"Queer Moments" in Foreign Classrooms: Investigating Lived Experiences of EFL Teachers in South Korea

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February 2017

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

Master of Arts in Education and Society from the Department of Integrated Studies in Education

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Abstract

This study seeks to better understand teaching practices regarding issues of gender and sexual identity in the intercultural context of foreign-teacher-headed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in South Korea. The purpose of this research was to identify and unpack influences that restrict the ways in which EFL educators felt able to approach queer topics with students and critically examine how this may work to perpetuate marginalization within English classrooms abroad. Through the lens of critical and queer theories, I examine instances in which four North American EFL teachers recalled gender and sexuality as becoming relevant issues during student-teacher interactions. I investigate these "queer moments" through a qualitative exploration of the participants' small story narratives and image biographies. From this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry, five themes emerged around the anxieties these teachers held concerning these topics. I explored how these concerns can influence teachers to perpetuate heteronormativity in their classes: discursively or through attempts to maintain their imported gender expectations. Finally, I suggest that a key element of improving teaching practices concerning sexual identities rests in the development of critical and queer-informed commercial EFL teaching materials.

Résumé

Cette étude tente de mieux comprendre les techniques d'éducation dans le contexte du genre et de l'identité sexuelle au sein d'interculturalité des cours d'Anglais Langue Étrangère (ALE) en Corée du Sud. L'objectif de cette recherche est d'identifier, d'analyser et de décomposer les influences qui restreignent les éducateurs ALE dans la façon qu'ils abordent le sujet d'identités sexuels avec leurs étudiants, pour ensuite examiner de façon critique comment cela perpétue la marginalisation au sein des classes à l'étranger. A travers un paradigme de théories critique et queer, j'examine quatre cas où des enseignants nord-américains de l'ALE se souviennent de la façon que le genre et la sexualité devinrent des sujets pertinents lors des interactions entre élèves et enseignants. Dans cette étude, je conduirai des enquêtes sur ces "moments queers," qui auront des explorations qualitatives des diverses narratives, et en même temps des portraits biographiques des participants de l'étude. De cette enquête phénoménologique herméneutique, cinq thèmes émergent révélant les difficultés sous-jacentes des enseignants. On découvrira que ces préoccupations peuvent influencer les enseignants à perpétuer l'hétéronormativité dans leurs classes ou, dans certains cas, d'introduire des attentes de genre hétéronormatives importées. Finalement, je suggérerai qu'un élément clé pour améliorer les pratiques d'enseignement en termes d'identités sexuels réside dans le développement de matériel d'enseignement critique et 'queer-informed' dans le program pédagogique de l'ALE.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Rationale for the Study

As Redman (1994) explained, "[s]chools are necessarily a significant place in which pupils learn about sexuality whether schools intend this or not" (p. 142, cited in Nelson, 2009). This study focuses in on student-teacher interactions in which gender, the socially constructed expectations attributed to a particular sex, and sexuality, the ways people experience and express sexual attraction, became relevant classroom issues for four North Americans teaching English in South Korea. I examine these English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' textual reflections on such events to explore how they experienced and dealt with *queer moments*, a term I have coined to encapsulate these interactions. In the intercultural context of a foreign teacher headed EFL class, how the teacher chooses to respond during queer moments communicates a message that may potentially challenge or reinforce dominant local attitudes about queer identities.

Nelson (2009) argued that "developing sociosexual literacy can be considered an integral part of developing intercultural language proficiency" (p. 208). Therefore, through this study, I seek to find out what EFL teachers in Korea are teaching about gender and sexual identities. Of particular interest are how their anxieties and concerns about these topics influence the ways in which they feel able to address them with students. Moreover, I am concerned with how these influences might tacitly reinforce marginalization in English language classrooms abroad. This interest, in turn, brought my attention to heteronormativity, "the hegemonic understanding that heterosexuality is natural, superior, and desirable whereas homosexuality is unnatural, inferior, undesirable or unthinkable" (Curran, 2006, p. 90).

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This study explores mundane student-teacher interactions which may seem inconsequential at first glance. However, this is with an awareness of the dire repercussions heteronormative discourses cumulatively pose to queer youths. In the North American context, studies have shown that gay and lesbian teens are far more likely than their heterosexual peers to commit suicide (e.g., Cover, 2012; Erwin, 1995; Flynn, Johnson, Bolton, & Mojtabai, 2016; Gibson, 1989). Carrying an awareness of this phenomenon into an East-Asian EFL context, Lubetsky (1998) wrote how one "shudders to think what the numbers might look like in Japan, where conformist pressures are so much stronger [than in the US], and gay and lesbian awareness next to negligible" (p. 44).

I similarly contemplate what this might mean in the context of South Korea, which consistently has the highest suicide rate among OECD nations (Yoon, 2015). There, suicide is the most common cause of death among adolescents (Kong & Kim, 2016), yet research into the risks contributing to this phenomenon rarely considers sociocultural factors and ignores sexual orientation altogether (see Lee, Hong, & Espelage, 2010). Hence, I position the pedagogical objective of empowering EFL teachers to more effectively engage with their learners about sexual identities, as being integral to a larger moral imperative aim of ensuring the comfort and well-being of the queer individuals within educational spaces.

1.2 Situating Myself in the Research

The narrative which follows is one of the numerous personal experiences that have served as catalysts, guiding my decision to take on researching sexual identities in the EFL classroom. My history with this topic not only led me to investigate it, but also helped to form my methodological framework and aided in my analysis of the data collected. My reflexive account of being a gay-identified EFL teacher struggling to teach a unit that introduced an LGBT

rights issue serves as a contextualizing entry point to this research endeavor. Through the act of

deliberate remembering (Kuhn, 1996), I engage with my personal narrative as a novice EFL

teacher in Korea, highlighting the centrality of narratives to this research and plainly locating

myself within this work.

> *About six months into teaching at a private English language academy in Seoul, I entered my middle school classroom with the book assigned to the majority of our Conversational English classes: Impact Issues (Day & Yamanaka, 1998). Each unit began with a short narrative introducing a social problem or posing an ethical dilemma. The unit this week was titled "Why Don't You Accept Us?" which was about a gay man who was tired of having to keep his relationship with his partner of six years a secret.*

> *My students were unaware that this was a topic I could relate to personally. As a formerly out gay-identified man, I found myself re-closeted by my new identity as a foreign teacher. I suppose this is why I was feeling somewhat uneasy going into this week's discussion topic. Although I found it to be interesting and was curious about young Korean perspectives on the issue, I had heard of foreign teachers in Korea being fired for being gay and did not want to rouse suspicions about myself. Regardless, I had developed a good rapport with my students, and after surviving the curveball topic of abortion (Unit 7) during my second week on the job, I felt I could manage.*

> *My first Conversation class of the day had slightly less than 20 students, mostly girls. We began by working through the reading collectively. I provided definitions for new vocabulary. The book provided a definition for the word 'homosexual' in the glossary so thankfully, I did not have to write it up on the whiteboard. Although it would be easily justifiable, seeing as the curriculum explicitly called for it, I still began feeling a bit anxious thinking about the suspicions that might arise should a passing coworker see me scrawling out LGBT-themed content.*

> *About fifteen minutes into the period, I noticed that the lesson had been rather unanimated. Were the students uncomfortable with the subject? Could they sense my own discomfort? The book offered five opinions relating to the topic as guiding prompts and instructed students to identify with one. We collectively went over the options, and everyone was given a few minutes to choose one with which they most agreed and come up with reasons to support their selection. It was now time for the students to voice "their" opinions on whether they believed the couple discussed in the reading should be able to live openly as a homosexual couple.*

> *The first student I called on began by reading her scripted opinion from the book; "I say no. It makes me really uncomfortable to be around people who are homosexuals" (p.28). I felt my stomach drop and I became increasingly anxious as I struggled to come up with a good follow-up question. "Okay… And why did you choose that opinion?" I sounded almost clinical, masking my disappointment and trying to appear neutral. Her explanation conveyed that she thought that gays are strange and homosexuality is not*

normal. I began to feel very exposed—hyperaware of how my reactions might let on to my own opinion. I continued, doing my best to manage my reactions to their answers.

Focusing solely on grammar and pronunciation, I tried to appear curious and offered nods of encouragement while students spoke. Still, I became increasingly anxious as I awaited each student's response. Moreover, I found myself feeling deeply disappointed each time a student answered with the terse "Absolutely not. Homosexuality is wrong." (p.28); one student supporting this sentiment with the simple statement "Because I hate gay." Did she mean that she hated gay people or the idea of homosexuality more generally? Unsure how to respond in either scenario, I decided I might prefer the ambiguity and thus chose let the questionable grammar slide.

After class, I was left with the uneasy feeling that I should have engaged with the topic in a more meaningful way. However, this was the most uncomfortable I had felt teaching up until this point: exposed, restricted, anxious, and bewildered. Do I have a right to let my bias as a gay man affect how I teach this topic? Would it be inappropriate to impose my American perspective on such ethical matters in a foreign classroom? I had certainly not allowed racist comments to go unchallenged in my classes, but this somehow felt different. Lacking answers to both my ethical concerns as well as practical approaches for challenging homophobia without potentially outing myself, I was completely at a loss about how to address these issues. As I taught that unit ten more times that week, I continued with my strategy of attempting to appear neutral, and in the process, became increasingly skilled at sinking into a disconnected passivity–quieting the nagging sense of injustice as I removed myself from my teaching.

Bearing in mind Nelson's (1993) advice to assume that there were LGBT students in each of those classes, I am confronted with the disturbing prospect of what these lessons must have been like for the queer students in them. Having witnessed homophobic remarks on several occasions in class as a language learner myself, I am aware that by remaining "neutral" to protect my presumed heterosexual identity, I inadvertently signaled—at minimum—a silent approval of the disparaging opinions expressed. Speaking to the implications of such neutrality vis-à-vis queer language learners, Kappra and Vandrick (2006) have argued that:

> *…TESOL cannot and should not continue its almost total silence on the lives and experiences of queer students both within and outside of our ESL classrooms; such silence is not—despite the assertion of many teachers to the contrary—merely neutral, but it is in fact dangerous to the safety and well-being of our students.* (p. 139)

This disheartening realization has led me to question how I could have better approached this content in a context where taking decidedly gay-affirmative stance would have

meant potentially arousing suspicions around my own sexuality; possibly jeopardizing my job, housing, and visa status in the country.[1]

These, along with similar reflections, inspired my interest in researching this phenomenon; thus, I begin this study with a preunderstanding that some expatriate EFL teachers in Korea may have anxieties toward LGBT themes and feel unprepared to engage effectively with them when they arise in their classrooms. Furthermore, these initial reflections revealed that my position as a foreigner and a gay man both influenced how I felt able to respond. To better understand these troubling teaching experiences, I start from the broad theme of gender and sexuality issues entering the classroom to examine how other foreign teachers have experienced similar situations and the influences that shaped their responses.

1.3 Research Questions

Through a qualitative exploration of participant accounts of experiencing queer moments within their schools and classrooms, this research study seeks to better understand teaching practices relevant to sexual identities in the context of English language education in South Korea. Both my experiences concerning this phenomenon and insights from the literature reviewed in chapter two have led to the formulation of the following two main questions driving this research:

1. **How did expatriate EFL teachers experience and respond to queer moments within their classes in South Korea?**

2. **What underlying concerns did teachers have regarding these interactions, and how did these concerns influence their teaching practices?**

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[1] This was the commonly held perception among queer teachers. See Nelson (2009) p.130 for a Korean student interviewee's assertion that a person would likely be fired from their job if discovered to be gay or lesbian in Korea.

1.4 Purpose of this Study

This inquiry seeks to uncover factors that shaped how EFL teachers chose to respond during queer moments, emphasizing the social forces that worked to limit teacher agency, reproduce marginalization, and stifle opportunities for developing sociosexual literacy. I hope that by identifying influences that silence and prevent teachers from productively engaging with topics relevant to sexual identities, we can reimagine approaches that mitigate these restricting concerns. This study has multiple key objectives:

a) **To explore the distinctive ways in which individual EFL teachers view issues of gender or sexuality as being relevant within their language classes.**
b) **To explore how teachers deal with (or avoid) these issues when they do arise.**
c) **To identify the major concerns/anxieties influencing how teachers feel able to respond.**
d) **To shed light on how these concerns can operate to maintain heteronormativity in EFL classes.**

The aim of this research study is to help bridge the gap between theory and practice. EFL teachers in Korea are both explicitly and implicitly communicating messages about sexual identities to their language learners. Thus, I hope to uncover ways in which heteronormativity may be operating within EFL classes to normalize some identities while marginalizing others. A deeper awareness of teachers' apprehensions concerning issues of sexual identity and how these anxieties work to impede pedagogy, will enable scholars to suggest theoretically-informed, practical strategies which address these underlying concerns. Therefore, having a better understanding of how teachers have experienced queer moments in classrooms abroad will enable scholars to conceptualize approaches for productive engagement rather than shameful avoidance. Thus, empowering EFL teachers to more confidently address issues of sexual identity—disrupting harmful heteronormative practices in the process.

1.5 Overview of the Thesis

In this introductory chapter, I have introduced the problem of EFL teachers experiencing queer moments in classrooms abroad and presented an auto-ethnographic essay to frame this study. I articulated the two critical research questions and outlined the aims of this study. In Chapter Two, after defining key terms, I review the literature on identities in TESOL. Following that, I present an overview of critical and queer perspectives regarding sexual identities in TESOL, followed by an exploration of teacher attitudes towards addressing LGBT topics.

I present my research methodology in Chapter Three. This explanation includes my theoretical underpinnings, the methods used to collect data, a procedural overview of my data analysis, as well as a discussion of methodological concerns. Organized into four case studies, Chapter Four presents the textual reflections of the participants who took part in this study: (1) Brian, (2) Lindsay, (3) Nancy, and (4) Alex. Each case study contains: basic demographic information about the participant, their small story narratives, an image biography, and a concluding summary. Finally, I articulate commonalities between the participants' experiences and identify the five essential themes which emerged from my analysis of the case studies: cultural difference, exposure to adult knowledge, queer stigma, genderqueerness, and bodies and touching.

The fifth chapter explores these five themes relating to participant concerns, highlighting how they influenced teaching practices vis-à-vis sexual identities. Stigma was found to play a central role in maintaining the heteronormative status quo. In the sixth and final chapter, I summarize the main research implications, discuss the limitations of this study, identify areas for future inquiry, and offer my personal reflections on this research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

       I begin this chapter by clarifying terminology used throughout this study. Then I review the relevant literature to explore works that brought attention to sexual identities in TESOL and outline key theoretical developments in how we conceptualize identity in L2 acquisition. Also, I explore pedagogical approaches to addressing queer issues in language education, providing examples of research from within critical and queer frameworks. Finally, I conclude by situating this study in relation to this literature.

       I have chosen to limit my scope to works focusing on sexual identities in second language education specifically, as the broader educational literature "rarely considers perspectives of student (and teacher) cohorts that are multilingual, transcultural, or international" (Nelson, 2009, pp. 9–10). I should note that not included in this review are works focusing on gender exclusive from issues of sexual identity. Further defining the scope of this review, are theories which I believe have important implications for pedagogical practices relating to queer issues and identities within TESOL.

       The sections of this review that pertain to sexual identity in English language teaching present a representative sample of the literature available; they are a selection of published works regarding each of the topics covered. For the sections discussing theoretical perspectives, I offer a purposive sample of works (Randolph, 2009); those considered to be canon, as well as those I view to be crucial to understanding the conceptual underpinnings of this research. Thus, no section in this literature review should be presumed to be exhaustive.

2.1 Definition of Terms

A distinction pertinent to this study rests in the difference between English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL). ESL is used to describe non-native speakers learning English where it is an official or commonly spoken language, whereas EFL is used to describe environments where English is not commonly spoken. ESL and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) refer to the target language as a *second* language (L2), likely following jargon from the field of linguistics: Second-Language Acquisition (SLA). English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and similarly TESOL, have been used to acknowledge that students possibly spoke more than language before learning English. For this study, I will use ESL and EFL to specify the educational context, while ESOL and TESOL will be employed as umbrella terms to discuss concepts relevant to either context.

Also, I use *LGBT* to stand for "lesbian, gay[2], bi-sexual, and transgender." This acronym is commonly extended to *LGBTQ* to include the reappropriated word *queer*. In this study, I will often use the term queer as a concise summation of LGBTQ that extends to encompass non-normative sexual and gender identities. Queer theory, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter, uses the word queer to blur and challenge essentialist categorizations of sexual identity. I employ both of these somewhat paradoxical usages—a catchall to refer to minoritized sexual identities, and a theoretical position which problematizes and destabilizes the very notion of sexual identity.

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[2] Some of the literature cited in this study used "gay" to encompass LGBTQ, a usage now considered by some to be sexist and somewhat archaic.

2.2 Problematizing Heterosexism in English L2 Education

In the early 1990's, sexual identities in TESOL began to receive consideration. In a seminal speech on the issue which was later published, Nelson (1993) brought seven pervasive attitudes resting in heterosexism to the attention of her colleagues. These attitudes, she noted, had been framing the debates around what place, if any, gay and lesbian issues had within ESL classrooms. She argued that because we operate in societies that uphold heterosexism, gay and lesbian teachers experience the classroom differently than heterosexuals, most feeling "compelled to hide many of our life experiences" (p. 144). Nelson explained that while heterosexual teachers' sexual identities often come up in class in mundane ways, gay teachers, conversely, must carefully self-monitor what they share about their lives and how they present their perspectives. Countering the assumption that ESL students couldn't handle talking about gay people, the author asserted that our students know that gay people exist and are curious about topics relating to them: noting that students "will discuss gay issues *if* it feels safe enough to do so" (p. 146). This assertion was later confirmed by Kappra and Vandrick (2006, p. 140).

Nelson drew attention to the fact that gay and lesbian people are already in ESL classrooms, both as teachers and students. Thus, the question she raised is: how can we make both the profession and our schools better spaces for these people? Turning attention to "the near-complete absence of anything gay in our materials and curricula," and the concern that LGBT students are not getting "the same opportunities for self-expression as our straight students" (p. 148), the author suggested that teachers assume that they have gay students in each of their classes. Therefore, she advised teachers to consider these students' sense of safety and comfort, opportunities to express themselves authentically, and ability to choose what personal details from class activities and assignments will be disclosed, and to whom.

Finally, Nelson contended that one does not need to be an expert to address gay issues. Bringing these topics up can be precarious for vulnerable queer ESL teachers. She pointed out that heterosexual privilege advantageously positions straight teachers to be potentially influential in this regard, and thus, called on allies for support. The points raised here by Nelson held significant implications for the field of TESOL, both concerning our pedagogical practices and our educational communities of practice. Calling on her peers to join the struggle to improve the situation for queer learners and educators, she asserted that being "heterosexual is not the same as being heterosexist" (p. 149). Vandrick (Vandrick, 1997a) made a similar appeal to heterosexual ESL teachers, emphasizing the argument that straight teachers are often in a safer position than queer teachers to take a proactive role in combating homophobia. This suggestion presents a quandary, however, as heterosexual teachers may not feel informed enough to address queer topics in class. However, as Nelson noted, those who can speak about these issues with firsthand knowledge often do not feel safe or free to do so.

For both teachers and learners, one's sexual identity clearly shapes how they experience discussions of queer topics in ESOL classrooms. Therefore, as we consider identity as an educational concern, and more specifically how sexual identities are represented, discussed, performed, or omitted within ESOL contexts, it is useful to look at how scholars of L2 acquisition have come to view theorizations of identity.

2.3 Identities in Language Education

a) A Critical Turn: Language Learning & Identity

Pennycook (1990) suggested that an educational theory which provided a view of the sociocultural, political, and historical context and implications of language teaching was sorely

lacking from the field of applied linguistics. As TESOL scholars began to look to critical theory to help answer complex questions around unjust power relations vis-à-vis English language education, it brought increased consideration to the role of identity in language learning. This critical turn toward identity led to an understanding that second language acquisition involves an ongoing process of identity construction, negotiation, and transformation (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Norton, 1997, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

Second language acquisition has become increasingly understood as being inseparable from the formation and transformation of identity (Canagarajah, 2004; Morgan, 1997; Pennycook, 2001). Therefore, some theorists began to explore how various aspects of identity relate to language learning, such as gender (Norton, 2000; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Siegal, 1996; Simon-Maeda, 2004) and race (Ibrahim, 1999; MaKay & Wong, 1996). Likewise, some scholars have begun to explore sexual identities in second language education (De Vincenti, Giovanangeli, & Ward, 2007; Nguyen & Kellogg, 2005), and English L2 education more specifically (Kappra & Vandrick, 2006; Nelson, 1993, 2004b, 2009; Ó'Móchain, 2006; Vandrick, 2001).

Vandrick (1997b) categorized sexual identities as "hidden identities" (p.153), in that they are not necessarily apparent and a person ostensibly has some degree of choice in deciding whether or not to reveal this aspect of themselves. However, the extent to which this choice is available is unclear as learners may feel "so intimidated by the authority and power of the teacher that they desist from presenting identities that are not institutionally desired" (Canagarajah, 2004). In the following sections, I explore issues that have been brought to our attention by scholars writing about sexual identities in TESOL. I first look at perspectives of

queer teachers, then students, followed by an analysis of queer identity representation in curriculum materials.

b) Queer Language Teacher Perspectives

Some queer teachers may see a pedagogical benefit of being honest about their sexual identity in class, as it can be seen as a means of challenging their students to "examine their attitudes and behaviors" (Mittler & Blumenthal, 1994, p. 6). Presenting an example from an EFL educator in Japan, Lubetsky (1998) recounted how a gay student who was contemplating suicide came out to him in a letter. Fortunately, this teacher could provide resources and offer guidance to this student, who later came out to family and friends and began to get involved in the local queer community. With the aim of making himself available as a support network for gay and lesbian students, the author decided to come out at both the university where he coached debate and the Women's High School where he taught. The author's comments reflecting on that decision give us insight into the impact that no longer being silenced by one's sexual identity can have on a teacher's disposition and outlook:

> *Coming out has totally reinvigorated me as a teacher. I love my work, my school, and my students more than ever before. I take great joy knowing I am doing something socially worthwhile, as well as making a substantial contribution to my students' lives and to the Japanese gay and lesbian community.* (p. 45)

Roseberry (1999) provided us with another example of, this time an ESL teacher in the U.S., coming out with pedagogical aims. The author recounted a story of a colleague who decided to disclose his identity as a gay man during an ESL class he was facilitating, in response to a student's homophobic remarks. This teacher later received recognition from another student in the class whom he had presumed to be gay. Commending him for having taken such bold actions to challenge his classmate's homophobic remarks, this student expressed that he hoped to

someday have the courage to do the same. However effective such decisions proved to be in these examples, not all queer teachers have the freedom to be open to about their sexual identities. In some contexts, it could be potentially dangerous even for heterosexual teachers to bring up LGBT issues in class (see Vandrick, 2001).

Queers teachers may feel the need to keep their sexual identity a secret for reasons of job security or to maintain the respect of their students and co-workers (see, Nelson, 2009). Simon-Maeda (2004) explained how in order to avoid friction, gay and lesbian teachers are sometimes forced to divorce their ideals from their pedagogies and adjust their interactions to conform to heteronormative expectations. The author noted how this is problematic. Not only does this lead to educators isolating themselves, but it also deprives their students of the opportunities to engage with and reflect on sexuality issues, which could have an enormous impact on the academic atmosphere for both students and teachers, queer and straight alike.

Furthermore, Nelson (2004a) demonstrated that queer teachers may not only struggle with the dilemma of whether or not to come out, but that effectively communicating one's sexual identity can be complicated within a globalized classroom. In such a context, "unpacking (homo)sexual identities means unpacking heterogeneous meanings and meaning making practices between interlocutors" (p. 43). Nelson made a case for thinking not only queerly, but also transculturally about sexual identity issues in education. Now that we better understand the precariousness of queer teacher identities in ESOL classrooms, in the following section, I present literature exploring how queer students experience these educational spaces.

c) Considering our Queer Language Learners

Students may also have a difficult time successfully constructing their sexual identities in language classrooms (Liddicoat, 2009). Some authors have explored ways in which ESOL classrooms can be hostile spaces for queer students which can have detrimental impacts on learning. For example, Kappra (1998) reported on a gay ESL student's experiences with homophobia and heterosexism. Expecting an environment welcoming to queer people, the student of concern had elected to study English in a liberal city in the U.S. He struggled with homophobia in class and the wider heteronormative assumption on campus that all students must be heterosexual. On numerous occasions in class, he was forced to navigate around questions about his presumed girlfriend—leading the author to suggest that language teachers "be careful of activities that ask students to talk about romantic relationships" (p. 19).

In fact, for some English language learners, their sexual identities are inextricably linked to their motivation for learning the language. For instance, for the gay Korean men interviewed in King's (2008) study, their queer identities played a significant part in their language learning, as English provided them access to a wider queer community through which they could more easily find legitimacy. This finding supported Nelson's (2010) claim that for many, "the English language functions as a sort of gay lingua franca that facilitates entry into a global gay community" (p. 448). Thus, for some, their sexual identity may be "the impetus for pursuing fluency in English and for migrating to an English-speaking country" (p. 458).

 Individuals who do migrate for reasons specifically relating to their sexual identity, a practice referred to as *sexual migration* (see Carrillo, 2004), may experience unforeseen challenges which could affect their studies. For example, they may be preoccupied with fears about facing discrimination or political persecution once they've returned to their native

countries (Nelson, 2009; Kato, 1999). Even within ESL classes in the comparatively "gay-friendly" countries in which they have chosen to study, these students may find themselves restricted by heteronormative discourses (Nelson, 2010) and feel compelled to keep their sexual identity hidden from classmates for fear of rejection (see Wadell, Frei, & Martin, 2011).

One study by Kappra and Vandrick (2006) focused on the perspectives of three gay ESL students regarding their classroom experiences in the San Francisco Bay Area. Statements made by the students demonstrated that they experienced some of their class environments to be less-than-welcoming to queer students. It was evident that students felt uncomfortable in classes in which they believed it necessary to censor themselves as to keep their sexual identities concealed. Coupled with unsupportive teacher reactions (or inactions) in instances of homophobia, these students felt ostracized, and at times, unsafe. Speaking to the impacts that these environments can have on learning, the authors highlighted the crucial role that teachers play in "creating—or not creating—an environment in which queer students felt accepted, safe, supported, and empowered" (p. 142). Furthermore, they identify academic institutions as having a role in creating safe and welcoming spaces for queer learners, as well as textbook publishers for producing educational materials that are inclusive and take up issues of equity.

Finally, Liddicoat (2009) provided an example of interactions in which students attempted to challenge heteronormative constructions of their sexual identity within their university foreign language classes. In this study, their efforts to respond to questions in ways which were congruent with their non-heterosexual identities were typically misunderstood and reframed by their teachers as grammatical errors. Thus, even when students try to express queer identity, the ubiquitous heteronormative framing of identities in language classes may undermine these attempts.

d) Heteronormative Language Teaching Materials

There is a lack of queer representation in EFL curricula while some attempts at inclusion have been problematic. As far back as the late nineteen-eighties, Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) argued that heterosexism be considered when evaluating second language curriculum materials. Nearly a decade later, ESL textbooks were still noted as lacking alternative representations of sexual and gender identities (Jewell, 1998). In what are presumably attempts at inclusion, some course materials have presented gay issues as controversial topics for debate, asking students to weigh in with their own opinions on gay rights (see Folse, 1996). As presented in the introduction of this thesis, my personal account of teaching such a chapter in Day and Yamanaka (1998) illustrates how problems may arise when attempts at inclusion uncritically provoke debates framed by heteronormative discourses.

Other learning materials have included gay characters and issues in ways that avoided framing them in terms of controversy—instead opting for a more normalizing approach to inclusion (e.g., Quann & Satin, 2000; Thewlis, 1997). *Choice Readings* for example, includes a story of a boy being raised by a gay couple within a unit about families (Clarke, Dobson, & Silberstein, 1996), while *Understanding and using English grammar (3rd edition)*, casually alludes to a gay relationship with the simple mention of a man and his longtime partner named Jerry (Azar, 1999, p. 291, cited in Vandrick, 2001). While some English L2 educational materials have been developed specifically with the aim of avoiding stereotypes and celebrating diversity (e.g., Hemmert & Kappra, 2004), such examples seem difficult to come by and are not representative of the commercially produced ESL/EFL teaching materials currently available.

2.4 Addressing LGBT Topics: Gay-Inclusive, Critical, & Queer Approaches

The lack of representation of queer issues and characters within commercially available ESL/EFL teaching materials have led some teachers to develop strategies for countering the effects of this absence. A handful of English L2 educators have shared practical insights from their individual experiences with introducing sexual diversity as a topic in their classes. Snelbecker and Meyer (1996) suggested that teachers might decide to include LGBT perspectives when presenting topics related to relationships, such as "dating, marriage, and family" (p. 19); while Summerhawk (1998) explained how teachers interested in incorporating gay/lesbian topics into their classes might integrate them into ongoing discussions on human rights. She recommended teachers might try: using literary characters, elements from films, summaries of newspaper articles, and inviting gay and lesbian guest speakers who can speak about the realities of being gay.

Ó'Móchain (2006) detailed his search for a context-appropriate pedagogic strategy for exploring gender and sexuality issues within a cultural studies EFL class he taught at a Christian woman's college in Japan. Inspired by Summerhawk's suggestion of inviting queer guest speakers, he recounts his experience of using life-history narratives of local queer individuals to generate these class discussions. The author concluded that a queer narrative approach may prove to be a useful method for exploring these issues as it can promote "empathetic values and open-ended imaginations of gender and sexuality for all students—especially within institutional or regional contexts in which such issues are rarely discussed openly" (p. 64).

For Vandrick (2001), the inclusion of sexual identity issues was seen as a means of striving for social justice. She suggested that "[p]erhaps the best approach to introducing lesbian and gay issues in the ESL classroom is to do it as part of a multicultural/equity approach, in the

context of fighting racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination" (p. 10). The author

identified religion and culture as two major points of resistance to discussions about

homosexuality in ESOL classes and suggested that by teaching critically, teachers can facilitate

in helping students examine their assumptions and expose students to new ideas without

imposing these ideas. Vandrick concluded that "it seems most appropriate that ESL and L2

writing programs and educators give attention to the rights, needs, and inclusion of LGBT

students, and to the education of all students on sexual identity issues" (pg. 18).

Amidst debates around whether or not second language courses should aim at promoting

critical thinking, Benesch (1999) offered an example from her own English for Academic

Purposes (EAP) reading classroom, in which she introduced the 1998 murder of gay college

student Mathew Shepard. During the discussion, the teacher invited her students to question

assumptions on which they were basing their opinions. Male students who had expressed

contempt toward homosexuals early in the conversation, seemed to become aware of the fact that

their negative sentiments toward gay men were based in fear and embarrassment. The classroom

discussion presented by the author illustrated how teaching practices aimed at encouraging

students to critically reflect on certain positions could expand their understandings in ways that

can promote social justice—supporting the notion that dialogic critical thinking can and should

be taught within language learning contexts.

In Curran's (2006) article reflecting on his teaching practices, he offered a critical

evaluation of his handling of a particular class in which his ESL students had asked questions

about homosexuality and gay people. He remarked on the shortcomings of the information

model approach he took to respond to his students' questions, concerned that he had failed in his

attempt to challenge heteronormativity. Informed by queer theorist such as Jagose (1996),

Kumashiro (2002) and Nelson (1999), the author made a case for an inquiry-based approach. He argued that taking such an approach would have invited students to deconstruct the normative questions they had posed; and prompted more student exchange, thus, been better suited to an ESL teaching context.

Finally, the ability for language learners to be able to speak honestly is increasingly becoming understood as important for developing L2 proficiency. The voices of queer language learners themselves have supported this notion as well. For example, a case study conducted by Moore (2014) of an English conversation class in Japan organized and operated by an LGBT community group, explored the particular learning needs of queer students. Unlike what they had experienced in other commercial English educational contexts, the students in the LGBT class could speak honestly as themselves; an affordance they greatly valued. However, the content selected by the teachers were sometimes seen as irrelevant to the lives of some students who were not interested in mainstream gay culture. To ensure class content better meets needs and interests of students, he suggested avoiding heteronormative discourses that essentialize what constitutes gay issues. Following Nelson (2006), Moore suggested taking a queer inquiry approach to addressing matters of sexual identity in language classrooms.

2.5 Insights from Queer Theory

Queer theory has provided educators with a method through which to interrogate the taken-for-granted assumptions relating to gender and sexuality. Similar to critical pedagogy, queer theory, as Wilchins (2004) explained, "is at heart about politics—things like power and identity, language, and difference" (p. 5). The gay and lesbian movement of the 1960s and 1970s which fought for greater visibility and legislation protecting from discrimination, held an essentialist view of sexual identities, positioning them as stable attributes. Poststructuralism

challenged this notion however (Seidman, 1995), and in the 1980s and 1990s queer theory

emerged, giving rise to an understanding of sexual identities as being acts rather than facts

(Nelson, 1999; Nelson, 2009). In other words, queer theory has shifted focus to how language

and culture operate to construct sexual identities.

Speech acts, for example produce sexual identities through discourses which construct a

hetero/homosexual binary (Foucault, 1990a). This referential relationship normalizes

heterosexuality by constructing homosexuality as abnormal, thus, heteronormative discourses

function to regulate sexual identities, privileging heterosexuality over homosexuality (Warner,

1993). Judith Butler (1990) articulated a notion of gender and sexual identity as being

performative constructs which are enacted though linguistic signifiers and discursive acts. Butler

argued that gender and sexual identities are produced through a ritual repetition and reiteration of

performative strategies, which over time, lead them to become taken for granted—understood as

being both natural and normal.

Informed by poststructuralist and queer theories of identity, educational research

involving gay and lesbian issues began to engage with this reconceptualization of sexual identity

(Britzman, 1995). A small number of studies have looked at the application of queer theory's

insights to approaching gay and lesbian topics in foreign language (De Vincenti et al., 2007) and

ESL classrooms (Curran, 2006; Nelson, 1999, 2004b, 2009). With the goal of legitimizing

sexual minorities and forwarding civil rights, previous approaches that had drawn on an

essentialist lesbian/gay-identity framework. However, a queer approach refocuses on an analysis

of discursive and cultural practices, exploring cultural meanings and interpretations.

> *Whereas a lesbian and gay approach challenges prejudicial attitudes (homophobia) and*
> *discriminatory actions (heterosexism) on the grounds that they violate human rights, a*

queer approach looks at how discursive acts and cultural practices manage to make heterosexuality, and only heterosexuality, seem normal or natural (heteronormativity). (Nelson, 1999, p. 367)

In other words, instead of seeking to simply affirm gay and lesbian identities, queer-informed pedagogical approaches aim to examine or problematize all sexual identities. Nelson (2006) further made the argument for queer inquiry, suggesting language educators, curriculum developers, and researchers shift their focus from inclusion to a critical, queer-informed approach which involves questioning and deconstructing how different cultures and languages perform and understand sexual identities.

2.6 Teachers' Attitudes Regarding LGBT Topics

Although English language learners are interested in learning about and discussing issues related to sexual identity, many teachers do not feel prepared to handle challenges associated with addressing LGBT themes (Lee, 2014; Nelson, 1993; Nelson, 2009; Wadell et al., 2011). In other words, while "many ESL learners are interested in sexual identity for a range of reasons, some of which may not be obvious or intuitive… many teachers struggle with how to address sexual identity in their classrooms" (Wadell et al., 2011, p. 105). This may in part be due to the fact that little has been done in terms of updating teacher education curriculum to prepare teachers to handle issues of sexual diversity with students (Dumas, 2010).

Further supporting this assessment, a recent study conducted by Evripidou and Çavuşoğlu (2015) found that many EFL teachers still fear that they are ill-prepared to lead discussions on gay and lesbian topics or deal with homophobia within their classes. The study found that, although teachers held positive views about the incorporation of LGBT topics overall, their inclination to engage with these topics was largely dependent on who would be responsible for introducing and framing these discussions. Teachers' responses implied that they would feel

more comfortable and inclined to address gay and lesbian issues if they were incorporated within the official curriculum. Thus, ESL and EFL educators clearly still hold anxieties toward addressing matters relating to sexual identity.

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

TESOL scholars have revealed ways that heteronormative thinking embedded within the field can have deleterious effects on queer students and teachers, and ultimately restrict learning opportunities for all language learners. Due in large part to calls from critical scholars for socially just approaches to L2 education, there has been a growing interest in the role of identities in language acquisition and TESOL. As a result, increasing attention has been given to the positions and experiences of queer English language learners and educators. Drawing on poststructuralist theories of identity and queer theory, Cynthia Nelson suggested queer inquiry as a promising approach for exploring issues of identity in English L2 classrooms.

Literature reviewed herein supports my initial reflective premising—that many EFL teachers still fear that they are not properly prepared to lead discussions on queer topics, and therefore struggle with how to incorporate them, or even deal with them when they do come up. Much of what has been written about sexual identity in TESOL have typically focused on outlining gay-affirmative inclusion approaches. A handful of studies have shared ESL teachers' experiences of teaching LGBT issues, such as gay rights, and this has received even less attention in foreign-teacher headed EFL contexts abroad. Furthermore, studies that consider the multitude of ways in which teachers may experience queerness in the EFL classroom beyond such discussions are scant. Finally, although several studies have demonstrated that teachers hold anxieties toward addressing issues of sexual identities with students, they rarely attempt to identify and explore the nature of these concerns in-depth.

Acknowledging these gaps, I focus on teachers' perspectives of experiencing queer moments in EFL classes in South Korea, a context that has received little attention in regards to sexual identities in TESOL. As Nelson (1999) noted, "even when sexual identities are not being discussed, they are being read, produced, and regulated during the social interactions of learning and teaching" (p. 388). As such, for the purposes of this research, I do not exclusively limit educational moments to those considered conspicuously relevant to sexual identities: instances in which gay and lesbian topics explicitly became the focus of classroom discussions. Rather, I conceive of queer moments to encompass the broad scope of subjective experiences participants perceived as relevant to gender and sexuality. Doing so affords consideration of that which remained unspoken—was deemed to be unspeakable—and the insights examining such silences might offer.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, I describe my research methodology, explaining the philosophical underpinnings that have informed this work and the research methods used to collect my data. I then present the practical undertakings involved in bringing this study to fruition, including the selection of participants, development of instructions, designing of elicitation prompts, and the data collection and analysis processes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of methodological concerns. In short, here I offer a detailed explanation of what I have done, and I share my rationale for having gone about it in such a way.

3.1 Theoretical Perspectives

Qualitative research investigates the world of lived experience. Therefore, a qualitative methodological approach was chosen for this research project, as it is concerned with deriving meaning and insights from everyday classroom occurrences experienced by EFL teachers in South Korea. Through interpretive practices that situate the research activity in the social world and locate the researcher within their work, qualitative research engages in "material practices that make the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Specifically, this study seeks to derive lessons from the participants' textual reflections through a thematic analysis of this data and a strong and pedagogically oriented exploration of the themes identified.

In conducting this hermeneutic phenomenological study, I delved into the teacher-participants' retellings of queer moments within their EFL classes—exploring the themes which emerge from these stories—attempting to unearth latent assumptions. The accounts of memorable student-teacher interactions which make up this study provide us with an opportunity to critically examine snapshots of everyday life as an English teacher in a foreign classroom.

This examination is meant to draw our attention to implications for pedagogical practices—particularly those pertinent to identities marginalized within Korean EFL classrooms.

As Nelson (2009) aptly pointed out, "there is no single meta-theory that can account for or encompass the complexities of ESL learners and teachers engaging with lesbian and gay themes in classroom contexts" (p. 9). I would extend this notion to the phenomenon of teachers experiencing queer moments in a foreign classroom. Such being the case, several theoretical frameworks have informed this study, namely critical and queer perspectives.

Throughout my analysis, at the front of my mind was a concern toward "issues of power and justice" and how "the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion, and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 288). I explore foreign teachers' experiences of queer moments within their classrooms in Korea with the aim of engaging with the complexities of power and justice embedded them, in hopes of offering critique and mapping out possibilities for a more humane pedagogy. I situate this project within a critical framework, as it acknowledges complexity, makes space for alternative modes of meaning making, explores relationships between power and oppression, and ultimately seeks social justice through critique and transformation. Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) outlined the main assumptions and beliefs that underpin and guide this work:

> *All thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; [f]acts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; [t]he relationship between concept and object between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; [l]anguage is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); [c]ertain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary*

societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable; [o]ppression has many faces, and focusing on only one at the expense of others (e.g. class oppression versus racism) often elides the interconnections among them; [m]ainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression. (p. 164)

The matter of sexual identity in the classroom is central to this study. However, as aforementioned, a critical approach to research asks us to look more broadly at ways in which various forms of oppression are interconnected. Therefore, the topic of sexual identities functions as an entry point, situating, but not exclusively binding this work. Informed by insights of queer theory, a critical hermeneutic analytical framework guided my interpretive readings of the texts. As such, I do my best to make visible and offer critique to manifestations of injustice and marginalization beyond LGBT issues which have articulated themselves to me throughout this research process. While grappling with the texts, my interpretations focused attention to the many power differentials embedded within them relating to colonial histories, linguistic imperialism, racial, sexual, and gender identities; as well as local-foreigner, employer-employee, teacher-student, and researcher-participant dichotomies.

Pedagogical research seeking insights through a critical form of analysis should "represent a form of reading that understood not only the words on the page but the unstated dominant ideologies between the sentences as well" (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 165). Thus, peering through a critical lens, I focus a queer eye on the hegemonic and normative forces governing foreign teacher pedagogies in EFL classrooms in South Korea.

3.2 Methods: Small Story Teacher Narratives and Image Biographies

I organized the data into four case studies which each examine one participant's experiences with queer moments in their EFL classes. This data was collected using two main

techniques: (a) small story teacher narratives collected in the form of written responses to open-ended prompts, and (b) an exploratory adaptation of photo-elicitation which asked participants to construct *image biographies* that exemplify or expand on an aspect of their writing.

a) Small Story Teacher Narratives

It has been said that teacher narratives convey "the vital substance of what teachers know and how they think" (Freeman, 1996, p. 101, cited in Nelson, 2009). Vásquez (2011) made a case for small story narrative analysis in language teacher research, arguing that they better reflected the kinds of stories people typically tell in their daily life than the autobiographies and life histories of big story approaches. I hoped to maintain a "strong and oriented relation" (van Manen, 1990, p. 135) toward the pedagogic implications of the practices and concerns of my foreign EFL teacher-participants. Therefore, this study looks to the "ephemeral narratives emerging in everyday, mundane contexts" (Watson, 2007, p. 371); the kind of reflective short stories teachers share in the break room.

b) Image Biographies

With the understanding that gender and sexual identity are in many ways communicated and interpreted through visual and physical signifiers, I decided to include a visual method component to this study. Some visual researchers have commented on how photo-elicitation interview techniques are useful to "explore participants' values, beliefs, attitudes, and meanings" (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998, p. 129). They have remarked on how context-specific photographs "could show indescribable attributes of people, objects, situations, and phenomena; subtle or unnoticed relationships; and the various dimensions of ways of knowing" (Richard & Lahman,

2015, p. 6). Sharing these beliefs, I employed an exploratory adaptation; a participant-generated image-elicitation approach.

The images participants provided were understood as serving as both a textual data in and of themselves, as well as serving as a means eliciting writing that presumably required the participant to focus in on a particular aspect touched on in their narratives. My intention for using this approach was to add a layer of depth to the narratives by prompting the participant to move back and forth between the abstract and the specific aspects of their experiences. This method asked the participants to guide us from the breadth of a shared memory into the specificity of a single image, and back again, to the broader meanings they had intended for the image to represent.

The visual data provided me the opportunity to see an issue or concern of from the perspective of the participant. Furthermore, because "artist are involved in giving shape to their lived experience, the products of art are, in a sense, lived experiences transformed into transcended configurations" (van Manen, 1990, p. 74). In line with this, both the image and the accompanying written explanations which comprised the image biographies were treated as phenomenological texts. I understood these texts to contain insights into participants' experiences with the phenomenon being researched. Thus, they were interpreted using close-reading strategies (Mitchell, 2011; Molestane & Mitchell, 2007).

3.3 Methodology: Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Modern iterations of phenomenology, the study of experience as it is lived and perceived, trace back to the work of philosopher Edmund Husserl. His protégé, Martin Heidegger, was influential in moving phenomenology away from its more transcendental philosophical concerns

toward an ontological focus on our everyday experiences of *being* in the world. Heidegger drew on hermeneutics, "the art and science of interpretation," in order to develop a phenomenology of everyday, real life concerns (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012, p. 2). The research tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology which descends from Heidegger's reorientation is characteristically involved in the project of studying experiences and their meanings. For this study, I draw heavily on the work of Max van Manen, a key proponent of this methodology in educational research. In his book, *Researching Lived Experience*, van Manen (1990) explained that phenomenology abstains from "constructing a predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts," thus, one's methods must be "discovered or invented as a response to the question at hand" (p. 29). In the following sections, I outline the process that evolved as I worked to answer the two main research questions which I presented in the first chapter.

a) Self-Reflective Journaling

Beginning with a research interest falling under the broad topic of "engaging with potentially taboo subjects in a foreign classroom," I started reflecting on and journaling about my experiences with this phenomenon. While a Husserlian phenomenological approach would expect the researcher to look back on these experiences in order to *bracket*, or set aside their biases and assumptions, hermeneutic phenomenology understands them as being "embedded and essential to interpretive process" (Laverty, 2003, p. 28). Therefore, such an approach calls on researchers to continuously throughout the research process "give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched" (p. 28). In line with this, I kept a journal throughout the research process. An edited portion of some of these initial writings formed a part of the first chapter of this report, introducing the topic of inquiry and elucidating my relationship to it.

b) Finding Participants

The participants invited to take part in this study all met the following criteria: they taught English in South Korea for a minimum period of at least one year, within the past five years, and were employed under the E2 teaching visa. As this study was inspired by several of my experiences as an expatriate EFL teacher, I was specifically interested in learning more about the perspectives of teachers who had shared similar experiences. The one-year minimum was intended to preclude newly arrived teachers who were still experiencing the initial culture shock. It also increased the likelihood that they would have relevant experiences to write about. I used the five-year time frame to ensure that we had a shared context; a period in which the local attitudes were likely similar to those I had experienced. As a result, all of the teachers invited to participate had been teaching in South Korea while I had been teaching.

The E2 teaching visa was the standard visa issued to foreign language educators who had been offered a teaching position in Korea. At the time the data for this study was collected, the E2 visa for teaching English was available to adult native English speakers from Canada, the U.S., the U.K., Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa who held a valid 3 or 4-year degree from a recognized tertiary institution located in one of these nations. Additionally, E2 visa applicants needed to submit to a criminal background check and medical tests screening for illicit drug use and HIV/AIDS.

I should note that my participant pool was in no way intended to be fully representative of all expatriate English teachers working within Korea. There are numerous foreign English teachers in Korea who have entered via other avenues, such as being married to a Korean national for example. However, this criterion assisted in delineating the demographic scope of my participant pool to the population from whose experiences I was seeking to learn: novice

expatriate teachers with backgrounds somewhat similar to mine. I should note that I do not view these teacher visa policies as being unproblematic, as they privileged certain English speakers, largely wealthy, Western, and white populations, while positioning other capable English speakers as being undesirable, or even unfit, to teach English in South Korea (Kim, 2011).

After receiving ethical consent from McGill University's Research Ethics Board (REB-II) in June of 2011, I sent out the initial invitation to participate (see Appendix A) by email to seventeen prospective participants. The invitation letter provided an overview describing: the subject of the research, my main research objectives, the kinds of data that would be collected, how that data would be rendered anonymous, the eligibility requirements, and an estimation of the time commitment required to participate. The letter also explained that participants would receive a copy of the completed report, and would be entered into a lottery-style drawing for a chance to win one $50.00 cash prize. Five invitees returned signed consent forms and were sent the data collection prompts. Of these five, one did not follow up, resulting in a total of four participants who submitted materials that comprised the data of this study.

The participants who took part in this study were recruited from within what I would categorize as my *community of practice*—a network of fellow expatriate teachers who learned from one another by sharing information and experiences related to our mutual profession (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This cohort of educators consisted of former co-workers, friends, and acquaintances; several falling into more than one of these categories. Furthermore, all of the teachers were raised and educated in North America: two Canadians and two Americans, a male and a female teacher from each country. Both female participants self-identified as straight, while both males identified as gay. One of the male teachers was African American, which is a topic touched upon in his writing. I should also note that only cisgender individuals were invited

to take part in this study, as I did not know of any transgendered individuals within my community of practice. Additional details relevant to the participants' teaching context are presented within each of their case studies in chapter four.

c) Data Collection Tools & Materials

Participants were asked to complete *Basic Demographic Data Form* (see Appendix B) asked for information such as their name, age, gender, nationality, educational background, and sexual identity. These questions were fill in the blank rather than multiple choice to avoid forcing participants to select answers that may not align with how they self-identified. Also, I collected contextual information instrumental for conducting a more informed analysis of the teacher narratives. Participants were asked to provide cursory professional information about their teaching experience in Korea; such as the name and location of the schools at which they were employed, periods of employment, and the general age range of the students they had taught in each of these positions.

The *Writing Instructions* (see Appendix C) offered clarifications which were supplemental to the writing prompts. They outlined basic guidelines for responding to the prompts and explained my goal of learning about the participants' everyday teaching experiences. The instructions emphasized the notion that the events which they chose to write about did not need to be extraordinary or life changing and reminded the participants that their answers would be kept anonymous, in order to encourage candid responses.

Van Manen (1990) noted that "writing places us at a distance from the practical immediacy of lived life by being forgetful of its context" (p. 128). Attempting to counter this, the participants were instructed to incorporate their recollected thoughts and feelings into their

writing, and include contextual information that would paint a fuller picture of the events they were describing. The writing instructions further explained that insights would ultimately be derived from the details and richness of their accounts; concluding with my objective of using their stories to potentially inform EFL teaching methods.

Table 1: Data Collection Materials		
Material		**Purpose**
Basic Demographic Data Form		To collect background information about participants useful to interpreting their data, such as name, age, gender, nationality, educational background, and sexual identity.
Writing Prompt #1 (Gender)	**Prompt** **1.A**	To guide the participant in reflecting on and writing about their experience(s) in which gender became an issue within their classroom. To elicit the participant's written recollection of their experiences.
	Prompt **1.B**	To guide participant in reflecting on and writing about the factors that had influenced their behaviors during the event(s) they had described in response to Prompt 1.A. To elicit the participant's written reflections on what had influenced their pedagogical decisions during these scenarios.
Writing Prompt #2 (Sexuality)	**Prompt** **2.A**	To guide the participant in reflecting on and writing about their experience(s) in which sexuality became an issue within their classroom. To elicit the participant's written recollection of their experiences.
	Prompt **2.B**	To guide participant in reflecting on and writing about the factors that had influenced their behaviors during the event(s) they had described in response to Prompt 2.A. To elicit the participant's written reflections on what had influenced their pedagogical decisions during these scenarios.
Writing Instructions		To offer additional clarification, outline basic guidelines for responding to the prompts, and highlight my goal of learning about everyday teaching experiences.
Image Collection and Submission Instructions		To explain my intended aim for the visual component of the research and describe the various types of images that could be submitted (new or existing photographs, drawings, cartoons, maps, diagrams, etc...) To request that the participant provide a brief written caption, explanation, or description of the image(s) they submit. To provide instructions for submitting image biographies.
Example Image Biography		To provide an example image biography that the participant could refer to if necessary.

The participants also received two writing prompt forms. *Writing Prompt #1* focused on the topic of gender (see Appendix D), while *Writing Prompt #2* was interested in the subject of sexuality (see Appendix E). Each consisted of two sections, A and B, resulting in a total of four writing prompts. *Prompt 1.A* asked the participant to reflect on and write about their experience(s) in which gender became an issue within their classroom, while *Prompt 2.A* asked the same using the topic of sexuality. *Prompt 1.B* and *Prompt 2.B* asked the participants to reflect on and write about the factors that had influenced their behaviors during the event(s) they had just described. Thus, the *A* prompts elicited the participants' recollection of their experiences, while the *B* prompts sought to learn about the participants' understandings of what had influenced their pedagogical decisions during these scenarios.

The prompts were designed to be open-ended. They allowed for a broad interpretation of what could qualify as being an experience relevant to this study. My reasoning for this parallels Nelson's (2009) decision to implement a minimally interventionist facilitation style in her focus groups and interviews, in that; I was interested in discovering "what issues and questions were pertinent for teachers, rather than impose those of interest to me" (p. 6). For this study, I understood my participants to be experts, authors, artists, storytellers, cultural interpreters, and analysts. Thus, the prompts were designed to be broad to allow for a greater degree of participant direction, expanding the ways in which this study understood the topics of inquiry as being pertinent educational issues. The open-ended design of these collection tools ultimately resulted in the inclusion and exploration of concerns beyond those relating to my initial interest in sexual identity issues.

Along with the writing instructions and writing prompts, the participants were sent *Image Collection and Submission Instructions* (see Appendix F) as well as an example image biography

(See Appendix G). These instructions explained my intended aim for the visual component of the research and instructed the participants to provide a brief written description of the image they chose to submit. The image and description together form what I refer to as image biographies. Participants were informed that the writing accompanying their image could be as simple as a title or a short caption that related to the idea they intended to illustrate through their image. I suggested that alternatively, the image biography could present a more in-depth discussion of a specific aspect touched on in their written narratives.

Possibilities for visual data were left open, in terms of both content and form. The artists-participants were invited to use a photograph that they already possessed, take photographs specifically for this project, or even submit a drawing (cartoon, map, diagram, etc.). Due to ethical concerns, I requested that participants not take pictures of their students specifically for this project. In addition, I asked that participants only submit images they own or have the right to use, and explained that all images in which individuals were identifiable would be altered to protect their anonymity. I concluded with instructions on how to submit the images and image biographies. Foreseeing possible confusion about what was expected of them, the participants were provided with an example image biography that I had created to which they could refer.

d) Data Collection Procedures

Current technology extends the possibilities of engaging in phenomenological inquiry (Butler-Kisber, 2010). All communications and data submissions related to this study took place via email which enabled me to work with participants who were geographically dispersed. Exchanging all information digitally allowed for the feasibility of the project and opened participation to teachers regardless of their location. The prospective participants who indicated that they were interested in participating in this study were sent an informed consent form that

complied with McGill Research Board ethical requirements (see Appendix H), which they were required to read, sign, and return before continuing with the research process.

After receiving a participant's signed consent form, that participant was sent the remaining six documents described in the previous section, which included: (1) a form requesting basic demographic information, (2) the writing instructions, (3) writing prompt #1, (4) writing prompt #2, (5) the image biography instructions, and (6) an image biography example. The four participants who ultimately chose to take part in this study were located throughout Canada, the United States, and South Korea during this data collection process.

Participants were requested to submit their responses to me within twenty days. The initial invitation letter had indicated that reading the instructions, responding to the prompts and creating an image biography would foreseeably require a minimum of one hour. The written responses were free form and the writing prompts did not recommend a minimum or maximum word count. All four participants submitted responses to all four writing prompts and an image biography. One participant submitted two images. Altogether, these sixteen written small story narratives, along with the five image biographies, make up the primary data source for this research.

Participant data was rendered anonymous by replacing all identifying information with randomly selected pseudonyms upon receipt. All information linking the pseudonyms with the actual identifying information of the participants has been stored as physical forms only and was kept under lock and key to assure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and their data. Only one of the photographs submitted featured human subjects. The photo was digitally altered to render the faces of these third-party subjects unidentifiable to ensure anonymity. After

all of the participants had been given the opportunity to look over and respond to my

interpretations of the data they had submitted, the prize drawing was held. The winner was paid

the $50.00 (USD) prize via bank transfer, and the three other participants were each sent an

Amazon E-Gift Card for $25.00 (USD) in appreciation of their thoughtful participation.

e) Data Analysis: Hermeneutic Circle

Figure 1: Visualizing my Hermeneutic Process

Researchers who employ hermeneutical analysis "practice the art by grappling with the

text to be understood, telling its story in relation to its contextual dynamics and other texts first to

themselves and then to a public audience" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 294). My

interpretive process was achieved through an enactment of a hermeneutic circle "which moves

from the parts of experience, to the whole of experience and back and forth again and again to

increase the depth of engagement with and the understanding of texts" (Laverty, 2003, p. 24).

I first conducted a close-reading of each participant's set of data separately. Although separate prompts had been designed to elicit information about the experience of the phenomenon and factors that influenced their engagement with it, some of this content blended together within the written responses. Thus, my first read through was guided by only a very basic theme marking key which focused my attention on distinguishing experiential content from influences. As I read through the data, I identified and made note of emerging themes. During this initial process of seeking meaning, I carefully read my participants' stories and images, attempting to "unearth something 'telling,' something 'meaningful,' something 'thematic' in the various experiential accounts" (van Manen, 1990, p. 86). Furthermore, in my analysis of these texts, I found Nelson's (2009) suggested questions for evaluating TESOL research and course materials to be useful. Thus, I asked myself: "Does the text portray a monosexual version of the world? Or are diverse sexual identities represented? What values or assumptions are evident vis-à-vis sexual identity? Does the text address a sexually diverse readership?" (p. 218).

I consolidated the emergent themes onto a theme marking key. Referring to this key, I collectively read the cases several more times in light of the totality of the themes that had emerged from the initial readings. The data was reexamined first as individual cases, then organized by prompt for a comparative analysis which looked at each response in relation to one another. These multiple rereadings helped to refine themes, distinguishing between those which appeared to be unique, and those which were overarching and universal. Critical and queer informed literature provided insights pertinent to my interpretation which prompted several focused re-readings of the data. Thus, the data was analyzed numerous times, applying different theoretical lenses such as gender performativity (Butler, 1990), or silencing/normalizing discourses (Foucault, 1990a), for example. These theoretically informed re-readings led to

deeper understandings, as well as the emergence of new themes. On several occasions between these various focused immersions, I stepped back from the data to reflect on the analysis process in an attempt to identify overarching patterns and relationships amongst the themes that had emerged.

Following what van Manen (1990) described as a *selective reading approach*, the texts were read to identify statements, phrases, and anecdotes which were "particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience described." (p. 93). These excerpts were used to craft the analytical case studies presented in chapter four. During the data analysis and crafting of the case studies, I read discussions and content posted on online message boards created for foreign teachers living in South Korea. Reading posts, news articles, comments, and discussions helped to keep me abreast with the concerns and various perspectives of the community about which I was writing.

Finally, each participant was sent a (nearly final) draft of the case study I had crafted from their data, inviting them to ensure my interpretations had not misunderstood or mischaracterized their stories. Two of the participant responses seemed to highlight the ephemeral nature of the positions and opinions they had voiced within their narratives:

> *Okay, so I just read what you sent me, and it was so cool to see my experiences down on paper like that. I feel like you nailed it on the head with me. It also shows how much I've changed in regards to how I handle certain situations. Thank you so much for sharing this w/ me.*

> *It was nice to see some of my past opinions and see if there have been any cultural shift or differences in Koreans I teach here. At first glance, very little…*

Regarding my analysis of their narratives, all responses were affirmative and validating, and none of the participants expressed concerns or offered suggestions indicating any portion of their case studies might require reinterpretation.

3.4 Methodological Concerns

As previously mentioned, my participants were selected from within my community of practice. This means that I knew them and they all knew me to varying degrees. Although this was beneficial in terms of informing my interpretations of their narratives, I am aware that it influenced the contents of their writings. Although it is impossible to know exactly in what ways and to what extent, I acknowledge that the interpersonal dynamics of this relationship between researcher and participants undoubtedly shaped the data that was collected. In addition, the participants may have known one another, possibly complicating anonymity.

Regarding the anonymity of participants, I found that working within a community of practice presented possible complications. Although I used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of my participants, it is foreseeable that participants may have shared one or more of the stories they have written about for this study with another teacher who will read this report. I recognize this as a concern which could potentially challenge a notion of complete anonymity. However, in such a case, would it matter? I weigh the seriousness of this hypothetical scenario against the innocuous nature of the stories presented herein, as well as the commonplaceness of these teachers openly sharing, discussing, laughing about, and trying to make sense of kinds of classroom encounters presented herein with one another.

I should note that all ten of the females who were invited to participate in this study identified as straight. Furthermore, of the seven males invited, only three self-identified as

heterosexual (to my knowledge). None of these three invitees responded to my initial invitation

email, and therefore the perspectives of heterosexual male teachers are absent from this study.

Although we cannot draw conclusions from such a small sample, for me this raises questions

about the relationship between sexual identities and: choosing to teach English abroad, the

formation of communities of practice, and possible apprehensions toward engaging with the

topics of gender and sexuality. Are heterosexual men generally less represented among those

who choose to teach in South Korea? Were straight male foreign teachers simply less present

within my own social circles? And finally, did straight men who were invited to participate in

this study feel uncomfortable engaging with the topics of this inquiry; or might they not have

viewed gender and sexuality as being relevant issues to their experiences as teachers?

Although the exploratory image biography component did offer insightful data to this

study, there were some practical issues worth noting. While designing the instructions for this

section, I had feared that because it was likely an unfamiliar means of collecting information,

some participants might be confused by this portion, and therefore, choose not to take part. I

included an example image biography I had drafted along with the instructions. This decision

appears to have resulted in a participant submitting an image biography which echoed my

example subject matter of a confusing gift from a student. Although I do not believe that the

similarity or our experiences render this data to be less true or relevant, it did cause me to

question if my inclusion of an example was an unnecessary overcompensation.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the theoretical underpinnings which framed this

work. I described the research methods used to collect data and my rationale for working with

small story teacher narratives and image biographies. I then presented a detailed explanation of

the practical undertakings involved in bringing this study to fruition, including the selection of participants, development of instructions, narrative, and image biography elicitation prompts, and the data collection processes. I explained my implementation of a hermeneutic circle to analyze the participants' data and presented central questions and major analytical lenses which framed this analysis. Finally, this chapter concluded with a discussion of methodological concerns. In the next chapter, I present the findings of this research study through four case studies.

Chapter Four: Findings

As described in the previous chapter, small story teacher narratives and image biographies were collected and formed the data for this study. In this chapter, I have organized this data into four case studies, each presenting the textual reflections gathered from one of the four participants who took part in this study: Brian (Case Study One), Lindsay (Case Study Two), Nancy (Case Study Three), and Alex (Case Study Four). Each case study begins with demographic information about the participant and some basic information about their teaching context. The small story narratives are presented as vignettes which are organized thematically under sub-headings. These are followed by the participant's image biography and a concluding summary. Finally, I conclude this chapter by drawing on commonalities among these case studies, attempting to articulate the essential structure of experiencing queer moments as a foreign EFL teacher in a South Korean classroom, and identify the five themes regarding the concerns these teachers held toward addressing issues of gender and sexuality in class.

4.1 Case Study One: Brian

At the time of writing, the participant whom I will herein refer to using the pseudonym Brian, was an American male in his late twenties who self-identified as homosexual. He had previously spent a little more than a year teaching students ranging in ages from 5 to 12 at a private English academy in Seoul. For purposes of anonymity, I call this school *ABC Academy*. While participating in this study, he was beginning his second year of employment at a public middle school in Gyeonggi-do, which is the province made up of the areas surrounding Seoul. Here his students ranged in age from 12 to 15 years old.

a) Discussing Queer Topics with Youths: "The Transgender Show"

Responding to writing prompts seeking to find out about how issues of gender have manifested in classroom experiences, Brian recounts an instance in which one of his young students initiated a conversation pertaining to transgendered people.

> *When I was teaching at [ABC Academy], I had a student who had gone on a summer vacation with her parents to Thailand. She was about 7 or 8 years of age. She never mentioned what city they went to, but she did say they went to Thailand. I'm sitting at my desk waiting for the bell to ring and the rest of my students to come in. So the girl comes in, and she's happy and smiling then she comes up to my desk to casually ask me if I know what transgender is. I replied yes with shock on my face, and she proceeded to tell me that she went with her family to see Tiffany at the transgender show.*

Although is not unusual for students to bring up topics that are unrelated to the prescribed curriculum, this example illustrates how unforeseen student-initiated conversations relating to a topic such as non-normative gender identities can catch a teacher off guard. Brian was quite surprised when this student shared her vacation story of attending a Thai transgender show with her family. Although he recalls responding with a shocked expression on his face, it is unclear whether or not the student realized the bewildering effect which her question had had on her teacher. He notes that the disorientation he experienced contributed to a certain degree of hesitancy to engage in the conversation more fully.

> *I really didn't know how to respond to that, so I simply said, "Oh okay; did you have fun?" She said yes, and skipped off to her desk and sat down. And that was the end of that… I didn't think to ask any questions about the show partly because of the state of shock I was in, but also because I thought it best to leave the situation alone.*

A bit perplexed by the situation at hand, Brian decided it was best not to expand on the topic and chose instead to allow the conversation to end by not seeking any clarification or additional details. Later in his writing, he identifies the age of the student as being a factor that influenced why he decided to respond to this situation in such a way.

I was in shock to hear such a young child (Korean or Westerner) ask me if I know what transgender is. But when I got over the shock, my first thought was why would her parents take their child to that kind of show. I don't know the nature of the show, but it couldn't have been bad for the child to be discussing it with me. Granted I didn't get any details of the show. I just remember being shocked, confused and somewhat amused.

Uncertain as to what said performance might have entailed, Brian presumes that because this student chose to discuss it with him, it probably wasn't too risqué. His concern with the age appropriateness of attending a transgender cabaret, to some extent, may speak to how gender identity is conceptually linked to sexuality, and more specifically gender expressions deemed to be non-normative are often framed in terms of sexual deviance or perversion.

Being both confused and amused by this unexpected conversation with his young student, this teacher chose to share this experience with co-workers and friends who have worked as expatriate English teachers in Korea.

I of course told my co-workers who were just as shocked and laughing pretty hard. In Korea, you just don't know what to expect from your students sometimes, and I definitely didn't expect that… Whenever I tell this story to friends especially those who have taught here in Korea, they laugh and just say, "Oh Korea!" That's the foreigner catch phrase after living here for a while. We just chalk everything up to culture…

This story would suggest that for some expatriate teachers, cultural difference becomes a lens used to understand the incongruences between their expectations of their students' behaviors and what they actually experience in the classroom. As seen in this account, teachers who have encountered a puzzling classroom interaction related to issues of gender or sexual identities may attribute the incident to cultural differences to make sense of their experience. Furthermore, his decision to recount the episode to other expat educators demonstrates one way that EFL teachers in South Korea may rely on informal communities of practice. By sharing stories of baffling student-teacher interactions with one another, they collectively interpret and make meaning of these experiences as they relate to the cultural practices of their students and host country.

b) Observing & Responding to Divergent Gender Norms

Commenting on cultural practices he has observed after having taught older students, Brian remarks on a tendency for his students to self-segregate by genders. He notes that girl students interact mainly with other girls, while boys associate with other boys. He further explains that pupils of the same sex engage in physical interactions, which someone from the U.S. or Canada would likely characterize as displays of intimacy or even attraction.

> *Now that I'm in the public school system and surrounded by teenagers, I can see how repressed the teens are in this country. For the most part boys hang out with boys and girls with girls... Also the boys and girls are very touchy feely with one another, and again this is boys with boys and girls with girls. They're always all over each other, whether it's by putting their arms around each other or holding hands. This is definitely a cultural thing though.*

Here again, the participant identifies cultural difference as a site from which issues relating to gender can enter classroom spaces. Unlike the first scenario in which a student initiated a conversation directly relating to gender identities, in this account the topic of gender was not brought up verbally. Instead, here he turns our attention to the common student behaviors that he viewed as breaching the gender norms prescribed by his home culture. While several of the actions he regarded to be gender transgressions are casual, unoffending, and therefore went unaddressed, others like the example that follows can be more dramatic or explicitly sexual in nature.

> *[During](m)y first year in the public school system, I was surprised to see a boy sit down in a chair then watch another sit all the way back in his lap and make a humping motion. It wasn't in a sexual manner but in a "normal" joking manner. From what I've seen it's just one of the things they do here… when I see teenage boys dry humping one another in their sits (sic), I tell them to stop and go sit down. There's not much I can do since this is their culture.*

From the sound of it, Brian has witnessed this behavior more than once and has identified it to be a scene that is not completely abnormal in a classroom with teenage male students.

Although his statement "there's not much I can do…" gives us a sense that he felt compelled to respond differently than having done, he does not offer an explanation of how he would have preferred to respond to this situation. Understanding this behavior as being culturally sanctioned to some extent, this teacher apparently felt limited as to how he should go about addressing these interactions. Thus, we see how the concept of cultural difference can serve not only as a tool EFL teachers may use to make sense of confusing situations but also as a constraint which limits how they feel able to respond in certain instances.

c) Making Sense of Cultural Difference

Brian offers a more thoughtful analysis that moves beyond his initial observations, sharing how witnessing the perceived gender breaching behaviors made him feel and providing a possible explanation as to why this is.

> *A lot of the behavior of the teens in Korea makes me uncomfortable because it's the exact opposite of how I was raised in the States. We're pretty much taught that a man is to be a man and a woman is woman. We probably get that from the influence of the Bible. In Korea, the men are more effeminate than the men in the States. Not all of them are, but the majority are. You see them carrying handbags and wearing clothing that is made for a woman's body. This is just not how things are supposed to be according to how I was raised.*

He notes that witnessing his male Korean students behave in ways he considers effeminate causes him discomfort. In theorizing explanations as to why he experiences this uneasiness, he cites his upbringing in the US, where Christianity has had an influence on shaping and maintaining gender norms which would appear to be less flexible than those in Korea. Thus, experiencing and revisiting these moments of disorientation caused him to reflect on how his own understandings of gender had been shaped.

To illustrate some of the perceivably self-emasculating behaviors he has witnessed, he describes how objects understood in the US as being markedly feminine, such as handbags and more form-fitting clothing, are commonly used by men in Korea. His observation highlights how objects can assign gendered perceptions toward those who own, wear, or use them, and how these meanings do not always carry over transculturally.

d) Failing Masculine Discourse: "Guys Don't Say That to One Another"

This next passage from the participant's writing draws attention to how language learners who lack the sociocultural competence required to fully comprehend packaged-meanings in the target language, may end up communicating messages with unintentionally gay connotations.

> *Another thing I'm still not used to is the boys telling me that I'm cute or a fashionista or that they love me. Sometimes they'll even greet me with, "Hey baby," or "What's up, baby?" Here it is called hip-hop style, but the way they say it comes across gay. Last year I'd do a double take, but this year, I'm telling them that guys don't say that to one another. It's just easier that way. They don't know the context to say it in.*

When male students compliment this teacher about his appearance or address him in what he describes as "Korean hip-hop style," it's likely that they fail to realize the gay connotations that they have (unintentionally) expressed. Recognizing these instances as miscommunications, Brian enacts a heteronormative instructional approach for simplicity's sake; informing the students that boys don't speak to one another in such a way. He further remarks on the discomfort he experiences due to these lapses in intercultural intelligibility.

> *You would think I'd be flattered by students giving me compliments, but it makes me uncomfortable. I'm just not used to this type of attention especially from guys. I think if I was Korean, they wouldn't care, but because I'm a foreigner, I'm interesting to them... Even though I'm gay myself I still find all this uncomfortable, and to be around teenage boys who are telling you [that you] are cute is a bit awkward. I just graciously say thank you and quickly change the subject.*

Even though he identifies as gay, he is uncomfortable receiving compliments of this nature from his teenage male students. Having had experienced similar scenarios with my male students, I believe it is not despite the fact, but rather *because* I am gay that I found these situations to be so uncomfortable. I was mainly concerned about being viewed with suspicion by other adults. Similarly to Brian, I also understood my students' interest in my physicality as being due to the fact that I was a foreigner whose body was different to what they are accustomed to seeing. Therefore, based on these and similar experiences, we are able to see how EFL teachers' bodies can become a topic of particular interest to their students, which can lead to embarrassing or uncomfortable situations for these educators. But what happens when discussions of a teacher's body become explicitly sexualized?

> *I've even had one student ask me if my "eggs and sausage" were black. He noticed my hands are black on top and white on the underside, so he decided to ask me that question. I didn't get upset, but I did think it was an inappropriate question, so I told him we don't talk about those things. The boys in the group all hit him for asking me that.*

In this scenario, a student asked his African-American teacher about the skin tone of his genitalia. Understanding that this student was genuinely curious about a body that was unfamiliar to him, the teacher chose not to reprimand him, but to point out the inappropriateness of the question being asked. Considering the reaction of the boy's peers, we can surmise that this was less likely a case of conflicting cultural norms than a single student choosing to behave audaciously. Even so, this story underscores how EFL teacher's bodies commonly become the focus of student curiosity and a topic of classroom conversation. Experiences such as these raise the question: how can EFL teachers in Korea better prepare students to interact and communicate with diverse peoples in ways that are not perceived to be disrespectful, denigrating, or objectifying? More broadly, how do we prepare students to navigate the sociopolitical implications of discussing other people's bodies in English?

e) Responding to Homophobia—Limitations & Risks

While in the previous section we saw how language learners might inadvertently communicate messages with gay implications, in this instance, we see how Brian responds when students make intentionally homophobic remarks toward one another.

...when they call each other gay, I'm always saying, "No he's not, so stop saying that."

Brian's stated approach to addressing homophobic comments made by his students is to reaffirm the accused students' heterosexuality and admonish the insult. One may wonder why we do not see a more passionate response to homophobia from a teacher who himself identifies as gay. Brian explains:

> *When you're an English teacher here, you're supposed to be teaching conversational English and the culture you're from. I can't completely do this because I work in a repressed culture. It makes standing up for what you think is right difficult. At this point I value job security over defending gay rights, especially to young teenagers.*

Pointing to what he describes as a repressive culture, he feels restricted to respond in a way that is queer positive — even though he views such an approach as falling under the purview of his mandate to teach about American culture. The fear that his job could be at risk depending on how he responds to homophobic comments works to silence him and rob him of agency in these situations. This phenomenon is touched on in more detail in the following section.

f) Classrooms as Closets: Lying to Keep One's Job

In this account, Brian shares a story about a situation in which he was forced to lie to students about his sexuality.

> *I recently lied to a student who asked if I liked girls... While I was sitting at the picnic table in front of the school, a group of 3rd grade boys (9th graders) sat down with me to*

talk... out of nowhere one of the boys said I was cute, so another boy said, "Ah teacher, he's gay." The boy accused of being gay, said, "I'm not gay; I love girl!" I just laughed. Then the student next to me asked if I liked girls, and this is where I felt I had to lie for my job's sake, so I told him yes. There's just such a bad stigma for homosexuals here. In Korea, we're viewed as perverts. I've heard of people being sent home once their school found out they were gay. I've been here for almost 3 years, so I'm not trying to get sent home now.

This story is an example of a situation in which the teacher's sexuality directly became a topic of discussion with a group of students. Afraid that he could lose his job and ultimately risk being deported if others at his school found out about his sexuality, he was forced to lie to his students. This fear stemmed both from his awareness that other EFL teachers had been fired for this reason, as well as his own observations relating to the powerful stigma associated with homosexuality in Korea. Here he intimates his feelings related to this event:

In this situation I felt horrible for lying, but that's one of the things you just have to live with when being a gay English teacher… I really would [like] to tell my students and co-workers about this part of me, and want them to be okay with it, but I don't feel Korea is at that point yet.

He regrets having to lie to his students but saw it as an unavoidable burden of being a gay EFL teacher in Korea. After revealing his desire to be honest about his sexual identity to his students and co-workers, he identifies Korean society's current lack of acceptance for gay people as preventing this from being realized. He further explicates:

I grew up in the South in the States, which is also referred to as the Bible Belt. So imagine a gay Christian black kid in the South in the US. It's actually quite a little like Korea, but I feel there are more people in the US who are accepting… Yes, I do have Korean friends who accept me for who I am, but as a whole they're socially not there… It's going to take time; I mean, America still hasn't gotten everything straight with this issue.

While Brian acknowledges that the U.S. still has progress to make concerning acceptance of LGBT people, based on his experiences and observations, he feels a greater sense of oppression and social stigma toward people who would openly identify as gay in South Korea.

g) Brian's Image Biography

This was a gift I was received this year from one of my first graders. It's called a fruit rabbit, and the rabbits (sic) name is Kitto as it's written in the title. My student gave it to me for my birthday. It was so sweet of him to give me a gift, so I was very thankful even when I unwrapped it. Thank the Lord he wasn't around when I did open it because I just laughed. I didn't know what to expect, but I wasn't expecting this at all.

…I was genuinely surprised, and could only think to say thank you. I gave him a one handed hug, and he said goodbye then left with his friend. I walked into the office, which I share with one of the five co-teachers I have, and we chatted about how sweet it was of him to think of me. Then I opened it, and as I mentioned before I laughed. My co-teacher did as well, but neither of us could figure out why he chose this gift. It's the thought that counts, right?

Figure 2: "Kitto the Fruit Rabbit"

Presented here is a photograph Brian took of a birthday gift he received from one of his male middle school students. His image biography circles back to focus on how objects project gendered meanings and how these symbolisms can differ cross-culturally. Interestingly, in his written explanation, Brian chose to specify that he gave a one-armed hug to thank this student. I believe his decision to clarify the manner in which he hugged this student speaks to a concern with how his physical interactions with students might be perceived by others. Furthermore, this concern was present both during the interaction and as he recounted the event in his writing.

h) Case Study Conclusion

This case study presented Brian's small story narratives and image biographies. Several themes emerged from his textual data, the major ones being: a concern with age appropriateness, dealing with cultural differences in class, differences in gender norms, bodies and interpersonal contact, and queer stigma. The concern for age appropriateness became apparent in his interaction with a young student who initiated a discussion about seeing a transgender show with her family. This story, along with his discomfort with his male students' performative and discursive breaches of American masculinity raise interesting questions about how gender norms get negotiated in foreign-teacher headed EFL classes, and what get communicated to students by teachers who attempt to mitigate these discomforts. Particularly interesting was how his observations and image biography demonstrated ways in which objects and materials work to construct identities, and thus, how they can lead to confusions when they miscommunicate identities in multicultural classrooms.

Much of Brian's writing focused on observing, making sense of, and responding to cultural difference in class. We learned that cultural difference can serve as both a kind of reassuring explanation in times of confusion, as well as a constraint which limits how teachers feel able to respond. Another observation worthy of mention here is how foreign educators form and use informal communities of practice to reflect on student behaviors and interpret local cultural norms collectively. Shifting to the theme of bodies, from Brian's experiences, it became apparent that EFL teachers' bodies sometimes become a topic of particular interest for their students. This phenomenon raises interesting questions about how EFL teachers in Korea might best prepare students to navigate the sociopolitical implications of discussing other people's bodies in English as to avoid unintentionally being disrespectful or offensive.

Finally, stigma against LGBT people in Korea emerged as playing a central role in silencing this teacher, greatly restricting how he felt able to respond regarding queer issues. In responding to homophobic comments made toward students, he limited his response to discouraging students from insulting each other because he did not feel safe to challenge the underlying prejudice; that being gay is something of which a person should be ashamed. When we consider that the student being called gay or another classmate hearing the exchange may, in fact, be homosexual, the implications become all the more concerning. Thus, this draws attention to how stigma and the fear of losing one's job can operate to force teachers into involuntarily participating in upholding heteronormative discourses in their dealings with students.

4.2 Case Study Two: Lindsay

This case study presents data provided by a participant whom I will refer to herein as Lindsay. She is a Canadian female who identifies as straight and was in her mid-twenties during the period reflected on in her writings. She had worked at a private language school in Seoul for more than three years before deciding to move to Gyeonggi Province, the province surrounding Seoul, to begin teaching at another private academy. At the time of participating in this study, she had been teaching at this second school for more than a year. At both schools, she worked with language learners who were generally between the ages of four and ten years old.

a) Teaching to Prevent Violence against Women

While gender was never a specific pedagogic theme within Lindsay's curriculum, gender issues did arise in her classes. One common occurrence she discusses here touched on violence between male and female students.

> *Being a kindergarten teacher, I haven't encountered lessons where gender has been the theme for discussion/teaching. Although one thing that I have encountered would be that it seems to be more acceptable for boys to hit girls [in Korea] more than at home. From what I remember as a child, it was quite a serious thing if a boy hit a girl, and boys were taught "don't hit girls." So I guess I always found it quite different that the boy students always hit the girl students when arguing and were not scolded for it. When I say hitting, I mean full on punching, pushing or knocking the girls down when arguing over something silly like a borrowed pencil. These occurrences did not happen every day but I found in my experience that other teachers would just brush it off by having the students say sorry to each other for arguing, with no real reprimand for the behavior.*

Using her own childhood as a point of reference, Lindsay recalls how boy children were made to understand that it was a serious taboo for a male to strike a female. In contrast to this, during her time teaching in Korea she perceived a greater degree of apathy with regard to instances in which male students were physically violent toward female students. Her observations of these physically violent student behaviors and the subsequent teacher reactions

gave the impression that there did not appear to be the same importance placed on the genders of those involved.

She reports that some of the other teachers at her school responded with what she perceived to be a certain degree of neutrality, as they did not distinguish boys physically assaulting girls as events requiring special attention. According to her recollection of events, these teachers had a tendency to focus on the disagreement itself while downplaying the violence. Here, Lindsay describes having taken a different approach.

> *So, when I began to reprimand the boys for hitting the girls they were confused. I remember the first time, the boy just looked at me like "what are you on about?" and asked "why?" I realized that the response "boys don't hit girls" had no effect on them. Now I explain to the students very simply, in a way that the Korean boys can understand; that boys are typically stronger than girls and that if they hit them they could seriously hurt them...*

When this teacher made it a point to reprimand her boy students for hitting girls, they were confused about her reasoning. Her students seemed to be unaware of the notion that when a boy hits a girl, it is considered to be a particularly unacceptable form of violence. In this instance, we see how differences in expectations with regards to gender relations can lead to student-teacher misunderstandings in EFL classrooms. Attempting to bridge this gap, she offered her students an explanation that she believes made sense to them. Her explanation conveyed the notion that boys possess greater physical strength, and therefore, this could cause serious harm to girls if used against them. She foresees that some might not agree with this approach.

> *I know every feminist reading this is probably cringing right now, but this has been the only way that they understand why they shouldn't hit girls… However in Korea the prominent belief is that boys are stronger than girls. Knowing that, using this [explanation] was to explain to them that their behavior is wrong, [which] seems to work.*

Even though this participant believes that some may take issue with her approach, it has

been the most effective method she has found for clarifying why she differentiates boys hurting

girls from other violent behaviors. Although she does not go into details as to why this

explanation might trouble some feminists, my hunch is that it pertains to apprehensions of

reinforcing preconceived ideas that males are superior to females. Thus, we see some of the

tensions that arise from EFL teachers doing their best to be understood, while simultaneously

being cautious of using potentially problematic oversimplifications in order to do so. Here, she

reflects on the influences that she identifies as having shaped her views on the matter.

> *I think the main factor that influenced my feeling on this subject was my upbringing. As I*
> *previously stated, growing up I remember that boys were taught not to hit girls from a*
> *young age and if they did, it was a serious problem. So when I moved here and*
> *encountered it, I was shocked that it seemed to be an acceptable behavior.*

Lindsay attributed her sentiments on violence as it relates to heterosocial gender relations

to how children were raised where she grew up. She reports being shocked to discover that in

Korea, the issue of boys hitting girls did not seem to be viewed in the same light as it was in her

own culture. Regardless, in situations in which males hit females in her classroom, she chose to

act in accordance with her principles; doing her best to justify her reasoning in a way her

students could comprehend.

b) Sex Education in Kindergarten: "Then off Came the Doll Clothes"

In this story, Lindsay recounts her experience at a school assembly that was intended to

provide the students with information relevant to protecting themselves against child predators.

> *A few years back, there was media hype in Seoul and surrounding areas about young kids*
> *getting kidnapped and sexually assaulted. I remember this time quite clearly as all the*
> *mothers were so scared their child would be a target. Because of this, my school at the*
> *time decided to have an educational presentation for the students about the subject. At*
> *first, I thought it was a good idea, and it could give the students some knowledge about*

how to get help if a stranger was after them. However when the presenter came into the school and set up the presentation, I realized that it wasn't that at all. It was sex-ed for 5~7 year olds, complete with anatomically correct dolls. At first, the dolls were clothed and the woman explained how one was a man and the other was a women. Then off came the doll clothes and she went on to explain sex and how babies were made… the woman doll came equipped with [a] baby and everything. I was shocked to say the least.

Responding to parental concerns stemming from a string of child kidnappings in the area Lindsay's school hosted a special informational event targeted at making the children aware of these kinds of dangers. She recalls that she initially saw this as a potentially positive initiative to better prepare the children to interact with strangers safely. However, she was shocked when she realized the content of the lesson was quite different than what she had anticipated, as it included a rather detailed lesson on sexual and reproductive health. She expands on her thoughts regarding this event, noting the age of her students as being a key issue of concern for her.

I am all for sex-ed, but for their age this subject matter seemed [to be] a bit much. She did explain about good and bad touching, which I thought was good, considering the media hype at the time. But I thought that such explicit details at that age should be the parent's responsibility to explain. Not some woman at a kindergarten presentation… Needless to say all the expat teachers were a bit uncomfortable and didn't know what to think.

Acknowledging the value of broaching topics such as appropriate and inappropriate touching, this participant questions whether it is suitable for a kindergarten lecture to cover explicitly sexual topics with very young pupils. She points out how this situation caused a sense of discomfort and confusion amongst the expatriate educators at her school. The anxiety they experienced in response to this event is unsurprising when we consider how contentious the issue of sexual education has been, and continues to be in the US and Canada.

This scenario highlights how dealing with value-laden (therefore often controversial) topics can become additionally complex in foreign educational environments. In these scenarios, the expatriate educator often lacks a working knowledge, not only of the various competing

ideological positions but also the shared dominant beliefs that frame these debates. Closely related to the issue of age and exposure to information about sex is the question of whose sexual values will be represented in such a lesson, and whose may be omitted.

> *I think culturally I was shocked, because in Western countries, at that age parents are the ones who talk to their child about this subject matter. Not a school. Experiencing sex-ed in school is a good thing. Everyone I know had to take sex-ed. Also, I remember that the older people got, the more detail[ed the lessons got]. I think the idea behind the sex-ed presentation was good. However as previously stated, I think it was a bit much for 5~7 year olds.*

Citing Canadian educational practices, Lindsay remarks on the understanding that when dealing with children this young, it is customary for these kinds of discussions to be taken up by caregivers at home rather than by educators in a school setting. She acknowledges the practicality of providing sex education in school curricula, however, views the ages of the learners as being a rather important factor in determining the scope and nature of the content covered. I recall that during my first few months in Seoul, I was amazed by how independent the youths were compared to at home. Up until around midnight, tweens could be seen out on the streets; getting to and from school, having dinner with friends, navigating the city's massive public transportation system, and so forth, all without adult supervision. Reflecting on this phenomenon causes me to wonder about the ways in which Korean conceptualizations of childhood might differ from our own, and how this could lead to misunderstandings in EFL classrooms.

c) Lindsay's Image Biographies

Presented here are two images directly relating to the issues Lindsay brought up in her narratives. The first image is a found cartoon and the second is a found photograph of visual aid dolls used for Sex Education.

In Korea, at least in the kindergarten system it seems to be acceptable to some teachers that boys hitting girls isn't really 'wrong'. They just take it as a normal argument. I think the boys should be taught not to hit the girls. Because if it is an ok behavior as a child, what is stopping them from doing it when they are adults?

Figure 3: "Boy Hitting Girl"

These are very similar to the dolls used in the kindergarten sex-ed presentation. Again, I just think that it is a bit much for the age of the students.

Figure 4: "Sex-ed Dolls"

d) Case Study Conclusion

This case study presented Lindsay's small story narratives and image biographies. Key themes which emerged from her writing pertained to dealing with cultural differences, gender norms, bodies and interpersonal contact, and a concern with the age appropriateness of sexual topics. While in the first case study we saw how foreign teachers might feel apprehensive to address predicaments stemming from cultural differences, for Lindsay, the possible consequences of inaction regarding males learning not to hit females were too significant to ignore. Hence, this demonstrated that in some cases EFL teachers might decide to challenge local culture within their classrooms, rather than concede to cultural practices they view as being problematic.

Again, the attention to gender focused on expectations of male student behavior, more specifically, how male students should be taught to interact with female bodies physically. Lindsay's statements highlighted the importance she placed on instilling into her young male students an understanding that perpetrating violent acts against girls is unacceptable. She used her image biography to further expand on this issue, where she posed a particularly compelling question: "Because if it is an ok behavior as a child, what is stopping them from doing it when they are adults?" Thus, Lindsay viewed addressing this issue to be a pedagogic imperative having significant and lasting implications beyond the classroom; possibly helping to prevent her male students from engaging in violent acts against women as adults.

Finally, Lindsay's comments regarding the presentation using visual aid dolls emphasized her concern about the age appropriateness of the content presented. This leaves us to wonder if Koreans hold different attitudes toward children and sexual knowledge, such that it

would be reasonable for a presentation designed to inform young students about sexual exploitation to include information about sex and reproductive health.

4.3 Case Study Three: Nancy

This case study presents several interesting classroom stories provided by a female teacher whom I here refer to using the pseudonym Nancy. She taught at a private English language academy in Seoul that catered to middle school students, generally between the ages of 12 and 15. Born and raised in the US, she identifies as straight and was in her mid-twenties while living and teaching in Korea. At the time she took part in this study, she was nearing the end of her second year of teaching.

a) English as a Commodity

This first short excerpt provides some background information useful for better understanding the context in which this participant was teaching.

> *I was teaching a special group of accelerated students. I say accelerated as opposed to gifted because it was their parent's choice to put them in the more difficult, incredibly more intensive after-school program. It wasn't as if they were approached by a team of mentors and told that additional schooling would benefit them, but that's a whole different subject on Korean education…*

In this short tangential remark, Nancy critically draws attention to one aspect of the private English education industry in Korea. Her comments highlight how this industry is often governed by strategies to best market educational services to parents, rather than concerning itself with educators' understandings of their learner's needs. This phenomenon is something I became acutely aware of when I was asked to teach a course at our company's high school branch; an experience I have written about in my research journal.

I remember the first day of teaching a TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] *preparation class. To get a better idea of how to plan the course, I began by asking the class when each of them was planning on taking the TOEFL. I was astonished when around eighty percent of the students reported having no plans to take the test, neither now, nor in the foreseeable future. Puzzled by this fact, I asked why they were taking the course. The students offered an explanation that my manager later reconfirmed: "TOEFL is a kind of buzz word. Moms really love TOEFL."*

Both excerpts offer a view into how market forces mediate English language curricula in the private education sector in Korea. The pervasive commodification of English education has produced a situation in which many curriculums are designed around market trends, rather than the pedagogic prowess of the practitioners who are asked to employ them. These circumstances bring up numerous questions around the ways in which both curricula and teaching practices are shaped by the profit driven necessity to appeal to parents as consumers.

b) Interpreting Behaviors: Homosocial or Homosexual Interactions?

In this passage, Nancy shares a collection of observations, which she recalls as being the impetus to bring up the topic of gender in the classroom.

There were several times when gender sort of "came up," but I feel like I was the one bringing it up. Being American, I noticed the differences on how genders interacted within their own gender. The boys/men felt very comfortable touching, hugging, kissing, playing with each other's hair, sitting on each other's laps and even (I witnessed this on several instances) touching each other's genitalia.

For Nancy, the topic of gender primarily entered her classes in her responses to observations that rules governing same-sex interactions in Korea appeared to contrast notably to what she was accustomed to in the United States. She describes how her male students felt comfortable being publicly physical with one another in ways that stood out to her as an American onlooker. She goes on to explain that where she is from, these interactions would have communicated meanings that are much more markedly linked to sexual desire or romantic intimacy.

In America if one were to witness these things, the men involved would immediately be considered gay and the reaction would usually be one of disgust. And it wasn't just the men that would be touchy with each other; the women did the exact same things. Again, in America, they would be thought of as lesbians.

The participant hypothesized that if her students were to behave in such ways in the US, their actions would carry very different implications than they appeared to have in Korea. Namely, her students would have been perceived to be gay or lesbian, and thus, met with the negative social repercussions associated with being identified as such in a middle school classroom. Nancy's observations illustrate how as diverging social norms play out within the intercultural context of a foreign teacher headed EFL classroom. One may interpret sexualized meanings from another's behaviors, while those who perpetrated the actions remain unaware of the significations assigned to them.

Nancy recounts how witnessing her students engage in intimate touching sometimes caused her to speculate about their sexual orientation.

Due to my cultural upbringing, I often wondered if some of my students were homosexual based on the way they interacted with each other physically. I also wondered whether or not the students felt more comfortable because, "homosexuality doesn't exist in Korea." The country is in a state of denial as far as homosexuality goes. There are openly gay stars, singers and everyday individuals, but still the denial exists.

She recognizes her childhood upbringing as framing her interpretations of those moments that caused her to wonder if some of her students might be homosexual. This phenomenon suggests that certain events or behaviors may lead EFL teachers to form conjectures about their students' sexual orientations. As we learned in Brian's case study about how students could become inquisitive about their teacher's sexuality, so too here we find the inverse; teachers may become curious about the sexual orientations of their students. Furthermore, Nancy offers an insightful theorization as to why there appears to be much less stigma associated with public displays of same-sex intimacy in Korea. She points to the notion of a societal denial in which

homosexuals exists in an abstract conceptual sense, however, are not recognized as existing

within one's social circles.

c) Physical Contact between Students

Here the participant offers up a particular instance in which she recalls gender as having

become a topic of discussion in her classroom.

> *If I had to think of a specific time when gender was raised it would be when I was teaching a class and the bell rang for break. Another student came running into [the] classroom to visit with his friend (two boys). The boy came running in and the other boy (seated) immediately pulled him onto his lap and hugged him from behind. In my culture, only two people that were dating would feel comfortable doing such a thing, but these boys were just friends. I jokingly asked them if they were boyfriend/girlfriend, their response was that yes they were and the one on the lap was the girlfriend.*

The story that Nancy has shared is strikingly similar to an experience that Brian had

described in his writings. While Nancy believed the boys to be just friends, she noted that in her

culture, this kind of display of affection is something that is typically only expected of people

who are in a romantic relationship. Using humor to approach this potentially uncomfortable

situation, this teacher inquired about the nature of their relationship—asking if they were

boyfriend and girlfriend. This approach appears to me to be an attempt to offer the boys a subtle

hint that, for her, what they were doing was a bit unusual, and was likely probing for a response

that could provide additional insight into what she was witnessing. The boys extended the

antics, confirming their status as a couple and elaborating that the boy seated on the lap of the

other was the female in the relationship.

> *I asked them how they decided who was the boy and who was the girl and they both responded that since the one sitting on the lap was in that position, then he must be the girl. I asked if they were to switch places on the chair, who would be the girl, at that point the pretend genders changed… The students seemed to understand the gender differences and gender roles when in a relationship, but chose to ignore it and continued to be as close as they wanted to be. No one else seemed to react to this, but there were a couple of students that were listening to the conversation that actually called the students*

gay. So, I got the impression that these particular students enjoyed being closer than most other students.

Trying to make sense of a perceived breach of homosocial gender norms taking place in her classroom, Nancy inquired about the two students' actions through the use of a heteronormative joke which hypothetically re-gendered one of the boys as being female. She notes that despite having demonstrated an awareness of the possible romantic interpretations of their behaviors, the boys continued with their seemingly intimate interaction. Although she recalls that no one had initially reacted to the behavior, she notes that some classmates who were privy to the conversation that ensued did end up calling the two students gay. However, it remains unclear if these statements were in response to the boys cuddling, or the content of the conversation which had positioned them as dating. Furthermore, we cannot ascertain if the statements identifying the students as gay were made with pejorative or merely interpretive intentions. In either case, by acknowledging the possibility of a same-sex romantic relationship, these students challenged the heteronormative framing of the conversation. This interaction serves as an example of the subtle ways in which foreign teachers may address their discomfort with student breaches of heteronormative gender performances by indirectly attempting to make their students aware of the queer meanings they are communicating.

Here the participant identifies the major influence guiding how she approached this particular situation.

I did feel comfortable with these students, which is why I joked with them that they were boyfriend/girlfriend, but I wasn't really influenced by anything else. I already mentioned above that being American and used to American views on how people of the same sex should interact, helped to shape my feelings towards the student's physical interactions. On several occasions I felt very uncomfortable with the touching that I witnessed.

This teacher had established a strong rapport with the students involved and understood this to be a central factor that influenced her decision to respond to this situation in jest.

Regarding how she came to experience certain gender-related issues as troubling or disorienting, she reiterates the role of her American upbringing in shaping her ideas about how people are meant to interact with other people of the same sex. Finally, she intimates how witnessing instances of touching that violated these norms sometimes caused her to feel particularly uncomfortable, highlighting how foreign teachers carry their own social rules related to both gender performances and interpersonal contact with them into their foreign classrooms. This being said, what happens when these scenarios move beyond student-peer interactions and Korean students attempt to be physical with their foreign teacher?

d) Physical Contact between Teachers and Students

Here, Nancy discusses how her students would sometimes try to be physical with her and how this made her feel.

> *It also made me uncomfortable when female students (I specify female because most male students would not do this based on their gender norms. It didn't seem proper for male and females to really be friends, so the touching did not occur between the two genders, just within their own gender.) would touch me. They would hold my hand or hug me while I walked. It was normal for students to do such with people they felt close with, but for me it was uncomfortable. I never really talked about this subject directly with students besides saying a quick, "That type of affection in America is not usual."*

She understood the inclination of her female students to hold her hand or hug her as being gestures of fondness and comfort; even so, these situations still caused her to experience feelings of discomfort. Although, she minimized these feelings and never directly mentioned this fact to her students, she did passingly attempt to make the students aware that these practices were a bit unusual to Americans.

Having experienced a similar sense of unease when my male middle school students would hang their arms over my shoulders, I am curious as to why these expressions of congeniality caused us American teachers to feel anxious. As we earlier witnessed how expat

teachers sometimes interpret sexualized meanings from particular physical expressions of friendship typical amongst Korean youth, it stands to reason that teachers might be uncomfortable about being embraced by students because they fear how others might interpret these interactions.

e) Adolescents & the Novelty of "Adult" Topics

In Nancy's final story, she shares an experience in which a subject that she found to be questionable came up while playing a game with her students.

> *… I was teaching a group of kids that spent the majority of their afternoons learning Math, Science and English Grammar with dry teachers that never really tried to introduce real fun into the classroom environment. Because of this, when I entered the classroom it was party time. The students would do the work I asked but also knew that I would let them slack on the work as long as they were speaking English. Games and activities were what we did the majority of the time. One particular game was an improv game called "Intervention." One student was sent out of the room. Once they were out of earshot, the class would decide what they were going to be addicted to. Then the student would come back. The class would then describe their addiction and the student would have to guess what it was.*

In setting up the backdrop for her story, she explains how her students were generally overworked and bored. To remedy this, she strategically tried to incorporate elements of entertainment into her lessons to motivate her students. Continuing her story, she here recounts a memorable event that occurred while using the above-described game in class.

> *The first few rounds went well. One student was addicted to McDonald's, so he got really fat. Another student was addicted to plastic surgery, so she was eventually really ugly and had no nose. Then the last student left the room. The class decided he would be addicted to Porn. I guess I probably should have told them that it was inappropriate, but I thought it was kind of funny. It also didn't seem like a big issue. Porn was talked about regularly in class. It was mentioned quickly as "over 19." I'd also seen it countless times at 2am on regular television. If I was seeing it, they were seeing it. So, I let it go.*

While playing an educational game, this teacher's students chose to use pornography as a theme. In hindsight, she notes that she probably should have redirected them toward a less risqué topic; however, for the sake of amusement, she chose to allow them to use pornography as

the mystery subject, or "addiction," to be guessed. In addition to the added comedic value, her reasoning also related to her sense that it would be relatively inconsequential seeing as though it was not uncommon for the topic of pornography to infiltrate classroom conversations. She reveals the result of this decision.

> *When the student came back in they tried to clue him in on his addiction by saying things such as, late night television, magazines, some books, only older people can watch or read, but the student just wasn't getting it. So, one of my favorite students... banged his fist down on the table with conviction and said, "If you do this, you feel good for maybe a moment, but then you feel tired and maybe a little shame." I lost it. I didn't know how to react. He had just talked about masturbating in front of the whole class. What was I supposed to do? Do I ignore it? Do I address it? I didn't know, so I laughed. The whole class seemed not even to notice. A couple of students giggled a little, but it may have been in response to my laughter. No one's body language seemed to change. They all seemed to continue sitting around as they had before the comment was made. It made me wonder if they understood him, or if it was just normal to proclaim, to a classroom of mixed gender [peers], that you masturbate. I never really figured out which one it was.*

Attempting to help his classmate guess the student-selected theme of pornography during an educational guessing game, one student offered up a hint by describing, what the teacher understood to be the act of masturbating. This student's remarks created a dilemma for the teacher, as she was uncertain about how best to respond. To make sense of the event, she attempted to gauge other students' responses. However, none of the other students reacted to the comment. At a loss, she simply had to laugh. Reflecting on the exchange, she was confused as to whether their lack of response was due to an issue of language, meaning they failed to understand the innuendo, or if it was explained by culture, suggesting the topic of masturbation was regarded differently in Korea. Her reflections here highlight how expatriate EFL teachers are faced with the added task of concurrently engaging in cultural interpretation as to guide their daily pedagogical decision making.

In this passage, Nancy offers additional insight into her reasoning behind the decision to allow her students to select a game theme that some might consider to be inappropriate.

Of course I was uncomfortable that the topic went to masturbation, but I could only blame myself for allowing it. I thought it would be funny to allow a student to be addicted to porn. I guess that's where bad judgment comes into play. I was very comfortable with these students because I was their only foreign teacher and my class was a little break for them in their endless chain of schooling and studying. I wanted to do something that they found funny and interesting. I wanted them to have an escape for 45 minutes a week. I think that's why I didn't control the topics as much as I should have.

This instance in which a student described masturbation caused Nancy to feel uncomfortable. However, she views her leniency and "bad judgment" as being to blame in this scenario. Offering further explanation, she points our attention back to the context in which she taught and rearticulates her pedagogic goal of creating a class atmosphere that incorporated entertainment and humor. Even so, she appears to question if she should have taken a more authoritative role in controlling the topics. Nancy understandably demonstrates feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence as she reflects on the complex question of where to draw the line regarding issues of a sexual nature. As her stories highlight, being in a position of authority in a country where one has a limited understanding of the culture, already complex pedagogical decisions become further complicated and uncertain. Consequently, EFL teachers struggle to negotiate whose ideological principles should guide their decisions to censor their students, their classroom discussions, and to what extent.

f) Nancy's Image Biography

Presented here is a photograph Nancy provided to illustrate behaviors she commonly witnessed among her male students that stood out as breaches of American masculinity norms.

Figure 5: "Two Korean boys"

So, these obviously aren't my students, I taught middle-school aged kids, but these were a couple of Korean boys I hung out with for a short period of time. I know you might be thinking that they're posing for a camera shot, that's why they're so close, but I distinctly remember that this is how the spent the majority of their night. They were always touching. This is the type of thing I was mentioning in my response. In America these guys would have been gayer than a Barbara Streisand drag queen, but in Korea they were just "very good friends" and even called themselves "brother."

Another thing you might notice is their clothing style. Both boys were dressed very nicely in designer clothes and button-downs. We were going out for a drink and this is how they showed up. They spent more time on their hair then every woman at the table. They were also carrying purses. There are so many things that pointed to these two men being homosexual, but they were not. Gender seems to be a relative thing in Korea. Gender norms seem to be stretched a bit more than they are here in the USA. I am a tomboy and would often dress that part. Recently I've been dressing more nicely and wearing more "girly" colors because I was tired of being called a lesbian. I got a short haircut and was told I was a lesbian because of that. In a way Koreans are more free to express themselves because they aren't as strict about the way a certain gender should look or act amongst their friends of the same gender. However, this isn't to say that gender roles do not exist in Korea. There are specific roles for women, but that's an entirely different subject that I shouldn't get into now.

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g) Case Study Conclusion

This case study presented Nancy's small story narratives and image biographies. A minor yet critical theme from her writing pertained to for-profit English education, raising questions about the influence this has on further marginalizing less marketable identities in terms of representation in curricula, teacher hiring, and teaching practices. The major themes which emerged from her textual reflections related to gender norms, queer stigma, bodies and interpersonal contact, the age appropriateness of topics, and addressing cultural differences. Focusing largely on male homosocial interactions and the queer meanings they communicate transculturally, both her writing and image biography explored this phenomenon in detail. From this we saw how cultural differences in the way genders are performed can lead teachers to speculate about the sexual orientations of their students, and how teachers may attempt to make their students aware of the queer meanings they are communicating. These findings raise interesting questions around how language educators might go about teaching for sociosexual literacy, without unintentionally enforcing or reinforcing heteronormativity.

The concern with gender also crossed over into the theme of bodies and interpersonal physical contact, as she expressed discomfort toward witnessing male students touching one another. This finding, along with her feelings about being touched by students, highlighted how EFL teachers carry their cultural mores regarding corporeality with them into their foreign classrooms. Additionally, the story in which a student introduced the topics pornography and masturbation into an educational game demonstrated how teachers are required to engage in cultural interpretation to determine local expectations around the age-appropriateness of particular topics. Nancy's experiences underscore some of the complex decisions EFL teachers must make as potentially problematic scenarios arise in classrooms abroad.

4.4 Case Study Four: Alex

In this fourth and final case study, we explore the teaching experiences of the participant whom I herein refer to as Alex, a gay-identified Canadian male who taught English in South Korea for approximately two years. He was in his mid-twenties when he arrived in Korea to begin teaching at a private elementary academy in Seoul. Here, his students were generally between the ages of 5 and 12. Shortly after completing this contract, he began working as an English instructor at a private woman's university, also located in Seoul. The writing he submitted for this study focuses on his experiences while teaching at this university, while his image biography focuses on cross-cultural conceptions of masculinity.

a) Cross-Cultural Inquiry: Discussing Gender in Class

Interested in learning about his students' perspectives, Alex recalls how he would often bring topics relating to gender into class discussions.

> *Having taught at a university I was always interested in the different perspectives on gender amongst my students. For me, the gender roles that I saw in Korean public were so different from what I was used to, I would often bring up the topic.*

Pointing to disorienting practices pertaining to gender norms which he observed during his everyday experiences living in Korea, this participant recounts how he would sometimes bring cross-cultural observations relating to gender into his classes in order to elicit conversations on the topic.

> *I would also ask about gender roles. I would tell the girls that boys in Korea were more feminine than in Canada. They would explain that Korean men were masculine at home, but in public they had to focus on their looks and impress other people.*

Here, Alex recalls a specific observation that he would share with his students to engage them in thinking and talking about gender performance related cultural differences. According to his account of using this strategy, explaining that Korean males seemed to behave in ways that

he, as a Canadian, viewed as being markedly feminine, provoked some of his students to offer explanations which challenged this interpretation and allowed for a more nuanced understanding of local expectations regarding masculinity. From this example, we can see how expatriate EFL teachers may use their classroom conversations as a means of gaining deeper insights into the local culture and the perspectives of their students. His words demonstrate how sharing cross-cultural observations and interpretations can serve as prompts to collectively explore and make sense of cultural differences. Thus, such an approach may help teachers improve their understandings of local practices, while simultaneously impelling their students to discuss and think critically about cultural practices, suiting the goals of a conversational English class.

This teacher personally enjoyed integrating discussions of gender into his lessons, and as he later notes, the subject was fairly prevalent in the textbooks. However, he reports that his students did not always seem eager to explore the topic in-depth.

> *The idea of gender came up a lot, but I found it was brushed aside. I think most people didn't want to talk about gender roles too much. It was hard to get an answer to some questions. The most common response I would get was "culture teacher!"*

Alex recalls that he would sometimes experience resistance to discussions about gender, as his students would skirt the topic by simply citing cultural difference. From this excerpt, it remains unclear as to why his students seemed reluctant to explore gender-related cultural differences in depth. One possibility is that they felt they lacked the linguistic capacity to communicate the complexities of these differences effectively in English. Another is that questioning gender norms might be unconventional or considered taboo in Korean culture. Finally, it is conceivable that some students interpreted this foreign teachers' observations to be cultural criticisms from an outsider, rather than an invitation for dialog and critical discussion.

While exploring cultural differences of gender norms can offer pedagogic benefits discussed above, this carries its own set of practical concerns worthy of consideration.

b) Making Space: Introducing LGBT Issues into an EFL Curriculum

Here, Alex discusses how he sometimes used the curriculum-sanctioned topics of marriage and gender roles as a launching point to incorporate discussions of queer issues into his classes.

> *There were always discussions in our textbooks related to marriage, and gender roles. During those times I would try to bring in a Canadian perspective and sway the conversation toward sexuality of some sort. For example, I remember one conversation about marriage and I told the class that it was possible for two men or two women to get married in Canada. As expected, most of the girls just nodded their heads, but I asked if that would ever happen in Korea. They most often said no citing religious reasons as one main reason. I was fortunate to have somewhat open minded girls in my classes.*

In this passage, we learn that marriage and gender roles were popular topics in the textbooks used in Alex's university classes. However, these units appear to have focused exclusively on heterosexual relationships, omitting a consideration of queer identities and their possible partnerships. This participant recalls how in these instances he would bring sexual identity into the discussion; in this example doing so by explaining the rights afforded to Canadian same-sex couples and inquiring if his students believed something similar could be possible in Korea.

This excerpt provides us with an example of how some foreign teachers may consciously make space for queer topics within their lessons. Alex chose to introduce the issue of same-sex marriage specifically during lessons in which he (as a Canadian) understood that topic to be relevant to, yet absent from, the prescribed unit materials. Introducing this issue in relation to the textbook unit worked to preemptively justify its educational relevance. Furthermore, the approach he described using focused the discussion on an analysis of social and institutional

practices rather than asking students to debate gay marriage or disclose their personal opinions on the matter. Framing the topic in this way adds a degree of safety, as it moves the focus away from personal beliefs toward interrogating wider cultural practices. This example demonstrates how some EFL teachers in Korea may choose to resist the heteronormative omission of queer identities by their course materials.

In addition, Alex reported that his students often cited religious concerns as being a major factor they believed would prevent marriage equality for LGBT couples from being realized in Korea. By inviting students to collectively examine local attitudes and social practices pertaining to queer identities, EFL teachers may foster environments in which students can develop a critical awareness of the social forces that work to oppress marginalized individuals within their own communities.

c) Unpopular Position: A Student's Story Challenges Prejudices

Alex noted that in his university classes, he would sometimes bring discussions about sexuality into his class discussions about marriage by deliberately leading into to the issue of same-sex marriage. Here, he expands on what those classroom conversations were like.

> *Sexuality would come up a lot in my university classes. The idea of marriage was a popular one to discuss in class. Whenever there was a discussion about marriage the topic would some way get to gay marriage. Most of these discussions would take place in a classroom setting. The students would usually react well. Most discussions around sexuality would be fairly quiet.*

While he recalls that his students typically responded well during discussions about gay marriage, Alex notes that these conversations tended to be comparatively subdued. One class discussion in particular, however, stood out in his memory as an exception worthy of mentioning here.

There was one instance I remember where one student completely disagreed with the class and thought there was nothing wrong with homosexuality. This student told a story about her best friend. She and her friend spent a lot of time together and her friend really trusted her. One day, her friend told her that she was a lesbian. As my student was telling this story she was obviously bothered. She went on to say that her reactions was an angry one and she hasn't spoken to her friend since. As she talked she got more and more upset, but controlled it well. She said that it was one of her big regrets and she misses her friends. The class was split on their opinions. Some of the students told her to contact her friend and other students told her she had done the right thing. The whole situation was somewhat uncomfortable.

In this story, Alex recounts his memory of a particular instance in which one of his students took a bold stance by sharing a personal story about her regret of reacting negatively when a close friend disclosed that she was a lesbian. By his estimation, this student's emotional story may have challenged homophobic views initially expressed by some of her classmates, as after hearing her story, some of her peers encouraged her to attempt making amends with her lesbian friend. Although Alex recalls having felt slightly uncomfortable in this highly emotional situation, he remarks on how it seemed to have had a positive effect on the class dynamic overall.

After this discussion I found the class dynamic sort of changed and after that students were able to give different opinions instead of keeping with the norm. It really opened up the class.

This teacher understands this particular conversation to have had a transformative effect on the class dynamics. This student's willingness to take a risk by arguing against her classmates' seemingly unanimous opinion apparently had the effect of creating an environment in which more students felt comfortable expressing opinions that might have been at odds with the dominant mindset.

I do feel that since the girl who was speaking was the only person who held her opinion at the beginning of class that I defended her opinion more than I should have. I think that had I not, she would have been attacked by the students.

Alex acknowledges that he had openly supported this student's queer-positive stance. Although this teacher appears to question if the extent to which he did so was inappropriate, he further qualifies this decision explaining that this student was the only one is the class voicing an LGBT-affirmative opinion. Therefore, he felt an obligation to allow her to do so safely. As Alex seems to question his response in this situation, we get a sense of the tension EFL teachers may experience when leading discussions on queer issues. However, we cannot ascertain from his comments if this pressure was related to his identity as a gay man, or if it stemmed from his awareness that the local dominant attitudes were at odds with his sense of responsibility to create a safe environment to discuss LGBT matters.

d) Reflecting on Teaching Approaches & Identifying Influences

In the following passages, Alex discusses the factors which he understood as having most significantly influenced his approaches to addressing issues of gender and sexuality with his students.

> *I am not sure if a whole lot influenced how I approached the topic [of gender]. I was under the impression that in university people should try to expand their mind. Having foreign teachers, a lot of students wanted to learn culture as well as language. I would bring these issues to the forefront of my class.*

By his own account, Alex did not feel particularly restricted in how he could approach discussing gender issues. He cites both the fact that he was teaching at the tertiary level and his students' interest in learning about Canadian culture as having allowed him to not only freely address these issues but to make it a prominent, reoccurring theme for class discussions. On further reflection, he notes that some students may have been offended by how he had presented these topics. However, he welcomed and encouraged all opinions to be voiced.

> *Of course, some students would get offended, but I would give my classes a disclaimer. I think my personal beliefs definitely influenced my presentation of these topics. I think my belief in gender equity came though [sic]. If I didn't have these opinions I likely would*

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not have brought up the topics. I was lucky enough to have surprisingly open students. They rarely all agreed, but they always had their opinions. Sometimes the only way to get that opinion out of them was to tell them my opinion was the complete opposite to what they thought.

Summarizing his experiences of bringing gender-related topics into his classrooms, Alex recounts his strategy of making the subjectivity of his positions clear to his students—acknowledging that his belief in gender equity undoubtedly influenced how he presented these issues. Moreover, he identified these beliefs as a probable motivation behind why he so readily felt impelled to address these matters in the first place. Thus, Alex positioned his feminist perspective as not only having shaped how he presented topics relating to gender but as being a pedagogic influence that led him to engage with these topics with his students. Guided by his beliefs in gender equity, and implementing a dialogic approach aimed at exploring alternative and competing perspectives, Alex's example demonstrates how EFL teachers may use their own observations of cultural difference as starting points for critical inquiry with their students.

Although Alex was comfortable enough to incorporate gay/lesbian subject matter into certain lessons, he reports entering into these discussions with a greater sense of caution.

Of course, in Korea, a society not so accepting to differing sexualities, I would approach the topics very carefully. Classes were never strictly about sexuality. The topic would come up in relation to another topic. A tangent in a unit in marriage, gender roles, etc.

As Alex noted earlier and reiterated here, he would lead into discussions relating to sexuality from various related topics, such as marriage. From this excerpt, we gather that he was not unmindful in his approach to hosting these conversations, but rather his decisions to engage with these potentially taboo topics were calculated and strategic, as he had identified the Korean context as being not particularly accepting of sexual diversity. He recalls that he would always introduce issues relating to sexuality as being supplemental to the interrelated topics scheduled within the curriculum, rather than presenting them as central themes.

This approach appears to have allowed Alex to give as least some measure of consideration toward sexual identity issues in his classes while maintaining a sense of safety should he be required to defend the legitimacy or suitability of these topics to others; imaginably department heads or administrators in this scenario. Although his comments do not state it explicitly, we get the sense that, had circumstances permitted, he might have preferred to have given full attention to exploring sexual identity issues, rather than feeling it necessary to disguise them as a marginal aside. Therefore, reading into his approach and considering the care taken to maintain claims of educational legitimacy, we can see how even educators who report feeling relatively unconstrained by the contexts of their teaching situations, are weary of and influenced by, the potential hazards of presenting queer topics in their EFL classrooms.

While Alex's strategy could serve as a possible model for teachers wishing to make space for queer issues within their EFL classes, it is worth noting the additional particularities of his teaching context to which he attributes his relative sense of freedom concerning the content he felt able to pursue with his classes. In addition to working in a university environment, here he identifies an additional element unique to his teaching context, which he saw as providing greater leeway in hosting class discussions pertaining to sexual identity.

> *I think the biggest influence was that my students were all female. If a discussion of sexuality came up, it was rarely about lesbianism. We would usually focus on men in our conversations of sexuality. I think the girls did this as a way to keep comfort in the classroom. It allowed girls avoid accusations of being lesbians.*

Alex identifies the fact that all of his students were female, as possibly being the single most important factor influencing his classroom discussions of sexuality. In his estimation, it provided his students the opportunity to discuss homosexuality in a way that fully dissociated it from them, thus, avoiding the discomfort of their own sexual identities being called into

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question. Thus, we see how teachers may worry that discussions of sexual identity might prompt some students to speculate about the sexualities of fellow classmates or that of their teacher.

In this final excerpt, Alex reaffirms the idea that when the topic of sexuality arose in his class, it was typically because he made the decision to bring it up. This further highlights his own sense of agency in these scenarios.

> *In my classes I usually approached the topic of sexuality. Luckily, I taught adults and some topics were easier to approach. Having studied sexuality in university I was interested in getting another culture's perspective.*

Here, Alex further expands on how he was influenced by his specific teaching context, moving beyond the notion of universities being sites for cultural exchange to expand one's mind, and more specifically attributing his relative comfort with broaching sexuality issues to the age of his learners. This suggests that this participant understood information about queer identities as potentially being knowledge considered to be more appropriate for adults than youths. Finally, he cites the fact that he had studied sexuality in university as underlying his personal interest in learning about Korean perspectives relating to these issues. Therefore, it also is conceivable that his educational background relating sexuality helped in preparing him to engage in these discussions with students more confidently. If so, this would suggest that TESOL teacher preparation programs might stand to benefit from including strategies for effectively navigate gender and sexuality issues with their English language learners.
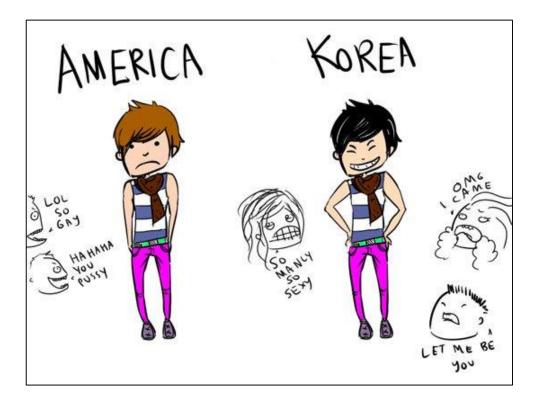
e) Alex's Image Biography

Figure 6: Alex's image submission [No Title Given]

This graphic sums up many of the discussions from my classes at [my] University. Many conversations focused around the differences in masculinity between Korean and 'The West' The ideas of masculinity were very different, rules of attraction were different, and visual/social cues for identifying male homosexuality were virtually invisible compared to the west.

The found graphic Alex presents here returns focus to the conversations he would initiate with his students concerning cultural differences regarding masculinity. This image powerfully highlights how objects, in this case, clothing, can project a heteronormative gender identity in one context while being regarded as non-normative and stigmatizing in another.

f) Case Study Conclusion

This case study presented Alex's small story narratives and image biography. The major themes that emerged from his writing related to gender norms, discussing cultural differences, queer stigma, and the age appropriateness of topics. For Alex, the subject of cultural difference served a pedagogical means. He used his own cross-cultural observations to prompt class discussions, giving differences in masculinity norms as a specific example. His experiences demonstrated how EFL teachers may use cultural differences as a starting point for inquiry with their students, and how doing so carries both practical concerns and benefits.

Citing local stigmatization of queer people, he discussed approaches he used to bring LGBT issues into class discussions, namely, his strategy of linking them to the textbook unit. Framing these discussions as collective inquiries rather than debates shifted focus to examining cultural attitudes and practices instead of personal beliefs. Alex's experiences demonstrated how some EFL teachers might find ways to resist heteronormative course materials to make space for LGBT issues in their lessons, and how doing so might help students develop a critical awareness of the social forces that oppress queer individuals. He identified the fact that his students were all adult, female, university students as being factors that helped to minimized the potential hazards of discussing LGBT topics—ensuring his students were old enough to discuss such content and reducing speculation anxieties by discussing gay men rather than lesbians. Furthermore, I posited that Alex's educational background may have prepared him to more confidently engage with these issues, suggesting this may hold implications for TESOL teacher preparation programs. Finally, Alex's image biography provided a poignant example of how gender expression is sometimes unintelligible cross-culturally, which can lead to misunderstandings.

4.5 Summary of Case Studies

a) Experiencing Queer Moments in Class

When issues of gender and sexuality enter the classroom, foreign teachers often experience anxieties about crossing the line—transgressing the unspoken rules governing appropriate and justifiable responses. Delineated by cultural values and ideologies, what are typically commonsense guidelines become blurred in the context of a foreign classroom. At the core of the experience is a sense of pedagogical uncertainty accompanied by an awareness that one is entering a potentially precarious territory. While a teacher may be taken aback and even slightly amused when a seven-year-old student joyfully recounts attending a transgender show with her family, they are forced to quickly gather their wits and ask themselves: what is an appropriate response here?

For the expatriate EFL teacher, a clear answer to this question is far more convoluted and oftentimes feels beyond our reach; as the *here* we struggle to unpack is not simply the scenario unfolding in our classroom, but also the broader cultural expectations of our foreign context. Sometimes gender and sexuality are intentionally brought to the forefront by students, the curriculum, or the teacher: for instance, a student suggesting an erotic theme during a class game, a Sex Education presentation put on by a kindergarten or an educator who presents LGBT issues despite a textbook that omits them. These matters can also arise unintentionally and might go unaddressed. In such cases, students may remain unaware of their perceived misstep, while the educator may not be fully aware as to why the interaction evoked such uneasy feelings. In either case, the unfamiliar nature of the teaching context complicates our decision regarding how to respond. Often marked by feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and discomfort, one is left to

themselves to work out what constitutes an appropriate educational response, rarely feeling confident that they are getting it right.

b) Emerging Themes: Teacher Concerns

While the details specific to experiencing queer moments in class can differ in a seemingly incalculable number of ways, five major themes underlying these teachers' shared concerns emerged from the hermeneutic analysis of the four participant case studies:

a) **Cultural difference**
b) **Age appropriateness**
c) **Queer stigma**
d) **Genderqueerness**
e) **Bodies and touching**

These themes, are explored in more detail in the next chapter.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the research findings through four cases studies. The EFL teacher participants' textual reflections, in the form of small story narratives and image biographies, provided insight into how these teachers experienced and responded to queer moments within their classes in South Korea. Thus, the information presented in this chapter addressed the first research question: how did expatriate EFL teachers experience and respond to queer moments within their classes in South Korea? Furthermore, I articulated the five key themes which emerged from the textual data: the main concerns that shaped teacher experiences of queer moments and influenced the ways in which they felt able to respond. In the following chapter, I explore the significance these teacher concerns, drawing connections between expat EFL pedagogy regarding gender and sexual identity relates to issues of oppression in English language classrooms in Korea.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Emerging Themes

In this chapter, I discuss the significance of the five key teacher concerns that emerged from the participants' textual reflections in the previous section. Although I differentiate these five themes, I acknowledge that they are entangled and interconnected in many ways. Here, I draw connections to literature which helps in deducing how these underlying apprehensions worked to influence teaching practices vis-à-vis queer identities. Thus, this chapter addresses the second research question: what underlying concerns did teachers share regarding these interactions, and how did these concerns influence their teaching practices? Before concluding the chapter, I briefly discuss two unanticipated findings from this research.

5.1 Cultural Difference

An ever-present concern with cultural difference was apparent throughout the four case studies. Participants used it as an explanation to make sense of confusing student behaviors and a prompt for class discussions. We learned it was also a consideration which influenced how teachers felt able to respond in certain circumstances, as they sometimes struggled to negotiate whose cultural norms should govern their classrooms. This internal negotiation between one's own beliefs and their still nascent understandings of local beliefs played out in participants' teaching practices during queer moments and was dealt with by teachers in a couple of ways.

One way teachers dealt with the tensions presented by cultural difference was to acquiesce to local culture. Given the legacies of colonialism, EFL teachers are justified in wishing to avert engaging in cultural imperialism by being respectful of the local culture and careful not to impose their own ideologies on students. That being said, it is also important to consider the implications of falling into a cultural preservationist stance that relies on essentialist

notions of culture, ignores nuance and diversity within Korean society, and positions the dominant local beliefs as being monolithic, unchanging, or unproblematic. Teaching with the objective of simply avoiding all friction can curtail potentially transformative classroom conversations and maintains hegemonic power differentials. For example, choosing to omit any mention of queer identities from one's curriculum with the intention of respecting Korean culture reproduces heteronormativity—ignoring educational obligations to queer students and failing to adequately prepare all students to engage in conversations with, or about, LGBT people.

Sometimes teachers may challenge aspects of local culture they view as being problematic. Lindsay felt compelled to teach male students to never become physically violent with girls, as she believed it had implications for preventing violence against women. Similarly, through calculated pedagogical acts, Alex challenged the local expectations of silence around LGBT identities by introducing gay and lesbian topics into class discussions. Thus, expatriate teachers may take calculated risks to resist dominant local culture within their classroom to resist norms they view as having potentially harmful implications. Critical pedagogy offers strategies that could be implemented by EFL teachers to address concerns stemming from cultural differences between learners and their teacher.

5.2 Age Appropriateness

A reoccurring theme found throughout all four participants' narratives centered on a concern with age-appropriateness. How old is old enough to be exposed to the concept of transgender identity, to joke about pornography, to learn about sexual reproduction or discuss gay marriage in school? In the story recounting sex education content being presented to a participant's kindergarten students, the teacher and her co-workers were left feeling shocked and dismayed—concerned it was "too much" for their young students. Another participant

recounted feeling freer to broach LGBT topics with his university students, citing the fact that they were adults. Throughout the narratives, a clear pattern emerged suggesting that foreign teachers held anxieties toward information that could be considered inappropriate for the age of their learners.

More specifically, topics that were perceivably related to sex in any way were seen as potentially dangerous and positioned as being adult knowledge. In the Judeo-Christian nations, sexual experience has come to be regarded as a moral issue constituted by the beliefs that "pleasure belongs to the dangerous domain of evil," people have an "obligation to practice monogamous fidelity" and must exclude "partners of the same sex" (Foucault, 1990b). Stemming from varying viewpoints regarding these beliefs, the issue of sex education remains hotly debated in both Canada and the US, with stakeholders expressing opposing ideas about the access young people should have to information about sex and sexual health. Thus, foreign teachers are sometimes confronted with dilemmas relating to what are contentious ethical matters in their home countries, however, without an understanding of the various positions and local sentiments regarding these issues.

Steinberg (2011) explained how by the 1920s, positivist views of children had come to naturalize the "mythos of the innocent and developing child" (p. 6). This effectively fostered a belief that children should only be exposed to adult knowledge at appropriate times in their development, leading to concerns that early exposure to the "secret knowledge of adulthood" would threaten the innocence of impressionable children (p.6). When we consider such fears in light of a moral code that positions sexual pleasure as potentially evil and same-sex attraction as particularly immoral, we begin to understand the anxieties American and Canadian teachers hold toward discussing topics that even hint at being related to sex or queerness.

The results of this study demonstrate that EFL teachers carry reservations about exposure to adult knowledge into their classrooms abroad. Lacking a working knowledge of how these issues are conceptualized and regarded locally presents foreign teachers with unknowns that can function to make experiencing queer moments in class considerably more distressing and perplexing. One should consider that this infantilizing, imported social construction of childhood may be incongruous with a Korean educational context. Furthermore, we see how when queer identities are packaged into notions of corrupting knowledge, it functions to regulatively maintain heteronormativity. When teachers minimize and selectively censor their classes under the premise of protecting innocence, they naturalize heterosexual identities at the expense of further marginalizing queer individuals in the process. I discuss this phenomenon in greater detail in the following section.

5.3 Queer Stigma

Merely mentioning LGBT people in class is perceived by teachers to be a political act and, thus, many are hesitant to engage with these topics. In part, the discomfort around queer concerns may be due to the tendency for gay and lesbian identities to be sexualized while straightness is not (Nelson, 1993; Nelson, 2009). Therefore, many teachers may view LGBT topics as being closely conceptually linked with the concern toward adult knowledge discussed in the previous section. For example, Brian's story about his student mentioning a transgender show pointed to the perceived *adultness* of the topic, as he was concerned whether "that kind of show" might be inappropriate for such a young student. This interpretation is in line with earlier findings that there is a belief among EFL teachers that teaching about genderqueerness is synonymous with teaching about sexual intercourse (Alvarez-Bernardo, Guijarro-Ojeda, & Ruiz-Cecilia, 2013, cited in Evripidou & Çavuşoğlu, 2015). However, beyond the concern with age

specifically, the acute stigmatization of LGBT people in Korean society was a powerful influence three of the participants in this study reflected on.

Alex, whose students were all college-aged females, reported finding ways to broach issues of sexuality within his classes. Based on his understanding that Koreans were "not so accepting to differing sexualities," he was always careful to enter discussions of sexual identity as a related aside, as opposed to presenting it as a central lesson theme. This participant recounted a particularly powerful conversation in which a student shared her emotional account of how she broke ties with a good friend who came out to her as a lesbian—a decision which she had since regretted. What initially began as an uncomfortable conversation resulted in several students rethinking their anti-gay stance and improved the depth and quality of dialogue among this group of students. His experience suggests to me that Ó'Móchain's (2006) approach of using narratives of local gay and lesbian individuals to explore issues of sexual identity with his Japanese university student could also be well-suited for implementation in the Korean context.

Nancy described what she perceived to be a societal denial that renders homosexual identity as basically unimaginable for the average Korean, an observation bolstered by Dong-Jin's (2001) explanation:

> *In Korea, homosexuality does not have any social existence. That is to say, in public discourse aimed at forming the laws and regulations governing Korean society, homosexuality is not mentioned. In Korea, the "civil rights" of homosexuals are not threatened on account of their homosexuality. This is not due to tolerance of homosexuals. To the contrary, it is because they are not seen as representing members of the society who can exercise the power to effect social changes. In other words, their existence is ignored. (p. 66-67)*

The belief that queer identities are an unspeakable taboo within Korean society leads to teacher anxieties about discussing LGBT topics in class. This phenomenon may be compounded

by the risks stigma presents to queer teachers especially. For instance, the prospect of calling

attention to Brian's sexuality made addressing LGBT issues a particularly delicate task. Kim

and Hahn's (2006) assessment of Korean attitudes toward homosexuality further substantiate the

anxieties this teacher held toward being identified as gay:

> *…most Korean people imagine that male homosexuality is an abnormal and impure modern phenomenon. Prejudice and confusion lead most Korean male homosexuals to be estranged from their families, religious communities and non-homosexual peers. Moreover, they are often viewed as the 'carriers' of AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). (p. 59)*

Therefore, when students explicitly questioned his sexual identity, this teacher

understandably felt obligated to lie—pretending to be straight to maintain the respect of students,

protect his reputation, and ultimately, his job. Reflecting on this in his writing, he lamented that

this disempowered position is simply "one of the things you just have to live with when being a

gay English teacher." His experience further illustrates how queer EFL teachers may fear being

perceived as a pervert and losing their jobs if they are honest about their sexual identity

(Lubetsky, 1998; Nelson, 1993).

Brian, however, was not only forced to lie about his gay identity but also felt quite

restricted in terms of how he could address LGBT issues in general. As Nelson (2009)

suggested, teachers engaging with gay themes can "give rise to dilemmas of self-representation"

(p.116). For example, for fear of raising suspicions about his own sexuality, when students used

"gay" as a slur, this teacher responded by reaffirming the heterosexuality of the accused rather

than challenging the homophobic sentiments underlying the accusation. Therefore, teachers may

protect themselves against the perils of queer stigma by minimizing or avoiding LGBT topics

altogether. While refusing to acknowledge the existence of queer people may feel like the safest

strategy for some teachers, it leaves one to consider the unintended consequences: how students may experience and understand these selective silences.

Besner and Spungin (1995) wrote that students "look to educators for guidance and exposure to information about attitudes, knowledge, and feelings.... Teacher attitudes may provide the validation for the student's self-acceptance or self-rejection" (p. 98, cited in Vandrick 2001). By determining LGBT topics to be so dangerous that they are unspeakable in the classroom, teachers may be inadvertently communicating to their classes that they are shameful or illegitimate—reaffirming the marginalizing premise that queer identities and issues concerning them are inappropriate for educational spaces.

Furthermore, Vandrick (2001) argued that English language educators "cannot underestimate the need of lesbian and gay students to be validated and to be safe, and the need of heterosexual students to see models of acceptance" (p.15). As true as this may be, teachers deserve to maintain their personal sense of safety. Thus, an important task becomes developing strategies that empower EFL teachers to productively address LGBT issues in ways that minimize the dangers that stigma presents, both real and perceived. I believe that part of the solution to countering the detrimental effects of stigma rests in the development of critically-informed EFL curricula aimed at generating queer inquiry. I discuss this recommendation in more detail in chapter six.

5.4 Genderqueerness: "Failing" to Perform Masculinity

Foreign teachers can find witnessing breaches of gender norms, and more specifically, breaches of masculinity in class to be disorienting and troubling experiences. Across the narratives in this study, much focus landed on descriptions of males behaving in ways

understood by participants as being characteristically feminine. Viewed through the heteronormative gaze of foreign teachers, Korean expressions of friendship involving same-sex closeness and touching[3] were sometimes read as being acts of queer romance or desire, inappropriate for a school environment. Therefore, this theme is understood as being intimately linked to the preceding concern with queer stigma.

In the intercultural context of foreign-teacher-headed EFL classrooms, varying practices relating to gender performance can cause educators to read queer meanings where none were intended to be communicated. Conversely, language teachers may misattribute intentional expressions of gay identity to cultural difference or miscommunication (see Liddicoat, 2009). Evident throughout the participant produced texts was the importance these teachers placed on performances of masculinity. The disquieting effects of perceived gender transgressions pointed to a strong aversion to gestures that could be construed as being *visibly* queer.

A consideration of dominant American cultural attitudes toward gender is useful for helping to explain this phenomenon. Wilchins (2004) described how during the 1970s and 1980s, the American public became open to debating some rights for gay people. However, gender-baiting from cultural conservatives at the time played into collective fears about the "breakdown of traditional gender roles," which created a climate that was "actively hostile toward anything that smacked of genderqueerness" (p. 16). This reality resulted in gay rights movements largely divorcing themselves from issues of gender and queerness, opting instead for a more gender-normative approach that basically advocated for "the right to *be* gay, but not the right to *look* or *act* gay" in public (p.15). While this strategy has been rather successful for

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[3] See Nelson (2009) p.181 for a Korean student's explanation about the normalcy of same-sex hand holding within Korean society.

moving gay rights forward, the findings from this study suggest that American and Canadian EFL teachers may carry a deeply ingrained unease toward genderqueerness with them into their Korean classrooms. This phenomenon holds serious implications as it can lead teachers to unwittingly be oppressive in their interactions with students.

Teachers may discuss differences pertaining to gender norms in ways that position the gender ideals they were raised with as being the universal standard. Furthermore, EFL teachers may unthinkingly impose these imported heteronormative gender expectations on their Korean students. While teachers in this study found the Korean attitudes toward the idea of homosexuality to be repressive, their accounts of witnessing students fail to perform gender as expected and the uncomfortable feelings it evoked suggests that EFL teachers from the US and Canada may hold strong aversions toward transgressions of heteronormative masculinity. Therefore, a significant finding of this study is that foreign teachers may unwittingly be gender policing students—discouraging them from engaging in behaviors they perceive as being openly and visibly queer in class.

Whether implicit or explicit, attempts to make students aware of the meanings that certain enactments of gender expression may communicate in the target culture should not uncritically position these views as being universal or unproblematic. Following Nelson (2009), the challenge with attempts to improve such cultural competencies and develop sociosexual literacy rests in making language learners aware of "language acts that connote gayness but without framing gayness as negative" (p. 51). In line with this, an important consideration becomes how one might teach about these cross-cultural differences regarding what various gender enactments can communicate, without unintentionally transmitting the heteronormativity embedded within these norms.

5.5 Bodies & Touching

How one experiences the lived body (corporeality), and the lived other (relationality), are two "existentials" which phenomenological research can use to explore our everyday experiences of the world (van Manen, 1990, p. 101). Following this line of reflection demonstrated that EFL teachers might encounter disorienting experiences related to the theme of bodies and touching.

Nancy reported becoming uncomfortable when students would hug her or hold her hands and Brian was mindful about how he hugged the student who gave him a birthday gift. These accounts speak to an anxiety that likely stems from the proliferation of *no touch* discourses within child-care and education professions that have arisen out of a distrust toward adults touching children (see Johnson, 2000). Furthermore, as discussed in the last chapter, witnessing intimate physical interactions between male students stirred up uneasy feelings for some participants, prompting them to intervene in some cases. For Lindsay, instances in which boy students would hit girls were understood as teachable moments; possibly having implications for educating against gender-based violence or preventing domestic abuse.

Moreover, in addition to being touched by students or witnessing students touching one another, Brian experienced distressing verbal interactions related to this theme in which students discussed his body. This occurred on several occasions when male students complimented his appearance, and in one encounter that he recalled, when a student explicitly inquired about the color of his genitalia. These experiences raise questions about how EFL teachers can best prepare students to navigate the sociopolitical implications of discussing other people's bodies in English. This should include how to talk about issues of racial difference in ways that are not perceived as being disrespectful, objectifying, or denigrating.

5.6 Unanticipated findings

a) Selling English-Speaking Identities

A topic Nancy touched on briefly in her writing pertained to the powerful influence that market trends have on shaping curricula in Korea's enormous private English language academy sector. Relating to this, a question that arises for me is in the context of this study is: Which identities are deemed marketable, and therefore desirable, and which become further marginalized within the milieu of private English education in Korea? In her dissertation which critically examined the impact of globalization discourses on educational policy and contemporary social life in Korea, Kim (2011) noted that both students and parents tend to have a strong preference toward white teachers for English instruction. In her analysis of English language course materials, she explained:

> *Representations of ideal target language speakers as white, upper-middle class, and North American English-speaking in textbooks and media are attributable in constructing the normativity and superiority towards the culture. Non-dominant groups are omitted or assumed as other or periphery to the core in the mainstream discourse.* (p. 145)

Therefore, in an industry that values whiteness and operates based on the presumption of universal heterosexuality, it is crucial for scholars in the field of TESOL to consider the role profit motivation plays in reproducing marginalization, and imagine ways in which educators and curricula might go about countering these effects.

b) Transformative Learning: Confronting another Normal

Mezirow (2000) described transformation as a process of "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (p. 4). In other words, by realizing that one holds a limited or

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distorted view, they are presented with an opportunity to critically examine their taken-for-granted beliefs.

An unanticipated finding of this study was that experiencing gender-performative related queer moments in EFL classes can work to elicit transformative learning in foreign teachers. By reflecting on their teaching experiences, some participants became critical of the extent to which gender is restricted and policed in the US. One participant revealed the oppressive, religious influences underpinning the strict prescriptions of gender in his native culture, while another remarked that: "In a way Koreans are freer to express themselves [than Americans] because they aren't as strict about the way a certain gender should look or act amongst their friends of the same gender." Such reflective insights suggest that educators can develop a critical awareness from being immersed in a culture whose norms challenge, broaden, and queer their preconceived notions of gender and homosocial relations.

5.7 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the significance the five teacher concerns related to queer moments. Also, I explored the implications these concerns hold regarding how queer identities are read, represented, discussed, omitted, and sometimes policed by Canadian and American teachers in EFL classrooms in Korea. Furthermore, I briefly explored the significance of two findings that emerged from the analysis of the participants' textual reflections that did not directly relate to the two main research questions. In the chapter that follows, I summarize the key points from my analysis, offer a recommendation based on my new understandings of the problem, discuss limitations of the research study, and offer final reflections on this research project.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Summary

For expatriate English language teachers in Korea, moments in which issues of gender and sexuality arise while interacting with students can feel perplexing and perilous. We have seen how EFL teachers' anxieties stemming from both their own social mores regarding the such matters, as well as the international, intercultural setting of their teaching context, influence how they respond during these queer moments. This study identified five themes characterizing the main concerns that emerged from the hermeneutic analysis of the four case studies. These themes were: a) cultural difference, b) age appropriateness, c) queer stigma, d) genderqueerness and e) bodies and touching.

We learned that teachers sometimes reproduce heteronormativity in their classes as they struggle to navigate scenarios relating to these five themes. One way this can occur is when teachers accede to local cultural norms to avoid conflict. Also, teachers may selectively censor to protect students from adult knowledge—which often has the effect of erasing LGBT identities from their classes. Furthermore, queer teachers in particular may reproduce heteronormativity by minimizing or ignoring LGBT issues in attempting to avoid the risks of being identified as queer. Finally, to allay their own discomforts with witnessing behaviors they read as being gay or genderqueer, teachers may discourage certain kinds of homosocial interactions between their male students. Therefore, EFL teachers may import and enforce unfamiliar heteronormative expectations into their classrooms abroad. Important to consider, yet beyond the scope of this study, is how students may interpret and understand such interactions with foreign teachers, and if some might find such experiences to feel oppressive.

Stigma was found to play a central role in restricting how teachers felt able to address LGBT issues. We saw how the fear of queer stigma can have a powerful influence on EFL teaching practices in South Korea—working to silence teachers and render queer identities unspeakable. When teachers minimize or dodge LGBT topics raised by students for fear of reproach, it conceivably sends these learners the message that such matters are not relevant or appropriate for class discussions. Therefore, teachers fearing the repercussions of such stigmatization might reproduce heteronormative marginalization within their classrooms.

We saw that expatriate teachers sometimes take calculated risks to resist dominant local culture within their classrooms to challenge practices they view as being problematic; for example, by teaching boys not to hit girls or actively making space for discussions for LGBT issues in class. Another finding from this study was that cross-cultural differences in gender norms can render aspects of gender enactments unintelligible, leading these educators to misinterpret gay meanings. Witnessing these performative failures can be a source of discomfort for foreign teachers, who may attempt to curb the offending student behaviors. This is significant because it suggests that teachers may be unwittingly importing and enforcing oppressive conceptions of gender normativity in their classrooms. In the following section, I make a recommendation which I believe could improve teaching practices vis-à-vis issues of sexual identity in foreign-teacher-headed EFL classes in South Korea.

6.2 Recommendation

Queer inquiry may be the most effective approach for discussing sexual identities in language classes (Nelson, 2009), and it has been reported that EFL teachers would feel most comfortable discussing LGBT-related topics if they were built into their curriculum (Evripidou & Çavuşoğlu, 2015). These considerations, in conjunction with findings of this study, lead me to

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argue for the production of commercial EFL teaching materials that are critical and queer-informed. Such texts would be designed to prompt explorations of "how sexual identities are accomplished discursively, what purposes these identities serve, how they are valued or devalued, what they mean or signify, and how people come to know, or learn, these meanings" (Nelson, 2009, p. 209).

There are three main reasons why I believe a key component to improving teaching practices relating to queer identities in the Korean EFL contexts rests heavily on improving upon the educational materials available. First, curricular materials that engage language learners in queer inquiry could help to ease teachers' anxieties around the risks posed by stigma, because it would shift the responsibility for initiating these conversations away from the teacher and onto the texts. This move would also alleviate the concern that teachers' may hold toward the likelihood of students, co-workers, schools, and parents speculating about their personal motivations for exploring issues of sexual identity. Furthermore, applying strategies of queer inquiry into the official course textbooks would help to foster perceptions of educational legitimacy with respect to these matters.

Second, engaging in queer inquiry aims to unpack social constructs that work to privilege some identities and marginalize others. Framing these conversations in such a way may help critically challenge students' preconceptions in a way that promotes discourses that are safe and respectful. Such an approach would be a vast improvement over the debate model which often uncritically forces students into a position of condoning or condemning LGBT people, and often has the effect of simply echoing unquestioned presuppositions.

Lastly, expat EFL teachers in Korea have varied educational backgrounds. Many enter the field with little or no formal preparation for language teaching. Therefore, while I believe TESOL teacher preparation programs should certainly be including considerations of sexual identity in their programs, I question the impact this would have overall on teaching practices in the South Korean context. Thus, I believe that improving the English L2 curricular materials available would pragmatically be the single most effective way to support novice teachers in critically exploring issues of sexual identity with their language learners.

6.2 Limitations of the Research Study

The data collected gave me access to the participants' reflections, understandings, perspectives, and attitudes toward events, however, did not allow me to witness these interactions first hand. Furthermore, follow-up interviews conducted via a web-based video chat service would have enabled me to ask questions about specific aspects of participants' textual reflections. I believe that this would have likely yielded richer results. As discussed in chapter three, no heterosexual males, lesbian females, or transgender people took part in this study. Therefore, these perspectives are not represented in this report. Moreover, this study is limited to the experiences and perspectives of EFL teachers from the United States and Canada. I recognize the need to consider the experiences of EFL teachers from other nations, as well as the perspectives of Korean students. However, the inclusion of these voices fell outside the scope of this study and remain to be explored.

6.3 Future Directions

Conducting this research has raised numerous new questions worthy of exploration and future research. A pertinent question which arose was how we could empower EFL teachers to

productively address queer issues while minimizing the risks that queer stigma presents to LGBT students and educators. The suggestion I give in the *Recommendation* section in this chapter was a preliminary attempt to address this question based on my new understandings of this problem. Another problem identified was around how EFL teachers can best prepare students to navigate the sociopolitical implications of discussing other people's bodies in English, as to not inadvertently be disrespectful, denigrating, or objectifying. In addition to this, I suggested that it is worth considering how one might teach about the cross-cultural differences regarding gender enactments, without unintentionally transmitting the heteronormativity embedded within these hegemonic social mores.

As noted in the previous section, the data collected did not give me access to the perspectives of the Korean students involved in these or similar scenarios. A key component to improving pedagogical practices would be to learn about how language learners in foreign-teacher-headed EFL classrooms understand interactions like the ones explored in this study. We must consider how Korean students might interpret being told by their foreign teacher not to be intimate with a close friend. Furthermore, it is crucial that we better understand just how students stand to benefit from our decision to partake in queer inquiry. Moreover, we must specifically concern ourselves with how our queer students experience such interactions.

Finally, reflecting on my research process, I am interested in the advantages visual approaches could potentially offer in way of working with language learners, both in terms of research and pedagogy. For instance, might a queer-informed textbook use an image like Nancy's photo of two boys sitting together (see Figure 5) to engage language learners in queer inquiry? How might similar images be used to collectively deconstruct gender norms, material practices, body language, or the diversity of relationships that could be interpreted?

6.4 Final Reflections

In the introduction chapter of this report, I described my personal experience of teaching a unit debating the issue of gay marriage in my EFL classes in South Korea. Reflecting on these and other similarly perplexing interactions served as an impetus—inspiring me to explore similar experiences other teachers have had. Through this exploration, I have come to realize that a problem which I had initially perceived as being idiosyncratic and peripheral to the objectives of teaching English, sits at the intersection of questions about power, identity, and cultural values in L2 education. Issues of sexual identity are important not only to LGBT students and teachers— rather, they are relevant to everyone who inevitably will, and in many cases, already do, communicate with and about queer individuals in language classrooms.

Reflecting on my experience of adapting an image-elicitation approach for this research, I discovered that images and the explanations they inspire can serve as texts which frequently point to the crux of an issue. Abstract, somewhat elusive concepts tended to attain lucidity when encapsulated in a single image. Thus, I found the image biographies helped to focus on and crystallize underlying themes. Lindsay's image biography expressed her motivations behind teaching boys not to hit girls. Brian, Nancy, and Alex's image work explored how objects can assign gendered and sexual identities toward those who possess, wear, or use them—highlighting how objects and dress function as props in constructing and performing aspects of identity. For example, the graphic Alex submitted served as a concise illustration of how the same outfit could be well regarded in one context, and elicit severe social stigma in another. My experience with using this approach demonstrates how visual methods can be used to thicken phenomenological inquiries. Furthermore, I believe it also speaks to the usefulness of visual approaches for studying material practices, identity, and stigma cross-culturally.

As a result of conducting this research, I feel better prepared to address issues of sexual identity with students. Furthermore, I am optimistic that teaching practices regarding this concern will continue to improve as scholars, curriculum developers, and teacher training programs increasingly afford attention to matters of sexual identity. EFL teachers are in a unique position whereby the very nature of their educational context places sociocultural issues front and center for inquiry and exploration. I believe that when these educators are engaged in critical praxis and armed with theoretically-informed pedagogical tools, they have the potential to transform far more than just communicative abilities.

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Do you, or did you teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in South Korea?
You have received this request because you have been identified as someone who may be eligible to participate in a study.

I am currently conducting a study to help educators better understand ways in which topics related to gender and sexuality have come up in EFL classrooms in South Korea and how teachers chose to address (or avoid) these issues. Additionally, I am interested in exploring the factors teachers identify as having influenced how they chose to navigate these situations. The research will hopefully provide insights that will help to inform socially just, context-sensitive pedagogical strategies to aid teachers in addressing these topics in the future.

My research methodology consists of two main components:
1) Analysis of participants' writings (responses to writing prompts);
2) Analysis of visual data (drawings, photographs) and accompanying written explanations submitted by participants.

All data collected will be rendered anonymous in the final report; participants (and third parties mentioned) will be referred to using pseudonyms. In addition, any individuals appearing in visual data, such as photographs, will be digitally rendered unidentifiable as necessary.

I hope to recruit approximately 8 to 12 individuals who: a) are currently teaching English at either a public or private school in S. Korea under an E2 teaching visa; or, b) have taught English at either a public or private school in S. Korea under an E2 teaching visa within the past five years. A working email address and access to the Internet are needed in order to participate.

The time required to participate in this study will vary greatly depending on the amount of information you choose to share. I expect that participating would foreseeably require a minimum of one hour of your time. If you would be willing to participate, or if you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me at: justin.laurion@mail.mcgill.ca

Should you agree and are selected to participate, you will be provided with a more in-depth explanation of the study when asked to sign the consent form. In addition to receiving a copy of the final report when it is completed, your name will be entered into a lottery-style drawing to win $50.00 [approximate odds of winning are 1 in 12].

Thank you for considering this request.

Justin Laurion,

McGill University
Faculty of Education
Integrated Studies in Education

Faculty contact: Dr. Claudia Mitchell; Claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca

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BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM

Please use this form to give basic demographic data about yourself.			
Given Name (First name)		**Family Name** (Last name)	
Date of birth		**Gender** (male / female / other)	
Country of origin		**Level of education** (at time of teaching)	
How do you identify in terms of sexual orientation? (heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, other)			

Please use this form to give basic data about your experience teaching in Korea. (School #1)	
City / Town in which you taught English.	
Approximate dates of employment.	
Name of the school at which you taught.	
Were you teaching under the E2 visa? (Yes / No)	
Was it a Public or Private school?	
In general, what was the age range of your students?	

If your responses stem from experiences teaching at more than just the school listed above, you may use the additional boxes below to provide information about additional schools. (OPTIONAL)

Please use this form to give basic data about your experience teaching in Korea. (School #2)	
City / Town in which you taught English.	
Approximate dates of employment.	
Name of the school at which you taught.	
Were you teaching under the E2 visa? (Yes / No)	
Was it a Public or Private school?	
In general, what was the age range of your students?	

Please use this form to give basic data about your experience teaching in Korea. (School #3)	
City / Town in which you taught English.	
Approximate dates of employment.	
Name of the school at which you taught.	
Were you teaching under the E2 visa? (Yes / No)	
Was it a Public or Private school?	
In general, what was the age range of your students?	

Questions? Investigator Contact: justin.laurion@mail.mcgill.ca
Faculty Contact: claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca

Writing Instructions

Topics – What should I write about?

  The writing topics which follow give a detailed description of the themes I would like you to think about and respond to. There is a lot we can learn from examining the seemingly mundane details of everyday occurrences; therefore, the teaching experiences you choose to write about do not need to be spectacular, life-changing events. If you can not think of a single event to write about, but rather a series of regular occurrences, this is fine. It is possible that you may choose to write about an event in which no verbal exchange occurred, this is fine too. If something came to mind while considering the writing prompt, it is likely worth writing about.

Style, Voice & Tone – How should my response be written?

  The focus of this writing activity is to share your personal experiences with others to help them understand what a particular classroom situation or teaching experience was like for you. With this in mind, I simply ask that you write however you feel most comfortable sharing this information. Feel free to use whatever writing style you feel best conveys the details of your experience. This could include a combination of styles such as essay, journal entry, script or something else entirely.

Content – What details do I include?

  Remember that your responses will be anonymous and only my thesis advisor and I will have access to your true identity. With this in mind, I ask that you please be as candid as possible; incorporate the thoughts and feelings you had at the time of the events which you haven chosen to write about. As if you were retelling a story to a friend, family member or co-worker, try to include contextual information that will help provide the reader with a more complete picture of what happened. You may choose to note things such as: physical space, sensory information, actions, facial expressions, body language, emotional and physical reactions, and so on.

Keep in mind

  This is not an incident or police report. It is not a questionnaire seeking dry, simplistic, clear-cut results that I will attempt to represent in statistics, charts or graphs. This study seeks to share with others, insights that can be gained from the richness of your lived experiences as a teacher. In this way, it will be the dramatic, humorous, vulgar, emotional and personal details of your stories from which readers will derive meaning.

  Finally, your responses are not being used to judge you personally or professionally. It is expected that we will all have teaching moments we are proud of, and those we feel we should have handled differently. It is important to share both of these as honestly as possible. With this information, we can work to inform and develop methods to help future educators confidently and effectively engage with these complex topics. To the best of your ability, tell it how it was - how you recall it being.

Formatting and Submission

  Type your responses in the spaces provided below the prompts.

To submit your responses, Email your files to: justin.laurion@mail.mcgill.ca

Questions? Investigator Contact: justin.laurion@mail.mcgill.ca
Faculty Contact: claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca

Writing Prompt #1: Gender

Prompt 1.A
Think back to an instance (or instances) in which you were teaching and the topic of 'gender' came up in your classroom. The broad phrase "came up" is used to allow for multiple ways in which you could interpret the topic of 'gender' as having entered your classroom; be it part of the curriculum, an informal discussion, an interaction that you witnessed, etc. The term 'gender' is also to be understood in a broad sense and could include things like: the differences between boys and girls, appropriate ways of behaving as a girl /boy (gender norms), the unfair treatment or expectations of males / females (gender inequality), cultural differences of gender norms, this issue of transgendered people and so on. To the best of your ability, describe the situation(s) in detail. Think about: Where you were, what happened, what was said, tone of voice, what you saw, your reactions, body language, student reactions, etc…
Response 1.A

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Writing Prompt #2: Sexuality

Prompt 2.A
Think back to an instance (or instances) in which you were teaching and the topic of 'sexuality' came up in your classroom. Again, the broad phrase "came up" is used to allow for multiple ways in which you could interpret the topic of sexuality as having entered your classroom; be it part of the curriculum, an informal discussion, an interaction that you witnessed, etc. The term "sexuality" is also to be understood in a broad sense and could include things like: human reproduction, puberty, appropriate / inappropriate touching, sexual orientation(s), and so on. To the best of your ability, describe the situation(s) in detail. Think about: Where you were, what happened, what was said, tone of voice, what you saw, your reactions, body language, student reactions, etc…
Response 2.A

Appendix F

Image Collection and Submission Instructions

Using Images - How and Why?

Much of how we interpret and understand the world around us comes from visual information. With this in mind, the goal here is to provide readers with a visual representation which you believe adds detail to or provides context for a topic which you touched on in one of your writings. The image can also serve as a starting point for a more in depth discussion of a certain phenomenon. For example, maybe one of your writings touched on "androgynous clothing styles". If you decided to work with this topic, you could provide a photo which you feel illustrates this idea and discuss it in more detail.

You may choose to use a photograph you already have, or may decide to take photographs specifically for this project. It can be an image showing a place, object, person's body language, etc. Or, could choose to draw a picture, map, diagram, etc... Whatever visual medium you choose is up to you.

Note: Due to possible complexities and ethical concerns, I ask that you do not take pictures of your students specifically for this project. You may choose to use photos that you already own which feature students. All images in which individuals are identifiable (including yourself) will be altered to ensure anonymity. You must own or have the right to use any images to choose to submit.

Image Bio

Give a brief description of the image you chose to submit. Feel free to write as little or as much as you like. You may decide to write a simple caption or may be inspired to elaborate in more detail. This is up to you.

You may choose to simply give a title or caption that clearly explains the idea your image is illustrating. For example: "My male students sometimes wear androgynous clothing."

Submission

You may insert your image directly into a word document and include your bio with it. Feel free to provide more than one set of images and biographies if so inspired.

To submit your responses, Email your files to: justin.laurion@mail.mcgill.ca

Questions? Investigator Contact: justin.laurion@mail.mcgill.ca
Faculty Contact: claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca

Appendix G

\<Image Bio Example\>

"A Queer Gift - My Pencil Case"

My pencil case was a gift from a student whom I tutored privately once a week for about two years. It is mainly black with white embroidery of chrysanthemum and bamboo leaf designs. The charm is made of a thin knotting cord which is the same lavender color as the flaps. The cord is knotted into a traditional Korean decorative knot. Below this knot is a small fabric butterfly with ornately embroidered wings of purple, white, pink, green, and gold colored thread. When I first received the gift I was both flattered and amused. I found the design choice to be a bit humorous; something with a flowered design and a purple and pink butterfly attached to it seemed an odd choice of gift for an adult male.

One of the first things I noticed when I first began teaching was that every one of my students had a pencil case. They seem as common as backpacks and appeared to be one of the few means of individual self-expression for students in the classroom. [Korean students spend the vast majority of their waking day in schools whose policies dictate their appearance (school uniforms and hair length/color, etc.)]. As a novice teacher entering a Korean classroom for the first time, the task of distinguishing students from one another was a difficult one. My eyes scanned over the rows of black hair in similarly styled hairdos, pairs of dark-brown of eyes, and drab uniforms. I struggled to find shreds of individuality. *A few have glasses... he has braces... most have some interesting phone charms.* As I began speaking they all pulled out their pencil cases and placed them on their desk in front of them. The sea of sameness suddenly became busy with tiny splashes of personality; there were pencil cases shaped like stuffed animals, covered with colorful hearts, or littered with pleasant nonsensical English phrases. Later, when discussing a student with a fellow expatriate coworker, I heard myself ask: "*Wait. Is he the one with thick black glasses and the pencil case with pink hearts all over it?*"

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Faculty of Education

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of Research:	Politicizing the EFL Classroom: What do we teach about gender and sexuality?		
Researcher:	Justin Laurion	Affiliation:	Master's Candidate; Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University
Email:	justin.laurion@mail.mcgill.ca		
Telephone:	1 (514) 649-6983		
Supervisor:	Dr. Claudia Mitchell	Affiliation:	Professor; Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University
Email:	claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca		
Telephone:	1 (514) 398-1318		

Purpose of the research: To explore the ways in which topics related to gender and sexuality have come up in EFL classrooms in South Korea and how teachers chose to address (or avoid) these issues. Additionally, this study will examine factors teachers identify as having influenced how they chose to navigate these situations. The research will provide insights that will help to inform socially just, context-sensitive pedagogical strategies to aid teachers in addressing these topics in the future. This research represents the core phase of the writing of my Master's thesis. The finished text will be available to the public. The information you provide may also be used in conference presentations and other future publications.

What is involved in participating?
- You will be asked to provide some basic demographic and professional information about yourself.
- You will be asked to write in response to two prompts; working from memory to share personal classroom experiences you've had while teaching EFL in South Korea.
- You will be asked to provide visual data (in digital form) such as a photograph or drawing that you feel relates to a given prompt. The images can be 'found' or 'participant created' however, must comply with the regulations set forth in the instructions provided. You will be asked to provide a short explanation or biography of the image(s) you choose to submit.
- You will be offered a chance to respond to my initial interpretations or analysis of the information you provide.

Potential Discomforts:
In general, allowing others to read one's writing can cause people stress or discomfort. Moreover, you will be asked to write candidly about your personal classroom teaching experiences which relate to the topics of gender and sexuality. It is foreseeable that the nature of these topics might cause some participants to relive awkward, uncomfortable, or embarrassing situations.

Benefits and Compensation:
In addition to taking part in meaningful research which may be used to improve pedagogical practices, participants will receive a copy of the final report. As I am funding this research project myself, I am unfortunately unable to offer monetary compensation to each individual participant. However, as a token of my appreciation for the time and effort invested, participants will be entered into a lottery-style drawing to win a cash prize in the amount of $50.00 USD [approximate odds of winning are 1 in 12].

McGill

Use of data:

In addition to forming the core data for my Master's thesis, both the written and visual data you provide may be saved and used for other purposes such as: conference presentations, workshops, academic exhibitions, and future publications.

Terms of participation:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can choose to skip sections, or even to withdraw from the project at any time. The information you provide will be reported in such a way as to make direct association with you impossible. Only my thesis advisor, Prof. Claudia Mitchell, and I will have access to the information you provide in its original form. Data submissions will be coded and stored using pseudonyms rather than real names to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Visual data will be altered as necessary to ensure the anonymity of individuals displayed in images.

Consent:

Typing your name in the designated sections below and returning this completed consent form will constitute an e-signature, signifying that you understand the information provided in this form, agree to terms set forth within and choose to participate in this study. You should keep a digital or physical copy of this form for your own records.

I consent to my submitted visual data [images] being used in conference presentations, workshops, academic exhibitions, and future publications.			
Participant's e-Signature:		Date:	

I have read and understand the above information and I agree to participate in this study.			
Participant's e-Signature:		Date:	

I agree to honor and abide by the terms and conditions described in this agreement, in addition to those set forth in the McGill *Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects.*			
Researcher's e-Signature:		Date:	

If you have any questions regarding this research project, or more specifically this form, do not hesitate to contact me at: justin.laurion@mail.mcgill.ca

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study please contact the McGill Research Ethics Officer at: 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca