Queer Topics in Education: Pre-service teacher preparedness at McGill

Francis Beaulieu

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

McGill University, Montréal

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Paul Zanazanian, for his continued direction and support during each stage of this process. His expertise helped guide my research and his feedback pushed me to keep refining my work.

I would also like to thank my parents who were always there to assist me no matter the problem and offered counsel whenever needed. Finally, I would like to express gratitude to my partner, Guillaume Coutu, for his unwavering support.

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to study the preparedness of pre-service teachers with regard to queer topics within secondary school classrooms, as well as their knowledge and attitudes towards queer inclusivity. This study strives to examine how the McGill undergraduate education programs prepare pre-service teachers to address these topics in their work. In addition, it reviews the ability that pre-service teachers have at being able to recognize traditional cisheteronormative teaching practices and to move away from them. The current literature regarding queer topics in school settings focuses on the experiences of students, in particular instances of homophobia or discrimination. Four pre-service teachers participated in semi-structured interviews to discuss their knowledge and beliefs about gender and sexuality within secondary schools and their experiences learning about the queer topics at McGill University. Moreover, an autoethnographical approach was used to support the findings and provide further insight into some topics. The themes found in the data include: cisheteronormativity being easy to learn and easy to teach, the adaptability of younger generations have to new information compared to older generations, and the issues of unstructured learning outside of schools. The implications of the results include suggestions to reform teacher education to allow for the creation of more equitable learning environments that allow for the disruption of cisheteronormativity.

Résumé

Cette recherche a pour objet d'examiner la préparation des enseignants en formation sur les sujets queer dans les classes d'écoles secondaires ainsi que leurs connaissances et leurs attitudes envers l'inclusivité queer. Cette étude évalue la façon dont les programmes de formation de premier cycle à l'Université McGill préparent les enseignants en formation à aborder ces sujets dans leur travail ainsi que la mesure dans laquelle les enseignants en formation peuvent reconnaître les pratiques d'enseignement traditionnelles hétéronormatives et s'en éloigner. La littérature actuelle sur les sujets queer dans le milieu scolaire est axée sur les expériences des élèves et porte principalement sur les cas d'homophobie ou de discrimination. Quatre enseignants en formation ont participé à des entrevues semi-structurées pour discuter de leurs connaissances et de leurs croyances sur le genre et la sexualité dans les écoles secondaires et de leurs expériences d'apprentissage sur les sujets queer à l'Université McGill. De plus, une approche autoethnographique a été utilisée pour étayer les résultats et fournir des renseignements supplémentaires sur certains sujets. Les thèmes trouvés dans les données comprennent notamment la facilité d'apprentissage et d'enseignement de l'hétéronormativité, l'adaptabilité des jeunes générations aux nouveaux renseignements comparativement aux générations plus âgées et les problèmes d'apprentissage non structuré à l'extérieur des écoles. Les répercussions des résultats comprennent des suggestions pour réformer la formation des enseignants afin de permettre la création d'environnements d'apprentissage plus équitables qui peuvent troubler l'hétéronormativité.

Glossary of Terms

- **Asexual:** Refers to someone with a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or interest in sexual activities. Asexual people may experience no, little or conditional sexual attraction.

- **Biphobia:** Fear, hatred or discomfort of people sexually or romantically attracted to more than one gender.

- **Bisexual:** Refers to someone who is sexually or romantically attracted to more than one sex or gender identity. These attractions can be to the same or varying degrees.

- **Cisgender:** Refers to someone whose gender identity conforms with the sex assigned to them at birth.

- **Coming out:** The process of acknowledging and accepting one's own sexual orientation or gender identity and shares it with others.

- **Gay:** Refers to someone who is sexually or romantically attracted to members of the same gender.

- **Gender expression:** The external appearance of one's gender identity. Usually expressed through clothing and behaviours. These may not conform with socially expected behaviours and characteristics.

- **Gender identity:** One's own concept of self as male, female, both or neither. Gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

- **Gender non-conforming**: Refers to someone whose gender expression is not easily attributed to a category.

- **Cisheteronormativity:** Refers to the world views that situates heterosexuality as the preferred or normal sexuality and being cisgender as preferred or normal gender identity.

- **Heterosexism:** Refers to the discrimination targeted towards queer people based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm.

- **Homophobia:** Fear, hatred or discomfort of people who are attracted to members of the same gender.

- **Intersex:** Refers to people born with a variety of differences in sex traits that deviate from social norms. This includes differences in gonads and internal sex organs, chromosomes, genitalia, hormones, and other secondary sex traits.

- **Lesbian:** Refers to a woman who is sexually or romantically attracted to other women. Some non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

- **LGBTQ:** An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer."

- **Non-Binary:** Refers to a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or woman. They can identify as being both, somewhere in between, or as neither.

- **Pansexual:** Refers to a person who has the potential for sexual or romantic attraction to people of any gender. Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.

- **Queer:** An umbrella term used to express a spectrum of identities and orientations. This term was, and continues to be used as a slur, but is now also used within the queer community.

- **Sexual Orientation:** The sexual attraction that one has towards other people. Can also be used to include emotional and romantic attraction.

- **Transgender:** Often called "trans" as a shorthand. Refers to a person whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the sex assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply a specific sexual orientation.

Definitions have been adapted from those used by the Human Rights Campaign's Glossary of Terms.

Chapter 1: An Introduction to Queer Studies, Activism, and the Challenges of Terminology

Queer studies is a relatively new academic discipline that has emerged in the second half of the 20th century. Notable and foundational authors for this field include Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. However, at the time of their writing neither of those two authors were writing specifically for this field of study. Instead, they were addressing issues in other established disciplines and challenging some traditional notions. Later scholarship emerged with others such as Sara Ahmed and Jasbir Puar. Queer studies developed into a field that shared many similarities with feminist theory but sought to examine society and structures through a different lens. Namely, one that rejects the strict categorization of people and their identities, especially when it has been prescribed onto them (Turner, 2000). The field of queer studies emerged as a way to grapple with issues of gender and sexuality as non-normative identities, it was in part a rejection of a prescribed identity. Over time, queer studies was used to examine other aspects of life that did not inherently pertain to gender and sexuality.

While queer studies is a recent academic field, much of what it strives to accomplish has been argued and fought for by the queer community for much longer. This led to many changes within the queer community, from who could be considered part of the group, to what the end goal of social acceptance was (Warner, 1993). This flux in the community is interestingly echoed in the literature of queer studies which has evolved and transformed quickly since its emergence (Turner, 2000).

This thesis adopts an approach based on post-structuralism. Within this text I will be examining the preparedness of pre-service teachers in relation to their ability to address queer topics such as homophobia or LGBTQ+ Inclusivity. I will be examining specific ways that university programs can promote or hinder a future educator's ability to meaningfully address and engage with these topics in a school

setting. I aim to gain an understanding of how certain pre-service teachers feel they are prepared and to identify where these educators are receiving knowledge of these topics. I will also conduct a critical examination of how cisheteronormative structures can be reinforced or limited within the context of these education programs.

These questions are important to answer as the wellbeing of staff and students can be linked to these issues. Issues of bullying can be detrimental to student mental health and physical safety, teachers may be unable to communicate openly with peers or students for fear of losing their jobs, and every student is negatively impacted when behaviours and expectations are imposed on them that run contrary to their sense of self. An important aspect of a school environment is the safe and understanding climate that is created to best promote a student's growth and learning (Short, 2013).

This section will serve as an introduction to some of the common terminology and schools of thought that can be found within queer rights movements and academic literature. I will be exploring the commonality between various identities and their relation to society. This exploration will serve as a grounding point to examine how diverse gender and sexual identities and their interactions within society are replicated in our schools and how attitudes and beliefs reproduced through our education can impact students, whether they identify as queer or not. It is important to note that the terminology that people use, and identify with, can change quickly as our understanding of gender and sexuality shifts and people move away from the pathologization of identity.

An important first step to this process is the grounding of my own identity within this work. This topic can be complex and rapidly evolving so I believe it to be important to ground my own use of certain vocabulary and my relation to the research I am doing. I identify as a queer researcher and educator. I want to use my own experiences both in teaching and in being part of the queer community to

engage in dialogue to improve conditions for current and future students. The use of the word “queer” is a contested one, I understand it to mean something that is related to sexual or gender identity that does not correspond to established ideas of gender and sexuality, usually heterosexuality. Queer was and still is used as a slur to denote one’s homosexuality derived from its original meaning of odd or strange. I align myself with the use of the term “queer” as a political action. I will often be using “queer” to signify a generic term that is intended to be more inclusive than the sundry acronyms that could otherwise be used such as LGBT, LGBTQ+ or 2SLGBTQIA+. I also recognize the use of “queer” as a way to identify within the queer community without providing or adopting a specific label. I am conscious of the negative connotation that the term queer can have for some members of the community as it was, and still is, used as a derogatory term and apologize to those who might be made uncomfortable reading it. I use the term queer politically when I refute the history of prejudice the word holds.

Much of the knowledge that is foundational to my understanding of queerness developed through a mix of academic and non-academic sources. As is common with some of my research participants, as seen later in my work, my first exposure to queerness and definitions was through YouTube. Ash Hardell and Alex Bertie served as key sources that I would turn to when looking for education. During my undergraduate degree, I took a course on the history of sexuality focused on the 1700s to present day Europe and North America. This course in particular helped to inform my understanding of the progression of the history of sexuality and queerness.

The contemporary issue that this paper seeks to address is linked to a wider societal construction of normative behaviours, the creation of expected behaviours as defined by our interactions with one another (Pfadenhauer & Knoblauch, 2019). Our expectations of others can be alienating to those who do not conform to these trends. Due to these feelings of alienation, our expectations can be powerful

influencing forces on people, the expectations of what someone is supposed to wear being an example. Many institutions replicate these expectations and convey them onto those individuals engaged with the institution (Ryan & Walsh, 201). Following the previous example, a dress code codifies the expectations of suitable wear.

This is especially notable in learning environments, in particular high schools. The reproduction of expectations and behavioural norms is especially effective in high schools due to the highly formative experiences that teenagers often face (Rose, 2009). These reproductions are often covertly implemented in lessons. Teachers are usually unaware of their biases in areas where they have never been challenged to critically examine their positionality (Ryan & Walsh, 2018).

The high impact of behaviour influences on teens is further amplified when we consider that the formation of one's sexual orientation is typically developed in these years (Perrin, 2002). While gender identity is developed in children as young as four (Perrin, 2002), it is more common to see that identity expresses itself in the high school years. A teenager's ability to access information and learn independently, as well as their higher degree of freedom to experiment and express their identity, can lead them to discover the terminology needed to better describe their identity (Kuklin, 2014). It is therefore important that we acknowledge and address the expectations of one's behaviour where it relates to sexual and gender identity and how a person expresses that identity.

In an effort to be inclusive to a variety of expressions and identities, as well as to acknowledge that queer issues do not only affect those within the queer community, I will be addressing the presence and reproduction of cisheteronormativity within high schools and the impacts it may have upon students.

While cisheteronormativity affects many within society, it is largely a reaction towards, and in tension with, those in the queer community (Warner, 2000). To fully understand this relationship, it is

important to understand some of the theoretical basis of queer identity and delve into the literature that helped to explain some of these identities.

First, the term queer that is commonly used has a lengthy and tumultuous history. While sexologists have been studying sexual expressions and providing labels for centuries, the most relevant name that emerged from that time is “homosexual.” It was first coined in 1869 and later used scientifically by psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing in 1886 in his book *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Mondimore, 1996). Homosexual in his work referred to a man who sought sex with other men. For Kraft-Ebbing homosexuality was a sexual perversion and he understood it as either a biological anomaly or a vice brought on from masturbation. The current contention with this term rises from the intrinsic medicalization of the word. The history of clinical homosexuality varies based on time and place, but it was largely deemed either a psychological immaturity (Freud, 1905) or some mental defect (Decker, 2013). With the further understanding of sexuality and the distancing of sexuality identity and mental disorders, the use of “homosexual,” especially used as a noun rather than an adjective, fell out of favour. Now the more commonly used term for denoting same-sex sexual orientation is gay and lesbian for men and women respectively.

Another shortfall of the term “homosexual,” without considering the medicalized history of the term, is the binary implication of the label. It denotes a very strict option of either a man having sexual desires for a man or a woman desiring a woman but does not leave open the possibility of somebody loving both men and women (Clarke, 2008). This led to the rise of the term bisexual. This term was popularized by Alfred Kinsey in the 1940s (Kinsey, 1998) who studied sexuality as a sort of gradient scale between absolutely heterosexual and absolutely homosexual (Mondimore, 1996). He introduced a sort of

nuance into the study of sexuality which helped to make people identifying both as hetero- and homosexual more comfortable.

A similar medicalization, where conditions and behaviours are categorized and treated as though they were medical issues (Oliver, 1990) was applied to the early understanding of gender identity. While sexual orientation was deeply studied in the past as a medical issue to resolve that academic view eventually fell out of favour. That is quite different with issues of gender identity, and the distinction between gender and sex. The distinction that I will be using is that sex is based in biological factors. Common identifiers are “male” and “female”.” There similarly exists a spectrum of biological characteristics and some of these people would fall into the category of intersex. For many, the use of sex as a defining part of their identity is problematic. I merely use this definition to better understand the difference between the biological and the social.

In contrast, gender can be understood as the set of behaviours and expressions that we expect and exhibit that signify to others who we are (Taylor, C. & Peter, T., 2011). It is important to note that these behaviours and expressions must be understood as culturally and temporally contextualised (Oliffe & Greaves, 2012). My own understanding of gendered expectations is largely built upon white, North American standards. The common identifiers that we use here are “man” and “woman.” Like sex, gender identity is not a binary and a person can be non-binary or gender nonconforming (Fiani & Han, 2018). It is a generally uncontested statement in queer studies that gender is a social construct, something that exists as a result of human interaction rather than objective reality. This implies that the behaviours and visual appearance that we expect to see from a certain gender evolves and changes depending on historical and geographic circumstances (Bochenek, M., Brown, A. W., & Human Rights Watch, 2001). The common example that is used to show the problems with gendered expectations of appearance has to do with

hairstyles. Conventionally we assume that men will have short hair and women will have long hair. The accuracy of this fact varies wildly. If we were to examine a group of people in today's society, we would very likely misgender someone if we labelled all people with long hair female and short hair male. There are always exceptions to the gendered "ideals" we have. Some of them, like hair, is often forgiven. Other examples like clothing might be less tolerated. The backlash a female student might face wearing a suit to prom is comparatively minor compared to what a male one would face in wearing a dress (Bochenek, M., Brown, A. W., & Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Judith Butler is a notable author in the field of queer studies and her discussion of sex and gender blurs the distinction that I have illustrated here. In her book *Gender Troubles* (1990), she argued against the distinction between sex and gender on the basis that one is inextricably linked with the other. To her a sexed body is one that can only be imagined and understood in the context of gender. Therefore, sex and gender are both constructed. The implication of this is that a discussion about sex in the context of it being the prototypical understanding of the body is fundamentally flawed.

The very word "queer" is a contentious one. For many, the word is tied up in a history of prejudice and discrimination and it is an insult. In the latter half of the 20th century, "queer" was largely rejected as an identifying label. The label of "queer" was often used to denote feminine men or those seen as flamboyant. Queer came to be understood as a specific type of gay man, namely, one that was often rejected by other gay men due to not being "manly" enough (Riemer, Brown & Marcus, 2019). This term was also used against transwomen as they embraced femininity (Reis, 2012). This was especially important because a dominant heterosexual society did not make the distinction between different gay men, they conflated various aspects into one stereotype, and applied their negative views towards femininity in men onto all gay men, whether or not they showed the same behaviours or expressions.

However, near the turn of the millennium, some gay activists began embracing the use of the term. This shift rejected the negative connotation of being outside of societal norms and embraced the resistance to strict categorization. It became a political action to reject what used to be an insult and apply it to yourself.

Similarly, the term “queer” in academia also took on various meanings. Of course, “queer” can be understood as referring to sexuality but in the academic discourse of queer studies it has a different, but related, connotation. Where queer was originally used to label people that fell out of the social norms of the time, queer studies embraced that identification and applied it to various contexts. The act of “queering” in this case has little to do with sexuality and instead focuses on a post-structuralist approach. For example, the topic of queer temporality examines how we normalize certain life milestones and paces of life from people but can often fail to account for individuals diverging from said expectations.

Based on the prior discussion, queer studies is a discipline intending to challenge binary notions and categorizations to better accommodate differing experiences and identities across many different fields of academia. It does, however, remain strongly linked with topics of sexuality and gender due to the early formative works of Foucault and Butler which helped to create this discourse community as well as the close relation to queer rights activism that queer studies can help promote.

As can probably be noted so far, the issue of labels and terminology is still a present topic of concern within queer studies and activism alike (Adams & McCreanor, 2014). Throughout history, changing attitudes towards gay men and women lead to the inclusion and exclusion of various subsects of the queer community. As I mentioned briefly before, there was intense resistance to the use of the term queer being used for all men in the latter half of the twentieth century. Similarly, the effort to distance queerness from the medical field also saw a rejection of terms like homosexual, transsexual and

transvestitism (Reis, 2012, Clarke, 2011). Some literature can feel quite outdated in this field simply by the use of certain terminology despite the ideas contained within the text still being relevant and influential.

There is also an unfortunate trend both inside and outside the queer community to resist new identifications and challenges to a now-established gay community (Adams & McCreanor, 2014). This is not a new phenomenon; early lesbian activists took issue with the lack of representation in gay events (Warner, 2000). Gay and lesbian activists actively distanced themselves from transgender people because Western North American societies were less tolerant of challenges to gender than they were to a normalized sexuality (Reis, 2012). Bisexuality also has a trend of erasure being often considered a "transitional period" where a person eventually becomes "fully" gay rather than being a distinct sexuality. Recently, the queer community has had to grapple with a pervasive lack of representation of people of colour as well as of a younger generation of queer people not strongly identifying with binary identities like male female, gay/straight (Riemer, Brown & Marcus, 2019).

Considering these challenges to the field, and embracing the ethos that queer studies can and should tackle harmful categorization that negatively impacts all people, I intend to address not any specific form of sexuality or gender expression but instead look to their common link, that of their relation to cisheteronormativity.

There are various schools of thought within queer activism which are commonly studied and which I see as problematic and favouring an elite majority rather than supporting a whole community. As I mentioned, lesbian and gay activists worked against trans activists and a masculine ideal for gay men rejected feminine expressions (Stryker, 2008). These actions speak to the societal unease of transgressing established patriarchal systems (Clark, 2011). A system of gendered expectations is a necessity for patriarchal society. If a person is easily understood to fit within a certain category of people, then it can be

easily assumed how that person will operate and what functions they can perform. Challenges to that system, especially challenges to an idealized masculinity, are therefore challenges to the very structure by which many people can understand the world in which they operate (Clark, 2008). I believe it is necessary to understand the societal concerns that are at play here to then understand how and why some students face challenges as they progress through their education.

One of the simplest explanations to the unease surrounding queerness is that in a patriarchal society, the ideal is to be a man. Like mentioned, transgressions in that system are a threat but some threats are more serious than others. Masculinity is held more highly than femininity. If we take the action of same-sex relations, lesbian relationships are often less policed because there is no subjugation of a male figure. Historically this has remained true, from the buggery laws that targeted men (Clark, 2011), because female penetrative sex was largely unimaginable, to the Nazi relative leniency to female homosexuality because it was not as much of a threat to the racial superiority (Marhoeffer, 2015).

For transgender people, the movement of going from female to male is inherently less threatening than male to female (Stryker, 2008). This can be understood as a movement towards or away from an "ideal." Transmen are more acceptable as they seek to "imitate" and become part of the influential gender although in early feminist circles they were rejected for "betraying" the feminist cause and thus weakening the position of other women. However, transwomen are willingly giving up their positions of power, an entirely incomprehensible act for many. This "illogical" move is then represented in media as some sort of perversion or mental illness (Reis, 2012). The perceived mental illness comes from a lack of understanding of a transwoman's understanding of self. Perversion, on the other hand, speaks to our society's gendered relation, it is somehow more normal to think that someone is attempting to sneak and manipulate their ways into a position in which they can better take advantage of women.

Due to these varying degrees of acceptability regarding different sexual orientations or gender identities, it is not difficult to imagine that the queer community can play into those very systems for their own benefit. Gayle Rubin (1984) explores this very system of pushing other non-normative sex into the margins to better make room for your own sexual expression. This can be done by conforming to already established sexual behaviours. For example, a gay, monogamous relationship would be considered more acceptable than a gay polyamorous relationship. There is no intrinsic value that makes polyamory dangerous between consenting adults, but legal and social frameworks accept and accommodate monogamous relationships even if they happen to be gay (Rubin, 1984).

This societal adherence within queer spaces can manifest in different ways as well. Recently, a new political philosophy called homonationalism has emerged (Puar, 2017). This is very distinct from queer nationalism. Queer nationalism is a movement that sees queer people as akin to a distinct ethnic group (McCaskell, 2016.). The queer community was said to be a nation due to its own culture and customs.

Homonationalism is much less overtly radical but aligns itself closely with far-right movements, some of which themselves are radical movements. Homonationalism is becoming more commonly used within mainstream political discourse. (McCaskell, 2016.) The essence of homonationalism is that queer activism and identities should be used to legitimize a governing body. This sort of rationalization is often used by governments or politicians to justify policy decisions. Homonationalism can thus be used demonize an outsider group while painting them as homophobic (Puar, 2017). In turn, there is an active avoidance or erasure of the actions taken by the government that is benefitting from the homonationalism. For example, in the wake of the Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting, both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton made speeches as political figures condemning the terrorist action. They simultaneously justified their political agendas, be it a total ban on Muslims or foreign military

interference, by claiming to seek to eliminate threats to the queer community. In Israel, similar efforts of "pinkwashing" are being employed. They are condemning Palestine for its actions against queer people to better legitimize themselves in the eyes of the international community (McCaskell, 2016).

Wrapped up in homonationalism, but not exclusive to that single movement, is homomasculinity. This is a term used to describe a subculture within the queer community that seeks to conform with the typical image of a straight male. In general, this subculture is as valid as any other expression of sense but taken to the extreme, homomasculinity plays into the stigmatization of gender nonconforming expressions (Sonnekus, 2009). The strict adherence to traditional norms and rejection of all others harms other members of the community. For some, homomasculinity is something that has been reproduced within themselves by external forces. Within a high school setting, this can be seen in both students and teachers alike. If we take a queer teacher, the pressures put on them by parents and administration can lead them towards expressing themselves in a way that their expression of self is muted so as not to start any unwanted discussions (Rasmussen, Rofes & Talburt, 2004). Queer teachers in particular can be some of the most impactful influences on young students when they can serve as role models. However, they can sometimes adopt harmful attitudes and instead negatively impact their students (Gregory, 2008). If a queer teacher is not conscious of their positionality, they may project some of the trauma or hardships felt in their own schooling onto their students. If a gay male teacher was picked on for being effeminate, he may have adapted and changed that part of himself. If he then tries to advise a student who is being bullied for similar reasons, he may convey the message that the best solution to the situation is to conform to societal expectations rather than seeking to address the bullying itself (Rasmussen, Rofes & Talburt, 2004).

All of these seemingly distinct factors, from the difficulty in finding a lasting terminology for queer activism and academics, to the vocal resistance within certain parts of the queer community towards non-normative expressions of sexuality and gender, stem from a single source: cisheteronormativity. The assumption that being cisgender (meaning a person whose gender identity and sex have corresponded since birth) and heterosexual is the standard, default or "normal" is pervasive through many levels of our society. This is especially common in schools where part of the objective is to integrate students into the societal mindset they will need as productive citizens (Rasmussen, Rofes & Talburt, 2004).

Recent efforts in the Quebec school system have focused on introducing token situations of same-sex relationships in math problems or books that some elementary age students might read. However, meaningful discussions are still lacking. This is largely attributable to the fact that teachers are not equipped to discuss these matters. The personal feelings of the teacher aside, many do not know how to address this subject in a constructive manner with their students and are unable to answer their questions.

Addressing cisheteronormativity within the context of educational institutions is vitally important. By addressing cisheteronormativity as a concept rather than targeting individual identity-based labels, we can more effectively generalize our teaching rather than leaving teachers to struggle with case-by-case specifics. Cisheteronormativity also seeks to address behaviours within society rather than specific identities. This means that even if a person does not identify as queer, they could still benefit from the deconstruction of a cisheteronormative social structure.

Moving forward, I will be looking to do research on the particular subject of how queer topics are represented within pre-service teacher education programs and how well-prepared pre-service teachers are to address these issues in a high school environment. This can relate to the cisheteronormative

assumptions placed upon teachers that can then get reproduced in their lessons as well as to the need to breach a generational gap in understanding that relates to the ease with which certain pre-service teachers can acquire information while their university lecturers may struggle to adapt to the changing knowledge of queer theory and the activism around it.

It is important to have pre-service teachers express their experiences with cisheteronormativity and their perception of their own preparedness to handle queer issues such as representation in lessons, intervention in homophobic bullying and offering resources to students looking for help. This will enable us to better identify how cisheteronormativity is reproduced within school settings. Understanding how pre-service teachers learn and acquire knowledge is important to then address their concerns in a meaningful and collaborative fashion. The data within this thesis can help inform what knowledge pre-service teachers are missing as well as what priorities they have when it comes to the practical application of these topics in schools. The general willingness that pre-service teachers have to address these issues and the importance that they place on these topics can also help to guide the approach needed to meaningfully engage teachers and have them recognize the importance of the subject if they are reluctant. Educators already willing to learn about these issues will more readily engage with the topics compared to those that do not see the value or necessity of these discussions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Examining queer realities and experiences within education is a relatively new occurrence. The final report of the first national survey of Canadian schools was released in May 2011. Previously, the United States had conducted a similar survey in 2001. Both reports played an important role in laying the groundwork for understanding the general climate towards homosexuality and gender identity. They are, however, focused on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and delve into the experiences of queer youth only in so far as they relate to instances of harassment. Given the nature of the reports, there is a substantial lack of qualitative data to provide further insight into these results. While the 2011 report entitled “Every Class in Every School” (Taylor, C. & Peter, T.) provides some excerpts of transcripts, they are devoid of context and are used primarily to illustrate the themes the report addresses.

Currently, Gabrielle Richard, researcher at Université de Montréal, is conducting important work on the topic of queer inclusion in education in Quebec. While she focuses on Quebec and French schools, much of her recent work has been centred on the pedagogical practices of teachers or the value of a testimonial-based approach to addressing homophobia, namely through GRIS-Montréal, a non-profit seeking to demystify sexual orientation and gender identity through testimonies (Richard, 2019).

Other researchers are addressing the topic of cisheteronormativity and heterosexism through the study of curriculum and teacher education (Bernier, 2011; Sherwin & Jennings, 2006). This is done with the intention of understanding how we institutionalize these concepts and propagate these behaviours in the work we do for students.

Statistical Counts and Population Numbers

One of the basic issues which arises when addressing queerness in education is trying to define and identify students who fit the label of "queer" or "LGBTQ." The issues of queerness often pose a challenge that many other minority groups do not face as readily, namely visibility. Generally speaking, one cannot dismiss the presence of racial minorities due to "not seeing them" though some exemptions exist. Furthermore, sexual orientation and gender identity can often evolve and develop for individuals as they age, and it can be difficult to accurately track a person's affiliations with a particular label.

In an effort to identify a quantitative sample of the student population, certain national surveys have been conducted. These studies were largely conducted to estimate the number of students who identify as LGBTQ+, what forms of violence and harassment they face, and what impacts that has on their lives. In the United States, *Hatred in the Hallways* (Bochenek, M., Brown, A. W., & Human Rights Watch, 2001) estimated that roughly 2 million students fell under the umbrella of queer. As the American population has grown in the past 20 years since they conducted their survey, it is only reasonable to assume that the number queer-identifying students has also grown, especially when combined with wider societal acceptance that has enabled students to more easily express themselves (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2012). In Canada, the more recent "Every Class in Every School" (Taylor, C. & Peter, T., 2011) reported that 26% percent of the participants identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or question, while a further 3% identified as trans or two-spirit. However, of these participants, only 14% identified themselves as queer or questioning in the school context. An important factor to consider for the national survey, however, is that while the authors set out to specifically provide data for researchers, educators and administration due to a lack of prior findings, this survey still entirely omits Quebec from its sampling. There is no mention as to why this decision was made, be it for ethical approval, linguistic challenges or potentially

significant cultural differences. In place of the data being incorporated into the national survey, a secondary team of Quebec-based researchers surveyed Quebec schools. (Chamberland et al., 2010) The situation around queer acceptance within youth culture has shifted within recent years but there continues to be attacks on gender identity, or casual homophobia within normal conversations. I still use these statistical surveys as they are quite comprehensive and help to understand the particular societal context that I live in and have experienced.

While it is also easy to understand problems arising from rates of bullying or hostile learning environments, I believe it is also important to emphasize the less tangible but equally important self-actualisation of students. The affirmation of their sense of self and development into a happy and productive adult should always remain at the forefront of a teacher's goals. By allowing for this environment our students can learn to be themselves and to be content with who they are.

Further issues in relation to addressing queer topics in education, also stem from the at-times dated terminology used in both of these studies as well as the occasional conflation of terminology. Although it can be relatively easy to define the common categories of lesbian, gay, transgender and queer, data collection often leaves out more recent categorizations of non-binary or gender non-conforming and conflates trans and two-spirit (Westbrook & Saperstein, 2015). While some of these people may also identify with the label of trans, that is not necessarily the case. When considering sexual orientation, much of the data collected is centred around attraction towards same-sex partners or the peer perception of such. I have found it largely omits discrimination directed towards those who identify as asexual, those who have little or no sexual attraction towards others, regardless of sex or gender. In the more recent "Every Class in Every School," asexuality is never once mentioned.

The other issue that I find occasionally arises is the conflation of terminology in misleading and incorrect ways. Turning to the Canadian national survey once again, students were generally divided into three groups when they fell under the umbrella term of queer. These categories are, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and questioning; trans and two-spirit and, finally, all those who do not identify under the umbrella term of queer. While the initial category of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and questioning make categorical sense as they all pertain to sexuality, and the latter category works as a "default" other, the grouping of trans, and two-spirit combines two dissimilar identities and glosses over an important cultural distinction. While it is commendable and undoubtedly important to have Indigenous peoples represented within this national survey, the grouping of the two-spirit with the transgender identity seems to indicate that these both have to do solely with gender identity. Although that may be true for trans individuals, it is a gross oversimplification of a much more nuanced historical term unique to Indigenous communities (Gilley, 2006). I believe that the researchers decided to group these two identities because of the relatively low numbers of trans and two-spirit participants. They acknowledged as much since trans students were much rarer in their findings, but they also faced higher rates of negative experiences and bullying. In addition, the researchers acknowledge the difficulty they faced when trying to work with Indigenous youth. Here, they stated that very little statistically significant data arose in their studies and that these youths had certain aspects in common with, what the researchers grouped as, Caucasian youth, while they had other aspects that more closely aligned with other students of colour.

Cisheteronormativity and Heterosexism Within Institutions

One of the key concepts being discussed within queer activism and academia is that of cisheteronormativity. This concept is the result of the discussion surrounding homophobia. In its initial understanding, homophobia was the irrational fear of "divergent" sexualities. It more commonly came to

be understood as overt acts of discrimination or prejudice (Walls, 2008). However, in the typical liberal society, even when homophobia is largely limited and unlawful, there are ways that true equality continues to be hindered. These acts are categorized as heterosexism and cisheteronormativity. Cisheteronormative acts always imply heterosexist behaviour, but focus on the oppression stemming from silence and exclusion of queer realities rather than heterosexism which valorizes and promotes heterosexual relationships (Walls, 2008).

Many studies have looked at a top-down approach to how this is handled in classrooms, generally from a teacher education perspective, or an examination of how teachers address queer issues in the classroom (Richard, 2015, Carpenter & Lee, 2010). Both of these approaches examine the curriculum. This provides a context to what a government or school board deems important information to transmit.

In "The Pedagogical Practices of Quebec High School Teachers Relative to Sexual Diversity," Gabrielle Richard (2015) examines the historical trend that situates Quebec as unique in relation to many of the other provinces. She explains how Quebec's history of early LGBT tolerance and its backdrop of antibullying legislation that held witnesses accountable for inaction should have created an environment that could easily address homophobia.

Unfortunately, Quebec's theoretical openness is limited by lack of programs and training provided to teachers on how to address these topics. In a 2011 survey by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), data indicated that while 60% of students acknowledged that they had seen teachers address issues of homophobia, a minority of them stated that it was done in the classroom and conducted in positive terms. This data establishes that teachers are lacking training, detailing student interactions with staff that could not answer questions or, in one instance, a teacher that told a student that the county in which they worked, forbade them from answering questions on homosexuality. I do not believe

it is enough to assume that if provided opportunities to learn teachers would immediately agree with an effort to more actively promote equity.

The issues are further compounded by the hidden curriculum, that of the unwritten, implicit and, at times, unintended messages (Alsubaie, 2015) of the educational system which often implicitly promotes cisheteronormative standards. Tania Ferfolja (2020) discusses the typical Western discourse surrounding childhood. While she sets her research within an Australian context, many of her points can be applied within a Quebecois context. Her use of other countries, such as the USA or UK, for an international comparison helps to adapt her work towards other societies, in this instance, Quebec. When examining the general expectations towards children, whether in high school or elementary school, there is a construction of youth as innocent, vulnerable and asexual. This sets the expectation for children to be unable or unprepared to learn about topics of sexuality.

In Preston's (2016) work, she highlights the perception that certain teachers had towards gender and anti-queer bullying, namely that teachers downplay anti-queer. Teachers tend to excuse this type of bullying and perceive it as less severe than other forms of bullying since the students are simply not old or mature enough to understand the true meaning behind those words. Preston also states that some participants in her research even turned to blaming the victim for the harm committed against them. In one example, the participant said that the student was flaunting their sexuality and that incited another student to bully them. These deeply disturbing examples of victim blaming and minimizing or excusing the act of bullying reveal a lack of preparation for educators to productively address these issues when they arise, not only failing to offer aid but actively worsening the situation for some students.

Pre-Service and Service Teacher Education

As some researchers address certain issues surrounding queer inclusivity in studies and research, others are trying to educate teachers on how they can better handle these topics when they arise in their classrooms. The current literature regarding these efforts generally originates from universities with pre-service teachers being interviewed about values and where/when they learnt about queer inclusivity. In their 2016 work "Challenging norms: University students' views on cisheteronormativity as a matter of diversity and inclusion in initial teacher education," authors Magnus and Lundin reviewed reports written by undergraduate students in secondary and elementary education on the topic of heterosexuality and homosexuality and its impact on education. While their questions directed towards the students did not directly address cisheteronormativity, because the students would probably not have understood those terms and would have thus engaged in a less meaningful way, Magnus and Lundin carefully examined the wording of the responses.

They divided student responses into different categories as a way to identify student teacher opinions and approaches to queer inclusion in education. In most instances, students indicated that at the very least they were open to equality on the basis of sexuality. However, many differed on the extent and the appropriateness of addressing the topic of sexuality in class. Many enforced what Magnus and Lundin called the "critique of tolerance," which advocates for a surface-level acceptance of homosexuality but continues to assert that it is distinct from traditional or normal sexualities. In contrast, other students phrased their responses in line with what the authors called the "critique for equality," some advocating for a changing of social norms to include homosexuality as standard while others declared that teaching tolerance pedagogy is not the same as equality.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Foundations

Introduction

In this chapter, I will focus on the theoretical foundations underpinning the research methodology of this project. Central to this project are the themes of knowledge and performance. This project adopts an approach based on post-structuralism à la Foucault (1987) and Butler (1990). This project aims to examine the preparedness of pre-service teachers in addressing queer topics such as homophobia or inclusivity. It examines the specific ways that the McGill university education program promotes or hinders future educators in how to best address these issues. The goal of the project is to gain an understanding of how prepared certain pre-service teachers feel as well as to identify where pre-service teachers are learning to address these topics or where they believe these topics would be best implemented. There will also be a critical examination of how certain structures can promote or limit a cisheteronormative approach to education.

My understanding of sex, gender and sexuality is informed by both current queer activists and foundational works in queer studies. In particular, gender being understood as a socially constructed concept and a performance comes from Judith Butler's work (1990). I have also been inspired by the work of Olivia Murray, author of *Queer Inclusion in Teacher Education: Bridging Theory, Research, and Practice*. I first read Murray's work early when I was still deciding on the subject of my research, and I found her work on knowledge transfer to be pertinent and engaging. I was also introduced to Gabrielle Richard's work after I was gifted *Hétéro L'école: Plaidoyer pour une education antiopressive à la sexuliaté* soon after settling on my research topic. This helped me ground some of my context into the Quebec francophone society.

Post-Structuralism

The theoretical framework that I will be using to guide my research is post-structuralism such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler's work. As a theoretical concept, post-structuralism focuses on the critical examination of structuralism, rejecting the tenant that structuralism can uncover structural meaning and ontological truths about society (Harcourt, 2007). Instead, post-structuralism looks to the gaps and exceptions to these rules as a way to derive knowledge (Dillet, 2017). Instead of focusing on the regularity within a system, there is instead a focus on the ambiguity. Perhaps most pertinent to this work is the critical examination of gender as a binary structure. Post-structuralism understands and interprets gender as a socially constructed role or behaviour. Rather than considering gender as a rigid set of behaviours intrinsically tied to one's sex, a post-structuralist interpretation poses gender as a set of learned behaviours. Due to their malleability based on time and place, these behaviours, undermine the notion of gender as predetermined. Instead, they open an avenue for critical examination of why and how we replicate these systems and what danger that may pose (Dillet, 2017). By applying this theoretical framework to education, we can examine which structures propagate inequality and how some people are working against these structures or how these systems are going unchallenged (Hodgson & Standish, 2009).

This theoretical foundation helps to understand that conventional ways of thinking and analysis can exclude the experiences of certain people and the issues they face. By interrogating this topic through a post-structuralist lens, I can better understand the ambiguities that arise from the lived experiences of the participants and how they interact with societal structures.

Queer Theory

Queer theory is a branch of conflict theory that adopts a specific lens when examining social and cultural structures of power. It has its early roots in academic feminist post-structuralism but has similarly important influences from early gay and lesbian movements and AIDS activism. In particular, community action against government inaction in the 1980s helped to highlight non-normative identity politics and the creation of marginalized groups (Reis, 2012). In terms of academics, queer theory stems from gender and sexuality studies. It contests many of the established notions of determined identities and readily criticizes the binary of ideal vs. non-ideal sexualities. The key paradigm shift that queer theory proposes is that there is no determined understanding of what "normal" is (Rubin, 1984). Instead, there are shifting ideals, a set of behaviours or assumptions that are expected to apply to a group of people, that fluctuate based on the societal context in which they are situated. As a result, people are no longer understood as fitting a definition of normal but instead they may or may not adhere to flexible norms (Rubin, 1984). This reframing of "normality" disrupts binaries (Bell & Cox, 2015). Within the context of education, this understanding of norms instead of normal can help educators create a more inclusive classroom, not just in terms of queerness but for any student who is not easily classified in the norms of our educational systems (Bell & Cox, 2015). Understanding how pre-service teachers learn about and apply these concepts can also help to illustrate how they might create an equitable and inclusive classroom environment.

Theory of Gender Performativity

The theory of performativity, as applied to gender (most notably by Judith Butler, 1990), will also serve to inform this research. When Butler describes gender as a performance, she asserts that gender is not something one *is* but rather something one *does* (Butler, 1990). Butler challenges the concepts of gender and sexuality as natural and roots her argument in how we perceive binary sexes. In our societal

discussions of viewing sex as a natural binary categorization we then, from that basis, create other natural seeming categories of gender and sexuality. By leaving binary sex as an unchallenged natural category, it becomes easy to apply gender onto those sexes; if one is born with female sex characteristics, it is only natural for one to adhere to a female gender. That is further applied to sexuality since heterosexuality is depicted to be natural because it falls in line with the "natural" gender expectations. Butler goes on to explain that gender is an involuntary act. While constructs such as gender, sex and sexuality are created, individuals adopt these performances through coercive means, in this case social sanctions and taboos. Drawing from Foucault (1978), Butler explains that disciplinary techniques create certain actions that are perceived as core to gender, sex and sexuality (Butler, 1990).

It is important to consider Butler's theory of gender performativity within the context of education, not only to better understand gender nonconformity but to also move beyond notions of cisheteronormativity. Understanding the theory of performativity also enables educators to better address unintended knowledge transmission from a hidden curriculum.

Foucauldian Knowledge and Power

Knowledge as a central theme to my research comes from an understanding of Michel Foucault's work (1978) on power-knowledge. Foucault's work helped to define post-structuralism, but his work can also help to understand how hegemonic perspective is replicated when addressing knowledge and power and how those are enacted within a society.

Central to his work is an understanding of how power and knowledge shape each other. The relationship of power and knowledge here has a sort of circular relation in which one can build up the other. Power-knowledge was a term coined by Foucault in order to demonstrate the intrinsic link that these concepts hold and how one cannot be separated from the other. He explains the concept as power

that is based on, and makes use of, knowledge and that power reproduces and shapes knowledge. Power can dictate and legitimize forms of knowledge while knowledge can itself provide reasoning as to what power holds sway. We can then understand that power recreates itself through knowledge. Within the context of education, we can understand different sources of power having influence over different populations. In this work we can understand pre-service teachers as both sources of power but also having power enacted upon them. Pre-service teachers learn to enact certain types of authority within their classrooms and their power stems from that knowledge. Foucault also comments that this sort of power-knowledge can be used to legitimize unjust actions and put down marginalized people. However, Foucault also believes in the possibility of breaking away from certain power-knowledge cycles and being able to recreate knowledge anew rather than having it be historically contingent. By understanding this relation, I can try to examine how narratives can be perpetuated and disrupted through these cycles of power.

When we understand how knowledge and power can relate to each other, it is important to apply this to an educational context. How do the forms of knowledge acquired through the McGill curriculum contribute to the formation of power structures? Here we can also borrow Antonio Gramsci's explanation of cultural hegemony as a sort of understanding that is so ubiquitous that it becomes akin to "common sense" to ask a question (Morton, 2007); what hegemonic norms are being reproduced and disseminated to the detriment of marginalized groups?

Queer Phenomenology

Sara Ahmed's Queer Phenomenology (2006) helps to bridge a traditional post-structuralist approach with more contemporary works within queer theory. For Ahmed, her understanding of phenomenology stems from Edmund Husserl. Ahmed focuses on the orientation of people towards

objects. The importance she places on our lived experiences and how we interact with objects and phenomena around us helps her justify why phenomenology would serve queer theory well.

To elaborate, phenomenology, as used by Ahmed and first explained by Husserl, can be understood as how we initially interact with the world around us to come to comprehend our surroundings. Ahmed uses the metaphor of Husserl's table to explain how we attribute emotion and meaning to that table. It begins to take on a specific purpose and that as we reflect on our surroundings, we can understand that table is situated within a larger context, surrounded by other objects. This highlights that even though there are things happening out of one person's sight, it doesn't mean those other things don't exist and in fact, a person needs to have an understanding of the environment to be able to meaningfully engage with objects.

To Ahmed, phenomenology is always queer in that it chooses and discards certain objects to perceive and push away in the process of meditating on our surroundings. The action of queering phenomenology allows us to perceive and present different aspects of the events happening around us. Ahmed rejects the notion of phenomenology as a neutral lens and instead embraces that it will be biased and how instead those different viewpoints can be integrated into phenomenology to critique and undo those biases.

Ahmed explains that because we perceive phenomena through particular biases spaces and institutions, we therefore place certain races, genders, sexualities or abilities over each other. The focus here being to highlight that the world is not organized to accommodate each person equally and only reflects the interests of those in power. Therefore, those who match the qualities of those in power are then able to easily navigate the world and it becomes harder for them to recognize that others might struggle to navigate that same world. I would like to offer an example that stems from my own struggles

being a teacher. I was privileged enough to navigate through school with support from family and peers and without major obstacles in my way. As a teacher now, I constantly need to check my teaching style and myself considering that many of my students do not navigate school with the same privileges that I did and treating them as I might have assumed students should be, will see many of them fail to thrive.

Coda

By adhering to these guiding themes and grounding my research within these established theories, I can better address the systems of knowledge that are being conveyed to pre-service teachers. Doing so can allow me to demonstrate the level of preparedness McGill pre-service teachers have for addressing queer topics. This research can then help advise how the undergraduate education program can be modified and improved to better assist pre-service teachers.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter will detail the methodology employed in this research as well as the rationale behind the decisions made. In short, this research was a qualitative look into the experiences of pre-service teachers through semi-structured interviews. I have adopted a qualitative approach as this methodology promotes a detailed look at data. Qualitative data involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data and is geared towards concepts, opinions and experiences. It recognizes the influence the researcher might have on the work and seeks to meaningfully incorporate that lens (Butler-Kisber, 2010). I have used it here as it can emphasize the experiences of participants. Quantitative research focuses on a breadth of data that I did not believe would suit the goal of my research. Due to me looking for opinions and experiences that pre-service teachers have in relation to queer issues; I was better able to analyze their

relation to the concepts. I was able to find subtleties in the research that I could not from a quantitative approach quantitative research does not allow for participants to explain a nuanced point.

Rationale for Chosen Methodology

The methodological framework that was adopted for this research aligns with qualitative research. I have adopted this method to better reflect the realities experienced by pre-service teachers and to have them directly participate in the inquiry process. As the data that was collected is the experiences and opinions of the research participants, the use of qualitative research will allow for "descriptive data" to be collected in regard to experiences and knowledge concerning queer topics, the roles those topics play in a high school setting and how prepared the research participants are to handle these topics in a work setting (Saldana, 2013). As the research participants only comprise a small part of the pre-service teachers within the Faculty of Education, undergraduate programs, this research is intended to be an exploratory look at their subjective experiences. The intent of this research was to explore the knowledge of pre-service teachers as well as to understand their opinions on how, and if, they would want queer topics to be addressed in their pre-service education (Saldana, 2013; Butler-Kisber, 2010). The community in question is understood to be pre-service teachers at McGill who are planning on teaching at the secondary school level. The lived experiences of the participants were central to the data collected and understanding how their opinions and knowledge have been informed. The input that the research participants have throughout this research is important to me as a researcher as I firmly believe that when doing research to serve a community, that community's members should have their viewpoints considered. I worked with pre-service high school teachers to identify what knowledge they feel they are missing and how best they believe they can acquire said knowledge.

Data Collection

This research involves the use of two data collection methods. The first is a series of semi-structured interviews with the participants. Semi-structured interviews have a framework of questions to ask but are not so rigid as to prevent deviations to the questions to explore topics as they arise (Harrel & Bradley, 2009). I used this method due to the flexibility it provided when interviewing participants while still gathering common data. This flexibility allowed me to focus on particular experiences or opinions that the participants had that were not necessarily accounted for in questions or which allowed for further insight into their lived experiences and the influences on their teacher positionality. Due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions these interviews had to be conducted via videoconference calls though the benefit of a "face-to-face" interview still allowed for a more natural flow to the conversation and allowed for clarification or further inquiry when needed. The second data collection method employed was that of an autoethnography. An autoethnography is an approach to research hand data analysis that uses the experiences of the researcher (Brown & Dobrin, 2004). One of the strengths I value in autoethnographies is the ability for self-representation and advocacy. In this instance, I can speak to the experience of queer educators without imposing my ideas on a group I have no relation to. This approach is common when dealing with colonial issues and the imposition of certain theorists over others (Thambinathan, & Kinsella, 2021) As a high school educator, graduate from the McGill Secondary Education program, and someone who identifies with the queer community, I drew from my own personal experiences to provide insight into some of the realities of a high school setting as well as within the McGill education undergraduate program. I chose to include the autoethnography due to my position as researcher, educator, and member of the queer community. My experiences within these communities have shaped my outlook and

inform the research I undertake. I believe it is not possible to put aside my opinions on these matters and it is instead necessary to critically examine them.

I used interviews to engage in dialogue with pre-service teachers on the topic of their current knowledge of queer topics in education. I created and ordered these interview questions to best address the issues that I thought would be pertinent and to best understand the viewpoints of the participants. This included some basic terminology as well as how they might handle issues concerning gender and sexuality that would arise in their future work. These introductory questions were written to highlight some of the more common knowledge needed to proceed with a meaningful discussion. I also encouraged the participants to reflect on where their knowledge was acquired and how big of a role the McGill Education program had in shaping this understanding. As mentioned previously, the interview followed a semi-structured framework (Harrel & Bradley, 2009). I was targeting certain themes, such as knowledge acquisition and inadvertent cisheteronormativity and sought to engage with certain specific topics like understanding certain terminology and how participants would address instances of homophobia, but I also allowed for the participants to guide the conversation. In most cases, these conversations allowed for further examination of an experience that a participant explains is important to their outlook. I also allowed for participants to lead the interview and ask me their own questions. This allowed for further insight into what was important to them and allowed them a further opportunity to bring up a subject or theme that we had not previously addressed.

Autoethnography is a data collection method that uses the researcher's personal experiences to connect with the larger cultural context or phenomenon they are examining (Leavy, 2017). As I have experience within the McGill Bachelor of Education program and I am involved in bettering the conditions for the queer community, I have decided to incorporate my personal experiences as a way to interrogate

how my experiences fit within my research. In order to collect data on my autoethnographical experiences, I examined experiences that were common between participants and myself and questioned my own reactions at the time. This also allowed me to understand how my personal strategies and opinions have evolved and allowed me to investigate what experiences altered those perceptions. In other instances, I drew from pertinent experiences during my undergraduate, as well as my graduate, degree to help illustrate some pertinent examples and included them.

I presented my experiences distinct from the other participants and presented their section first so as not to unconsciously detract from the data being presented. I was also more able to delve into my own experiences and provide greater context on my own experiences and the feelings that I had during the events detailed. Not being able to do this for other participants I wanted to eliminate any chance of giving the impression that I was imposing extra feelings that did not arise from the interviews.

Recruiting Participants

The participants in this research project were all pre-service teachers who are likely to teach in Secondary Schools. This was to limit the scope of research as there can be significant differences between elementary and secondary school realities, especially concerning gender identity and sexual orientation (Hall, 2006). They come from a range of different programs that span a number of teachable subjects. All of them were in at least their second year of their undergraduate degree at McGill University. I recruited participants primarily through emailing course instructors and having them advertise the research project. From there, some participants reached out to peers to see if they would be interested in participating. Interested participants contacted me via email for more information. Though I had initially set a goal of six participants, through the recruitment process I managed to recruit four pre-service teachers. This did not pose issues as I was able to gain significant data from the four participants. While more participants could

have enriched the data further, particularly as I had not reached saturation, I was still able to achieve the goals I set out.

Interviews

The interviews had a semi-structured format. Each participant participated in one interview and was asked a series of questions. These questions were open-ended and encouraged participants to draw from their experiences and for me to delve further into topics of interest as they came up. The interviews were conducted over a video-conference call and audio recorded. I then transcribed the recordings onto my computer without the use of transcription software.

The process that I undertook to create these semi-structured interview questions started with a basis in the uses as well as the benefits and flaws common to semi-structured interviews (Jamshed, 2014). The number of questions were kept to between 10 and 15 to keep the interview to about an hour in length, this was to prevent interview fatigue (Adams, 2015). The questions themselves began as close-ended questions to, first, identify some of the participant's background, I focused on their subject teachables, linguistic ties and their gender identity and sexual orientation. I then posed questions to orient the participant in their own understanding of these issues and so that I could understand how they would use certain terms. Finally, I explored the role of queerness in their own experiences as student-teachers.

The questions that guided the interviews can be found below.

- What are your teachables?
- Do you see yourself working in a French or English school? (communities of belonging)
- What, if any, labels do you use to define your sexuality and/or your gender?

- How do you define gender and sexuality?
- What do you understand from the terms; homophobia, heterosexism and heteronormativity?
- How do these terms fit into your role as an educator?
- Do you feel prepared to address these topics in a high school environment, whether with students or other teachers?
    - What factors led you to feel prepared or what could be done to better prepare you?
- Do you see the McGill Bachelor of Education as sufficiently addressing these topics?
    - In what context did you most learn about these issues and where do you think these issues can be better addressed?
- Can you describe a scenario that you have witnessed or heard about that served to reinforce a heteronormative structure?
    - How was that situation resolved?
- Is it your responsibility to address these issues?
- Do you have any questions to ask of me or would you like to add anything else?

Thematic analysis

To analyze the data, I adopted an approach of thematic analysis (Butler-Kisberg, 2010). This method involves reading through a data set, in this case my interview transcripts, and identifying patterns. In this case, I initially used key words or phrases to group data together, I then reviewed the data and grouped the data into core ideas that help to explain the main ideas found within. By reviewing the interview transcripts, I sought to identify general ideas that were common between participants. My preliminary coding was based on a holistic coding which gathers larger segments of text to identify

pertinent themes. This method easily allows the context of an interaction to be represented and communicated (Saldana, 2013). From these derived codes, I then reviewed the data and sought to compile these ideas into more complex theoretical concepts. These concepts would then be used to further the analysis of the data. The practical coding method that I used was manual. I coded by hand by using various colours to identify themes in the data. There was an initial cycle of coding using the holistic approach to coding which was subsequently followed by the thematic analysis which similarly was done by hand using a variety of identifying colours. The terms that I looked for during my holistic coding were as follows; vocabulary, gender, sex, sexuality, identity, McGill, society/social, preparation, uncertainty. These were later interpreted into the more complex theoretical concepts of; cisheteronormativity being easy to learn and easy to teach, the adaptability that younger generations have to new information compared to older generations, and the issues of unstructured learning outside of schools.

The data is presented in a narrative style (Butler-Kisberg, 2010; Wells, 2011). This entails using the interview transcripts from participants and presenting them into a cohesive account of their experiences and opinions. The participant data is demonstrated narratively to highlight their subjective experiences. The data is presented in a way to demonstrate common themes between participants and how their opinions and thoughts on the matter differed. As the data collected is the subjective experiences and thoughts of the participants, this method helps to keep in mind the subjectivity of the study.

Strengths and Limitations

The various methods of data collection help to provide insight into the subject through different lenses. The varying background of the participants during the interviews also contributed to a richer and diverse set of perspectives and experiences. Each participant was free to talk about their thoughts and the interviews could be adapted to better suit them. The inclusion of autoethnographical data also allows for

a richer illustration of certain experiences by including more in-depth insight on topics. This can be harder to do directly from an interview as a participant's motives or background might not be fully understood whereas I can speak to my experience in much more detail. The primary limitation of this study is the size of the participant pool. With four participants, this study cannot, and does not, claim to be used for statistical generalization. My close identification with the queer community as well as being an educator also colours my perspectives in this research and inherently places limits on the claims I am making as I have a vested interest in the research topic.

Summary

Overall, this research project is a qualitative, community-focused project. In this section I discussed methods of data collection and how said data is to be presented. I also spoke to the general community of my participants. The data being collected here focus on the subjective experiences of the participants. This project is primarily intended as an exploratory look at teacher preparedness and what insight can be gleamed from the experiences of the pre-service teachers.

Chapter 5: Results

Introduction

The collection of data was done through the collection of subjective experiences. This can be identified in two parts: the first being the experiences of the individual participants expressed through interviews and the second, through my personal experiences. I will present the experiences of the participants in a narrative format to allow readers to see how opinions varied amongst participants while still allowing for an easy comparison of themes in their responses. All names included here have been altered for anonymity.

I tried to structure these narratives in a way that could be understood somewhat sequentially. Beginning with a quick description of the participants followed by their understanding of terminology allows us to understand who they are and how their opinions have been informed, as well as their level of comprehension with some basic queer topics. Following this, how and where participants acquired their knowledge can help to understand the quality of their definitions and in some instances understand the gaps and priorities in understanding. Following this, participants explained where they saw these topics in relation to education and their role as educators. Having reflected on what these terms meant; they were better suited to consider their implications. Following a similar logic, after having discussed the previous topics, it is easier to reflect on the role their educational program had in preparing them, and how better these topics could have been integrated in their learning. Finally, some of the following passages have been edited for legibility and comprehension. All participants were native English speakers so adjustments made were primarily about speech patterns and filler words such as “like” or “umm,” which have been removed when they impeded understanding. These instances are marked but never remove content from the excerpt.

I will also take a moment here to address my use of McGill as a focus in this research. I decided to focus on McGill as it is a renowned Canadian university, and one of only three English-language universities in Quebec. It is also the university in which I studied for my undergraduate and graduate degree and where I worked, and guest lectured for a time. I am much more familiar with the details of McGill’s programs, which enables me to understand my participants on a deeper level. Nothing written here is meant to demean the work within McGill’s Department of Integrated Studies in Education or carried out by individual course instructors. The comments here are the views expressed by students within the university and any criticisms are meant as feedback not only for McGill but for other

universities as parallels can likely be drawn to other institutions. The transferability, or reader generalization, of the following sections should be considered. I hope that by identifying key characteristics, or a thick description, (Polit & Beck, 2010) one can see how these experiences and views can be echoed in other people as well.

Taylor's Narrative

Taylor is a pre-service teacher in her fourth year of secondary education with English and History as her teachable subjects. She is non-binary and uses "she/her" pronouns. Taylor began this interview with a substantial amount of knowledge about this topic as well as strong opinions derived from pertinent life experiences. Taylor was the sole participant that identified strongly with a non-heterosexual identity. Identifying as queer, she brought in personal, first-hand experiences as a member of the queer community.

Initial Comprehension

Taylor's understanding of the terms was well developed and nuanced. She spoke confidently about the terminology and comfortably used what is typically queer slang for some of the vocabulary. She also demonstrated the close interrelationship of these terms with how she identifies, the line between theoretical terminology and lived experiences were blurred.

Gender is a social norm and how we're perceived through society's lens. I've been open about my construct, that's why it's non-binary, in my head it's because it's through what people are prescribing and I think that it varies between cultures I think that it varies between situations, and it varies between who you're talking to. […] I hate society's construction of men. I'm non-binary and I've got that but the way that society has created male privilege is just, there's too much there for me to be like "it doesn't exist" and that does come with being born a CisHet male. So, my idea of gender, my construct of gender has to do with

society's imposition and how society has—our society meaning like Canada, right now Montreal. How Montreal, Canada sees gender is there and I'm aware of it but not subscribing to it actively 'cause it's a social construct and that's it.

Knowledge Acquisition

Taylor's experience with learning about queer topics is a mixed bag of academic or structured learning as well as exposure to popular media and social platforms. Taylor expressed a desire to further her own understanding of queer topics and identities because of a lack of content in more formal settings.

I brought up queer TikTok and I was like "a lot of people are coming to terms with their sexuality later in life because no one's talking about it" and three different people personal messaged me to be like "I figured it out on TikTok" and I'm like how sad for you that you had to figure it out—I figured it out in school. I learnt about it; I don't want to figure it out on an app. We need this more in school. Like, we need more talking about it, we need people to be able to talk to their queer students without thinking that their identity is a slur and that, I think, comes into a lot of classes. […] Students are losing their childhood due to not being able to explore the one thing that drives a teenager which is sexuality.

Addressing these topics in a school environment

When asked about her experience within school settings during her field experiences, Taylor spoke about the heteronormativity she faced and her efforts to break away from those standards and why it was important for her to do so.

I'm in a constant battle between "fight the heteronormativity that students are facing" but also "don't push yourself on students" 'cause I'm very proud to be in my relationship. […] I did a stage with a [cooperating teacher] who immediately started talking about her husband and talks about her husband constantly. Whereas, I sit here and I go "I have a hard time saying my partner" in a classroom because I don't know—I had a situation where a student started using that same f-word in class and I was like "aaahhh," I was terrified. […] My ability to talk about my relationship, which people do, it's normal, well its hetero-normal. It's okay for the hets to do it versus me being like "I can't do this 'cause that could put me in a dangerous situation right now." Which is so weird 'cause they're my students and I love them, and they love me but then there's a part of my life that [they] might not agree with and that could actually become a problem. I want to encourage them and give them positivity so that they can see it and be a representation without ruining my chances of being fed.

Building from this discomfort of prescribed gender performativity, Taylor also spoke about the difficulty inherent to professionalism in heteronormative work attire.

I wear dress pants; I don't wear skirts. I wore a collared shirt and it made me feel powerful. […] I figured out that woman's aisle clothing that sticks to my body is not for me, Nice big collar shirts with like a sweater vest over it, yeah. First of all, kids see me, and they go "she's queer, she's got it" second of all, I'm comfortable and I'm happy.

Experiences at McGill

Regarding their exposure to queer topics within their time at McGill in the undergraduate program, Taylor expressed dissatisfaction with how some topics are presented and how easily course instructors can propagate negative and harmful tropes about queer people. Even in some of their most positive interactions Taylor still felt that the topic wasn't suitably addressed.

*We read "*They Both Die at the End," *the novel, and, spoiler alert, both people die at the end but that was [the course instructor's] way of including a queer novel which was beautiful but they both die at the end and so I did my reflection and I talked about how that's an issue. That like, we got to start putting out media where people live and actually have fulfilling lives and queer relationships aren't only challenged because someone is dying. Like, there's more complexity to it and again he had to recorrect himself after he read what I had already said. So, where he had already set up putting queerness in the classroom, he still missed the burning issue of like, this is a thing. I've had professors who try again, there's that little bit missing.*

Taylor also spoke about some of her interactions with peers within one of her professional seminars when various ethical scenarios were discussed.

We got placed with a situation where one of the teachers was really enforcing gender norms and then the whole class talked about male-female. The whole class, the whole time, it was a three-hour seminar, okay. It was long. We talked about male-female and I waited for either the professor or someone else to say something 'cause I was already the queer advocate in the class, and I was just waiting. And them, at the end of the presentation they go "does anyone have any questions?" and I had to pipe in and be like "I just want everyone to know that this conversation is operating on a gender binary" and that wasn't from McGill. I didn't learn that from McGill. McGill didn't do anything. McGill didn't step in. No one would have stepped in if I hadn't said anything.

Kristine's Narrative

Kristine is a pre-service teacher in her second year. She is studying to be a Physical Education teacher and wants to specialize in Secondary Education. She is a woman and, though bi-curious in high

school, identifies as heterosexual now. Kristine entered into this study with some knowledge of queer topics from a previous workshop she had attended but also joined with the enthusiasm of looking to further her knowledge of these subjects.

Initial Comprehension

Kristine demonstrated more than basic understanding of some of the key terms presented. She accurately described them and even spoke to the nature of gender and sexuality as a spectrum. However, there were instances of confusion regarding some other terms. In the following instance, the use of polygamy instead of polyamory can be seen, despite the meaning being there.

I think it's a spectrum again, […] it varies from asexual to heterosexual to homosexual to, what's it called, pansexual. I think that one depends on the personality […] it doesn't matter what the gender is. Yeah, I think sexuality is just like the person, or people even, because some people are polygamous, like, the people you're attracted to.

Knowledge Acquisition

Early in the interview Kristine wanted to highlight that she had attended a sex ed workshop and where she learnt about some queer topics as well as the importance of gender-neutral terminology. Besides that, YouTube videos were an important source of information.

I did watch—I know at some point I had a phase that I watched […] a lot of gay YouTubers like Joey Graceffa, oh my god, what are the names, Troy Sivan, […] those YouTubers.

When asked about YouTube videos more explicitly geared towards educational content the response was; *I think I watched a couple of educational videos, but I could count it on my fingers, […] not a lot.*

Addressing These Topics in a School Environment

Kristine's attitudes towards these topics within a high school setting show the willingness to learn and actively address issues that arise but important barriers stand in the way. The ability to incorporate specific lessons is limited by curricular mandates and, in Kristine's case, she didn't feel prepared to include these lessons while respecting the material she is supposed to cover.

It's important to talk about those things but at the same time, […] I'm scared of if I make a lesson on that, which is something that I think is important to talk about, but if it's not directly related to the thing that I'm—like the curriculum that I'm supposed to teach then parents might complain; "oh why is the teacher teaching that instead of what they're supposed to teach," right? That's a fine line but I think there are ways to bring it up.

Another important limitation that arose while speaking with Kristine is her comfort in addressing colleagues. We had previously spoken about ways to foster an inclusive classroom environment, but we turned to the subject of potential harmful behaviours from other teachers. When asked how she would handle issue arising from other teachers, she responded as follows:

Oh my God! Hey, that's true, eh? Ah my God, that's so sensitive because—[…] with the student I have an authority figure, right? Like, I can—I'm there to teach them about life but with other teachers, they already have their own […] thing. […] No, I wouldn't feel comfortable addressing that to my colleagues. I might […], back with my friends, talk about "oh my God, this happened, they were talking about that. I felt so helpless." But, yeah, oh my God, I don't know. I think, […] another good, a more passive way of doing it is just putting up posters that inform better or resources, you know, but, I mean, if they already think like that […] they might not even like to look at it so, it's hard, yeah. I don't feel comfortable addressing it to the colleagues.

McGill Experiences

Kristine's experience of learning about queer topics within McGill seemed to be either focused on narrow issues without wider context or in other courses where the material would have been assumed to be included; it was absent.

[W] e talked a little bit about the locker room, we talked about that a lot. […] Yeah, I think it's the Health Education class and yeah, I feel like we talked a little bit about that but I feel like we could have more, […] even in Equity and Education, […] that could have been a great place to put in more of that. […] I think there might have been like a student presentation on like the LGBTQ community, yeah, I think there might have been a student presentation on that.

Sarah's Narrative

Sarah is a pre-service teacher in her third year. She is studying to teach History and Geography. She is a heterosexual woman. At the beginning of the interview, and a few times throughout, Sarah indicated that whatever she said during the interview was intended to be tolerant and positive. She was worried that, though she had some basic knowledge, she may unintentionally make a mistake. This demonstrated earlier on Sarah's desire to be as accurate as possible when answering questions but also that she had self-reflected on the limits of her knowledge and the impacts that it may have.

Initial Comprehension

In our discussion on various terms and vocabulary, Sarah did conflate some terms and yet accurately identified the nuances of others. When asked about gender and sex, rigorous definitions were provided for both, but their definitions were inverted.

In terms of gender, I think you can look at gender in two ways; you have your gender identity; so how you would see yourself, […] I said my gender identity, I would use she/her pronouns but then I think with gender, you also have your biological gender, the gender you were assigned at birth, right, your physical anatomy. So, I think it depends on the context, […] I guess for more medical reasons you would focus more on the biological.

I guess—I identify sex more with identity than to say the physical anatomy you were assigned per se. I guess again, depending on context—like in a perfect world the way you see yourself, you would turn out that way and you wouldn't have to have that confusion, but the reality is sometimes there is that—not—confusion sounds bad, it's not the right word, disconnect.

When asked to provide a description of homophobia, Sarah was well equipped to address some of the nuanced aspects of homophobia, even addressing the potential "why" of somebody's actions.

It's definitely—it's a form of intolerance, definitely bad, like I don't associate it with anything positive. I can also associate it with misunderstanding, if you're not exposed, you're not aware, you don't understand. That can also create your misunderstanding and then when you actually are exposed, there's better understanding of it. So yeah, I associate something that's definitely negative, but it can sometimes be negative out of ignorance, that you aren't familiar.

When asked about potential examples of homophobia, she said; *I think the range is very big in terms of what you can consider homophobic, like, so as far as just passing a little comment, right, that would count but then there's the other extreme of physical violence, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse. It's a wide range.*

Knowledge Acquisition

Sarah's acquisition of knowledge pertaining to queer topics was more academically focused compared to some of the other participants. She had experience in CEGEP (Quebec's pre-university schools which replace grade 12 and is generally required for university admission) with these issues and

exposure through mainstream news stories also seemed to have played a role in awareness of certain topics.

I had the opportunity to take a class in CEGEP called Documenting Myths and the specific professor did a whole unit just on like the basics on LGBTQ+ issues or topics and within that, like, we watched documentaries, we had readings, we had guest speakers, so, an example from that is; I was familiar with transgender, like the term, but I didn't really have a deeper level of understanding other than the bathroom issues because that was at the time when the school was converting the bathrooms to gender-neutral bathrooms. So, it was an interesting overlap, so that was talked out, but it wasn't something that was talked about often. So, then having a moment where we watch a documentary, did some readings, there was a guest speaker who came in and just did anonymous questions, we all wrote questions down and went through the questions, one by one. It was really informative and that tends to have a better understanding from that person's perspective, so I feel like had a little bit of a base. I don't think that's enough in terms of teaching.

McGill experience

Sarah's exasperation at times towards what McGill had not prepared her for came up numerous times, and often unprompted. The following extract came immediately following the discussion on knowledge acquisition within the CEGEP setting as described previously.

I feel like I should be prepared more from McGill in that sense but I feel fortunate to have had that experience where I have some sort of base, because the reality is, some people are coming in here with no base and they're leaving with no base. So it's a spot where even just a class, I know a class is definitely not enough, like you look at Indigenous education, it's a great class and t's a great starting point, like it's a

great basis to address Indigenous topics, Indigenous issues in education. You can build on up more for sure, but we don't even have that base line in the program.

This issue also came up at the beginning of the interview when Sarah felt uncertain in some of her responses.

I feel—ah my gosh, I feel like we're—sorry, no to get off topic but I feel like we aren't prepared just overall to answer these kinds of questions in our program. […] I've had classes on these topics and I still don't quite feel—not comfortable but like I want to answer everything properly and I—whenever I'm not sure I'm like "Oh my goodness, I'm not sure, how would I handle this in a classroom setting when a student comes up to me with this?"

Addressing These Topics in a School Environment

During the interview, Sarah also spoke about one of her cooperating teachers' behaviour during one of her field experiences. This exchange highlights how some teachers act in the field when they have no training on the matter and how they can influence pre-service teachers who might not have had the base of knowledge that Sarah did.

There was a lovely, not lovely, comment made by a staff member 'cause one of my grade 7; actually, it happened twice during the stage, where one of my students came up to me and they were like "oh, I want my name to be this now" and I was like "okay, no problem." I wrote it down, and then, "I don't want to be referred to by these pronouns," I said, "okay, no problem, good to know" and then they were like "in the classroom setting, any instance you can use them, not just on-on-one, I'm fine with the class knowing." Like, perfect, and then because I was the student teacher, the teacher wasn't there for that,

they were in the staff room at that point. […] So, I just mention it to the teacher 'cause the teacher was going to take over in a week so it would be good for her to know, and then there were some questionable comments made. It was more of a "Ugh, not this again," like this has happened in the past with this teacher.

The second instance of this happening was with a student of a different grade and when Sarah mentioned this student asking for a different name to be used, the response was; '*oh, the student just does that stuff for attention.*

Sarah's thoughts on the matter were as follows:

So, I will say that the student is an attention seeker but that didn't seem like a fair comment to make with that child. Verbally complaining about an assignment, yes. Talking about your identity, no. Especially, it wasn't in like a big thing either. The student came up to me, again, one-on-one, "Oh, I want to change my name."

Theresa's Narrative

Theresa is a pre-service teacher in her third year. She is studying to teach History and Ethics and Religious Culture. She is a woman. Throughout the interview Theresa brought in a particularly interesting lens when answering the questions. Having grown up in a Jewish community, many of her experiences were informed by her faith. She also expressed a relation between having faced antisemitism in her life and the perspective it provides her when addressing other issues of inequity targeting other communities.

I find it makes me more aware because not everyone is affected by specific things that affect them so even if somebody's being affected by something differing than I am, I find that because I am affected by

something, it helps me relation so someone else or be aware that somebody might be affected by something.

Initial comprehension

When going over terminology, Theresa, for the most part, was able to give a solid definition of the terms. But she did struggle with one of the more basic terms. In the case of sexuality, she had provided a definition very similar to that of gender but adjusted quickly. However, when prompted, she was able to reflect on her answer and realize something was wrong and refined it.

So, I think sexuality or sexual orientation is what you feel is who you are. So, you might have been prescribed at birth female genitalia, but you feel that you are male. So, I think that's more what sexuality or sexual orientation is.

When asked to address the similarities between her definitions of gender and sexual orientation, she said.

Umm… I don't know. I think there's a lot of overlap in the terminology. I think … maybe some people are more inclined to ask you what is your gender versus what's your sexual orientation. I don't know, I could be totally wrong. I haven't thought of this but could it—could sexual orientation be like sexually you are interested in this gender so that's our sexual orientation because you're interested in that gender and you are this gender, kind of thing.

As I continued to ask clarifying questions and asking for examples, she became more confident in her new answer.

There was another instance of particular interest with Theresa's answer and it comes in the comparison of her definition of homophobia with the example she used to illustrate her point. Her definition of homophobia was relatively simple but got to the heart of the term.

Homophobia, so, being against or not treating, like, not treating, like, the way you talk about people who aren't straight, who could be bisexual, gay, lesbian, whatever their classification, is not positive.

When asked to provide an answer, we can see where there seems to be a divide between a theoretical understanding of homophobia and not fully recognizing it in practice.

I think—honestly, I think I would—this could be stretching but last semester when I was on placement, I had a student who came out as bisexual and she would—the kids in her class would often make fun of her, call her a boy, try to trip her.

Knowledge acquisition

When Theresa spoke about how she views Judaism and her faith interacting with her ability and willingness to speak about queer topics, she brought up an instance in which she learnt quite a bit about queer realities. This instance seems to be an important moment of joining queer issues and Judaism together. Theresa used this instance to mould her own understanding of sexuality within her faith and feels more comfortable addressing others quipped with this information.

I was part of this program a couple years ago which was a religious Jewish learning program and one of our speakers was an openly gay rabbi, Orthodox, and I, under my impression, I was always like, in my religion people think you're not allowed to be gay but it's not a sin that you're not allowed to be gay, you can't act on your instincts as a gay. And so, this rabbi actually tore apart the Torah to find quotes. […]

He read between the lines and whatever to find quotes to help validate what he was doing and after that it made me realize that so much is up to interpretation and it does help me influence and I often will—like one of my friends, she is not—most of my friends are not Jewish but one of my friends is not a religious Jew, far from it, and she disagrees with a lot of my opinions and whatever but when we get to this topic she'll be like "well, isn't it not right to be gay?" then I will go and show her all the reasons why it's okay to be gay. […] People are accepting and I think that does also help me because it shows that the world is—or my religion isn't as limiting as people in my religion think and it helps me reach out to more people because it shows that I'm not closed off to the Orthodox view.

Addressing These Topics in a School Environment

When asked about whether or not it is the responsibility of a teacher to be informed and ready to address queer topics in a school environment, Theresa provided a very valuable comment on what she believes is needed, not just from herself, but from all teachers. This comment highlights the importance of being equipped with information right away and how simply knowing where to turn for information isn't always enough to handle a situation.

Yeah, I think teachers need to know because if it comes up, we have to be able to address it on the spot. Not like other things where I can just say "Oh, we'll come to that tomorrow" or "We'll have a speaker come in." You can say we'll have a speaker come in but on the spot it comes up, you have to be prepared to stop what you're doing and at least deal with it minimally until you have the people who are more knowledgeable, the speaker, the guidance councillor, the principal, whoever, come in and deal with it. Not on the spot, that's not something you can just brush off and say, "Oh, we'll deal with it tomorrow" like I do

in my history class if I don't know the answer. […] You can't do that when it's an issue at hand. So, you need to be prepared, on the spot to jump in and talk.

McGill experience

Theresa had some strong opinions on specific instances of where the McGill education program could be reformed to make space to address more issues of equity. Teresa was frustrated by the apparent repetitiveness of certain classes as well as how some course instructors didn't cover as many equity issues as they could or should have.

What I got out of Equity and Education was like, more about ethnicity, race, religion. I don't think [homophobia or sexism] would have been out of place. The prof for sure is not the right prof to do it. And the way the class is built; I don't see it incorporated.

When discussing what sorts of courses could have queer topics added into the material, Theresa spoke about the value of the Indigenous education course and expressed interest in a similar course for queer topics.

I really enjoyed it; it was a great course. It was cut short because of Covid but I really enjoyed it. It's one of the only courses that is not specifically teaching social studies or philosophy of education, like psych, maybe it could fit psychologically into one of our psych courses but that's not touching on it and there's already so much to cover in other courses. What I say is get rid of one of those repetitive psych course, and replace it with this, right? We have three or four psych courses and they all touch on the same information differently. […] Why not replace one of those psych courses with a course that will deal with gender, sexuality and all that in schools?

When I asked if a sort of continuation of the format of Equity and Education would be interesting, Theresa responded, *Yeah, that could work, 100%. They could build off of each other and you could bring sexuality issues or with religion and race and ethnicity because that also plays a role in how maybe you should deal with it in a classroom because people who come from different backgrounds will react differently. So, it all links together, so I think it could be an Equity and Education 1, Equity and Education 2.*

Personal Narrative

As a secondary school history and geography teacher, I have also experienced McGill's undergraduate education program. Over the course of this project, I have reflected on my experiences within the program and considered how I handled queer topics as they came up. I have also reflected on the experiences I have had in educating about queer topics that came about during my time doing my master's. These were recorded throughout my time conducting research and analyzing data. When something made me reflect on an instance in my past, I would write a shorthand note and when time permitted, I would return and expand on the experience I had and its connection to the point that was made. All of these experiences have allowed me to better inform my teaching practices and helped to shape this research into what it is now.

I also want to take a moment to recognize that my experiences are limited in that there are many different identities that are part of the larger queer community, not to mention the depth that intersectionality brings to each of these identities. As in line with Ahmed phenomenology, I can speak only to my lived experiences. Recognizing this now, I have worked to acknowledge and disrupt the normative assumptions that are ingrained within me. I have primarily done this through critical examination of my own experiences using my prior time learning about various avenues of discrimination.

As I asked that my research participants begin with defining some vocabulary, I believe it is only fair to reiterate my understanding of these terms. These terms shifted during my research, becoming more nuanced overtime. I understand gender as an internal identity that is often informed by the societal constructed set of behavioural norms. Gender also often manifests in a certain type of expression, here meaning how a person chooses to dress or how they act, for example. While some reject a normative expression of their gender, the expression of gender is once again largely dictated by societal expectations. Gender and sex are two distinct concepts that are sometimes incorrectly seen as interchangeable. Sex is based on biological factors such as gonads, chromosomes, hormones, and other sex characteristics. It is important to acknowledge that sex is no more a binary than gender is. Chromosomal combinations do not only form as XX and XY and those that might have differing combinations can go through life without knowing about it. Understanding that sex is socially constructed, as Butler explains, does not mean that observations of "real things" like biological factors do not matter. These are instead observable aspects that we understand to mean "male" and "female". This understanding can help us reconcile how two-spirit does not track directly onto other queer identities. Seeing sex and gender as both socially constructed allows for an understanding of Two-spirit identities that don't rely on "transness" or homosexuality. Sexuality, I define as having to do with the attraction one has towards other people. I use it here to include romantic, physical and sexual attraction. Homophobia is comprised of actions stemming from hate or lack of knowledge that seek to put down members of the queer community. Its scale can vary from disparaging comments to widescale violent attacks on people. These actions can be verbal, physical, or sexual in nature. I see cisheteronormativity as the hegemony carried out by a society that is predominantly heterosexual and predominantly cisgender. This hegemony is what dictates the classification of people into the gender binary of men and women, and it lays out the assumptions of acceptable sexuality.

Queering Education

I see queer topics as vitally important to be addressed within the educational setting. Schools are one of the most important environments where students learn how to socialize and where they shape their identities and their sense of self-worth. For many students, high schools are also a place of discovery for their sexuality and their gender. While gender identity can be solidified in younger students, within elementary schools, for example, many high school students are developing the independence and vocabulary to properly question themselves and the world around them. I see one of the biggest limitations to students who are trying to understand their sexuality and gender identity as coming from a lack of exposure to queer content and therefore to inform terminology that can help them associate a label to how they feel. This ability to label their identity has numerous benefits, primarily it can allow a child to better communicate with others how they are feeling but it also gives them, in situations where the child has limited or no queer representation available to them, a sense of belonging and lets them know they are not the only one in the world who feels this way.

While some would argue that these subjects are better left to families or that media representation is sufficient to address the concerns I brought up, I would argue that not having an informed adult ready to teach and address these topics would continue to propagate gaps in knowledge. A teacher would also be uniquely situated in helping a student receive the resources and help they need in case their home situation is harmful and unsupportive.

My Experiences at McGill

During my time in the McGill undergraduate program, I identified two dedicated instances where queer topics were addressed. One was during my first year, in the Global Education and Social Justice

course, where two guest speakers from an outside organization came in and introduced some terminology and some basic scenarios. The second time was in my third year during my professional seminar where the same two guest speakers came in and provided the same information. This circumstance of the guest speakers coming twice and giving the same information reveals a few things, both positive and negative. First, it shows initiative from the course instructors who recognized the absence of this content and sought to include it in their course. It does, however, also reveal how there was no plan to have this material included otherwise. Having material covered in the first year and then having knowledge progression in the third year would have demonstrated a cohesive departmental strategy to handle these issues, even if they did not have course instructors ready to handle the material themselves. The other issue that is revealed comes from how some students, in their third year, were only seeing these guest speakers for the first time. While the information was largely redundant to me, some students did not have these speakers during their first year. This also raises the concern that had there not been a guest speaker in the third year a sizable number of students would never have received this knowledge. Coverage of certain topics is unequal across instructors or courses.

One other instance that stands out to where queer topics were incorporated within the lesson itself was an entirely optional workshop on teaching Sex Ed. The organization providing the workshop had specifically included a section on the importance of gender-neutral terminology in sex ed and, as the sex-ed curriculum was still a pilot program at the time, addressed how the program largely left out non-heterosexual sex.

It was my own interests that lead me to seek out extra information on queer topics and unfortunately, I could not find it. Even during my graduate coursework, I had to take queer topics and adapt lessons and content around it.

Classroom Experiences

Within my classroom experiences, I have had on multiple occasions students come to me to discuss topics of gender or sexuality. Two of which I will be discussing here happened during my time as a student teacher and thus helped to inform me on how to proceed within the context of education. One instance happened during my first field experience, at a time where my experience within a classroom was severely limited and I did not know all my powers and responsibilities as a student teacher. The second instance was during my fourth and final field experience, where I was considerably more confident in the decisions I could take in classes and how I could approach various situations.

The first instance happened when I was in my first field experience, during my first university semester and when I spent a total of three weeks at my school placement. The context of the interaction was simply that a student that I had seen a few times in various classes approached me at the beginning of one of the classes and requested that I use a slightly altered and gender-swapped name instead of referring to them as their given name. To clarify with a pseudonym their given name was Alexandra and they requested to be called Alexander.

In this instance, I knew what this likely meant and I wanted to respect that decision. However, I was puzzled about how to specifically approach the situation. I resolved internally at the time to not address any student by name, a luxury I only had because of the nature of the first field experience and its focus on observation. When I had the opportunity, I spoke with the McGill supervisor to ask what McGill's stance was regarding this situation and what I should do, especially if my host school was not going to respect the decision of the student. The supervisor did not immediately know but did check for me and later informed me that I was to respect the student even if my cooperating teachers or host school did not.

This event highlighted a few things for me. Firstly, that as part of the supervisor, at the time, there was no answer to a pretty basic issue within the queer community. To their credit, the supervisor was able to quickly receive an answer and within a day I knew how McGill would proceed. This could indicate that this situation had arisen previously but not often enough to necessitate inclusion into general preparation. Admittedly, I do not know the full scope of how placement supervisors are trained. The second insight I received from this event was that student teachers are likely more prone to face these events than full teachers. The nature of a student teacher is that they are inherently temporary. A student who wants to experiment with names or gender identity can do so with relatively more safety when it is a student teacher. Should the encounter go poorly, and the student regrets their decision, perhaps because of actions taken by the student teacher, that student-teacher will leave, and the student doesn't have to suffer the consequences anymore. If the encounter goes well then, the student gains more confidence and can try again with friends or teachers knowing that chances of it going well are higher.

I had a similar situation occur during my last field experience. This time I was more confident in how to handle situations as they came up and I had positioned myself to be more outwardly open to students coming to me with issues or questions. As part of my extracurricular activities within my host school, I participated in the re-emerging Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), a student-led group that provides a meeting ground for students to address issues of gender and sexuality within their schools. It had shut down for a number of years and was starting up again. One of my students attended the GSA and when the first session wrapped up, we took a moment to discuss how we would proceed in class. We laid out limits to when I would refer to them by their chosen name and whether or not I would inform my cooperating teacher. Whenever I graded their work, I provided them two copies of the rubric, one with their given name and one with their chosen name so that if they wanted to show their grades to their

parents, they could choose which name to use. This arrangement was kept a constant dialogue so that adjustments could be made as needed.

These accommodations were simple to implement, but the student's gratefulness and growing level of comfort within my classroom were easily observable. I believe these interactions are the goal when I advocate for teacher preparedness on queer issues. The ability to know how to modify classroom practices to easily and effectively communicate with your students.

Teaching Undergraduate Students

I wanted to take a moment here to discuss an experience I had during my master's degree. Having made connections and relationships with peers during my coursework, I was invited to be a guest lecturer for the Equity and Education course. This largely came about as I was open in discussing my research topic and, in some instances, had personally explained some queer topics to the future course instructors.

This experience allowed me to see how easily pre-service teachers could take in information yet how limited some of their knowledge was. When provided with a chance to ask questions and discuss amongst themselves scenarios and implications of the content they had learnt, most of them were able to engage in meaningful and productive discussion. This highlights that when provided a basis of knowledge many pre-service teachers can incorporate that information into their teaching philosophies.

These experiences helped me to also identify some of the major preoccupations that undergraduate pre-service teachers have towards this topic, many of these had to do with bullying intervention. Others also brought up concerns regarding the legitimacy of kids in early childhood

expressing their gender identity and expression. That discourse also helped me refine how to communicate ideas to people who may be resistant to the information.

Chapter 6: Interpretations

In this section I will cover and interpret the data gathered from the interviews. I initially analyzed my data by using holistic coding followed by a thematic analysis (Saldaña,2013). Both methods were done by hand using colour coding. I found it easier to visually represent my coding when I did it by hand as I could physically manipulate excerpts of the text and group data for closer comparison. The simplicity of this method allowed me to focus on the data itself rather than on learning a new software. I started by highlighting key words or phrases that reoccurred throughout the interviews. I associated these words and phrases with more complex themes. The interpretation of the data will be centred on the narratives of the research participants as well as my own. The narratives provide insight into the subjective thoughts and experiences of the participants in relation to their preparedness to handle queer topics within an educational setting. The interview transcripts were analyzed to draw out commonalities between participants. The themes that emerged from the interview analyses are as follows:

- cisheteronormativity is easy to learn and easy to teach;
- The adaptability of younger generations in the face of changing knowledge;
- The issues of unstructured learning in out-of-school environments

Cisheteronormativity is easy to learn and easy to teach

Cisheteronormativity is something that is propagated and learnt in often small and unconscious ways. It is a set of normative beliefs that position heterosexuality as the default and "normal" sexuality. A person generally needs to have an initial level of awareness regarding these norms to be able to work against it. Without education on the subject, it is generally through lived experiences that people become aware of these established norms. Cisheteronormativity within the university context can take multiple forms. In Taylor's interview, she spoke to the limited exposure she had to queer literature. In her comments about the work "They Both Die at the End" she mentioned that it fell into common stereotypes and tropes and that she never received formal training on how to teach other books that handled queer topics, or even which ones she could bring into her classroom. In the following interview excerpt, we can see how her cooperating teacher's decision to attend a workshop allowed Taylor to move beyond the limited resources she received previously. "S*he saved the papers because she does, and it was—like that was—I lucked out but otherwise the only piece of queer literature would have been—like, that I could bring into my classroom would have been 'They Both Die at the End' or the ones that I was reading in university which aren't appropriate for the students. So, I was like 'great' right?"*

There are also instances in which the subject matter being taught is working under the assumption of gender as a binary. In an interview excerpt included previously, we saw Taylor experiencing this during a presentation where the binary went unchallenged until Taylor reminded her peers of other genders. Kristine had a similar experience where instead she was the witness to another student explaining concepts to the class. *"In my other class, like Equity in Education, there was a student that was very vocal about the LGBTQ community and they would often like bring it up and I was like okay I would—like the*

whole class, I think learnt a couple more terms, that like queer is a term that might be delicate for some people, like it's not good to use it all the time, those kinds of things."

Cisheteronormativity, like many normative behaviours, can be easily overlooked and propagated unconsciously. These sorts of behaviours can be taught and, when someone is not challenged on their assumptions, can easily go and continue carrying these potentially harmful expectations. These sorts of assertions are exerted and then reproduced like Foucault's power-knowledge. These normative behaviours can be used to categorize individuals and put down those not conforming to the "ideal". As we have seen in the above examples, course lecturers can be unprepared to challenge these norms. Much like it is important to recognize that there is a certain white privilege, it is important to recognize that there is also a privilege to being cisgender and heterosexual.

Taylor mentioned a certain difficulty when trying to find a balance between self-expression and job security. In my personal experience, that is a very common concern, there is worry about parental, student or faculty reaction when revealing certain parts of one's identity. These are challenges not faced by heterosexual and cisgender teachers. A higher level of education and training can promote more tolerance and inclusivity in the workplace. This would allow for queer teachers to be more visible role models for the students that might need it.

The Adaptability of Younger Generations in the Face of Changing Knowledge

One of the fascinating things that I noticed through working on the topic on educating about queer topics is that even when people don't have a background basis of knowledge pertaining to gender, sex or sexuality, they are still able to acquire knowledge and meaningfully interpret that knowledge. There are,

of course, instances where they need structured learning, and formal teaching. However, they can acknowledge their own limitations in knowledge and can seek out further information. This ability to acquire new knowledge can stand in stark contrast with a more stagnant understanding of queer topics that is most common with older generations, this inability or reluctance, conscious or not, poses many challenges when it comes to preparing future educators for handling these issues.

To begin, I want to explore some of the responses and attitudes that the research participants had concerning definitions and their level of understanding. At one point or another, each participant came across a term that they were unfamiliar with, for the most part that term was "heterosexism." All participants tried to provide a definition and acknowledged limited knowledge of that term. At the end of the interview, when I allowed the participants to ask questions, all but one of the participants asked for clarification on the meaning of heterosexism. The one who did not had mentioned during the interview that because they were learning new terms they didn't know they would look it up after the interview. This eagerness to learn and ask questions was not limited to terminology. Kristine also asked for ways to bring in queer content into her lessons more meaningfully. "Yeah*, okay. Other question, how do you think I could bring a little bit of like what we talked about in my lesson, applying to Phys Ed or dance, like dance more specifically."*

In the interview with Taylor, I asked her if she felt comfortable with her peers' ability to address topics of queer equity and meaningfully resolve instances of homophobia in school. This arose from our discussion using lessons learnt at McGill to better create an intersectional understanding of equity in classrooms. Taylor's response was as follows: "*they are getting it and now that I'm in the fourth-year experience, I've been talking with more people who are in 4th year who've done the four years at McGill and they're—they're getting it. They're working on it. When I brought up that thing in the class being like*

'hey that's a binary.' They were all like 'oh, you're right. You're right. We should have—' […] they're figuring it out. They've got it. It's just not as explicit as it could be for those who aren't getting it."

I also asked this question to Taylor as, during my undergraduate studies, I had little confidence in the ability of some of my peers. In one instance, on a Facebook page created to allow students in my year to communicate with each other and ask each other questions, a fellow student asked a question about how to address a situation regarding one of her potentially homophobic students. The response she received from another student-teacher was, in my view, damaging to the student and detrimental to the overall queer movement for acceptance. That response mentioned reassuring the child that she doesn't have to be gay, as if confirming to her that it was something to be avoided. The student-teacher also attacked her presumed religion and parental intolerance and encouraged dismissal of the student's held beliefs.

My intervention in this situation was to explain my plan of action for such a situation while also trying to explain the dangers of the previous response, without specifically addressing it so as not to shame the person who was simply trying to help. While my comment on the situation was met with general approval from other peers and the one who initially posted the situation, I was mostly dismayed to see that the student-teacher who had posted the worrisome advice had blocked me on the platform.

Drawing from my experiences guest lecturing on subjects of gender, sex and sexuality, I can also attest to the fact that pre-service teachers have many questions to follow up after a lesson on these topics, most of them very important and meaningful questions that demonstrate a keen level of critical thinking and the desire to apply the new information to practical situations.

These examples should help demonstrate that there is a desire on many levels to learn and to improve one's teaching in a variety of manners. Although I had a poor experience with someone trying to

help address a queer topic, that person was still fundamentally trying to help, it was their lack of knowledge that led to more harm than good.

I believe that one of the challenges posed in learning about queer topics is that academically, queer topics are still a fairly recent topic, especially compared to other intersectional topics in education, and the activism outside of academia continues to change and it redefines identities. Earlier in this paper I spoke to the difficulty in settling on strict terminology that is universally inclusive to the queer community, this results in a community that can often be perceived as fickle and therefore less legitimate than other identity-based groups.

A secondary effect of the many changes to terminology and expressions of gender and sexuality is that it requires an ability to adapt and quickly understand these new expressions and identities. It is not uncommon to hear about coming out stories in which parents might prefer a simpler sexuality because they are more familiar with it and therefore it is easier to come to terms with said sexual orientation. The comfort of familiarity often limits someone's ability to adapt and grow. This can similarly be applied to course instructors who are providing training to pre-service educators. Theresa expressed this concern when asked if she felt that one of her course instructors was well suited for teaching about queer topics. "[*What*] *I got out of Equity and Education was […], More about like ethnicity, race, religion. […] I don't think [queer topics] would have been out of place, the prof is for sure not the right prof to do it. […] For sure the prof isn't the right prof to do it. And the way the class is built, I don't see it incorporate because of the way the class is built. It was also a short course; it went to November [it started in September] and then we stopped it to go on our placement."* When asked to explain why she felt that way Theresa elaborated: *"The age of the prof, that's one thing. I don't know if they're a prof anymore cause they're older, but the age of the prof plays a large role in being able to talk about it."*

To illuminate this further, I can draw on some parallels between the development of technology within a North American context and the development of the understanding of queer identities. It is common to see older generations being confused by what others would consider mundane uses of technology. The common explanation is that as they did not grow up with these technologies, be it cellphones, internet, televisions with remotes, they are struggling to adapt. My generation and the following generation are generally considered to be more technologically literate because we grew up and learnt to use these complex systems in a way that became second nature to us. I would argue that understanding queerness works in much the same way. There are those who went through large parts of their lives without understanding that there were sexualities beyond heterosexuality.

Understanding the dynamics of this knowledge base can also help to inform how to approach teacher training. Universities might want to recognize that some of their own staff may have more difficulty adjusting to a queer lesson compared to their students. If we examine this using Foucault, we can also speak to the way that the mechanisms of Truth are applied. The discourses by those in power redefine what is pertinent to discuss and in doing shapes a particular reality. By focusing on only particular issues, we see only particular issues being broached. Inadvertently or not, this creates the issue that pre-service teachers looking to address other topics might be less inclined to do so as a result of a desire to behave in an expected way, to contribute in an expected way and thus to self discipline. It is also important to remember that while exposure to and understanding of queer identities might be more common it does not mean that everybody will have received that early introduction. It is still vital to provide foundational knowledge to everyone to not omit any background learning. As I will explain soon, this can also help everyone share common definitions to be built upon later.

The issues of unstructured learning in out-of-school environments

A common thread between some of the participants of this research, myself included, is the prevalence of social media in the formation of early knowledge about queer topics. Some of the basic understanding and exposure to queer identities happen online and in unregulated environments (Fox & Ralston, 2016).

The internet was, and continues to be, a vital place where people can access resources, explore identities, find a community and practise coming out. It has been an incredibly important part of the coming out journey for many people. All these digital interactions can help people prepare for the intersection of a queer identity within their non-virtual lives (Craig & McInroy, 2014). This sort of exploration of identities and access to resources also allows multiple perspective to be brought up and discussed as individuals make sense of their surroundings much as Ahmed (2006) discusses in her *Queer Phenemonology*.

The negative aspect that I want to highlight here is that not all the information found online is accurate, educational or accessible. I will briefly explain what I mean by these points and hopefully highlight the importance of moving knowledge acquisition away from unstructured, unverified sources and situate them within educational settings.

One of the most obvious issues of looking something up online is that it requires some level of critical thinking and awareness to be able to validate the information you are accessing. It can be very easy to see something that looks informative, yet it does more harm than good (Fox & Ralston, 2016). The ability to interact with information around us in not made equally for all. Without proper critique, sources can seem reliable and yet espouse the values of a particular group. As an example, it can be very easy for

someone questioning their sexuality to stumble across a webpage that preaches about the dangers of homosexuality and the damnation someone may face. This can enhance self-doubt and uncertainty in someone who is not confident in their identity and push them away from seeking relevant support. A recent example is the book entitled “Irreversible Damage: The transgender craze seducing our daughters” by Abigail Shrier. While positioned as a book to help parents cope and deal with their transgender children, it preys upon the parents’ confusion and uncertainty to advocate harmful practices. While I would hope the title would be enough to deter any compassionate parent, the lack of understanding in the general population on transgender issues makes it easy to manipulate parents who are only looking for the best in their children. At the time of writing this thesis, the book remains as the #1 Bestseller in Amazon’s Transgender Studies category, a book whose author had to manipulate and mislead a transgender man into participating, and which is rife with harmful misinformation.

On the topic of educational content, we can turn to Kristine’s interview. She explains that one of her early exposures to queer content was on YouTube. “*I did watch—I know at some point I had a phase that I watched like a lot of like gay YouTubers like Joey Graceffa, oh my god, what are the names, Troye Sivan like, yeah, those YouTubers.*” When asked about if they ever watched videos aimed more towards being educational, they responded, “*Yeah, yeah. Back then, yeah. I think I watched a couple of education videos but like I could count it on my fingers, like, not a lot.*” This interaction highlights that queer representation is often not done in a specifically educational way. The issue with rarely getting an educational perspective is that somebody might interpret a specific person’s personality or behaviours as a sort of blanket assumption towards other queer individuals. The type of person one can see in a YouTube video is rarely representative of that person in real life, let alone others, but assumptions and stereotypes can still easily form.

Finally, the accessibility of material might be heavily limited. Many social media platforms, YouTube chief amongst them, have crushed queer content channels (Wilkinson & Berry, 2019). By branding queer content as “unfit for children,” it limits these channels’ audiences even in cases where the channel was built to educate elementary-aged children such as the YouTube channel “Queer Kid Stuff.” By giving them this label, social media platforms also prevent channels from collecting advertisement revenue, thus depriving creators of their livelihood. It is therefore understandable that children are finding it harder and harder to find any sort of resource online.

In the face of all these uncertainties, I believe it can easily be argued that queer content should be introduced in schools to ensure accurate and reliable knowledge. This sort of inclusion should happen in both K-12 schooling as well as in pre-service teacher education. Both children and university students can fall into the trap of misinformation and unequal access to knowledge. It should therefore be part of the university’s responsibility to even out these knowledge bases in their pre-service teachers so that they can better educate their own students.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the main themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews and the participant narratives. I arrived at these themes after consolidating my initial codes into more theoretical categories. The main themes that emerged were cisheteronormativity being easy to learn and easy to teach, the adaptability that younger generations have to new information compared to older generations, and the issues of unstructured learning outside of schools. The narratives of the participants demonstrated how their lived experiences shaped their thoughts and opinions on the topics of gender and sexuality and how those concepts relate to education and their teaching practices. They demonstrated that there are cisheteronormative assumptions that are placed upon them or taught to

them and they often see those practices replicated in their or others' teaching making it very difficult for them to break from the cycle of cisheteronormative assumptions. They also all demonstrated a keen and critical eye when it came to learning about inclusivity and were able to recognize an absence of content in their studies. The participants showed a keen interest in learning more about the subject and frustration towards the limits of their programs. Finally, many spoke to a less formal acquisition of knowledge. I explored some of the issues with that and the importance of having a shared learning experience to help even out differences in content knowledge. Overall, these themes reflect the need for a robust exploration and development of queer topics as they pertain to the field of education. Well-trained teachers are paramount for the health, wellbeing and success of their students despite educational institutions that readily perpetuate normative assumptions.

Chapter 7: Reflections and Implications

In this section I will be discussing how the themes and the interpretations are linked to the literature that was brought forward earlier in this thesis. The main question that motivated this study was: how prepared were pre-service teachers to address queer topics within secondary education settings? I examined this question on a smaller scale by exploring how the McGill education program prepares its undergraduate students. To do so I posed the following questions: What level of comprehension do pre-service teachers demonstrate concerning queer topics in education? What barriers exist that may limit knowledge acquisition within the undergraduate programs?

Unequal Exposure and Unequal Knowledge

The varied experiences of the participants in respect to their understanding of queer terminology or queer realities speak to the disparity between their exposure to these topics. As the participants

primarily identified non-university settings in which they most learnt about queer topics, it seems to indicate that the Bachelor of Education is not adequately addressing these subjects. Many of the participants identified non-educational settings as important to their understanding of queer concepts. In order to address these issues in classes and teach about queer identities, teachers must have a developed understanding of terminology. A teacher who is not using proper definitions or lacks a knowledge base could impair the work being done by other instructors and limit a student's understanding of queer topics (Payne & Smith, 2012). For many educators, there is a willingness to learn and to improve to better accommodate students. By adjusting to the appropriate environment we demonstrate to students that openness. The participants who felt that they already had a well-developed understanding of queer issues in education believed that their knowledge was not challenged or enhanced by McGill's educational program. They sought to address issues that they saw within their own courses and challenged what could otherwise have been an accepted cisheteronormative curriculum.

One of the issues that we will explore a few times here has to do with the absence of a standard curriculum to address queer topics. It is fairly common for universities which seek to address discrimination to pass over gender and sexuality as worthwhile topics. There is an unspoken hierarchy that prioritizes certain parts of a person's identity over others. Queer identities are generally found near the bottom of that hierarchical structure (Payne & Smith, 2012). This is not to say that some forms of oppressions are more worth discussing than others but an observation that certain ones see more attention. As a result, it is generally up to individual instructors to address queer topics in their courses. This further aggravates the issue of unequal access to knowledge as if only certain course instructors provide content, then only a certain number of students will learn that content. In the future, should another instructor want to elaborate on this information they would be inherently limited by the fact that

they must assume a number of students present in the course have no foundational knowledge to build upon.

In relation to this lack of queer content, the teaching program then inherently becomes cisheteronormative as there is a lack of critical examination of teaching practices. This will limit how teachers are able to express themselves as we saw with one participant and can also lead to normative behaviours and standards being placed upon future students when the pre-service teachers end up in a classroom of their own.

Practical Ideas and Limited Experience

A common complaint that arose from the participants in regard to what they did know, and this was generally a complaint levelled against most diversity content, was a lack of practical ways to apply the content learnt in the school setting. While I observed this when I guest lectured and while I understand that it is impossible to factor in an unknown context to provide some sort of universal guide, it is nonetheless important to emphasize common instances that might need to be addressed as well as how to handle instances where you are uncertain how exactly to act.

I recognize that some participants were able to apply their knowledge to extract the facts that would benefit them. Others relied upon the information presented by the course instructor. One of the issues that can come up with this method of presenting material, especially in cases where there lacks a well-defined curriculum, is the fixation on a mediatized issue to the exclusion of other topics. It appeared from a conversation with one of the participants that, they had a limited understanding of how to address queer topics in physical education courses outside of a discussion of the challenges that gendered locker rooms might pose. This, as well as gendered bathrooms, was widely discussed in mainstream media and it

is not surprising that it became the focus of attention although it is still unfortunate that it remained limited to that subject.

Mandatory Courses and Shifting Focus

One of the most straightforward solutions that I see to working against cisheteronormative teaching practices and to actively teach queer realities within education is having these subjects included as a mandatory part of a pre-service teacher education program. Currently it is common to have some equity courses that will address various issues within the field of education. Unfortunately, as described previously, and from what I have experienced and the participants have recounted, LGBTQ identities are seen less often when addressing discrimination and are often cut from course content. In the instances where they are included, they are often relegated to one week's worth of course time, an incredibly small amount of time to discuss any sort of discrimination. This problem of limited knowledge is further compounded if more than one course instructor tries to introduce these topics. With the inability to assume that every student has seen some basic material, the course instructor is unable to develop more complex material depending on where the students are in their degree.

While I advocate for a dedicated course to cover queer topics, I acknowledge the resulting challenge. It is not feasible to have separate courses to address all points of potential discrimination. I believe a more practical option is allocating more time to courses which specifically address equity issues. McGill's education undergraduate programs have a mandatory course that addresses this, by offering a sort of "part 2" to the course more topics can be explored and in greater depth.

The inclusion of queer content in other educational courses can also help to normalize the topic and introduce scenarios in which a different form of discrimination can occur. I believe that McGill's efforts to include Indigenous perspectives throughout many courses is a great point of reference. The

inclusion of Indigenous perspectives within the “Philosophical Foundations of Education” course being one example. Following this sort of example would go a long way to educating pre-service teachers in practical and worthwhile ways.

Once a common knowledge base has been created, I believe it would be beneficial to also allow pre-service teachers to further develop knowledge in equity issues important to them. Providing opportunities to learn whether through optional education courses or workshops, can allow students to gain an extra level of comfort when trying to address this topic in schools.

Policy Recommendations

In this section, I will discuss potential policy recommendations that could be adopted within the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. These policy recommendations are intended to be applicable at McGill but can serve to help inform other Education programs within other universities.

Establish Formal Guidelines for Required Education Courses

One of the issues brought up previously and in many of the interviews was the shallow and repetitive nature of queer topics being addressed or even the complete lack of these topics being brought up. This leads to unequal knowledge bases between students taking the same courses and even for those that do have some knowledge it tends to be superficial and can be difficult to put into action.

I believe certain topics should be formalized so as to be discussed in certain specific classes. If we take the course Equity in Education as an example, which was brought up by a few participants. This could be a great class to incorporate this specific topic as you already have the groundwork for inclusivity

pertaining to other identities. Students would be in a position to ask a course instructor that might be better able to provide strategies for inclusivity.

Provide More Opportunities to Address Inclusivity

A natural issue that might stem from trying to add more content into a course would be the limited time that a course instructor may have to meaningfully handle various topics. Where a course instructor could very likely be able to speak to any single issue of inclusivity for the entirety of the semester, trying to reduce these topics into one or two lectures can reintroduce the very issue of shallow knowledge again on a wider scale.

To address this issue, I believe the introduction of a second course following the format of Equity in Education would be best. By doubling the teaching time, you could more meaningfully address these topics, and this also leaves open the possibility of having a second course instructor that can speak to other topics. I believe it is important to have a course instructor that can also speak from experience on issues of inclusivity, but no single person can meaningfully represent every identity that gets discussed. At least, with a second instructor you can draw on other lived experiences.

Optional In-depth Courses

Providing the opportunity for students who are willing to pursue their interests can also be encouraged by creating optional courses that cover in much more depth issues of gender and sexuality in the classroom. Having a course dedicated to this topic can also allow for more concrete strategies to be developed alongside pre-service teachers. As utopian as it might be to have every teacher be perfectly prepared to handle any issues in their classroom, it is also unfeasible. Having a few teachers who are more prepared to handle these issues in a school can also create systems of collaborative teaching strategies

once educators are in the field. By allowing students to pursue their interests then they become invested more readily in advocating for their students and finding concrete solutions.

Summary

The results from this study support the argument that McGill's pre-service teacher education programs lacks some of the courses and resources needed to prepare student-teachers to address issues of queer equity within school environments. The curriculum does not provide equal and comprehensive content to pre-service teachers leaving them uncertain as to the manner in which they can practically address issues they face within their field experiences and leaves them unable to build their confidence in their preparation post-graduation. Within the participant's narratives, we see how they are receiving information from a wide variety of sources of various quality levels. The limits of this knowledge in students prevent critical examination of queer topics and challenges to the cisheteronormative assumptions ingrained in many teaching practices. The same pre-service teachers also demonstrate a desire to learn in an academic setting to better prepare themselves for their classrooms. The generational discussion around queer identities means that very few people are completely ignorant of gender and sexuality, yet many have limited knowledge. By exploring these topics during the education undergraduate programs, we can better inform teachers and help to shift the discourse within high school settings, making these environments safer and more productive for teachers and students alike.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter I will provide a summary of my thesis, setting out an overview of my thesis objectives and my literature review. I will review the findings from my interviews and analyses, address the implications of the data, and conclude by addressing the limitations of this research and what future research is possible on this subject.

Objective

My interest in this research stemmed from my identity as a queer educator; throughout my undergraduate degree, I grappled with how my queer identity fit into my teaching practice and into my classroom. Navigating this posed challenges as I had limited knowledge of how queer topics intersected with educational curricula. I sought to bring in content when possible and to cultivate my own knowledge. As I gained confidence in my own understanding of these issues, I also grew uncomfortable with how peers around me propagated damaging ideas due to their own limited understanding. During my graduate degree, I committed myself to targeting pre-service teachers as an avenue to improve conditions within school settings.

The aim of this study was to examine how capable pre-service teachers were in their ability to address queer topics within school settings. Through this I also sought to examine where exactly students were gaining knowledge of these topics and where they could better develop their understanding of queer issues within an academic setting. Through this I was able to gain a sample of some student concerns and how they believe they can be better served. By working with pre-service teachers at McGill University and examining the undergraduate programs, I sought to demonstrate where we can improve pre-service teacher training and that these student-teachers were conscious of gaps in their knowledge

and aware of a lack content being provided to them during their programs. Despite good intentions, students could easily propagate cisheteronormative assumptions onto themselves, their peers, and their students.

Literature Review

My literature review consisted of examining the work of theorists that helped guide my understanding of current issues within education and how it related to queerness and cisheteronormativity. It also guided how I collected and analyzed my data. I took a careful look at not only what some of the pressing issues were within schools and how they affected queer youth, but I also looked at what the focus was for many recent studies. Understanding what gets omitted from research helped to inform the angles of study, I would take. Otherwise, I also sought to ground my work in established queer theory such as Butler's theory of performativity and Foucault's relationship between power and knowledge to critically examine how educators understand and enact discourses of gender and sexuality.

Review of Findings

The findings of this research drew from participant interviews and an autoethnography. Both of these were presented through the use of narratives. The narratives from the four participants were presented first and highlighted their experiences learning and applying knowledge of queer issues throughout their time in their respective undergraduate programs. My own narrative was presented last and drew from my experiences during my undergraduate program but also from my work during my graduate degree.

Overall, the participants displayed a range of knowledge when it came to queer issues and terminology. Those best informed and most confident about their knowledge tended to also be those that

self-identified under the LGBTQ+ community and who had grappled with these topics as part of their lived reality. Other participants displayed knowledge of foundational terms like gender, sex and sexuality while struggling with more abstract terms like cisheteronormativity and discussions of the impacts that has within schools. I believe that the small sample here demonstrates that there is certainly an interest in the topics discussed but that actual knowledge can be limited. As these participants were likely already interested in queer topics, thus their willingness to be interviewed, and had some base knowledge, I believe that there are some students that know considerably less about these subjects within the pre-service teacher programs.

All participants readily agreed that they wanted more comprehensive and mandatory training on queer issues so that they and their peers could better address these issues in schools. During their field experiences, some of the student teachers had seen teachers who undermined the efforts of others who wanted to include queer content in their lessons. Some of them also spoke to the importance of teacher-teacher relations and how queer inclusivity within schools could also support queer educators, not just students. This inclusivity training would help to break down barriers between staff and allow for better queer visibility, while ensuring job security.

The participants all thought that having queer topics included within the university required courses would be best for knowledge transmission. Some of them desired a specific course dedicated towards equity issues that were not addressed in previous courses, namely queer issues. They mentioned that having these topics only briefly addressed in classes without a more robust explanation meant that any knowledge would remain superficial and would ultimately not be practical to implement in their careers. Others strongly believed that limiting discussions of queer issues to only one class meant that

students would struggle to apply these topics to other contexts and would pay lip service to equity without implementing practical solutions.

Implications

By identifying the gaps in teacher knowledge as they go through their training, we can fill in the missing information they need. This would create a more inclusive learning environment and promote the safety and wellbeing of all students as well as ensuring the job security and visibility of staff members. Addressing these issues within an educational setting also has a ripple effect throughout society as lessons learnt in high school can inform someone's knowledge and opinions as they later join the job market and participate in their citizenship roles.

Through this research, I have demonstrated that some students desire, but are unable to access, complex discussions of queer equity issues as a way to improve their future teaching careers. These pre-service teachers are conscious of the harmful effects that they or their peers could have by not being adequately prepared in resolving issues in schools. Through these calls from those presently being instructed, as well as from the personal experiences I relayed, it seems clear that there necessitates a shift in teacher preparation to adequately address these issues.

This research can be used by Education Faculties to critically examine their teacher education programs and understand what messages they are conveying through their decisions, whether they are conscious or not. There can be a critical discussion about how equipped their student-teachers are to address multiple issues of equity or if they prioritize some over others, leaving gaps of knowledge when it comes times for future teachers to take action in the field.

Limitations

The biggest limitation of this research has to be the small population size of the participants. Due to the limited scope of participants and the inherently subjective experiences they were asked to speak about, their thoughts cannot be assumed to represent a whole or even the majority of the Faculty of Education at McGill.

I would also have preferred a larger representation of identities within the participants. While they each provided important unique experiences, some populations are not represented. While I had participants, who identified as female or non-binary, I was the only male to be included in the data through my autoethnography. This limited the data collected as there are not a wide array of perspectives being offered. Having a greater array of perspectives can provide richer variety in data.

My research is also driven by my own lived experience and my own identity. There are certainly going to be times where my own identity as a white, cisgender, non-intersex man leads me to make assumptions or conclusions that might otherwise alienate some readers or fail to meaningfully address certain issues. I do believe that within my pool of interview participants I have a relatively diverse group considering the sample size. While I did ask about gender identity and sexuality orientation, I did not ask about race and ethnicity or disability. I included a question on communities of belonging where participants could have volunteered extra information but only a few did. Not having uniformly acquired this information from participants I felt uncomfortable assigning race or ethnicity for example. I have tried

in my work to reduce as many of these issues as possible but certain privileges and hegemonic practices would likely need to be addressed in future works.

I believe that my representation of my participants was done fairly and openly, and I do not believe I mischaracterized their views. I did check in with them after the interview to make sure they were still comfortable with their data being included and reminded them they could withdraw within a set time. Some participants during the interview indicated that they wanted certain sentiments highlighted and I tried my best to include that.

During this work I did put quite a bit of emphasis on queer terminology. This was done as it's my belief that inclusive vocabulary goes a long way, but it could be criticized that homophobia using inclusive terminology is still harmful. While that is undeniably true, I believe that for those teachers that are simply uniformed and not maliciously can greatly improve a school environment by adjusting terminology and knowing what some signs of homophobia are amongst the student body. Moving forward I would like to look at more concrete actions being taken within teacher practice or policy.

Future Research

This research and the results herein could be used to inform future research such as developing key strategies to improve teacher preparedness programs and workshop trainings for teachers already working in the field. Research can also be done to see how effective these trainings are by taking a sample group who underwent these trainings and examining how well they incorporate and address these topics within a high school setting. Furthermore, a surveying teacher that is currently working in the field in a way similar to what was done here for pre-service teachers can help to identify if, or what, opinions and attitudes might differ between generations and what problems might arise from differing viewpoints working within the same environment.

Conclusion

This research was guided by my desire to explore how pre-service teachers were equipped to address queer topics and how exactly they perceived themselves interacting with this subject. Through the interviews, I discovered participants drawing relationships between experiences and ideas that I was not expecting to help inform their worldview and inform their teaching philosophies. While some were challenged to reflect between what they had initially constructed as their place within education, the participants all agreed to the importance of more inclusive teacher trainings and the need for their own knowledge bases to expand and shift towards practical solutions to problems they would have to face during their careers. They emphasized the importance of their future students' wellbeing and the need for those students to have equal access to a safe school environment.

Bibliography

Adams, J., Braun, V., & McCreanor, T. (2014). “Aren’t Labels for Pickle Jars, Not People?” Negotiating Identity and Community in Talk About “Being Gay.” American Journal of Men’s Health, 457–469. https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988313518800

Adams, W. (2015). Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews. 10.1002/9781119171386.ch19.

Ahmed, S. (2006). Queer phenomenology: orientations, objects, others. Duke University Press.

Alsubaie, M. A. (2015). Hidden Curriculum as One of Current Issue of Curriculum. Journal of Education and Practice, 6, 125–128.

Atkinson, E., & Depalma, R. (2020). Un-believing the matrix: Queering consensual heteronormativity. *Judith Butler and Education*, 91–103. doi:10.4324/9780429470950-6

Bell, D. C., & Cox, M. L. (2015). Social Norms: Do We Love Norms Too Much?. Journal of family theory & review, 7(1), 28—46. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12059

Bernier, M. (2011). Reconnaissance de la diversité sexuelle et éducation : Quels défis pour les futurs maîtres québécois ? (Master’s thesis). Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal, Québec, Canada.

Bochenek, M., Brown, A. W., & Human Rights Watch (Organization). (2001). *Hatred in the hallways: violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students in U.S. schools.* Human Rights Watch.

Brown, S. G., & Dobrin, S. I. (2004). *Ethnography unbound: From theory shock to critical praxis*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Butler, J. (2015). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). *Qualitative inquiry: Thematic, narrative and arts-informed perspectives*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Carpenter, V. M., & Lee, D. (2010). Teacher education and the hidden curriculum of heteronormativity. *Curriculum Matters*, 6, 99–119. doi:10.18296/cm.0117

Chamberland, L., Émond, G., Julien, D., Otis, J., & Ryan, B., Bernier, M., Chevrier, M., Petit, M.-P., & Richard, G. (2010). L'homophobie à l'école secondaire au Québec : Portrait de la situation, impacts et pistes de solution Montréal, Québec, Canada : Université du Québec à Montréal.

Chouinard, V. (n.d.). *La prévention de l'homophobie et de l'hétérosexisme à l'école secondaire : Besoins et perceptions des enseignantes et des enseignants* (Unpublished master's thesis).

Cianciotto, J., & Cahill, S. (2012). *LGBT Youth in America's Schools.* Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press. muse.jhu.edu/book/14133.

Clark, A. (2011). *The history of sexuality in Europe: A sourcebook and reader*. London: Routledge.

Clark, A. (2008). *DESIRE: A history of European sexuality*. Place of publication not identified: CRC Press.

Coughlin, S. S., Smith, S. A., & Fernández, M. E. (2017). *Handbook of community-based participatory research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Craig S. L., & McInroy, L. (2014). You Can Form a Part of Yourself Online: The Influence of New Media on Identity Development and Coming Out for LGBTQ Youth. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 18*(1), 95–109. doi: 10.1080/19359705.2013.777007

Decker, H. S. (2013). *The making of DSM-III: a diagnostic manuals conquest of American psychiatry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Denzin, N. K., & Giardina, M. D. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and the politics of advocacy*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Dillet, B. (2017). What is Poststructuralism? Political Studies Review, 15(4), 516–527. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929917712931

Duncan, N. and Owens, L. (2011), Bullying, Social Power and Heteronormativity: Girls' Constructions of Popularity. Children & Society, 25:306—316. doi:10.1111/j.1099-0860.2011.00378.x

Duquet, F., & Daigle, J. (2003). *L'éducation à la sexualité dans le contexte de la réforme de l'éducation*. Quebec: Ministère de l'Éducation.

Ferfolja, T., & Ullman, J. (2020). *Gender and sexuality diversity in a culture of limitation: Student and teacher experiences in schools.* New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Fiani, C. N., & Han, H. J. (2018). Navigating identity: experiences of binary and non-binary transgender and gender non-conforming (tgnc) adults. International Journal of Transgenderism, 1-14, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2018.1426074

Foucault, M., & Hurley, R. J. (1990). *The history of sexuality*. New York: Vintage.

Fox, J., & Ralston, R. (2016). Queer identity online: informal learning and teaching experiences of lgbtq individuals on social media. Computers in Human Behavior, 65, 635–642. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.06.009

Freud, S. (1971). Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905). *PsycEXTRA Dataset*. doi: 10.1037/e417472005-178

Gilley, B. J. (2006). Becoming two-spirit: gay identity and social acceptance in indian country (Ser. Book collections on project muse). University of Nebraska Press.

Gregory, M. R. (2004). Being Out, Speaking Out: Vulnerability and Classroom Inquiry. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *2*(2), 53–64. doi: 10.1300/j367v02n02_04

Hall, H. R. (2006). Teach to reach: addressing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth issues in the classroom. New Educator, 2(2), 149–157.

Harcourt, B. E. (2007). An Answer to the Question: What is Poststructuralism? *SSRN Electronic Journal.* doi:10.2139/ssrn.970348

Harrell, M. C., & Bradley, M. (2009). *Data collection methods: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Hodgson, N., & Standish, P. (2009). Uses and misuses of poststructuralism in educational research. International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 32(3), 309–326.

Hudson, C., & Walford, G. (2009). *Genders and sexualities in educational ethnography*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Human Rights Campaign. (n.d.). Glossary of Terms. Retrieved from https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms

Ian, R. (2011). *Practical Issues for Parents and Teachers. In Homophobic Bullying: Research and Theoretical Perspectives.* Oxford University Press.

Jamshed S. (2014). Qualitative research method-interviewing and observation. Journal of basic and clinical pharmacy, 5(4), 87–88. https://doi.org/10.4103/0976-0105.141942

Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., & Martin, C. E. (2010). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nations Schools.*

Kuklin, Susan. (2014). *Beyond Magenta: Transgender teens speak out.* Candlewick Press, Massachusetts.

Larsson, H., Redelius, K., & Fagrell, B. (2011). Moving (in) the heterosexual matrix. On heteronormativity in secondary school physical education. *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, 16(1), 67–81. doi:10.1080/17408989.2010.491819

Leavy, P. (2017). Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches. The Guilford Press.

Magnus, D. C., & Lundin, D. M. (2016). Challenging norms: University students' views on heteronormativity as a matter of diversity and inclusion in initial teacher education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 79, 76–85. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2016.06.006

Marhoefer, L. (2015). *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German homosexual emancipation and the rise of the Nazis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

McCaskell, T. (2016). *Queer progress: from homophobia to homonationalism*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Mcneill, T. (2013). Sex education and the promotion of heteronormativity. Sexualities, 16(7), 826–846. doi:10.1177/1363460713497216

Mitchell, C., Weber, S., & OReilly-Scanlon, K. (2005). *Just who do we think we are? Methodologies for autobiography and self-study in teaching*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Mondimore, F. M. (1996). A natural history of homosexuality. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Morton, A. D. (2007). Unravelling Gramsci: hegemony and passive revolution in the global political economy. Pluto Press.

Murray, O. J. (2015). *Queer inclusion in teacher education: Bridging theory, research, and practice.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Oliffe, J. L., & Greaves, L. (2012). Designing and conducting gender, sex, and health research. Sage Publications.

Oliver, M. (1990). The politics of disablement (Ser. Critical texts in social work and the welfare state). Macmillan Education.

Padgett, D. (2017). *Qualitative methods in social work research*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Payne, E. C. & Smith, M. J. (2012) Safety, celebration, and risk: educator responses to LGBTQ professional development. *Teaching Education, 23*(3), 265–285, DOI: 10.1080/10476210.2012.699520

Perrin, E. C. (2013). *Sexual orientation in child and adolescent health care*. New York: Springer Science Business Media.

Pfadenhauer, M., &; Knoblauch, H. (Eds.). (2019). Social constructivism as paradigm? : the legacy of the social construction of reality (Ser. Knowledge, communication and society). Routledge. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9780429467714.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. International journal of nursing studies, 47(11), 1451-1458

Puar, J. K. (2017). Terrorist assemblages: homonationalism in queer times (Tenth anniversary expanded, Ser. Next wave). Duke University Press.

Rasmussen, M. L., Rofes, E. E., & Talburt, S. (2004). Youth and sexualities: pleasure, subversion, and insubordination in and out of schools (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Reis, E. (2012). *American sexual histories*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Richard, G. (2019). Hétéro, l'école ? : Plaidoyer pour une éducation antioppressive à la sexualité. Montréal (Québec) : Les Éditions du Remue-ménage.

Richard, G. (2015). The Pedagogical Practices of Québec High School Teachers Relative to Sexual Diversity. Journal of LGBT Youth, 12(2), 113–143. doi:10.1080/19361653.2014.969866

Riemer, M., Brown, L., & Marcus, E. (2019). We are everywhere : protest, power, and pride in the history of queer liberation. Ten Speed Press.

Rose, I. (2009). School violence: Studies in alienation, revenge and redemption. Taylor & Francis Group.

Rubin, G. (2012). *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ryan, A., & Walsh, T. (Eds.). (2018). Reflexivity and critical pedagogy (Ser. International issues in adult education). Brill Sense.

Saewyc E. M. (2007). Contested conclusions: claims that can (and cannot) be made from the current research on gay, lesbian, and bisexual teen suicide attempts. *Journal of LGBT health research*, 3(1), 79–87. https://doi.org/10.1300/j463v03n01_09

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (Second). SAGE Publications.

Schwandt, T. A. (2005). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sherwin, G., & Jennings, T. (2006). Feared, Forgotten, or Forbidden: Sexual orientation topics in secondary teacher preparation programs in the USA. *Teaching Education, 17*(3), 207–223. doi:10.1080/10476210600849664

Short, D. (2013). "Don't be so gay!": queers, bullying, and making schools safe. UBC Press.

Smith, M. (2004). Questioning Heteronormativity: Lesbian and gay challenges to education practice in British Columbia, Canada. *Social Movement Studies*, 3(2), 131–145. doi:10.1080/1474283042000266092

Sonnekus, T. (2009). Macho men and the queer imaginary: a critique of selected gay "colonial" representations of homomasculinity. De Arte, 44 (80), 37 – 53. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043389.2009.11877113

Stryker, S. (2008). *Transgender history*. New York, NY: Seal Studies.

Taylor, C. & Peter, T., with McMinn, T.L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., Gross, Z., Paquin, S., & Schachter, K. (2011). *Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools.* Final report. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

Thambinathan, V., & Kinsella, E. A. (2021). Decolonizing Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Creating Spaces for Transformative Praxis. International Journal of Qualitative Methods. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211014766

Turner, W. (2000). A genealogy of queer theory. Retrieved from https://hdl-handle-net.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/2027/heb30704.

Warner, Michael, and Social Text Collective. Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory. First ed., University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Warner, T. (2000). Never going back: A history of queer activism in canada. University of Toronto Press.

Walls, N. E. (2008). Toward a multidimensional understanding of heterosexism: the changing nature of prejudice. Journal of Homosexuality, 55(1), 20–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918360802129287

Wells, K. (2011). *Narrative inquiry*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Westbrook, Laurel & Saperstein, Aliya (2015). New categories are not enough: rethinking the measurement of sex and gender in social surveys. Gender and Society, 29(4), 534–560.

Wilkinson, W. W., & Berry, S. D. (2019). Together they are troy and chase: who supports demonetization of gay content on youtube? Psychology of Popular Media Culture, (2019). https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000228

Appendix A

Integrated Studies in Education
Faculty of Education
McGill University
3700 McTavish Street
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
H3A 1Y2

Département d'études intégrées en éducation
Faculté des sciences de l'éducation
Université McGill
3700 rue McTavish
Montréal, Québec, Canada
H3A 1Y2

www.mcgill.ca/education

Participant Consent Form

Researchers:

Francis Beaulieu,

Master's thesis student,

McGill University,

Faculty of Education,

(514) 919-8168

francis.beaulieu@mail.mcgill.ca

Supervisor:

Paul Zanazanian,

Faculty of Education,

(514) 398-4527 loc. 00495

paul.zanazanian@mcgill.ca

Title of Project: Queer topics in education: Pre-service teacher preparedness at McGill University

Sponsor(s): N/A

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to identify how some pre-service teachers at McGill university understand topics relating to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) in their academic and professional development. This will help to identify strengths and weaknesses in the training of pre-service teachers to address these issues.

Study Procedures*:* As a participant, you will be asked to take part in one audio-recorded interview. This interview will be conducted through an online platform such as Zoom. The duration of the interview will be between 45 minutes and 1 hour. During the course of the interview, you will be asked a number of discussion questions where you will be required to reflect on your experience in the McGill education undergraduate degree. I will be using a secondary software called Audacity to audio-record the interview. It is a software installed on my computer and data will be securely stored then transferred to my secure personal computer. Video-recording is not required so you can turn your video-camera function off. The audio recording will solely be used to create a transcript of the questions and answers. It will not be shared, and, upon completion of the study, will be fully deleted. The recording is required to best capture the answers you provide without interrupting the flow of the interview. Once the transcripts are composed, names and other identifying information will be changed to ensure your confidentiality.

Voluntary Participation*:* Your participation in this study is voluntary. Should you wish not to answer a question, you are free to decline. You may decline to answer individual questions, or should you desire to withdraw from the study entirely you may do so. Should you desire to withdraw from the study during the interview the audio recording will be deleted unless you grant permission to use the answers provided prior to withdrawal. If you choose to withdraw during or right after the study, all information obtained up until that point will be destroyed unless you specify otherwise at the time of withdrawal. Once data have been combined for publication, it will not be possible to withdraw your data in its entirety. Following publication, we can no longer destroy data upon withdrawal, we can only remove your dataset from further analysis and from use in future publications. Identifiable data (this includes code key) will be kept for until approximately the end of 2021.

Potential Risks: The primary risk associated with this research and your participation in this study would be emotional discomfort stemming from some of the questions asked during the interview. Some questions may have you remember uncomfortable memories. Should that arise and you wish to stop the line of questioning, you can indicate your desire to do so.

Potential Benefits: Participating in this study may not have a direct benefit to you but, it is the believed that through this research, techniques and strategies to better prepare pre-service teachers to handle the complexities of LGBTQ topics that may arise in their classrooms and schools. This will, in turn, benefit students by fostering more inclusive and representative environments that care more conducive to their learning and better prepared to represent their future roles as productive citizens.

Compensation: N/A

-

Confidentiality: The confidentiality of the participants' answers during the interview will be addressed in numerous ways. When the study is completed, identifying information will be changed to protect participant confidentiality. A coding system will be used to be able to identify the disguised names and the actual participants. That coding system, along with the audio-recordings will not be seen by anybody else. These documents will be kept in password protected files on a personal computer. Any identifiable data, such as the recording and coding system, will also be deleted after thesis submission to further protect you. I will be the sole person to have access to these files. Although all precautions are taken, there is always the possibility of third-party interception when using communications through the internet.

Dissemination of Results: The results of this study will be used in a master's thesis and will be included in McGill's database for dissemination. The results may also be disseminated by writing a report for McGill's Faculty of Education and by publishing a peer-reviewed article.

Questions*:* Should you have any questions or concerns about this consent form or the research in general you are free to reach out to francis.beaulieu@mail.mcgill.ca

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca citing REB file number _____

This study has been reviewed and approved by McGill University Research Ethics Board for ethical compliance regarding research activities involving human participants.

For written consent

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals, such as a member of the Research Ethics Board, may have access to your information. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____