present in a, for want of a better phrase, a stereotypical butch dress sense. Erm, so I don’t think by any stretch, nobody’s guessed but at the minute it’s still just a guess” (Participant 3)

Using an example from a parent’s evening, participant 6 highlighted the impact of heteronormativity and a lack of consideration for the ‘non-traditional family’ by his school:

“At the last school, we had this lad that joined who had two dads and god I almost jumped for joy, I thought ‘bloody hell a bit of diversity at our school finally’ and that was so lovely. But then I just saw on parents’ evenings, just basic things like when they signed in, erm, you know ‘which one of you is the dad’ or on the forms there’s nothing to... you know. Just institutional structural things so.” (Participant 6)

Again, the tension between the gender normative and heteronormative structures permeates throughout the school, highlighting the need for structural changes within schools. Furthermore, participant 5 illustrated her worries following various encounters with students and parents. She described being identified and recognised within her school as ‘*the gay one with kids*’. This extract indicates the perceived incongruence between people who identify as non-heterosexual and having children:

“It was only the other day, a kid in my form was like erm, so the parent knew me from one of their other kids... and it was like ‘oh yeah, she’s gay but she’s got kids’, you know that kind of thing. I don’t know, I think... I feel like they might know me because I’m the gay one with kids, you know when they’re talking about teachers and stuff.”

(Participant 5)

Finally, participant 5 described the impact of an implicit heteronormative environment and silencing of non-heterosexual identities when stating, *“that’s my barrier, no one’s ever told me not to say”*:

“Erm, that’s my barrier, no one’s ever told me not to say. But, I just, yeah, I suppose I’m worried about if they go home and say ‘oh this is what my head of year said today’, what the parental response would then be because I don’t think that some parents are as accepting as some of our students are.”

(Participant 3)

This extract alludes to the invisible heteronormative structures with an unspoken rule that acknowledgement of sexuality is ok as long as it abides to heteronormative standards.

4.6 THEME 5: “It’s getting easier all the time... but it’s still got its challenges”

The final theme generated from the data analysis came from teachers’ acknowledgement of changes within education in relation to LGBQ+ visibility and inclusivity. Within this, teachers spoke positively about how it is becoming increasingly easier to be an LGBQ+ teacher in comparison to past years, however, there was an emphasis on highlighting problems that continue to co-exist. Some participants described how factors such as: the impact of time, societal change and inclusion, and the support from their school has contributed to moving towards a more accepting environment for LGBQ+ individuals:

“But we’re a very good school in that if you get it wrong, we will challenge and we will sort that out and there are opportunities where people can be educated so I think there probably are some homophobic, there are some teachers that haven’t come out that

have partners. So there obviously is something that isn't making it a safe environment for everyone to come out but I think on the whole you are supported by the school..."

(Participant 4)

Participant 4's extract encapsulates the change occurring within schools, yet also acknowledges the ongoing difficulties endured by LGBTQ+ teachers who do not feel safe or comfortable to be open about their sexual identity within their school.

4.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Moving towards normalising sexuality through education, visibility, and support

This sub-theme draws attention to the perceived progression towards a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ and transgender individuals within schools. Participants described the recent focus and attention given to educating students and staff, whilst in the same breath, also highlighting the continuing barriers. Participants described that the implementation of LGBTQ+ education is breaking down heteronormative cultures within school. In the excerpt below, participant 7 described how her school's collaborative approach to promoting LGBTQ+ visibility within the curriculum works towards normalising non-heterosexual identities:

"I think there's still a way to go in terms of educating that, but I think it's huge. And I think... again, speaking from my own experiences, every department across the curriculum has added it into our subject area and we've changed things that we used to teach in that way... For example, erm, in my subject area things like same sex families, same sex parents and things like that. It's small changes but it opens that dialogue, so I think it's really important and I think pupils see it when they move around lessons and that normalises it."

(Participant 7)

Another teacher also described the importance of using the curriculum to normalise non-heterosexuality, as well as the need to educate all staff members so the school can collaboratively implement LGBTQ+ visibility into their teaching:

"Erm so that's why next year we're moving towards more staff training and including things like [challenging] heteronormative language in the classroom... And it could even

be things like 'Mark and his husband went to the shops to buy whatever'... just little tweaks and normalising it into the curriculum." (Participant 1)

Participant 1's extract illustrates the importance of a collaborative school approach to breaking down heteronormativity within the class by describing her school's future initiatives to increase staff training. However, it appears that these initiatives are in the development stages and yet to be implemented suggesting a slow move towards normalising non-heterosexuality within schools.

4.6.2 Sub-theme 2: "I think it depends on your school"

Participants highlighted the individuality of each school and how LGBTQ+ teacher experience can be influenced by factors such as a school's location, type of school, attitude and priority towards matters surrounding sexuality, as well as wider factors such as a school's financial situation, Ofsted rating and surrounding community influence. One teacher illustrated this below:

"I think it's getting easier all the time, erm, but it's still got its challenges. It depends on the type of school that you're teaching, and I've had experiences in a few now. It can be very different as to how comfortable it can feel, in my opinion." (Participant 3)

One teacher who works within an academy school highlighted the financial disparity between schools. She described how funding for LGBTQ+ educational resources, such as guest lectures and speakers, can be costly and how this subsequently can only be accessed by schools who have a budget in place:

"Universities I think in general are great at LGBT inclusion now. Erm, schools are being left behind because a lot of the great resources that are out there cost so much money and schools don't have enough money as it is (laughs) or time. So, I think, if it was embedded more, I think that would help enormously... we've been pretty lucky in terms of our budget, but a lot of school's aren't" (Participant 1)

From this extract, we can see the wider socio-political impact of funding shortages within the UK education system, which limits certain schools in being able to access these resources demonstrating the inequitable situation that certain schools face. Consequently, this extract

indicates that due to school funding shortages, it is difficult to manage what areas are given priority and funding.

Additionally, teachers reported that the influence of change and inclusion within schools is largely dictated by government regulation authorities, such as Ofsted. The excerpts below illustrate the weight and pressure that Ofsted places on schools, resulting in LGBTQ+ matters falling to the bottom of the priority list:

“... I've spoken to my new line manager at school about it and I know in most schools it's not really a priority and that's understandable with Ofsted and a million other things going on each day.” (Participant 6)

“Yeah, I think it's ultimately what I've slowly come to realise when teaching is that ultimately that change comes from the top. So, it's often what Ofsted's agenda is what filters down into teaching and schools and the priorities of what SLT is willing to fund.” (Participant 1)

These extracts highlight the influence of wider socio-political influences on what is deemed important for schools to focus on. It indicates the difficult position that schools and SLTs are forced into by having to prioritise the agenda of Ofsted and ultimately overlook matters concerning sexuality and bullying in schools.

Teachers also referred to the varying experiences of LGBTQ+ inclusivity as depending on the location of the school. Teachers reported how working within a city environment compared with a town or rural area had some influence over this. Participant 3 exemplifies this below when discussing their understanding of the differences between schools in different areas:

“Because if you're in a coastal town or a sort of rural village and you live and work in the place then maybe it's a little bit more difficult to be as open and maybe you wouldn't get the support from leaders as much. That's certainly from the people that I've met from their experiences as well, but I've never worked rurally.” (Participant 3)

Finally, in the two excerpts below, teachers spoke of their discussions with students and described their perceptions of how the narratives of these discussions are more open and accepting towards LGBTQ+ identities compared with previous years:

“I think it’s with kids as well, there’s definitely a more open dialogue and it’s definitely more (pauses) like, spoke about more positively than like perhaps, four or five years ago.” (Participant 7)

“...we talk about it a lot more now than when I started there nearly a decade ago. I think the views of the young people have moved forward a lot. I think, as people watch more TV and it’s in the media more, (internet crackles) and I think that might have helped sway opinion a little bit.” (Participant 3)

The extracts above demonstrate teachers’ perceptions of the changing attitudes amongst students as a factor in the progressive change towards a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ identities within schools. Participant 3 indicates that media exposure and a greater visibility of LGBTQ+ identities could play into these changes.

4.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings constructed from the reflexive thematic analysis conducted, generating five major themes and 15 sub-themes. The findings provide an in-depth understanding and insight into the accounts, perceptions, and experiences of the LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers who participated in this study. Furthermore, the findings offer varying insights into the experiences of both teachers who are open about their sexual identity in their school, as well as those who are not open, or only open to their colleagues. Teachers’ fear of persecution following past experiences, concerns of being discriminated against from the wider school community, as well as being worried about how being open could impact their job and career progression were all described within theme 1. Following this, teachers described in theme 2 the protective strategies they utilised to maintain the safety of their sexual identity as well as concealing it. Consequently, the emotional impact that these strategies had on teachers formed part of theme 3, as well as the additional responsibilities,

expectation and burdens placed on LGBTQ+ teachers on matters concerning sexuality. In theme 4, teachers offered a multi-layered understanding into their perceptions of their school's support towards LGBTQ+ issues as well as themselves as LGBTQ+ teachers. Teachers varied in how they viewed support from their SLT, highlighting both the benefits and tokenism that LGBTQ+ teachers' identities can provide for schools. Finally, theme 5 offered a useful insight into the wider structures impacting schools, which subsequently filter down and impact on LGBTQ+ teacher experiences.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

In this chapter, I provide a discussion of how my interpretation of the findings provides a greater insight into the accounts of LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers' experiences and how they manage the visibility of their sexual identity within school. This chapter also offers an in-depth insight into LGBTQ+ teachers' perceptions of support offered to them by schools regarding matters concerning sexuality. Within this chapter, I offer a summary of the key findings before using the existing literature available to elaborate on the findings in this research project. Afterwards, I provide my own reflections on the research undertaken and highlight the strengths and limitations of the project. Finally, the contributions to knowledge including the implications and recommendations for future research and counselling psychology are highlighted.

5.1 Revisiting the research aims and research questions

When I began this research project, I set out to gain a greater insight into the accounts of LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers' experiences regarding the visibility of their sexuality within school. Although the research in this field is growing, I sought to add to the limited body of literature available, specifically within the UK. Considering this, I sought to address the following research questions:

1. What are the accounts of LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers regarding the visibility of their sexual identity and how this influences their role as teachers?
2. In what ways do these LGBTQ+ teachers feel supported or unsupported by their school and what is needed going forward?

5.2 Key findings

The data presented in the data analysis chapter offers an in-depth insight into the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers. It is important to remind the reader that the findings reflect the accounts and experiences of the seven teachers who took part in this research and that there is no attempt

to generalise these findings to the experiences of all LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers within England. To begin with, the findings reiterated some of the ongoing issues identified within previous research studies, as well as highlighting other concerns for LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers. The data analysis also offered insight into some of the shifting dynamics within school and changes to LGBTQ+ teacher experiences through their reference to the past and comparisons to their experiences today. Throughout the data analysis process, five major themes were constructed. The first major theme, *'fear of persecution'*, highlighted teachers' concerns of being discriminated against because of their sexual identity as well as concerns of being persecuted by others. This theme especially brought attention to teachers' continuing fear of persecution from various groups within and outside of the school as well as the potential repercussions on their job. The second major theme led on from this theme as the *'strategies used to maximise safety of self and sexual identity'*. Within this theme, teachers spoke of how they attempted to manage the safety and visibility of their sexual identity, including ensuring good relationships with students and waiting until they are established within their teaching role before being open. Teachers also spoke of the internal risk evaluation processes they would use before being open and using methods such as silence and avoidance in instances when confronted about their sexual identity. The third major theme was the *'expectations, extra work, and emotional costs'* endured by LGBTQ+ teachers. Whilst a sense of responsibility was not always perceived negatively, teachers reported how the promotion of visibility for non-heterosexual identities often fell to the LGBTQ+ staff as their responsibility. In instances where teachers did not feel comfortable in being open, there was a described feeling of guilt for not being a role model for students. In theme four, *'School responses to LGBTQ+ issues'*, teachers described the lack of school support available for LGBTQ+ issues. A majority of interviewees reported feeling unsupported by leadership in regard to matters concerning sexuality and that the support implemented often felt tokenistic. However, those teachers who had positive accounts of being open about their sexual identity, often described feeling supported by their leadership teams. Finally, theme five, *"it's getting easier all the time... but it's still got its challenges"* provided insight into the current climate for LGBTQ+ teachers, in which LGBTQ+ teachers perceived that school climates were changing towards greater inclusivity yet acknowledged the need for more to be done due to the ongoing challenges highlighted within previous themes.

5.3 Discussion of the findings

Within this section, I provide a discussion of the findings and will refer to previous literature where relevant. I have split this discussion into three major areas, which are (i) navigating LGBTQ+ visibility and protective strategies used, (ii) the emotional impact on LGBTQ+ teachers, and (iii) perceived support from school leadership teams. Please note that I will refer to 'being open' as an abbreviation of 'being open about their sexual identity' and 'LGBTQ+ teachers' in specific reference to 'LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers'.

5.3.1 Navigating LGBTQ+ visibility and protective strategies used

Influence of Section 28

Although existing literature demonstrates the shifting discourse surrounding sexuality within schools (Nixon & Givens, 2007), my findings demonstrate that most participants were not open about their sexual identity, largely due to their concerns regarding the negative consequences this could have on them. Accounts from participants indicated that these concerns resulted from the impact of the heteronormative culture enforced within schools and made references to the historic influence of Section 28 and its continued prevalence within schools. As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 28 was implemented to maintain and uphold heteronormativity as the dominant culture (Clarke, 1996). None of the participants within this study taught during Section 28's active years (pre-2003), however, it was particularly significant that participants referenced Section 28 suggesting that the repercussions are still being felt, including a perceived sense of secrecy around non-heterosexuality. The existing literature has already brought attention to the wider social and political influences impacting education and LGBTQ+ teacher experience, especially regarding Section 28 (for example, DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Edwards et al, 2016). Lee's (2019a) findings indicated that non-heterosexual teachers who taught through Section 28 continue to be more adversely affected by the Act than those teachers who began teaching post-Section 28. However, my findings suggest that for younger teachers, their experiences of Section 28 as students continue into their professional lives, which appears to perpetuate an on-going discomfort about being open in school. My findings therefore indicate that teachers who began teaching after Section 28 are also affected by the Act, not solely from their understanding of the Act, but from their lived experiences of being a student at the time.

Despite this, participant accounts also described the value and importance they placed on being a visible LGBTQ+ person and further indicated the tensions between their own experiences and their desire to break the trend of silence that has and continues to exist because of a heteronormative environment. This in some ways exemplifies the shift in the discourse surrounding non-heterosexuality within schools (Nixon & Givens, 2007) but further indicates that LGBTQ+ teachers appear to exist in a state of incongruence. Existing research has demonstrated how despite the removal of legal barriers, teachers' accounts expose a fear of revealing their authentic identity and a feeling of obligation to conform to the heteronormative school culture (Edwards et al, 2016). So far, we know that the restrictive chains of heteronormativity continue to influence LGBTQ+ teachers' visibility, and the silence imposed through historic discriminatory legislation is recollected by LGBTQ+ teachers. Considering the wider structural changes in the UK, such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, one must consider whether school cultures have moved away from the influence of Section 28.

Impact on career

Further, my analysis brought insight into LGBTQ+ teacher concerns of being open due to the possible implications that this might have on their job security. Participants referenced their concerns of being open in case this disadvantaged them when applying for a promotion, or even have the reverse effect and offer an unfair advantage. Neary's (2013) research articulates the difficulties experienced by Irish LGB teachers in negotiating their private and professional identities and how it exposed the unique challenges for teachers should they not "comply with the heterosexual norm" (p.589). Neary's findings demonstrate a sense of incompatibility between the existence of 'LGBTQ+' and 'teacher' identities due to the consequences attached to being a visible non-heterosexual teacher. Historically and recently, the tensions between LGBTQ+ identities and teacher identities has resulted in the denial of a true and authentic self for many LGBTQ+ teachers (Rudoe, 2010; Ferfolja, 2009; Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021). My findings add to these understandings of a perceived incompatibility between teachers' professional and personal identities as participants stated that they perceived the co-existence of both identities as inharmonious without negative consequence or concealment of their sexual identity. Butler's (2004) conceptualisations are applicable here in understanding my findings through their ideas around 'cultural intelligibility'; that is, the cultural norms by which

people are judged as 'intelligibly' human. Butler applies this to gender to say that being normatively gendered is part of what makes us 'culturally intelligible'. Applying this to sexuality within an educational context, schools prescribe to asexuality (Rudoe, 2010) yet have embedded heterosexuality as the norm so deeply that it appears invisible, therefore non-heterosexual identities are viewed as being culturally *unintelligible* (Butler, 2004). Therefore, this cultural unintelligibility can be represented through my participants' perceptions of viewing the combination of teaching and LGBTQ+ visibility as not making sense or existing without barriers to their career progression (or even continuity).

At this point, I acknowledge that the narrative of the discussion so far frames LGBTQ+ teacher experiences as largely negative. Some scholars have suggested that literature exploring the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers frame them as victims who lack agency (Stones & Glazzard, 2020). However, the narrative of this discussion does not intend to frame LGBTQ+ teachers as victims but intends to be explicit in exposing the on-going difficulties and barriers imposed on them that causes them the additional task of navigating their identity. I further argue that the teachers who shared their stories within this research demonstrate a sense of agency in doing so. As my findings suggest, the impact of institutionalised heteronormativity requires LGBTQ+ teachers to actively manage their identity (Lee, 2019a). However, my findings also add to the literature that demonstrate how it is possible for LGBTQ+ teachers to be open within their school without disadvantage (Fahie, 2016). One participant portrayed an overall positive experience of being an open LGBTQ+ teacher within her school, stating that she felt supported and embraced by her school and the local community. Her passion to be a visible LGBTQ+ teacher was heard throughout the interview as she indicated surprise that there would be any issues to raise. However, this positive experience appeared to rely on the influence of her school and its embrace of diversity and inclusion. Further, she questioned whether working for nearly a decade in one school was a contributing factor to her positive experiences, as well as whether the location of working within a city school had influenced this. Non-heterosexual teacher experiences have been reported to vary depending on location, with those working in a city reporting more positive experiences (Lee, 2019b). However, Lee's findings cannot fully explain disparities between LGBTQ+ teacher experiences as all participants within my study described working within city schools. Therefore, although geographical location may influence

some teacher experiences, it cannot be suggested that LGBTQ+ teachers are likely to have more positive experiences working within city schools.

School structures and binaries

Exploring LGBTQ+ teacher visibility further, the following findings can be understood through the prism of intersectionality due to the complexities arising because of multiple and overlapping identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Teachers spoke about the wider structural issues that impact schools and shared how this impacted their experiences. To begin with, the segregation and enforcement of binary roles in schools was highlighted as something in need of addressing; in particular, the stereotyping of performative gender roles expected by staff and students played into the expectations around sexuality. Considering an intersectional lens, one teacher's exploration of their gender identity further compounded the feelings of incongruity as a teacher. As mentioned previously, to separate sexuality and gender is impractical (Barker & Scheele, 2016), and teachers shared how heteronormative and gender-normative structures contribute to limiting their ability to be open. For example, teachers highlighted their awareness of the daily visual reminders of these structures imposed on students, such as gender segregated toilets, changing rooms, sports teams, and uniforms. The binary sex classification of toilets, changing rooms and gendered dress codes are representative of the oppressive institutional barriers (Davis et al, 2017). Further, school endorsements of normative gender performance such as 'male' masculinity and 'female' femininity not only enforce a heteronormative culture but further exclude and 'other' those who do not fit into a binary (Gray, 2013). The findings demonstrated how these normative gender performances were expected of LGBTQ+ teachers should they wish to succeed to leadership positions. The tensions between binary and queer identities are discussed in the work of Carrera et al (2012) who look to education as a primary source to bring about change within the existing heteronormative and gender binary structures. They call for a re-education of sexuality, gender and binaries in schools, incorporating a (trans) gender curriculum. Further, they call for efforts to move away from obstacles that continue gender segregation, such as implementing gender neutral toilets in schools. My findings add to the existing literature of how these oppressive barriers continue to perpetuate heteronormativity within schools and how this impacts LGBTQ+ teachers' decisions regarding visibility.

In addition to this, participants further described the direct impact of gender binaries, particularly when describing the expectations of teacher presentation. Teachers perceived performative expectations of how they *should* act and dress, and how this included adhering to normative societal expectations, such as, males wearing suits and having short hair. What this further indicates is that there are perceived ways in which a teacher *should not* dress, which are often behaviours or presentations that go against heteronormativity. One teacher shared how having short hair felt as though she was going against the normative gender expectations. These findings are compatible with Connell's (2015) research which poignantly articulates how the 'ideal teacher' is "determined by heteronormativity: he or she should act, dress, speak, and self-present according to normative gender and sexual expectations" (p.65). Another teacher described how by appearing and acting 'normatively male', he "passes" as heterosexual, which inadvertently conceals his sexual identity. Looking beyond the physical expectations, these findings show how educational structures do not accommodate non-heterosexual identities unless they fit into the mould of heterosexuality.

Similarly, teachers spoke of the misconceptions they were confronted with by other members in their schools. One teacher who openly identifies as bisexual shared how her students assumed that she would eventually go back to dating men, where dating women was a 'phase'. The misconceptions around bisexuality can be understood through a queer theoretical lens as again, the binaries constructed by heteronormativity, which historically can be understood as 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' mean that bisexuality (and other identities under the queer umbrella) complicate and challenge the mono-sexual identity categories (Ault, 1996). Not only this, but they also subsequently appear to not exist. Student's lack of understanding of bisexuality can again be understood through Butler's (1990) conceptualisation of cultural intelligibility where heterosexuality as society's dominant sexuality is so powerful yet invisible at the same time it has been normalised without question. Gray's (2013) findings tell us that because of binarised sexual identity categories, bisexuality within education is silenced, further complicating bisexual teachers' navigations of being open about their sexual identities. Additionally, the findings generated offered further insight into the misconceptions around non-heterosexuality. Participant 5 being referred to as the 'the gay one with kids' by students and parents demonstrates a sense of incongruence and unintelligibility towards the concept of a non-heterosexual person having children. Taylor (2007) talks about a newer form of

homophobia, where identifying as LGBTQ+ and having children are viewed as incompatible. However, in this example, I interpreted participant 5's description of these instances as suggesting an unfamiliarity as opposed to homophobia amongst students and parents around diverse families.

Teachers' own responsibility and agency around LGBTQ+ visibility

Whilst participants reported their concerns surrounding being visible, there was a clear sense that they strived towards being open about their sexual identity as a future goal. Some participants reported that because of their past experiences of being silenced, their desire to be open was even more vital. In fact, participants spoke about how they would actively try to promote LGBTQ+ and transgender visibility in their school, even if they were unable to be open themselves. This included creating and implementing school policies surrounding LGBTQ+ bullying and/or LGBTQ+ inclusion, challenging homophobia and creating conversations and visibility using the LGBTQ+ rainbow flag. What this indicates is that despite not being open about their own sexual identity within school, LGBTQ+ teachers tactically manage ways to ensure that they promote and create visibility for LGBTQ+ identities in school, demonstrating a sense of agency within complex situations. 'Agency' can be understood as one's ability to take initiative and make choices within specific contexts and situations (Jindal-Snape, 2016). Gowlett (2014) states that, "[a]gency' is not, therefore, seen through a prism of escape but more an alternation and recrafting of the rules that enables a viable form of social existence" (p.406). Despite not being visible, participants in my study illustrated their agency through promoting what is important to them whilst navigating the complex dynamics of keeping their sexual identity concealed.

Protective strategies used by teachers

Previous research findings have highlighted the efforts and strategies undertaken by non-heterosexual teachers to deflect interest away from their sexual identity (Griffin, 1991; Ferfolja, 2009). LGBTQ+ teachers in my study reported methods of concealing their identity using the strategies of silence and avoidance to move away from discussions that may reveal their sexual identity. In instances where teachers were directly asked by students about their sexual identity, there was a conscious effort to avoid the question or change topic. Further, in instances where teachers were assumed as heterosexual, teachers reported not correcting the

pronouns of their partners to avoid the possible negative responses. Not only this, LGBTQ+ teachers spoke of how they actively attempted to avoid situations where their sexual identity may be uncovered. In one example, a teacher who had recently married spoke of her tireless efforts to deter her students from seeing her wedding photos, and in some instances, actively lying to avoid her students finding out that she was gay. These strategies of silence are consistent with the silencing and self-censorship strategies reported in other research studies (Edwards et al, 2016; Clarke, 1996; Squires & Sparkes, 1996). Although these findings do not add an original contribution to the literature, they provide an important recognition of the ongoing difficulties for LGBTQ+ teachers where they continue to use methods of concealment and self-censorship of their sexual identity in the present day. It is important to acknowledge that these methods do not come without personal cost or conflict to an LGBTQ+ teacher (Clarke, 1996) and further demonstrate the possible implications on psychological well-being.

Becoming established as a teacher

Furthermore, participants spoke about the degrees to which they were visible about their sexual identity within school. Research illustrates how non-heterosexual teachers vary in the degree to which they are open, for example, being completely open or being selectively open to certain people (Simons et al, 2021). Only two participants within my study were open to everyone in their school, including colleagues, students, and the wider school community, whereas most participants were open only to their colleagues. Those teachers who were open to their colleagues stated that it was important to build trust with their colleagues first before being open with them and to ensure that there was a shared understanding that their sexual identity could not be disclosed to students. From this, we can see how teachers engage in a risk evaluation process and must actively consider who they are able to be open to and whether they can be trusted to respect the boundaries of their visibility. Similar to other research findings, it appears that many LGBTQ+ individuals within education settings weigh up the potential negative outcomes of being open before doing so (Prock et al, 2019).

Having conveyed the extent of their visibility, teachers spoke of how they envisaged moving towards being completely open in a way that would not hinder their personal or professional safety. Often these plans involved firstly establishing themselves over time and being perceived as well-regarded by others. Building credibility and gaining the respect of students

through rapport building contributed to teachers feeling 'established'. Factors such as time and experience at a school have previously been reported to offer a great level of security for LGBTQ+ teachers (Squires & Sparkes, 1996). However, time was not always a consistent factor across all accounts as one teacher in my study shared how they did not feel able to be open despite being in her post for 10 years. However, the importance of being perceived as a good and well-admired teacher was consistent. Establishment and high regard were viewed as an additional layer of protection as these could be helpful in breaking down stereotypes and negative connotations attached to the 'gay teacher'. What these findings show is LGBTQ+ teachers' efforts to go above and beyond their heterosexual counterparts to become well respected by others as it may be perceived that their sexuality places them at a disadvantage to begin with. This is similar to conceptualisations around educator ideals of being the 'super-teacher' (Rasmussen, 2006), as well as the 'hyper-professional' (Msibi, 2019). These ideas are applicable here as the measures that participants describe reflect a super-teacher or hyper-professional attempt to mitigate negative responses from the school and to compensate for identifying as LGBTQ+. Arguably, these strategies may only work to reproduce heteronormativity through the additional measures undertaken by LGBTQ+ teachers to experience a non-discriminatory work environment (Neary, 2017). The fragility of these tactics must be considered as what these findings also tell us is that LGBTQ+ teachers must remain hyper-vigilant in their professional role otherwise, their sexuality can be used as a weapon against them.

There was a notable incongruence regarding the methods that teachers used to conceal their sexual identity, especially as some methods appeared to conflict with one another. In one sense, teachers emphasised the importance of building a good rapport with students, so that should they experience homophobia in the classroom, they would feel more confident knowing that most students had respect for them as a teacher. On the other hand, teachers also shared how they would try to maintain a greater level of personal and emotional distance between themselves, and students compared with heterosexual teachers. This included avoiding sharing stories or updates about their weekend activities as well as not offering personal details about themselves with students in case discussions moved towards discussing their partner. One teacher highlighted their frustration that heterosexual teachers in their school would talk about their family on their introductory PowerPoint presentation to their

class, demonstrating the “invisible privileges” afforded to heterosexual teachers (Connell, 2015; p.69). As previously stated, schools attempt to position themselves as ‘asexual’ institutions (Bragg, 2018) yet only non-heterosexual teachers appear to be obliged to adhere to this asexuality (Gray, 2013). My findings illustrate how heterosexuality is so normalised it is invisible (Butler, 1990) yet ‘others’ those who do not fit into the binary (Gray, 2013). Furthermore, my findings also offer insights into the tensions between LGBTQ+ teachers’ identity protection methods, their relationships with students and the impact this has on their authenticity as a teacher. Again, my findings touch on Msibi’s (2019) ideas of ‘hyper-professionalism’ as teachers attempt to work harder to build rapport to minimise the possible negative repercussions.

5.3.2 Emotional impact on LGBTQ+ teachers

The discussion so far has already touched on the psychological and emotional impact on LGBTQ+ teachers particularly through the complex negotiations and identity management strategies used. However, in the second part of this discussion, I move to explore the overt emotional impact endured by teachers. Meyer’s (2003) minority stress model can be a useful framework for understanding the psychological impact on LGBTQ+ teachers throughout this section. As the minority stress model offers insight into how minority stress can be understood through the influence of the dominant values of society or institutions and its impact on minority group members, we can gather a greater understanding into the impact of LGBTQ+ teachers working within educational settings.

Teacher guilt

Most participants in the current study described experiencing feelings of guilt for not being open about their sexual identity. This guilt stemmed from the complex negotiations between being open with students and the subsequent impact that this could have on their career progression. Participants described how this emotional weight of not feeling able to be a role model left them with an internalised perception of failure for not being able to be visible for those students who may identify as LGBTQ+. The findings demonstrate the detrimental impact on LGBTQ+ teachers’ emotional wellbeing for the additional navigations they must take to ensure the security of their sexual identity as well as their livelihoods. Similar findings have been reported in other studies, including Llewellyn and Reynolds (2021) research exploring

LGB teachers' accounts in relation to their sexual identity within school. It was reported that LGB teachers held feelings of guilt for not being open and viewed their decision as an internalised 'failure' rather than a barrier caused by institutional factors and regulations. Despite legislation such as The Equality Act 2010 ensuring that sexual identity is a protected characteristic, we can see that the negotiations between career progression and an authentic LGBQ+ teacher identity clash, resulting in the diminishing emotional well-being of LGBQ+ teachers.

Not only do these findings clearly illustrate the emotional impact placed on LGBQ+ teachers, they also give a greater insight into the pressures placed on LGBQ+ teachers and the perception that they *should* be open about their sexual identity in school. As participants spoke about the barriers to being open, I felt that there was a sense of obligation on LGBQ+ teachers to be a visible LGBQ+ representative for their students. It was important that prior to the interview I highlighted how there were no right or wrong answers regarding whether they should or not be open in school. Most teachers described their desire to be open and spoke as though it was the right thing to do. The research findings can be further understood through a queer theoretical lens. Between the complex dynamics of the obligations to be open as well as the emotional impact on LGBQ+ teachers, we can see the influence and power of institutions, such as schools. Foucault (1978, 1979) and Butler's (1990) work has maintained the idea that assumed heterosexuality is a strategy used to maintain control over individuals and populations, especially within institutions such as education. Arguably, participants' sense that they *should* be open gives insight into "the dominant heterosexual school culture" (Edwards et al, 2016; p.312) as the obligation to be open only demonstrates the reinforcement of heterosexuality as the 'norm' by continuing the "heterosexual/homosexual binary" (Rasmussen, 2004; p.148). There is much debate as to the implications of announcing one's sexuality within school and one participant within my study questioned whether sexuality should be at all present within the classroom. On one hand, to actively be open with others about one's sexual identity could work to break down heterosexist assumptions. However, this could also add to the dominance of heteronormative school cultures whereby non-heterosexual teachers are expected to make a declaration of their identity; an expectation that is not required of heterosexual teachers (Bragg et al, 2018). What these findings demonstrate

is an added responsibility placed on LGBTQ+ teachers to navigate this difficult environment without there being accountability for the lack of changes in the school environment.

Fear of parental power

For those participants who described concerns around being open, a significant influence in this concern came from teachers' fears of the school's community and parents. Many teachers perceive parents as holding a significant amount of power, especially regarding the influence of parental complaints. This acute awareness of parental influence was frequently mentioned during interviews and raised as a concern should they know that there are LGBTQ+ teachers at their school. Consequently, participants shared their worry and wariness about interacting with parents. The influence of parental response to LGBTQ+ visibility has been reported in other research findings, including teachers' reports of feeling fearful of the parents' responses towards non-heterosexuality (Ferfolja, 2009; Gray et al, 2016; Lee, 2019b). This wariness from teachers subsequently meant that they were cautious of what they shared with students about their sexual identity, in case this was fed back to the parents. From this, the perception appears to be that LGBTQ+ teachers experience parents as having negative reactions to the idea of a non-heterosexual teacher educating their children and how this could influence their children. This may stem from previous discourses of 'safeguarding' children whose vulnerable positions could be jeopardised should a non-heterosexual teacher reveal their sexuality (Gray et al, 2016) or parental fears of the exposure to sexualities as promoting children towards non-heterosexuality (Rudoe, 2010). Consequently, the concern of having parents complain to school was ingrained as an anticipated consequences of being a visible LGBTQ+ teacher.

In some instances, these perceptions of negative parental reactions to LGBTQ+ teachers were founded from previous experiences. Participant 3's account showed how parents actively sought to confirm their suspicions of her sexual identity through breaching her privacy and searching through her social media. Parents utilised their powers to complain to the school to remove her from her role, which was traumatic for her. In another example, a teacher described how parents would remove their child from RSE lessons on sexuality. With this consciousness, teachers reported not wanting to give parents a form of ammunition to use against them should there be issues with their child in school. This awareness of power held by parents can be seen in other research where teachers reported how parents appeared to

have a free pass to make comments about teachers without recrimination, even if the allegations were untrue (Lee, 2019b). What the findings tell us is that LGBTQ+ teachers' perceptions are that parents may view non-heterosexual identities and teacher identities as incompatible; a finding that has been previously reported in other research studies (Ferfolja, 2009). Meyer's (2003) distal and proximal stressors, including the impact of prejudice and discrimination, point to the potential psychological repercussions of these experiences.

Fear of faith community reactions

Whilst sharing their concerns around being open, teachers also referenced faith communities within this. Historically, religious teachings have been perceived as opposing those who identify as non-heterosexual (Allen et al, 2014). These concerns raised by participants were often described in relation to the tensions between religious beliefs and non-heterosexuality and from personal accounts of being discriminated against on religious grounds. Some participants shared how working in an area where there were strong faith communities filtered into their considerations of being visible or not. Other research findings show that non-heterosexual teachers have a reluctance to be open about their sexual identity for fear of a community backlash (Love & Tosolt, 2013). Not only this, LGB teachers have had their professional integrity questioned by the local faith community for being open about their sexual identity in school (Neary, 2017). It is important to avoid the portrayal of all faith groups as intolerant of non-heterosexual identities, and studies have shown that faith communities, schools, and LGBTQ+ communities can effectively collaborate together to co-exist (DePalma & Jennett, 2010). Furthermore, what was particularly insightful from my findings was the awareness that teachers had regarding these already existing tensions and how this may influence their feeling of concern. For example, participants were aware that their concerns surrounding religious-based discrimination were not always directed from personal experience. In fact, there were references to the media coverage of the protests that occurred in Birmingham where one participant described their 'worst-case scenario' response to the reaction of being open about their sexual identity as replicating the reaction that occurred in Birmingham. As previously mentioned, the portrayal of Islam's attack on 'British values' was emphatically portrayed by the media during the Birmingham school protests (Khan, 2021), which links back to Puar's (2007) concept of homonationalism. In one interview, a participant shared how it was important to convey that she was not trying to insinuate that her local

community would replicate these protests, however, her concern of persecution remained. Following on from this, other participants described how their expectations were sometimes incorrect and how their religious students were more engaged, inclusive, and willing to learn about matters concerning sexuality compared with those who did not hold a religious faith.

5.3.3 Perceived support from school leadership teams

During interviews, I asked participants to describe their accounts and perceptions of the support offered to them as LGBTQ+ teachers by their leadership teams. Teachers referred to their 'school leadership teams' as including the headteacher, with SLT supporting underneath this. 'Support' could incorporate the backing from SLT to LGBTQ+ teachers, zero-tolerance policies for homophobia, school enterprises to promote LGBTQ+ visibility as well as providing supportive spaces for LGBTQ+ teachers. There was a clear division in perceptions of how teachers viewed support offered from their schools. On one hand, the perception of support offered was described as minimal when it came to addressing issues around sexuality. Issues such as homophobia, heterosexism, and the overall promotion of LGBTQ+ visibility were described as not being regarded as important matters by participants' SLTs and in one instance, a teacher shared how she listened to her headteacher actively deny homophobia as being an issue within her school. From this, I interpreted a sense of disconnect in the shared understanding between teachers interacting with students in the classroom and those within management positions. In one excerpt, a teacher described repeatedly overhearing homophobic language on the school corridors, leaving her to question whether this language was being challenged in other classrooms by other teachers and the senior leadership team. Consequently, my findings demonstrate how some teachers perceive their leadership teams as out of touch and unwilling to acknowledge the issues of homophobia, heterosexism, and visibility of LGBTQ+ matters in their school, often leaving them to feel frustrated. In these instances, one must also question where teachers can turn if faced with issues surrounding homophobia in the classroom. Findings from Lee's (2019b) study uncovered similar responses from LGBT teachers struggling with their senior leadership teams not challenging homophobic name calling in schools. Taking action against homophobia and heterosexism has consistently been called upon as the responsibility of all teachers in school (Griffin & Genasci, 1990; Sparkes, 1994).

Teacher accounts appear to indicate a negative perception of their school support, however, there did not appear to be a focus on blaming their schools for certain shortcomings. In fact, teachers acknowledged wider societal factors that may contribute to higher levels of homophobia, including geographical location, parents, and faith community influences. However, the overarching methods to tackle issues of homophobia were viewed as being the responsibility of leadership teams within schools. The importance of strong leadership has been widely reported as a substantial factor in the tackling of homophobia within schools (Rudoe, 2010). Other research studies reference the power of 'micro-cultures' within schools and how these micro-cultures can affect the experiences of a whole school including its staff (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013; Connell, 2009). Here it is argued that the surrounding environment, such as geographical location of a school, does not entirely dictate the levels of discriminatory behaviour or attitudes within a school, yet a school's management and celebration of socio-cultural differences can influence the school climate (Atkinson, 2020) and subsequently, LGBTQ+ teachers' experiences (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013). On the other hand, those teachers who perceived their schools as supportive towards LGBTQ+ matters provided a useful insight into the responses from their leadership teams. In one example, a teacher described how their school endeavoured to create a climate of inclusivity for their LGBTQ+ students and staff and although their intentions were well-founded, the school lacked guidance at times. The lack of guidance (and policy) on LGBTQ+ issues meant that the school was vulnerable to being unable to support their students in these matters. Although we can see a differing narrative here with schools actively attempting to address issues around inclusivity and homophobia, it seems as though many schools are left to navigate these matters without great institutional support or guidance. The recent changes to the RSE guidance (Department of Education, 2019) means that schools have been relying on the previous RSE guidance dating back to 2000, in which education around LGBTQ+ identities was not compulsory as it is now. With this, it is understandable that schools are left to navigate their policies while adhering the government guidance available. This may address earlier discussions of the perceptions of responsibility placed on LGBTQ+ teachers, which may result from the limited government (and cost free) resources available to schools in the UK. This was further supported by one teacher's explanation of how her school outsourced LGBTQ+ resources and speakers from organisations such as Stonewall, which help educate and offer tools for schools. Nevertheless, she adds that these resources require schools to not only actively seek and solicit Stonewall's resources, but

that it comes with financial implications. With this, we can consider the impact of the current UK socio-political climate, in recognition of the public funding cuts, especially within education (Widdop et al, 2018).

The expectations of “the professional gay”

There was an overall sense of pride shared by teachers when speaking about their felt responsibility to create an inclusive environment within their schools. This sense of responsibility was described as for the benefit of the students in their school. Teacher accounts provided insight into the various initiatives they were involved in implementing such as, initiating and delivering training on LGBTQ+ matters, devising inclusive policies for LGBTQ+ issues, promoting visibility through visual representations i.e., LGBTQ+ rainbow lanyards and laces, and incorporating LGBTQ+ representation into lessons. Those participants open to students highlighted how they use themselves as a platform to be a role model to students. The caveat to this was participants reported how these additional tasks often felt expected by other staff members and SLT because they identified as non-heterosexual, reflecting Nixon and Givens’ (2007) findings that LGBTQ+ teachers are responsible for non-heterosexual matters within school. In one segment, a teacher described themselves as being perceived as the “*professional gay*” by other colleagues in their school, suggesting that LGBTQ+ teachers are positioned as the ‘experts’ of non-heterosexuality. The idea of responsibility and obligation being assigned to LGBTQ+ teachers have previously been considered “obvious” and expected (Harris, 1990; p.105). This ‘expert’ association often meant that in situations where there were issues or questions around sexuality, for example a student questioning their own sexual identity, staff would refer them to an LGBTQ+ member of staff. What this sole responsibility indicates is a particular pressure on LGBTQ+ teachers to fulfil this role, which further suggests that there is a responsibility for those teachers to be open. Those teachers not open to students also described the pressures that came with this assumption of responsibility, especially as this placed pressure on them to be open about their sexual identity. In one example, one participant implies that it is important to have visible role models but exclaimed, “*why’s it got to be me?*” Again, this obligation of being a role model can be viewed as a pressure placed on LGBTQ+ teachers whereby, should they fail to be an open and positive role model, the narrative of having failed in their assumed duties is reproduced (Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021). Minority groups are often expected to engage in additional labour to either educate

others or provide an inclusive representation for their organisation without consideration of the pressure this places on the individual (Calvard et al, 2019).

Furthermore, as stated, the initiatives undertaken by teachers were not perceived as negative duties for the majority of LGBTQ+ teachers, however, it was acknowledged that these initiatives would likely not be implemented without their lead, suggesting that there is a burden on LGBTQ+ teachers who engage in these tasks alone. This was illustrated through teachers' descriptions of some of the additional tasks and projects undertaken, including, setting up and leading LGBTQ+ clubs or devising a structured anti-homophobia policy for their school. Considering the already demanding expectations placed on those within the teaching profession, having these additional tasks could be overwhelming for LGBTQ+ teachers. One teacher exemplifies this as she listed the extensive time, work and effort put into creating school policies to ensure a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students and staff. There was a particular moment where she paused having offered a detailed description of her contributions and acknowledged, "*yeah it was just me*", noticing that she was the only member of staff governing these initiatives. She further recognised how there were no other colleagues or SLT members involved despite the workload being above her pay grade and job description. Although it was perceived as considerate for leadership teams and colleagues to look to guidance from an LGBTQ+ teacher and take lead on LGBTQ+ projects, often there was little to no support in assisting in these projects. What appeared to be a source of contention was the sense that it was the sole responsibility of LGBTQ+ teachers to address matters surrounding non-heterosexual issues in school. These tensions can be understood as placing an onus on LGBTQ+ teachers to approach LGBTQ+ matters as though it is a LGBTQ+ problem. As argued by Sparkes (1994), in order to create a safe and inclusive environment, the responsibility lies with all teachers to challenge LGBTQ+ issues, including homophobia and heterosexism. However, it was also evident that LGBTQ+ teachers felt it was important to be a representative figure for their students and to lead on projects that worked to promote visibility for LGBTQ+ identities and challenge sexual identity discrimination. This representation is arguably more uniquely understood by those who identify as LGBTQ+. One participant who is open to her school about her sexual identity reported how she saw the responsibility of being a role model as an opportunity and powerful platform to influence her school's views on LGBTQ+ matters, whilst

actively promoting the visibility of non-heterosexuality through using herself as a role model figure.

Tokenistic use of LGBTQ+ inclusion and school benefit

The present findings also suggest that LGBTQ+ teachers perceive their school's support around LGBTQ+ issues as lacking in legitimacy and at times appearing 'tokenistic'. Teachers described the superficial reactions to matters concerning non-heterosexuality from their senior leadership teams. For example, teachers often cited the requirements and targets set out by Ofsted regarding inclusivity and diversity and how their schools approached this with a 'tick-box' mentality. By this, participants stated that when it came to the school's efforts to address LGBTQ+ inclusion and visibility, there was often a tendency to achieve the bare minimum inclusion requirements and to 'tick off' the expected standards. Further, when issues concerning LGBTQ+ inclusivity and visibility were addressed, it was often perceived as serving a purpose for the school's benefit. For example, in the lead up to Ofsted inspections, some teachers reported how their schools would cite concern for LGBTQ+ matters to meet the threshold of Ofsted reports within their inclusivity policies without making efforts to implement these policies following the inspection. However, teachers highlighted the monumental stressors placed on schools to reach certain requirements and how the time available to dedicate to various areas of inclusivity, including LGBTQ+, were minimal. Moving away from the institutional mentality of box-checking has been cited as an important step within Australian education as part of addressing a social justice agenda (Gray et al, 2016). In part, my findings offer insight into the wider socio-political implications that impact schools through the pressures to adhere to rigorous standards and procedures. However, it further demonstrates the micro-level impact on LGBTQ+ teachers as the perception of tokenism experienced by LGBTQ+ teachers demonstrate a perception of feeling undervalued or cared for by their leadership teams.

This perception of tokenism extended to LGBTQ+ teachers themselves, as participants reported feeling that their own sexual identity added to the school's diversity box-checking requirements through having LGBTQ+ staff members. One teacher described feeling as though her identity was being used to help their school appear diverse and inclusive, as well as being the representative voice for all LGBTQ+ matters and individuals in the school. These findings

illustrate another strand of additional workplace labour that expects LGBTQ+ teachers to represent the voice of LGBTQ+ matters. Existing literature within higher education has brought attention to LGBT tokenism and the corporatisation of sexual identities (Calvard et al, 2019). Calvard et al write:

“Much of the work of LGBT inclusion in workplaces is performative – organisations want to be seen to be acting because doing so carries social capital. This means that the workplaces who are more likely to engage in LGBT initiatives are those who have the most to gain from doing so” (p.364).

Similarly, my findings suggest schools have a performative response to LGBTQ+ inclusion as LGBTQ+ teachers perceive that SLTs capitalise on their sexual identity for the sake of abiding to diversity and inclusion policies rather than a genuine intent to champion inclusion within their schools.

Disciplinary actions for breaking heteronormative boundaries

Finally, some participants described a wariness towards engaging in promoting LGBTQ+ visibility in case it was viewed as a professional conduct concern by their SLT. Participants highlighted the double standard of what constitutes appropriate discussions in the classroom in comparison with their heterosexual colleagues. This included avoiding sharing wedding pictures and details about their weekend activity or encouraging discussions that promote the visibility of non-heterosexual identities in case it was deemed inappropriate. These findings provide additional evidence to the idea of certain sexualities being viewed as inappropriate, and further, LGBTQ+ teachers’ concerns of being in trouble for discussing ‘inappropriate’ content (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006). Again, the questioning of ‘appropriateness’ relates back to the implications of non-heterosexuality linked to perceived sexual inappropriacy (Foucault, 1979). Similar to Foucault’s ideas of non-heterosexuality being linked to sexual deviance, these findings demonstrate an ongoing narrative that to discuss non-heterosexuality is to disrupt the discourse of protecting childhood innocence (Neary, 2019). In one account, a teacher spoke passionately about the importance of promoting visibility of non-heterosexuality within their school yet described their tentativeness to do so due to their perception of what their senior leadership team deemed appropriate. In their account, they described witnessing another staff

member be challenged by their SLT for promoting discussions around LGBTQ+ visibility in the classroom, which consequently created a hesitancy for them in promoting LGBTQ+ visibility. These findings provide additional evidence towards the idea of the “heteronormative logic” that educational institutions adhere to, whereby schools present themselves as asexual yet uphold heterosexuality as the norm at the same time (Bragg et al, 2018: p.421). It further replicates the “messy mix of transgressing boundaries and reproducing normativity” endured by LGBTQ+ teachers while simultaneously attempting to maintain a professional legitimacy and being an active role model for students (Neary, 2020; p.18). My findings exemplify these transgressing boundaries, especially from participants’ accounts of non-heterosexuality being questioned as inappropriate.

Finally, participants described what they thought their SLT wanted from them as staff members and what constitutes a *good* teacher. When describing this, teachers indicated that in certain situations it was beneficial for them to tone down the visibility of their sexuality when around their leadership teams. For example, one participant stated that to avoid getting on their senior management’s ‘radar’ or to progress up to senior leadership level, meant to get on with the job without making a fuss as well as adhering to the institutional norms expected of teachers, such as heteronormativity and normative gender performances. This corroborates Williams and Giuffre’s (2011) concept of “a new homonormativity” whereby non-heterosexual professionals are able to succeed within their workplace if they conform to conventional performances of gender, politics and family (p.553). As highlighted by one participant, ‘masculinity’ was deemed as a preferred approach to leadership styles indicating that it is perceived that ‘masculine’ presenting men or women are more likely to be considered for leadership compared with ‘feminine’ presenting men or women. However, considering Williams and Giuffre’s (2011) concept, this could suggest that LGBTQ+ teachers are less likely to be considered for leadership positions if they do not conform to these conventional performances of gender. Thus, further illustrating the importance of considering the impact of overlapping identities, in this example, between gender and sexual identity (Crenshaw, 1991; Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Furthermore, this offers pertinent insight into the inherent power imbalances experienced by LGBTQ+ teachers where their sexual identity disconnects them from a sense of job security,

which appears to maintain the cycle of silence and invisibility. Teachers who were open about their identity described their schools as supportive and encouraging towards the discussion of non-heterosexuality and embracing diversity. LGBTQ+ teachers appear to be able to exist authentically in a school culture where non-heterosexuality is valued explicitly. Ferfolja and Hopkins' (2013) ideas around 'micro-cultures' are useful in understanding my findings here as it appears that the 'micro-cultures' of a school i.e. how a school manages, recognises, and celebrates socio-cultural differences creates a perception of greater inclusivity and acceptance for non-heterosexual individuals within schools.

5.4 Reflexive Statement

A researcher's subjectivity undoubtedly shapes, influences, and impacts every part of the research process (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). As a social researcher examining the social world, I acknowledge that my engagement within the research does not exist without my influence and interpretation and equally that the research cannot exist without interpretation. I have attempted to remain acutely aware of my own preconceptions, biases, and experiences and how these may have influenced my approach to this research project. This process of reflexivity permeates the entirety of the research project and is often complex (Mitchell et al, 2018). Despite the limited space available to discuss these complexities, I have utilised discussions with my research supervisory team, engaged in reflexive journaling and continuously challenged my processes throughout. A reflexive research diary has been described as a particularly beneficial tool for enabling a researcher to acknowledge and process their thoughts and feelings throughout the research process (Haynes, 2012). As part of my reflexivity, I began by identifying my research paradigm including my ontological and epistemological positioning before approaching this research project and approaching the data. Understanding my position as being in line with critical realism gave me a greater understanding into how I constructed meaning from the research as well as understanding my assumptions and biases (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Additionally, it was crucial for me to consider my own personal positioning in relation to the research project, as well as being aware of the similarities and differences between myself and the participants (Berger, 2015). Dodgson (2019) states that "[t]he quality of the work depends on the researcher(s) ability to articulate these similarities and differences to self and others,

which include participants and readers” (p.220). I sit as both an insider, one who identifies as LGBTQ+ and an outsider, as a training counselling psychologist who has no experience of working as a teacher. Considering the nature of the topic, I continued to ask myself questions, sit with discomfort and challenge my processes at every point. For example, before engaging with this project, I explored my desires to venture into the specific area of sexuality and education. I knew that there would be a deep personal connection to the project and was acutely aware that this stemmed from my own personal experiences as an LGBTQ+ student growing up within a heteronormative school environment. I acknowledge that my own experiences undoubtedly shape the preconceptions I have towards other experiences of those who identify as non-heterosexual and further attempted to remain acutely aware of this during the entire research process. However, my curiosity to explore the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers in part removed an element of similarity through the lack of shared experience as a teacher.

I endeavoured to remain aware of my assumptions and biases at each stage. For example, when exploring the available research surrounding LGBTQ+ teacher visibility, I maintained an awareness of the research articles that I was drawn to and my search process. I learnt significantly from continually questioning myself and asking, “why did I use that search term?” and considering what my assumptions were in doing so. Prior to the interview process, I continually drafted my research questions and considered possible connotations attached to the phrasing of the question utilising my supervisory team in the process. For example, I constructed open questions such as, “how is your experience as an LGBTQ+ teacher?” to facilitate an open response. During the interview process, I used my reflexive journal to help me develop awareness into my blind spots. To illustrate this, when asking participants about their positive and negative accounts as LGBTQ+ teachers, I wrote in my journal about noticing participant tendencies to lean towards offering either a negative or positive account and not mention any differing experiences. I endeavoured to ask about their positive or negative experiences again to ensure that participants were given the opportunity to offer all sides of their experiences. It was difficult at times to try and hold my own experiences whilst immersing myself in the narratives of participants during the data analysis and interpretation, despite my endeavours to maintain an element of personal detachment. However, this is not to suggest that this interpretation was not co-constructed between myself and the participants. As previously stated, I believe that it is not possible to fully detach oneself from the data analysis

and interpretive stages as a social researcher (Bhaskar, 1975). Therefore, I utilised my own reflexive journal and discussions with my supervisory team to try and distance myself from this. Despite my efforts to work inductively, and therefore, being led by the data, the effect of engaging in academic readings and assignments, as well as having conversations with LGBTQ+ teachers will have influenced my sense-making of participant experiences.

5.5 Strengths and Limitations

One strength of this research project is its contribution to literature in the field of LGBTQ+ teachers' experiences, specifically within England. Although there has been a progressive amount of literature added to the field over the past 10 years, there have been calls for further research (Glazzard, 2019). By directly engaging with LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers, this research responds to these calls. The accumulation of further research in this area continues to spotlight the overlooked issues ongoing within education and I hope that by adding this contribution, there will be greater emphasis on tackling the issues presented. In this hope, it may be possible to see greater weight given to the promotion of visibility for non-heterosexual identities within education.

Another key strength of this research project is the ability to generate an in-depth analysis of LGBTQ+ secondary school teacher experience using a reflexive thematic analysis. The process of using RTA was an extremely insightful and challenging process for myself as a researcher as I continually questioned and queried my assumptions that fed into the interpretation of the data. Holding the knowledge that this research project is an accumulation of my own generation and interpretation of the data has been challenging, particularly, balancing my fear of not accurately portraying the accounts of LGBTQ+ teachers with the knowledge that themes are creative and interpretative stories (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Compared with other types of analysis, such as IPA, a reflexive thematic analysis enabled me to examine the meaning across all participants in my study (Braun & Clarke, 2014), which was most appropriate for my research questions. I hope that through engaging in the process of a good reflexive thematic analysis I have minimised and challenged, as much as possible, the influences of my own experiences.

I was eager to ensure that participants were not subjected to having their sexual identity exposed because of their involvement in the project, and therefore, adamant that recruitment would not be sourced through participants' place of work. I believe that this emphasis strengthened the recruitment process as the snowball sampling that followed provided me with participants who were trusting and engaged during the interviews and that this is evident from the findings through the vulnerability demonstrated by participants in the accounts shared. However, a point of learning from the interview process stems from the caution I had in approaching interviews and how this influenced the data generated. Within the methodology section, I discuss the impact that COVID19 had, such as, conducting interviews virtually, and without the camera function being used. This was to provide additional layers of protection of the data due to the remoteness of interviews as required for the ethics process. However, following the initial unfavourable outcome from the 'medium' risk ethics process, for the reasons of a risk of 'embarrassment, distress, anxiety or fatigue' (see Appendix 11), I often felt hesitant towards prompting participants for further detail, in fear of 'doing something wrong' or distressing participants. On reflection, if I were to complete this project again, I would be braver in the exploration with participants during interviews to generate a deeper understanding into their accounts. Additionally, I would be bolder in my challenge to the ethics committee in their attitudes towards sexual identity and discussion of the topic.

Another point of learning taken from this research project stems from the lack of focus that this project had regarding other elements of one's identity, such as race, age, disability with sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1991). In part, having the camera function switched off and not asking about other parts of the participants' identity within the questionnaire made it harder to explore this. This does not suggest that should there have been face-to-face interviews that this matter would have been resolved (for example, hidden disabilities). However, in my attempt to remain as close to the subject of sexual identity, this focus may have potentially hindered opportunities for participants to discuss the impact of multiple and intersecting parts of one's identity. On reflection, although the scope of this research was limited by time and focus, I believe that there were areas within the data that could have been further explored and developed to consider how the amalgamation of a person's identity can influence their accounts and experience as LGBTQ+ teachers. If I were to conduct future research, this would be an imperative avenue to explore. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, the focus

of this research pinpointed sexuality, and although not excluding transgender participants, it is possible that the advertisement of the project may have deterred those under the transgender umbrella from requesting to partake in the research. With further consideration, although my research advertisement poster included the acronym 'LGBTQ+' (*see Appendix 1*), it may have been helpful to include the transgender flag as well as the LGBT flag.

Another limitation of this research study is through the impact of COVID19, in which the interviews were conducted with participants at a time where most had not physically been in school for between three and six months. This could have meant that teachers' accounts were not as fresh in their memory considering the time delays. Furthermore, my final few interviews were conducted shortly before teachers were due to return to school for the new academic year in September 2020 and were likely anxious at the prospect of returning during uncertain times. Reflecting on this, I believe this in turn impacted how I approached these interviews, not wanting to add stress to the participant by taking their time in the run up to returning to school. For future research, I would ensure that the participant was in a fully engaged position to take part in the research and ask to rearrange to a more appropriate time that suited them for the benefit of both the researcher and participant. However, reviewing my notes following interviews, I recalled how teachers described finding the process of engaging in a research project as an unusual experience that they likely would not have taken part in if they were in school due to the demand of their working schedules. In fact, it was shared that the process of engaging in the research was a unique chance to sit back and reflect on their experiences as LGBTQ+ teachers.

Furthermore, as someone who is completing their training to become a counselling psychologist, it is also important to acknowledge that I am not and have not ever qualified or trained as a secondary school teacher. I believe that this has been both an advantage and disadvantage to the research conducted. Through my lack of knowledge or understanding of the experiences of teaching, there are limited biases and projections of my own experiences on to the research undertaken. However, this lack of experience may have led to certain blind spots or areas to explore further. Finally, I acknowledge that there may be teaching professionals reading this thesis whose experiences oppose the findings presented. Considering the nature of qualitative research, this study does not attempt to generalise the

findings to all LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers and instead aims to provide a deep and contextual insight into the lived experiences of the seven LGBTQ+ teachers who partook in the study. It is a further point of significance to acknowledge how the findings and interpretation of this study would differ depending on different participants as well as a different researcher.

5.6 Implications

The findings generated suggest that there are many factors that influence LGBTQ+ teacher experiences on an educational, political and societal level in need of consideration and action. As the findings have indicated, it would be inappropriate and unfeasible to offer suggestions without considering the multifaceted undercurrents permeating individuals' experiences. It is important to look beyond the individual - i.e. LGBTQ+ teachers on a 'micro' level – and consider a 'macro' approach which acknowledges the influence of wider structures such as, schools and communities as well as cultural and political impacts (Prilleltensky, 1999; Winter et al, 2016). Moving away from examining issues at an individual level is critical as part of a social justice agenda (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003). With this, I offer recommendations applicable for teachers and schools, as well as on a political level. These recommendations are not made with the intention of placing blame on any groups, nor do I suggest that these recommendations offer a complete resolution to the difficulties described by the LGBTQ+ teachers in my study. However, the findings do indicate that there are issues in need of recognition and action. Some of these issues may on the surface appear unproblematic or invisible, but with small yet significant changes, it is likely to create a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ teachers.

5.6.1 Whole school approach to promoting inclusive school culture

From the findings of this research project, the discussions have largely focused on the issues experienced by LGBTQ+ teachers as being influenced by school structures and culture. Firstly, my findings have demonstrated a back-and-forth pendulum between the responsibilities and expectations placed on LGBTQ+ teachers by the school and the internal responsibilities and pressures that these teachers place on themselves. On an individual level, participants described how they strived to create a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ identities, whilst in some cases maintaining the privacy of their sexual identity. However, this led to feelings of frustration and guilt in instances where they were not able to promote visibility or act as a visible role model for students. This concealment of identity appeared to be in part

compounded by the dominant heteronormative discourses within schools (Rothing, 2008) but was further intensified by perceptions that LGBTQ+ issues are for LGBTQ+ individuals. Teachers also described their perception of the added expectations placed on them by virtue of their sexual identity by their school, which often resulted in taking on additional labour without support from their heterosexual colleagues. I therefore argue that it is imperative for *all* teachers to consider the promotion of LGBTQ+ visibility as their responsibility within school. The promotion of visibility can be achieved in a variety of ways that extend further than tackling issues such as homophobia and heterosexism (Sparkes, 1994; Formby, 2015). Ensuring a whole-school approach to promoting LGBTQ+ visibility is not only likely to improve the 'micro-cultures' within school (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013), but also reduce the burden of responsibility on LGBTQ+ teachers. As the findings suggest, there are small progressive changes occurring within schools, through the implementation of policy and an inclusive curriculum. For schools, it is crucial to ensure that inclusive curriculums are implemented and LGBTQ+ visibility is incorporated into lesson plans (Carrera et al, 2012; Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013). As shared by the participants in this study, incorporating LGBTQ+ and transgender visibility can be achieved through using case examples that include diverse families/relationship and gender-neutral language, discussing queer representation, and facilitating discussion around LGBTQ+ terminology. Regarding policy, LGBTQ+ teachers spoke about their experiences of being the driving force behind non-discriminatory and inclusivity policies in schools. Again, I argue that schools, in particular leadership teams, must ensure that the devising and implementation of these policies are collaboratively approached. This may be approached by resourcing staff time for these activities to avoid the exploitation of free labour of staff, in particularly, LGBTQ+ teachers.

As highlighted previously, intersectionality is a framework that considers people's overlapping identities to understand the complexities of the prejudices they may face (Crenshaw, 1991). As indicated, the interplay between gender and sexual identity feeds into these prejudices and subsequent disadvantages for LGBTQ+ teachers. Regarding school structures, we know that heteronormativity infiltrates the physical structures including gender segregated toilets, changing rooms, uniforms and titles. My suggestion is not to abolish these structures, but rather to move away from the construction of gender as binary. For example, this could include having gender neutral toilets and changing rooms for staff and students and ensuring that all

schools have a gender-neutral uniform option. These visual representations not only create more inclusive spaces for non-heterosexual, queer and transgender staff and students but would also work to disrupt the invisibly heteronormative structures of the school (Butler, 1990). Additionally, the findings indicated LGBTQ+ teachers' difficulties surrounding the power dynamics between school, parents, and the wider community, including receiving parental complaints about promoting LGBTQ+ visibility. Further, the findings demonstrated a perception of senior leadership teams' support for their LGBTQ+ teachers and matters concerning sexuality as minimal. In some instances, teachers were concerned about what their SLT constituted as appropriate regarding non-heterosexuality, including demonstrating normative gender performances. From this, I argue that it is important for senior leadership teams to have an awareness of these power dynamics and reiterate support for LGBTQ+ teachers through the active promotion of LGBTQ+ visibility and creation of an inclusive school culture from the recommendations above. Although teachers did not directly speak about the impact that this had on their psychological well-being, breaking down these perceived power inequalities is argued to have positive mental health outcomes for LGBTQ+ teachers (Meyer, 2003).

5.6.2 Educational resources and funding for LGBTQ+ visibility

As mentioned throughout this discussion, some of the barriers impacting LGBTQ+ teachers have been explored from a macro-level perspective, through examining the wider socio-political impacts. As indicated within this discussion, the Department of Education's (2019) updated guidance for RSE highlights how LGBTQ+ inclusion is required by all secondary schools within the UK. As the findings suggest, LGBTQ+ teachers appear to lead on implementing this new guidance with little support resulting in teachers feeling used by virtue of their sexual identity. School expectations have been interpreted as placing pressure on LGBTQ+ teachers who are already under immense workloads as well as pressures to meet requirements by Ofsted, including obtaining certain grades and managing behavioural issues in the classroom (Smyth, 2007). These additional requirements to meet inclusive benchmarks appear to be expected by schools (and LGBTQ+ teachers in particular) despite the lack of resources available from the Department of Education. Although Stonewall offers an introductory guidance document for secondary schools in the UK (Ward, 2017), a majority of resources appear to come at a cost. Therefore, schools must take on the financial implications of sourcing LGBTQ+ and transgender

resources, which is not feasible for all schools. Therefore, on a political level, I argue that educational resources around sexuality should be funded and provided to schools in England.

5.7 Recommendations for future research

This thesis project has approached examining the experiences of LGBTQ+ secondary teachers from a broad lens and has generated significant findings that expose some of the difficult obstacles that teachers navigate. As the focus of this project did not attempt to pinpoint a certain area of interest within this, one area of focus for future research could look to specifically explore the psychological impact and well-being of LGBTQ+ teachers. Further, I would argue that there is a gap in the literature available as although the existing literature touches on the psychological ramifications, there does not appear to be a body of work exploring LGBTQ+ teachers' psychological well-being. With this, I reiterate the importance of also looking beyond a micro approach and tackling issues on a meso and macro level (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003). In this instance, going beyond the individual and challenging the wider structures including education and political influence is imperative for social change. As the findings have touched on, although schools have an active role in implementing change to facilitate a more inclusive environment, there are likely wider factors restricting these changes. Moreover, it would further be remiss to not consider the changes that have occurred during the process of this thesis project. For example, the implementation of the new RSE guidance (Department of Education, 2019) for all secondary schools within the UK came into implementation in September 2020, during which time the UK, like the rest of the world, was battling a global pandemic. In the findings of this research, the implementation of policy (or lack thereof) was a considered point of reference and therefore, it would be insightful for future research to follow up on the implementation of this guidance and how this has been addressed in the context of the impact of COVID19.

5.8 Implications for Counselling Psychology

As a training counselling psychologist, I believe that this research project has offered significant insights and implications for the CP profession. One may question why CP should take interest in the specific area of LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers. I attempt to address this below and in doing so, it is useful to remind the reader of some of the values and philosophical positionings of CP. Counselling psychology is rooted in humanistic values and ethics (Cooper,

2009), and further strives towards developing a holistic approach when working with clients (Woolfe et al, 2010). With this, it is imperative for practitioners to have a well-informed understanding of their client's world including their social and relational contexts (Cooper, 2009). From the findings of this research project, I believe that it has demonstrated a clear link to the interests of CP for its interpretations of the psychological outcomes that may affect LGBTQ+ teachers. Furthermore, the research has brought awareness to the unique experiences of discrimination or disadvantage that LGBTQ+ teachers face regarding the impact of intersecting identities, such as gender and sexual identity. This can be further applied to recognising the possible prejudices and discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ teachers and other identity markers, including race, religion, age for example. As counselling psychologists navigate a variety of professional identities and work across a broad spectrum of organisations, this may include within or around the educational setting. Alongside our understanding of the significant stressors that teachers undergo (Smyth, 2007), it is likely that practitioners will work with this client group. With this, practitioners may have been unaware of some of the additional factors impacting the well-being of LGBTQ+ teachers, and therefore, this project is important for CP to be conscious of.

Although it is important for CP to be aware of the possible psychological outcomes for LGBTQ+ teachers, as stated earlier, looking beyond the individual and to the wider implications are not only important but interconnected (Winter et al, 2016). CP research has focused on the impact of the UK's current socio-political climate; a climate which is implicated in impacting the psychological and emotional well-being of many people, including those within education (Winter, 2019). A social justice agenda is an integral part of CP, its philosophy and professional identity (Vera & Speight, 2003). As well as this, counselling psychology's commitment to research as working towards a vehicle of change is equally valued. Counselling psychology involves, as Winter (2019) writes:

“...an acknowledgment that the work we do occurs in a socio-political context which it cannot be easily disconnected from (and therefore that things like power, discrimination and oppression are important) and that this work can have political implications.” (p.180).

The findings generated have demonstrated some of the inequalities that LGBTQ+ teachers endure because of wider political failings. A social justice agenda raises the question of equity, especially when considering distribution of resources and opportunities (Crethar & Winterowd, 2012). As mentioned, schools in the UK are under immense pressure to measure up to government standards with little support offered regarding financial aid as well as policy reform. CP is known for its advocacy outside of the therapy room and holds significant powers to make changes on a political level. Fitzgibbon and Winter (2021) describe a macro-level intervention for practitioners whereby through working collaboratively with schools, practitioners can use their voice and power to challenge current educational policies. I argue that this is imperative work that needs to be done, especially regarding matters surrounding sexuality, not only for teachers but students also.

5.9 Conclusion and contribution to knowledge

When I embarked on this thesis project, my focus was to gain insight into the accounts and perceptions of LGBTQ+ teachers working within English secondary schools. It was clear from the existing literature that further research into the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers was required, especially within England. Therefore, in answering my research questions, I sought to firstly explore the accounts of LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers regarding the visibility of their sexual identity and how this influenced their role as a teacher. Using a reflexive thematic analysis enabled me to generate a deep and insightful understanding into the accounts and experiences of the LGBTQ+ teachers within my study and further generated a unique insight into their experiences on an individual, educational and socio-political level. This research project adds to the growing body of literature that recognises the obstacles and considerations that LGBTQ+ teachers navigate within their professional settings, especially in comparison to heterosexual teachers. As stated at the beginning of this thesis, there was no suggestion that LGBTQ+ teachers should be open about their identity, and that choice remains entirely with the individual. However, due to the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm, LGBTQ+ teachers are automatically expected to navigate within a heteronormative environment and actively consider the visibility of their sexual identity. This research project has further contributed to the existing literature through illustrating the protective strategies used by teachers to conceal the visibility of their sexual identity. Similar to the existing research highlighting the expectations and obligations placed on non-heterosexual teachers (Henderson, 2019; Connell,

2015), my research findings demonstrate the expectations placed on teachers by virtue of identifying as LGBTQ+. However, the additional burden and weight of responsibility has left an emotional toll on LGBTQ+ teachers. My research project offers an original contribution to knowledge from the findings surrounding LGBTQ+ teacher perceptions of tokenism. By this, teachers reported how they at times experienced the incorporation of LGBTQ+ inclusion as appearing as a tick-box exercise rather than a genuine attempt to champion inclusivity within schools. Further, my findings demonstrate the perception that schools capitalise on their LGBTQ+ teachers' sexual identity to appear diverse and inclusive. However, these perceptions of tokenism can be understood in part because of the wider socio-political constraints placed on schools to meet certain standards and criteria. Finally, my findings offer a unique insight into LGBTQ+ teacher experiences from a counselling psychology perspective.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Advertisement for participant recruitment



MANCHESTER
1824
The University of Manchester

LGBTQ+ Research

Are you a teacher? Do you identify as LGBTQ+? Do you work in a secondary school?

... If so, we want to find out about your accounts and perceptions surrounding sexuality within your school and to hear about the impact these experiences may have had on your professional life and personal life. You do not have to be open about your sexuality at work and/or in your personal life and your participation in this study will remain anonymous.

We are inviting participants to take part in an online interview lasting up to 45 minutes in total.

For further details about this study and if you would like to take part, please contact Roshini:
roshini.prince-navaratnam@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

(*Due to the current pandemic, all interviews will take place via Zoom* Any correspondence between yourself and the research team will be highly confidential and personal details will be kept securely and privately amongst the research team. Further information on data and confidentiality is available on request)



← **LGBTQ+ Secondary Teachers study** 🏳️‍🌈
7 Tweets Follow

[@LGBTedUK](#) Hi there, could I get a retweet for my doctoral research? Many thanks!

LGBTQ+ Secondary Teachers study 🏳️‍🌈 @Research... · 25 Jul 2020
Looking for LGBTQ+ secondary school teachers to interview as part of my doctoral research. Please check out the poster below for more details! Please contact me via the email provided - Many thanks! 🏳️‍🌈
#lgbtq #secondarieschool #teachers



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Appendix 2 - Example participant email

Participant Email

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for your interest in this research project. As you are aware from the advert, I am conducting research surrounding teacher's accounts and perceptions of openness about sexuality. Specifically, this research is focusing on lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) teachers who work in a secondary school. I have attached a participant information sheet along with this email, however, should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

I would also like to reassure you that any correspondence between yourself and I will be kept highly confidential and that your workplace/school will not be informed of your participation in this research.

Further, due to the current pandemic, this research will be conducted online. We ask to ensure your wellbeing and privacy that you only take part in this research if:

- You have access to a secure and private space to conduct the online interview.
- You believe you are able to look after your own well-being if you take part in the research and have access to support should you become distressed as a result of taking part.
- You are able to sign a consent form via electronic signature or have access to a printer to physically sign the consent form. A photograph of the form from your phone can then be emailed back to the researcher.

If you would still like to take part in this research project, please let me know a convenient time for you. As noted, interviews will take place online through the platform of Zoom, in which I will send you a link to join before the interview. You do not need to create a Zoom account in order to access Zoom however, if you will be using Zoom from your phone or a smaller electronic device, please ensure you have downloaded the Zoom app. If you need any further assistance with this, please do let me know. Prior to beginning the interview, I will ask you to turn your video off for the duration of the interview. I will also turn my camera off too.

Only when the interview has ended and the recording has stopped, can the video camera be turned back on; the researcher will inform you when this has happened.

The interview will be audio recorded only. The interview will be recorded through Zoom's recording function. The recording is then uploaded and stored to a secure university storage system.

Please note: If you wish to take part, we will accommodate a time and date that is suitable for you. However, if following initial interest, we are unable to get in contact with you for a period of 2 weeks, we will assume you no longer wish to take part. If you are unable to attend for any reason, please inform the researcher as soon as you can.

If you choose to take part and at any point feel upset during the interview, please let me know. There are also a number of organisations listed below that you can contact should you require following the interview.

Organisations	Number
NHS Direct	111 or 999 (in cases of emergency)
Samaritans (24-hour service)	116 123
LGBT Foundation (for talking therapy referral)	0345 330 30 30

Kind regards,

Roshini Prince-Navaratnam

(Trainee Counselling Psychologist
University of Manchester)

Participant Information Sheet - V7.7 (2)

An exploration of LGBTQ+ teachers' accounts and perceptions of openness about their sexuality within secondary schools

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a Doctorate Thesis in Counselling Psychology. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

About the research

➤ **Who will conduct the research?**

Researcher: Roshini Prince-Navaratnam, Counselling Psychologist in Training.
School of Environment, Education and Development
Ellen Wilkinson Building
The University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

➤ **What is the title of the research?**

An exploration of LGBTQ+ teachers' accounts and perceptions of openness about their sexuality within secondary schools.

➤ **What is the purpose of the research?**

The purpose of this research is to explore the accounts and perceptions of openness about your sexuality as an LGBTQ+ teacher in your school. In doing so, this research aims

to enable individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ to have a voice and to express current issues as well as giving the opportunity to suggest areas for improvement. You have been selected to participate in this study as an LGBTQ+ teacher who works in a secondary school and we are very interested to hear your experiences in regard to this. Using a semi-structured interview, the research aims to gain a greater understanding the overall impact being an LGBTQ+ teacher has had including the impact this may have on your personal (i.e. life outside of work and well-being) and professional life (i.e. the impact of work on you, on your career progression, your relationship with staff, students, parents etc). Additionally, the results of the study will contribute to literature for LGBTQ+, social justice, education and counselling psychology.

➤ **Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

The outcomes of this research will be published in the form of a student thesis but may also be published within an academic book chapter, journals or cited at conferences. Anything that is published will not contain any identifiable information.

➤ **Who has reviewed the research project?**

This research has been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) at The University of Manchester.

What would my involvement be?

➤ **What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

If you choose to take part in the research, you will be asked to participate in one interview with the researcher lasting up to 45 minutes. You will be asked closed and open-ended questions about your experience of being an LGBTQ+ teacher working in a secondary school as well as questions about your perceptions of LGBTQ+ matters within your school. Due to the current pandemic, the interview will be held via the online platform, Zoom. The interview will be recorded through Zoom's recording function. Only the audio will be recorded therefore, yours and the researcher's camera will be turned off to ensure this. This audio will then be analysed and discussed within the research thesis.

Prior to the interview taking place, you will be asked to sign a consent form acknowledging your acceptance to take part in the study. The consent form will be emailed to you prior to the interview taking place. You can electronically sign the consent form and return it or print the consent form, sign it, take a photo of it and email it back to the researcher. It is within your rights to withdraw from the study if you no longer wish to participate in the study. However, it should be noted that once your data has been analysed, it will not be possible to remove your data as it will have been anonymised. Additionally, although it is unlikely, there is a chance that discussions may cause distress in which there is a debrief procedure available. Additionally, there will be an optional demographic questionnaire sheet which you can fill in if you want to. This asks questions about how you identify, what area of the country you work in i.e. county, the type of school you work in i.e. faith school and how long you have been teaching.

Zoom

Due to the impact of COVID19, the interview must take place online through the platform of Zoom. On the day of the interview, the researcher will send you a link to join before the interview. You do not need to create a Zoom account in order to access Zoom however, if you will be using Zoom from your phone or a smaller electronic device, please ensure you have downloaded the Zoom app. If you need any further assistance with this, please email the researcher for further guidance. Once the researcher has your verbal consent to begin the interview, the researcher will ask you to turn off your camera so that only the audio can be heard. The researcher will also turn off their camera. Only then will the research begin recording and begin the interview.

Additionally, we ask to ensure your wellbeing and privacy that you only take part in this research if:

- You have access to a secure and private space to conduct the online interview.
- You believe you are able to look after your own well-being if you take part in the research and have access to support should you become distressed as a result of taking part.

- You are able to sign a consent form via electronic signature or have access to a printer to physically sign the consent form. A photograph of the form from your phone can then be emailed back to the researcher.

If you wish to take part, we will accommodate a time and date that is suitable for you.

However, if following initial interest, we are unable to get in contact with you for a period of 2 weeks, we will assume you no longer wish to take part.

➤ **Instances of breaking confidentiality**

What you say within the interview will remain anonymous, and at no point will your school be made aware of your participation in this research or of your data. There are a few instances where, if disclosed, we would have to report to someone else. If you disclose that yourself or someone else is currently at risk of serious harm, the researcher may have to inform the appropriate authorities. I should emphasise that, this is in instances of current serious harm, meaning that, should you disclose an account from the past, this will not satisfy the criteria for current serious harm.

➤ **What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is entirely up to you to choose whether or not you will participate in the research. If you do decide to take part, your next step will be to read the documents provided and communicate electronically if you are interested in participating, my email is roshini.prince-navaratnam@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk.

If you express an interest in taking part but then change your mind at any point during the research, you are free to withdraw before or during the interview and please note, you do not have to give a reason. As noted, the interview will be audio recorded which is essential to the research for the purpose of transcription and analysis. You should feel comfortable with the recording process at all times and you have right to stop recording at any point. Please note that it will not be possible to remove your data from the project once the data has been analysed as we will not be able to identify your specific data. This does not affect your data protection rights. If you decide not to take part, you do not need to do anything further.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

As this is a self-funded project, there is no payment for taking part in this research.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

➤ What information will you collect about me?

When participating in this research project, we will collect some information known as “personal identifiable information”. This may include some optional demographic questions including; sexual identity, the type of school you work in i.e. faith school, academy etc and how long you have been a teacher for. We will not be asking for the name of the school you work at, and only the county in which you work, for example, ‘Greater Manchester’ or ‘Cheshire’. This demographic information will not be kept with your data. You do not have to answer any demographic questions if don’t want to and you can write ‘prefer not to say’ for any question. We should highlight that your demographic information will not made identifiable to you within the publishing of this research.

We will need to collect an audio recording of the interview in order to transcribe the data. The data collected through the Zoom recording will download to the researcher’s laptop following the ending of the recording. After the interview has finished, the researcher will upload the recording onto a secure and protected university storage service. The recording will not be stored on the researcher’s laptop. The audio recording itself will be destroyed from the secure storage space once the data has been transcribed and pseudonymised. All interviews will be transcribed by the researcher and then analysed using qualitative analysis methods to identify themes, create understandings of LGBTQ+ perspectives within secondary schools, and identify what factors and experiences have influenced openness of sexuality within schools. Following the interview, the researcher will use quotes from the data to illustrate themes in any write-up from the project. If you consent to be re-contacted after taking part in the interview, the researcher may get in touch with you if they have a query about using a particular quote. This will only happen where the researcher wants to clarify something about that particular quote.

➤ Under what legal basis are you collecting this information?

We are collecting and storing this personal identifiable information in accordance with data protection law which protect your rights. These state that we must have a legal basis (specific reason) for collecting your data. For this study, the specific reason is that it is “a public interest task” and “a process necessary for research purposes”. Further, in line with data protection laws the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act (2018) states that personal information should only be stored in an identifiable form for as long as is necessary and should be pseudonymised (partially de-identified) and/or anonymised (completely de—identified) as soon as practically possible.

➤ **What are my rights in relation to the information you will collect about me?**

You have a number of rights under data protection law regarding your personal information. For example you can request a copy of the information we hold about you, including audio recordings. If you would like to know more about your different rights or the way we use your personal information to ensure we follow the law, please consult our [Privacy Notice for Research](#).

➤ **Will my participation in the study be confidential and my personal identifiable information be protected?**

In accordance with data protection law, The University of Manchester is the Data Controller for this project. This means that we are responsible for making sure your personal information is kept secure, confidential and used only in the way you have been told it will be used. All researchers are trained with this in mind, and your data will be looked after in the following way:

- Your place of work will not be asked for within the research and a broad geographical location will be used, for example, ‘Greater Manchester’. Details of your demographics will be published in a way that does not personally identify yourself. For example, *‘there were six teachers from Greater Manchester, seven teachers from Cheshire ranging between the ages of 20-65’*.
- Details of your personal information will be kept confidential and a pseudo-name will be used which will only be known to the research team.

- Any other identifying information will be also removed and replaced with a pseudonymised name or number, for example '*participant 1*'.
- Only the research team will have access to the key that links this name/number to your data.
- Once the analysis is complete, your data will not be able to be identifiable.
- The researcher will use quotes from the data to illustrate themes in any write-up from the project. If you consent to be re-contacted after taking part in the interview, the researcher may get in touch with you if they have a query about using a particular quote. This will only happen where the researcher wants to clarify something about that particular quote.
- The data (the audio recording) will be recorded through Zoom's audio recording function. This audio will then be transferred and stored in a secure university storage service. No data will be left or stored on the researcher's laptop.
- All collected data will be encrypted and stored securely in the university's protected storage service.
- Your data will not be transferred outside the EU or to any cloud services.
- Your data will be compiled as part of a student research thesis at the end of this project and may be published within book chapters, journals or cited at conferences but will be unidentifiable.
- Your personal data will not be shared with any other organisation/persons apart from the research team.
- This research has not been advertised within schools. Your school will not be informed of your participation in this research.
- Your consent and contact details will not be retained following completion of the research.

Please also note that individuals from The University of Manchester or regulatory authorities may need to look at the data collected for this study to make sure the project is being carried out as planned. This may involve looking at identifiable data. All individuals involved in auditing and monitoring the study will have a strict duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant.

What if I have a complaint?

➤ Contact details for complaints

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions. If you have a complaint that you wish to direct to members of the research team, please contact:

Dr Laura Winter (Supervisor) – laura.winter@manchester.ac.uk

If you wish to make a formal complaint to someone independent of the research team or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact;

The Research Governance and Integrity Officer, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 275 2674.

If you wish to contact us about your data protection rights, please email dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL at the University and we will guide you through the process of exercising your rights.

You also have a right to complain to the [Information Commissioner's Office about complaints relating to your personal identifiable information](#) Tel 0303 123 1113

Contact Details

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part then please contact the researcher;

Ms. Roshini Prince-Navaratnam – roshini.prince-navaratnam@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Appendix 4 – Example Consent Form

Participant Consent Form (v1.7)

If you are happy to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

	Activities	Initials
1	I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet (Version.7.7(2) 18/06/2020) for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	
2	I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself. I understand that it will not be possible to remove my data from the project once it has been analysed and forms part of the data set. I agree to take part on this basis.	
3	I understand that due to COVID19, the interview will take place through Zoom.	
4	I agree to the interviews being audio recorded through Zoom.	
5	Due to the interview taking place remotely, I will ensure that I have support in place to ensure my psychological well-being	
6	I will ensure that I have a private, safe and secure environment where the interview can take place	
7	I consent to the researcher contacting me after the interview, should they have a query about the use of a particular quote	
8	I understand that data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from The University of Manchester or regulatory authorities, where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.	
9	I agree that personal data collected may be shared within the research team at the University of Manchester.	
10	I accept that once the data analysis has been completed, I will not be able to withdraw my data.	
11	I understand that there may be instances the researchers will be obliged to break confidentiality if I disclose that I or someone else is at risk of serious harm and this has been explained in more detail in the information sheet.	

12	I understand and agree that the data collected will be used as part of a university research thesis and may be shared within a journal article, book chapter and/or presented at conferences.	
12	I agree to take part in this study.	

Data Protection

The personal information we collect and use to conduct this research will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet and the [Privacy Notice for Research Participants](#).

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of researcher/
person taking consent

Signature

Date

Appendix 5 – Example Optional Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

Please note that you do not have to answer any of these questions, you may put **'prefer not to say'** for any/all questions.

Date:

Time:

- How would you identify your sexuality? (for example, Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Queer, Pan, do not identify, prefer not to say)

.....

- What county do you work as a teacher in? (for example, 'Cheshire')

.....

- How long have you been a teacher for?

.....

- What *type* of school do you work in? (for example, 'faith school', 'academy school', 'pupil referral unit' – please do not write the name of your school)

.....

Appendix 6 – Example Interview Questions

Participant Questions

An exploration of LGBTQ+ teachers' accounts and perceptions of openness about their sexuality within secondary schools.

Example statement: 'During the next 30-45 minutes, I am interested in hearing of your accounts and perceptions as an LGBTQ+ teacher. I would particularly like to hear about how you have found being open or not open about your sexuality in your school and the impact that this has had on you professionally and personal. Further, I would be interested to hear any ideas you may have as to what/whether you think anything needs improving or changing to support LGBTQ+ teachers. I may ask a few open-ended questions designed to prompt you on these subjects, although you do not need to stick exclusively to them. I am interested in whatever you feel it is important to say in relation to your own accounts and perceptions'.

Example questions:

- How would you describe being an LGBTQ+ teacher today?
- How important is your sexuality to your identity as an individual and as a teacher?
- Are you open about your sexuality within your school?
 - If so/not, what influences that?
 - How has that been for you?
- Are there any accounts you have experienced in relation to sexuality/your sexuality that has impacted you in positive or negative way?
- What is your perception of your school's attitude towards sexuality?
- What is important for you as an LGBTQ+ teacher on a professional level?
- Is there anything (else) that you think is important that we should know?

Minimal prompts will also be used such as:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you give me an example (of that)?
- How did (does) that feel?
- How did that impact you?

Appendix 7 – Distress Protocol

Prior to study

Prior to the commencement of the study, the participants will be given a participant information sheet with details of who to contact if they experience distress (the researcher, Roshini Prince-Navaratnam). The researcher will answer any questions the participant may have so they are fully aware of what the research entails. Due to the research being conducted online and due to COVID19, the researcher explicitly states that the participant should be able to ensure the safety of their psychological wellbeing and that they should not take part if they are unable to do so, especially acknowledging the current pandemic. The researcher will email the participant a contact sheet at the conclusion of the interview should they need it. The sheet will contain contacts for organisations should the participant require further assistance.

As the participant is partaking in the interview via Zoom, the researcher will ensure that;

- The participant is in a safe and private location prior to conducting the interview
- The participant is able to look after their psychological wellbeing should they become distressed.
- This could be if the participant has a point of contact who they can contact. This may be a partner/family member in the house or have their telephone contact.
- If the participant states that they think they cannot look after their psychological wellbeing, the interview will not go ahead.

During the study

Should a participant report or show signs of distress and feeling uncomfortable, such as; crying, breathing heavily, reporting feelings of anxiety and/or distress while the interview is being undertaken, the following actions will be taken by the researcher:

Step 1

- Suggest that the participant take a break, pause the interview, have a drink of water, go to a separate room, and/or stop the interview indefinitely.
- Ask the participant how they are feeling, listen with empathy and offer support.
- Ask what the participant needs to do to ground themselves.

Step 2

- If the participant would like to continue, the researcher will offer continued support, reiterate that the participant can stop the interview at any time and offer further breaks.
- The researcher will also ask the participant if they would like to skip any question(s) or move away from the specific area(s) of distress.
- If the participant would like to stop or appears highly distressed such as; continued distress and upset, panic attacks, reports of extreme distress, unable to speak, follow the actions in **Step 3**

Step 3

- Stop the interview.
- **Mild distress:** Encourage the participant to speak to a trusted friend/partner or family member for support OR offer to do so for the participant. The researcher will provide the sheet via email which contains contact numbers of organisations such as; Samaritans or the LGBT Foundation for further support.
- In all instances the researcher will seek support from their supervisor/line manager through email and Zoom.

Follow-up actions

- Offer to follow participant up with an email the following day.
- Offer the participant the opportunity to withdraw from the study and for their data to be destroyed
- Recommend the participant contacts the organisations including; NHS Direct, the Samaritans, the LGBT Foundation etc if they continue to feel distressed.

Organisations	Number
NHS Direct	111 or 999 (in cases of emergency)
Samaritans (24-hour service)	116 123
LGBT Foundation (for talking therapy referral)	0345 330 30 30

Appendix 8 – Example of Reflexive Journaling

Reflexive journal

- 3rd September 2020

Internet connection! Brilliant and insightful interview otherwise. It was really hard to hear the participant speak at points. I'm worried I've missed parts of what she said. Hopefully the recording has picked it up better. There were points during the interview where she sounded emotional but think this was due to the issues with audio. I felt quite nervous going into this interview but not as much as I did last time. I feel like the nervousness comes from not being a teacher and falling into therapist mode! This interview brought a lot of useful points I hadn't considered before especially around the impact of gender and the gender expectations on staff.

Appendix 9 – Example of initial coding (transcript 1)

		like I do deliberately do it because I know it's important to normalise it. Whereas, out of school I suppose I would be a bit more selective, so err..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o LGBO v.s. b.l.t.g importance.
39	R	It's interesting you say you know in school, deliberately you do this and you say to the importance of normalising. (20.32) But in your personal life its more selective and I guess, I'm just wondering because, parents as well, who are technically part of the school but not. How does that link in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Selectiveness
40	P	That's a good point actually, yeah parents I would probably be very selective with. Erm, I don't really know why. I suppose even like you know, it wouldn't necessarily come up in the context of parents evening, like I'm not going to talk about my private life. But they probably know because the pupils have probably told them. (21.00) Erm, but yeah parents I'd be a bit more wary of, I suppose, I don't know why. I suppose it's maybe... even if you think back a few months back or years whenever it was about the protests at the primary school (pauses). And then also when I've had conversations with SLT when I first came out and I was wanting to do the work on diversity. Even they were a bit more reluctant about saying about you know, 'well actually we've got to be wary with parents'. Erm, and also we've had in PSHE, you can withdraw your child from lessons, or erm certain topics. (21.36). Erm, and I've had a couple of instances, erm, and I'm friends with the head of PSHE who's told me about a few instances where the parents withdraw the pupils from LGBT lessons. So, I suppose I'm just a bit more guarded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difference around parents invisibility - Aware of parent's know. - Waryness. - Reference to Birmingham protests. - Reluctance to be open at first. - Parent waryness. - parental power. - Guarded exterior.
41	R	It's really interesting hearing you say that that there is this difference and with SLT having that awareness of having to be considered and careful. That sounds quite... I guess with heterosexual couples (yeah) that isn't considered but that is a thing for the LGBTQ+ community (22.14).	
42	P	Yeah definitely. And erm, I think when it comes from the top a lot of the time in teaching, you know it wasn't an explicit 'you can't do this', it was a 'we have to be a bit more careful'. Because one of the things I wanted to do is put on a session and get someone from stonewall in to talk to parents of LGBT pupils or even parents in general. (22.33). Erm, that was sort of, erm, I was told that that 'might be a longer-term plan' basically which I've interpreted as 'actually maybe that's not a great idea'. So, I think, I don't know it's probably just being a bit more aware and then obviously with things like diversity week, it's just being aware that, erm, certain parents might not necessarily be okay with it. Like I say, they've already	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influence of SLT - Teacher promoting v.s. b.l.t.g - implicit message. - School's awareness around parents responses - parental power. - parent attitude or influence on LGBO identity

		<p>withdrawn their pupils from lessons. (23.04). Erm, and then we've also got, you see I'm wary of this one, we have also got a big group of ethnic minority groups where stereotypically there is this idea that parents for example of our Muslim children won't be accepting. Whereas, I've had actually a really mixed response and that our Muslim pupils are like the most accepting and the most, erm what's the word, the biggest advocates during things like diversity week. So yeah, anyway sorry I'm waffling now. (23.36)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - waryness of faith communities - challenged stereotypes. - Support from faith communities - perception
43	R	<p>No no, I think you're touching on very important things around the impacts of stereotypes, but you know also the breaking down of stereotypes too. Not just within sexuality, but religion and minority groups as well as there are stereotypes attached to that so I think that's a really interesting point you've made.</p>	
44	P	<p>Yeah well we've had even with diversity week... (24.00) you know I remember a conversation in the workroom and it was, erm, I'd invited in an Imam to come and speak to the pupils about anything to do with diversity, so it could just tolerance or anything like that. Erm and he didn't want to display the rainbow banner, which is absolutely fine. But straight away, even amongst the staff, it was this idea of 'well it's like the Muslims protesting outside the school in Birmingham'. So straight away, people were stereotyping ironically (laughs), you know a big religious group and saying they're going to be against LGBT. Erm so I think that's one of the battles we're also facing is things like that because actually, like I say, my experience hasn't been like that at all. It's been very much mixed, and it's been mixed amongst all communities within the school. So yeah I think there's a few stereotypes like that. I'd say the biggest battle is more with boys in general than girls. (25.04). Erm, I don't know why that is, it might be this idea or fear of getting called 'gay', I don't know but it might be a barrier.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visibility of rainbow flag in schools - challenge to stereotypes - Other staff perceptions of faith communities or individuals - Birmingham protests - language / attitudes - mixed experiences of feminist responses - student gender difference

Appendix 10– Example of electronic codes on NVivo

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. The top menu bar includes Home, Create, Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, and View. Below the menu is a ribbon with various tool icons for Item, Clipboard, Format, Paragraph, and Styles. The left sidebar shows a hierarchical tree view with categories: DATA (Files, File Classifications, Externals), CODES (Nodes), CASES (Cases, Case Classifications), NOTES (Memos, Annotations, Memo Links), SEARCH (Queries, Query Results, Node Matrices, Sets), and MAPS (Maps). The 'OPEN ITEMS' section at the bottom left lists: Heteronormativity, Fear, Other, Frustration and anger, and xx. The main workspace is divided into two panes. The left pane, titled 'Name', contains a list of codes with expandable arrows: Being Open, Change, Comfortability, Demographics, Fear (expanded to show sub-codes: Fear of being open an..., Fear of impact from pa..., Fear of persecution fro..., Feelings of guilt, Frustration and anger, Gender, Heteronormativity, Hidden Identity, Homophobia, Hypervigilence, Impact, Lack of education, Negativity of being open, Other, Other staff not out, Personal vs Professional, Positivity of being open, Relationship with students, Responsibility, Role model, Schools Attitudes and Pe..., Sense of responsibility a..., SLT and Leadership, Staff, Time (expanded to show: Mention of the past & i..., Using silence and avoida...), 0 item selected. The right pane is titled 'xx' and has tabs for 'Summary' and 'Reference'. The bottom status bar shows the breadcrumb: CODES > Nodes > xx.

Appendix 11– First Ethics Application Response



Environment, Education and Development School
Panel PGR
School for Environment, Education and Development
Humanities Bridgeford Street 1.17
The University of Manchester
Manchester
M13 9PL
Email: PGR.ethics.seed@manchester.ac.uk

Ref: 2019-8083-12248

03/12/2019

Dear Ms Roshini Prince-Navaratnam, , Dr Jo Shuttleworth, Dr Laura Winter

We regret to inform you that your ethics application entitled: An exploration of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Queer (LGBQ) teachers' accounts and perceptions of being open about their sexuality within secondary schools Ref: 2019-8083-12248 has been given an unfavourable ethical opinion. The reasons for this decision are outlined below:

This project should be resubmitted for a full UREC review given that the research may;

- 1) pose a significant risk of having an adverse effect on the personal, social or economic well-being of participants
- 2) covers topics which may cause a significant level of embarrassment, distress, anxiety or fatigue
- 3) Topics which are socially or personally sensitive

Should you wish to resubmit this proposal for ethical review you will need to go back in to the ERM system and duplicate your original application. The new application must have a revised project title as the system will not allow two applications to have the same title. Please also ensure you answer yes to question D1 and provide the ERM reference number of your original application. If you have been advised to seek an alternate route of ethical review, i.e. full UREC, please ensure you select the relevant answer to A5.

You should ensure that your new application addresses each of the points outlined above which have been raised by the Committee before submitting the application, along with any updated/new supporting documentation, to your designated Division/School administrator via ERM for a pre-screen check.

If you have any additional queries, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kate Rowlands

Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR

Appendix 12 – Ethics Approval



Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity
 2nd Floor Christie Building
 The University of Manchester
 Oxford Road
 Manchester
 M13 9PL
 Tel: 0161 275 2206/2674
 Email: research.ethics@manchester.ac.uk

Ref: 2020-8769-15846

22/06/2020

Dear Ms Roshini Prince-Navaratnam, , Dr Laura Winter, Dr Jo Shuttleworth

Study Title: An exploration of LGBTQ+ teachers' accounts and perceptions of openness about their sexuality within secondary schools.

University Research Ethics Committee 1

I write to thank you for submitting the final version of your documents for your project to the Committee on 20/06/2020 09:20 . I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation as submitted and approved by the Committee.

COVID-19 Important Note

If you are conducting research with a data collection methodology that involves face-to-face contact (i.e. interviews, focus groups, psychological experiments, tissue sampling, and any other research procedure requiring face-to-face contact) you must switch to data collection via Skype, telephone or an alternative digital platform.

Please note, you do not need to seek a formal amendment to your existing ethical approval to make these changes provided your consent procedures remain the same (i.e. if you are still obtaining written consent but the form is returned by post or email). If you are choosing an alternative consenting procedure, please submit a formal amendment to your ethical approval via the usual process.

If switching your data collection to digital or electronic means is not possible (i.e. human tissue studies) then you must suspend all research activity until further notice unless doing so will have critical impacts on research participants (i.e. affect their wellbeing or care).

Please also consider whether you need to submit an amendment to extend your dates of data collection, due to postponed fieldwork or other research activities. If you need to seek an extension, you must do so before the end date as listed on your approved ethics application/last approved amendment or within 3 months of this date.

Researchers who wish to continue with face-to-face data collection during this period will require specific approval from the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team. Such approval will only be given if 1) the researcher is a member of staff or PGR, 2) the research is specifically related to the Covid-19 situation and data collection has to take place at the present time, or 2) there are exceptional reasons for the continuation of face-to-face data collection (i.e. critical impacts on the wellbeing or care of research participants).

Please see <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/rbe/ethics-integrity/ethics/> for further details

Please see below for a table of the title, version numbers and dates of all the final approved documents for your project:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Additional docs	Letter (3)	07/05/2020	V1
Default	Demographic Participant questions v2	23/05/2020	v2
Default	Participant questions V2	23/05/2020	V2
Advertisement	Email to organisation for advertising	25/05/2020	v2
Distress Protocol/Debrief Sheet	General Distress Protocol v1.0	02/06/2020	V1.0
Additional docs	RPN Revisions to Ethics Applications	02/06/2020	v1
Additional docs	Second Ethics Letter	08/06/2020	V2
Data Management Plan	RPN DMP 18 June 2020	18/06/2020	v32
Advertisement	Participant Advert 18:06 V4	18/06/2020	V4
Advertisement	Participant Email 18:06 V4	18/06/2020	V4
Participant Information Sheet	Participant information sheet RPN	18/06/2020	v7.7(2)
Consent Form	Consent Form v1.7	18/06/2020	V1.7
Additional docs	RPN 2nd Revisions to Ethics Applications	18/06/2020	v2

This approval is effective for a period of five years however please note that it is only valid for the specifications of the research project as outlined in the approved documentation set. If the project continues beyond the 5 year period or if you wish to propose any changes to the methodology or any other specifics within the project,

an application to seek an amendment must be submitted for review. Failure to do so could invalidate the insurance and constitute research misconduct.

You are reminded that, in accordance with University policy, any data carrying personal identifiers must be encrypted when not held on a secure university computer or kept securely as a hard copy in a location which is accessible only to those involved with the research.

Reporting Requirements:

You are required to report to us the following:

1. [Amendments](#): Guidance on what constitutes an amendment
2. [Amendments](#): How to submit an amendment in the ERM system
3. [Ethics Breaches and adverse events](#)
4. [Data breaches](#)
5. [Notification of progress/end of the study](#)

Feedback

It is our aim to provide a timely and efficient service that ensures transparent, professional and proportionate ethical review of research with consistent outcomes, which is supported by clear, accessible guidance and training for applicants and committees. In order to assist us with our aim, we would be grateful if you would give your view of the service that you have received from us by completing a **UREC Feedback Form**. Instructions for completing this can be found in your approval email.

We wish you every success with the research.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Kate Hennessy

Secretary to University Research Ethics Committee 1