Mapping LGBTQ educators' experiences teaching (in) English internationally:

unpacking identity and advocacy

by

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**Abstract**

While research shows the unpreparedness of international schools toward working with LGBTQ educators, they are actively advocating for inclusion as they navigate teaching in countries that sometimes have state-sponsored homophobia. Western teachers are often hired by international schools primarily because of the neoliberal agenda that considers native-English teachers a great asset for their businesses. In international schools, the interest is on efficacy and teaching standards, leaving aside other important aspects of teachers' identities such as gender and sexuality, which seldom have any place in schools' curricula. LGBTQ teachers, as seen in this research, often pursue advocacy through educational practices and/or discussions around gender and sexuality in class, which can be the only space provided for students to participate and learn about LGBTQ issues in unfamiliar contexts abroad. Following that premise, this research analyzes the experiences of six LGBTQ educators who teach (in) English internationally. Following an intersectional lens, findings suggest that these educators' experiences vary tremendously when considering their positions at school, their gender or sexual identities, nationalities, and languages they speak. The English language is key to unpacking these Western LGBTQ teachers' identities and helps question and problematize instances of power, privilege, and identity where language is central to raising awareness and challenging colonial social norms. The research will inform critical pre-service and in-service teacher education, and decolonial and intersectional approaches to English language teaching.

*Keywords:* International schools, LGBTQ teachers, English language, intersectional, advocacy.

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## Introduction

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ) educators are part of a teaching force in today's international schools (Mizzi, 2013; 2014; 2015). To validate the different sexual and gender identity intersections of educators in this study, the term LGBTQ is reasonably inclusive of what their distinct experiences might be. Indeed, LGBTQ teachers are located within different countries of the world whether such places are more progressive in their thinking or not, the inclusion of, and responses to sexuality and gender differences (Chow, Segal, & Tan, 2011; Knopp, 2009; Levitt, 2011) in social and institutional settings. This study draws data from a larger study called *Out There: A Study of LGBTQ Educators Teaching Overseas* (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2018) and following Mizzi (2013; 2014) and Carroll (2016), it uses the term international to identify the context of the LGBTQ teachers portrayed in the research. International, as the appropriate term chosen in this study, reflects the mobility and residence of educators in countries across the globe, other than their home countries.

To provide some context of how this inquiry expanded the original goals of the primary *Out There* research, it is essential to understand how that study was developed, who was recruited, and for which reasons. In addition, this introduction presents some of the key literature approaches in terms of international LGBTQ teacher mobility and the impact of such movements that reshape social behaviour, beliefs, and values (Binnie, 2004). The *Out There* contexts and previous research (see more in Chapter 2) then inform the research questions that are pertinent to this work and foreground its importance.

*Out There: A Study of LGBTQ Educators Teaching Overseas,* was a SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) funded research study that took place between

2018-2020[1]. As a research assistant, I worked on the project that Robert Mizzi and Clea Schmidt from the University of Manitoba developed to help LGBTQ educators navigate the complex social and cultural systems that reshape their experiences abroad and to inform administrators, policymakers, and teacher educators. In a time where border-crossing and internationalization have tremendous momentum in society, LGBTQ educators often take risks in terms of language, culture, values, and identities in relocating to different countries (Blackwood, 2005; Nelson, 2010).

We recruited 23 LGBTQ Anglo-Western educators from various sexuality and gender backgrounds. Study participants held a paid instructor position within an international organization or program and came from primary, secondary, or adult education contexts. Selection criteria for this study were: (1) identification as being an LGBTQ Canadian/American/European[2], (2) confirmation to work in a non-Western country (e.g., in Asia, Africa, Middle East, South America) as an international educator (teaching English or a certain subject).

To participate in *the Out There* research, LGBTQ teachers were recruited from international schools in non-western countries, TESOL organizations, and Faculties of Education in Canada, by posting ads and posters online (e.g.: Facebook groups, Twitter), and in invitations issued in international teaching magazines. From the original themes, in the current study, I draw data from a particular theme – identity (see Figure 1). This allowed me to unpack teachers' identities through mapping out their experiences and include teaching (in) English as an additional intersectional perspective that informs these educators' advocacy.

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[1] See more on http://www.outthereresearch.ca/our-research.html.
[2] Note that European is a necessary feature to describe participants in the study as two participants are from the UK.

**Figure 1**

*Research (re)starting point.*



**Out there: A study of LGBTQ teachers working overseas**
Qualitative research; grounded theory

**Recruitment**
TESOL; Faculties of Education in Canada; International Schools; International Magazines; social media

**1st Interview**
Background; preparation; expectations

**2nd Interview**
Photos; LGBTQ teachers' experiences internationally

**Data Management**
Transcription; coding; analysis

**Themes**
Engagement; identity; safety; support

**(re)Starting Point: Identity**
LGBTQ teachers' intersectional aspects
English as the subject or medium of instruction
LGBTQ teacher's advocacy

*Note*. Pathway to developing the study drawing data from *Out There: A Study of LGBTQ Educators Teaching Overseas*

As I addressed LGBTQ teachers' experiences in international teaching contexts, this research was qualitative, and I suggest this as a post-critical (Paraíso, 2012) case study. The case study allowed me to use different methodological approaches through the experiences the

participants share. It is an accessible method of research that approximate the experiences of teachers and researchers to anyone who shares similar stories. I call case studies post-critical in this study to challenge traditional hierarchical conceptions of critical, which means that criticality is not a result of a unique type of knowledge, but rather a social construction and empathy for multiple truths (Ferraz, 2015; Wortmann, 2020).

The prefix 'post' needs to be carefully considered here because this is not an attempt to go against critical movements. Post-criticality converses with critical theories, for instance, when its theoretical focus is on "investigating unjust social conditions, problematic modes of subjectivation, or deficient relation to oneself and the world that must be overcome" (Wortmann, 2020, p. 2). Following a post-critical lens reinforces the descriptive, evaluative, and exploratory dimensions of a study, and consequently fosters a more autonomous, critical, and self-reflective social transformation (Masschelein, 2004; Wortmann, 2020). The key to proposing a post-critical study is to raise awareness that criticality is not linearly transmitted (e.g., from a scholar to a teacher), but rather de-/reconstructed through the interactions of individuals who participate in social systems and that carry several truths in themselves.

When considering multiple truths, this study corroborates post-structural theories which challenge critical notions (Henderson, 2018) of what it means to conduct research in neoliberal contexts. Therefore, the post-critical ontologies and epistemologies contemplate the reconceptualization of the theory of chaos (Henderson, 2018) that enhances and validates more dynamic approaches to complex and plural systems that need further dismantling. Criticality can be a result of a hierarchical positionality where one individual leads the way for the other to achieve an ideal level of critical thinking. Within the LGBTQ community, members of this

group, experiences are diverse, thus the goal of presenting multiple and unique voices that reflect different socio-cultural and economic barriers and/or systems.

In international teaching contexts, experiences of isolation and marginalization may lead LGBTQ individuals to alcohol and drug addictions, mental health breakdowns, and also harassment, as some data has shown in the *Out There* Study (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2019) and previous research. Mostly in countries where homophobia and transphobia are a constant issue, LGBTQ teachers can struggle with legal and social acceptance (Mizzi, 2013; 2014). Therefore, these teachers need to develop strategies to adapt to a system that often marginalizes and oppresses them (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2018; 2021) because of their gender and/or sexuality. Their agency becomes visible in subtle actions and behaviours as LGBTQ teachers themselves use rainbow stickers to signal a safe space, or in more open dialogues in class when gender and sexuality are brought up by students.

However, concerning LGBTQ teachers' advocacy, it is important to investigate what contributes to such actions. This study, for instance, recognizes individuals' identities as intersections of multiple aspects (Crenshaw, 1991; Hankivsky, 2014; Simpson, 2009) that help reshape their identities (e.g., sex, gender, origin, religion/spirituality, age, capitalism, and others). It is among the intersection of the LGBTQ teachers' identities that I call attention to the role of language – English in this context – as a potential platform for advocacy in education settings.

Central to this study is the argument that LGBTQ educators' experiences are reshaped by the intersection of their identities, and I analyze the extent to which (the English) language helps them create a critical "conscientização' (Freire, 1996; 1998) through education. As for a critical 'conscientização', it is relevant to note that neoliberalism plays an important role in society, and (the English) language cannot be seen as a neutral medium. Because of neoliberal ideals,

language education, for instance, is treated as a commodity which contributes to the production of knowledge as a global form of capital (Pennycook, 2007). Knowledge, in neoliberal contexts, can be understood as something that provides value and monetization to society. Therefore, powerful potencies in the world dictate what is learned and expressed through language (Moura, 2017).

Social features including cultural behaviours displayed in mainstream media, for example, sell an image of reality that creates a false consciousness of what places look like, and therefore raise the bar for an ideology (Kubota & Miller, 2017) which naturalizes social behaviours and concepts (Menezes de Souza, 2011). And in terms of ideology, privileged societies, which have more capital power, articulate how the world should view them. Thus, cultural awareness of what they look like as an ideal goal and what they do to attract people underpin issues around social settings. Knowledge as capital masks a lot of the concerns of society, and it is through a critical 'conscientização' that students, teachers, and researchers should be able to stress that society has real oppressions, poverty, deaths, and wars.

I understand that a 'conscientização' leads to teachers pursuing advocacy to a certain degree. And in elaborating on LGBTQ teachers' advocacy in an international context, their Western identity – considering white privilege and English as their first or native language – impacts how such a process develops. Advocacy, then, needs to be problematized to avert neo-colonialism. As Freire (1998) and Kubota and Miller (2017) argue, unlearning privilege is necessary, and problematizing advocacy through understanding the various aspects of the LGBTQ teachers' identities is an example of that.

The figure below references the intersectionality wheel (Hankivsky, 2014; Simpson, 2009), and illustrates my goal to join scholars (Knopp, 2009; Mizzi, 2014) who support LGBTQ

teachers in developing critical consciousness as a pathway to advocacy by unpacking the role of

(English) language in their experiences. I present this through the perspectives and experiences

of LGBTQ teachers who affirm how social and cultural behaviours can still be a source of

harassment present in their teaching environments, but who also agree that as foreigners – the

majority who are Western teachers – they tend to be less affected by such struggles when

compared with locals in their working contexts (Mizzi, Schmidt, Moura, 2019). This research

uses the experiences of LGBTQ teachers as a starting point for a cartographic analysis in which

their lives are mapped out. Mapping (Crenshaw, 1991; Griffin, Robinson, & Roth, 2017; Museus

& Griffin, 2011) in this research means to display teachers' stories and create a map of concepts

and ideas shared over interviews and reflection sections. Through systemically organizing this

information in a non-linear way, as the researcher, I can see in between shared stories.  I can start

making sense of how language is perceived by LGBTQ teachers and make conclusions regarding

its impact on teachers' advocacy.

**Figure 2**

*Design of the research - theories and goals.*
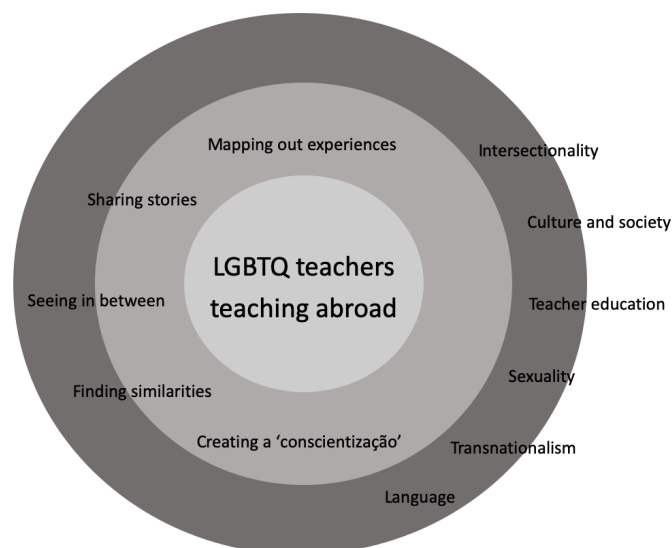


*Note*. Key aspects and elements to be considered in this study.

Seeing things in between, to my mind, means broadening the understanding of things that sometimes are not said. Through the scope of intersectionality and its techniques, conversations with LGBTQ teachers become a valuable source of information. The conversations with the LGBTQ teachers provide insights for understanding their experiences in an international context, given their varied localities of practices. As the teachers' multiple identities start to overlap, the notion of privilege and power gets clearer, too. Likewise, this work provides space to figure out how systems – from local education to a broader national institution – can influence their social and professional experiences.

From a range of contexts that may include features of accepting, affirming, discriminatory, and/or threatening workplaces, LGBTQ teachers end up relying on the 'conscientização' of what it means to be LGBTQ and teach internationally. However, these teachers also carry cultural knowledge and background (Candau, 2014; Candau & Russo, 2010; Kumaravadivelu, 2012) that intensify "(neo-)colonial relations" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 13). And to approach an intersectional awareness, theories such as cultural studies in education (Candau, 2014; Candau & Russo, 2010), teacher education (Menezes de Souza, 2011; 2017; Monte Mór, 2014), sexuality (Browne, Lim & Brown, 2009; Chow, Segal & Tan, 2011; Knopp, 2009), and language education (Martin & Morgan, 2015; Morgan & Martin, 2014; Moura, 2017) are pivotal in the constitution of this work.

In this study, I looked at my context and positionality as an experienced EFL educator who identifies as LGBTQ, where I explore some of my ideals and concepts around teaching internationally and teacher education. I also discuss and theorize the intersectional lens for this work along with a literature review of the key studies abovementioned. In the second chapter, I focus on methodological choices and argue about the importance of critically understanding the

cases analyzed in this work. To help the reader understand these ways of thinking, I also use some graphic representations which encompass the key elements of this research.

**Purpose/Problem Statement**

The research questions consider how teacher identity potentially influences and inspires advocacy in international education contexts where English is taught and used. Moreover, the purpose of this study is to investigate the linguistic aspects of LGBTQ teachers' identities and the role of English in international education settings inclusive of LGBTQ teachers. Analysis of (neo)colonial practices through (the medium of) English is timely in a society that favours Western knowledge through the English language. As LGBTQ teachers in this study are constantly moving from country to country, it is pivotal to analyze teachers within the most varied locations while exercising some critical standpoints.  The LGBTQ perspective adds a queer lens to the study, and purposefully, it means to allow others to speak up, so we can contribute to a change by understanding what their needs are. Through an LGBTQ understanding of education and the role of the English language in international contexts, teaching pedagogies become relevant for traditionally marginalized and excluded audiences, and students learn and discuss how power can mediate social dynamics.

**Research Questions**

1. What intersectional aspects (e.g., language, sexual and gender identity, culture, neoliberalism, and others) are present in the LGBTQ educators' experiences teaching overseas?

2. To what extent do LGBTQ teachers advocate and perceive the role of advocacy in their professional and personal practices?

3. To what extent does English (as the subject or medium of instruction, and/or as the first or native language of the teachers) influence teachers' potential awareness and action concerning sociopolitical issues in their teaching contexts?

**Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework helps distinguish concepts and organizes key ideas underpinning this study. The concepts used in this research are interpreted according to the researcher's positionality and readings of the world (Freire, 1996). As Freire (1996) suggests, my position as a teacher and an academic contributed to the negotiation and recreation of other meanings. To illustrate some key terms for this conceptual framework, the figure below portrays how they relate to each other, thinking of macro- and micro- contexts of teaching, according to the researcher's views and understandings of teacher education and society.

**Figure 3**

*Conceptual framework map.*
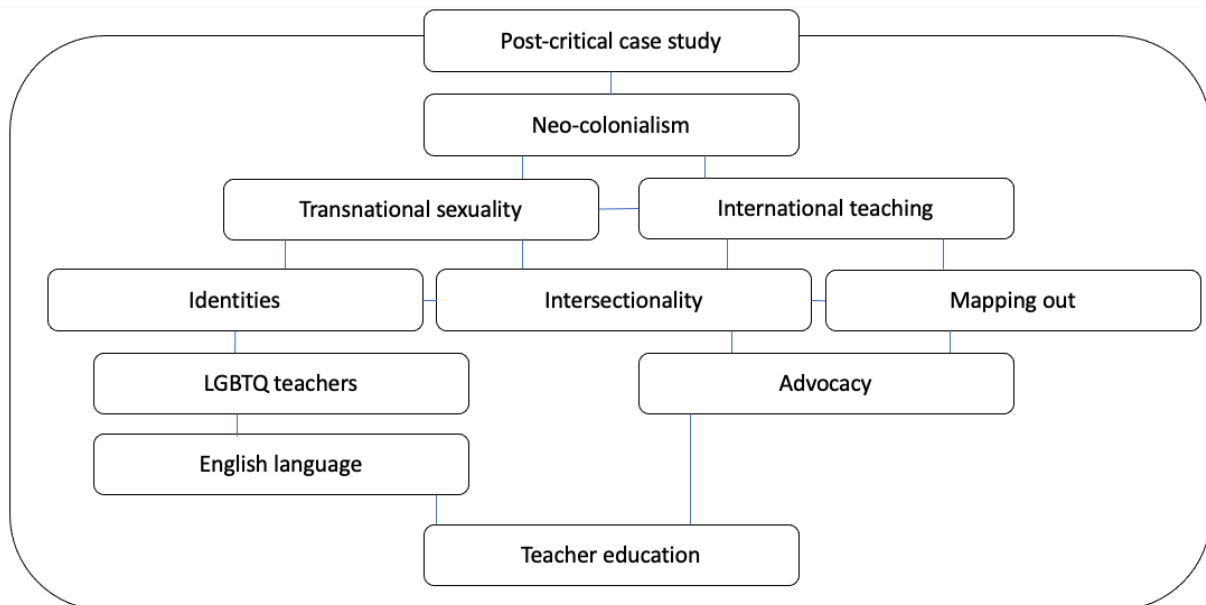


*Note.* Visual idea of how these concepts can interconnect.

Altogether, the concepts indicate a broader social system (e.g., neo-colonialism) that narrows down to teachers' identities and advocacy permeated by some theories (e.g., transnational sexuality and intersectionality) that help shape social contexts (e.g., teacher education, international teaching), for instance. Amidst these concepts, it is possible to see other variables that are also important for this study as well as have them reinterpreted depending on different readings.

As neo-colonialism prevails, its definition aligns with the idea of Eurocentrism and the hegemonic power of the USA (Pennycook, 2007; Done & Murphy, 2016). Based on Cummins and Davison (2007), I interpret neo-colonialism as a model of Western ideological power dynamics that act in society proposing a right way of thinking (e.g., white-hetero-patriarchy thinking), validating only certain types of knowledge (e.g., sciences, philosophy, arts, and the humanities) and certifying certain languages (e.g., English).

Within neo-colonialism, a post-critical case study justifies research seeking to address and analyze the participants' experiences through the lens of personal and collective movements and emergencies (Paraíso, 2012: Moura, 2017). The process of doing research flows according to society, which means it is not a rigid process but rather one which allows potential and continuous questioning and reflections (Paraíso, 2012).

In a post-critical case study, intersectionality supports the unpacking of participants' identities and sheds light on different aspects that form one's identity (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Hankivsky, 2016); intersectionality allows researchers to critique dominant power relations (Grant & Zwier, 2011) that are present in different cultures (e.g., racism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, classicism, and others).

When analyzing participants' identities, the strategies in this study included mapping participants' experiences. Mapping originated from a cartographic method of analysis in research (Santoro, 2014). The objective of this method is to design a map based on participants' experiences revealed through their interviews and conversations with the research team. The research team uses words, speeches, and other multimedia language to organize a map and make meaning out of it. Because the English language is an identity aspect for this study, it is necessary to also comprehend how language impacts or is impacted by social behaviours and interactions among different people from different cultures (Shohamy & Gorter, 2008).

The research includes LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Queer) teachers who are teaching in different international contexts. International contexts include places around the world where international schools constantly work towards the teaching of different cultures and different knowledges (Candau, 2014) with the cooperation of mostly Western teachers. Because teachers' identities as LGBTQ are considered in this study, transnational sexualities emerged as pivotal in seeing the relationship between identity and place (Knopp, 2009). The term transnational is used to describe the mobility of teachers and the flow of information as they move from country to country (Hacker, 2009). Their sexualities, then, impact the interactions the teachers establish in their living contexts and therefore create spaces for developing new social understandings (Blackwood, 2005; Chow, Segal, & Tan, 2011). In this study, advocacy is one of the themes that emerged from original data in the *Out There* study (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2019) and is key to unpacking privilege through seeing how different identity layers work together.

The outcomes of this research are substantial for rethinking teacher education. Teacher education, according to Menezes de Souza (2011; 2017), affords an opportunity to understand

how knowledges operate in society, and a chance for educators to share a sensitivity to different contexts. Within the meaning-making processes in education, teachers are called to develop strategies for how they see students and what they do with the varied range of types of knowledge in classrooms. Teacher education is a place for reflexivity where teachers need to rethink their positionalities and the hierarchical power relations they bring to classrooms (Ozano & Khatri, 2017).

This conceptual framework problematizes the roles of education researchers and teachers. On the one hand, LGBTQ teachers working in international contexts represent diversity in schools; on the other hand, I need to ask who these teachers are and where they are coming from. What stances and knowledges do they represent? And why are they the ones chosen for their positions? The decision-making processes still validate hegemonic knowledge, which is seen through job ads of international schools as they mostly seek Western native English speakers, for instance. Schools are profiting from this type of neo-colonialism and this study has the objective of unpacking more of these neoliberal influences. To elaborate on the context and rationale for this study, below I present my background as a researcher which helps define the research questions ad objectives for this study.

**Researcher's Context of Study**

As a researcher, my positionality in the study is relevant to establishing how individual experiences shape the context, design, and implementation of research. Given the significance of researcher positionality and the analytical tool of cartography I use to map participants' identities and experiences, I opted to map out my *locus* (Bhabha, 1998; Moura, 2017) while conducting this research. By *locus*, I refer to the background of my context as a researcher. Through exploring and reflecting on my trajectory, I argue it is relevant to look to the self to begin

processing information and making decisions about the research, as researchers themselves

"engage in reflexive practices which call upon them to become aware of their roles in the

research process" (Roger, Bone, Heinonen, Schwartz, Sater, & Thakrar, 2018, p. 532).

My mapping out (see Figure 4) emerged from my autoethnographic work as a researcher

(Moura, 2017). The faint-coloured rhizome was the introduction to self-reflective research that

encompassed experiences I went through throughout the development of my language teacher

education. Each plateau (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Moura, 2017) represents a different

sociocultural and political context (e.g., Brazil, Canada, and Cuba) given my international

mobility during my master's program. From the interactions with others and the

autoethnographic work developed, reflections around teacher identity, self-identity, and the

relationships with culture, society, and education were pivotal in the meaning-making process of

this doctoral research.

Furthermore, I see researcher reflexivity as a constant exercise of considering *others* and

seeing other perspectives which will help me mitigate biases. For this study, the motivation for

dealing with language, teaching and privilege start with myself – a researcher, teacher, gay man,

and middle-class Brazilian who studies internationally. The self is the starting point of a series of

questions which challenges notions of what it means to be/become a critical teacher/academic.

To frame the context and explore what the questions are, the first contextual outline I present is a

short autobiographical narrative. Through this narrative, the stories influence my construction of

meanings as a Brazilian English as a Second Language (ESL) and international gay teacher.

**Figure 4**

*Mapping out my identity as a reference for this study.*
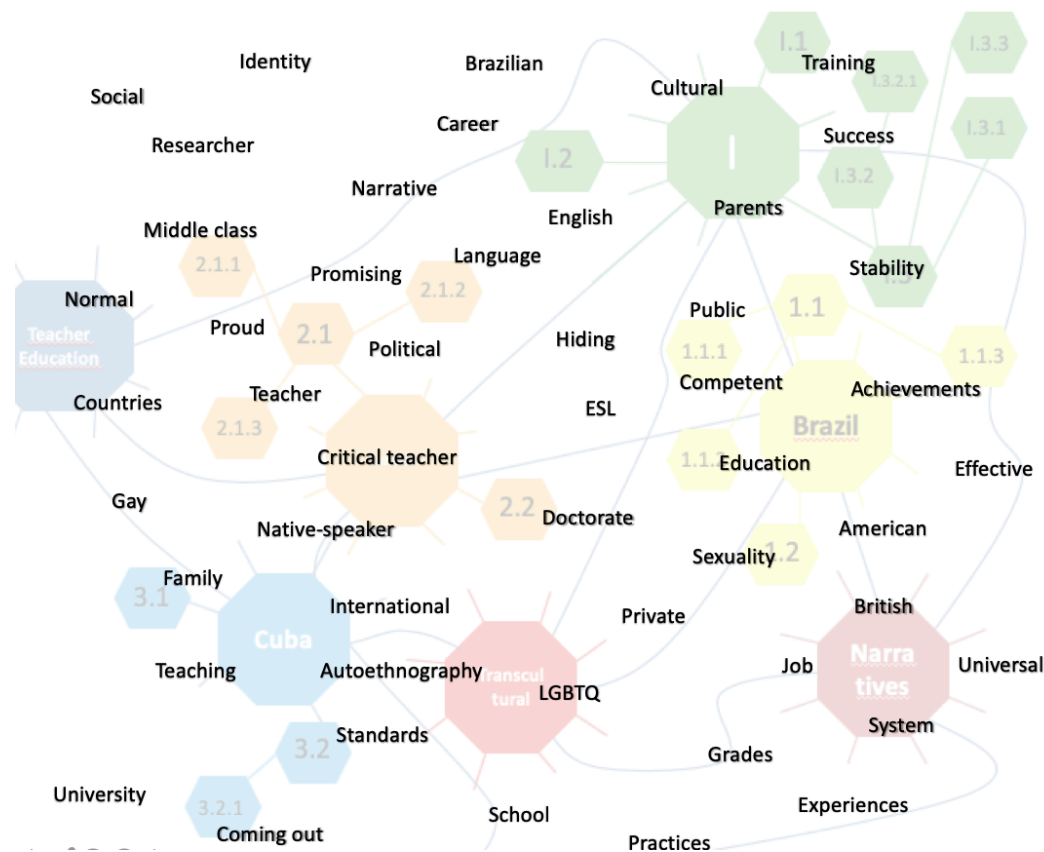
*Note.* Mapping out expanded from an autoethnographic work (Moura, 2017).

Additionally, as Matos (2009) discusses, the role of the self is the base and foundation of research on teaching and learning. A narrative of the self allows for a synthesis which establishes meaningful connections among living, learning, researching, and teaching (Matos, 2009). A narrative works for researchers who seek other possibilities by revisiting the complexity of lived experiences of individuals in the research context. In this study, as the narrative unfolds, I present some turning points that made it possible for me to rethink what I have been doing in terms of (language) teaching. This narrative explores my identity aspects, and it highlights how I work through and with my privilege.

As the mapping out of my experiences shows, I was raised comfortably in Brazil as my home country. Different from classmates I had at school and university, I come from a socio-economic background that gave me the privilege to have access to private school education,

English language learning to a high degree of proficiency, and international and professional education. In my late teens, as a 17-year-old in Brazil, I had a lot of pressure from my parents, relatives, and teachers to enter a good university. Good university in that context meant to go into a federal university, highly praised by my parents and relatives because a student must score high on the entrance test to get in. The societal standards, in general, also affected me as not only did I need to enter a public university, but also majored in one of the most prestigious courses it offered. For people around me, prestige comes with becoming a businessperson, a doctor, or even a dentist.

According to the expectations others placed on me, I had to try any major in the sciences (e.g., dentistry, physiotherapy) or one of the engineering programs. If I had to do something more humanities-related, then that would have to be law or business. And as that would make my parents and family happy, it was what I did. An observation that is valid to point out here shows I was not making decisions for myself. Rather, I was deciding what would make others around me happy and proud. And truly, there was a reason behind my decision to follow what they had chosen for me.

If I recall correctly, I probably realized I was different from other boys when I was about 8 or 9 years old. It was not very hard to notice what attracted me physically. Today, I recognize I liked some boy bands and actors as much as my girl friends did, and even for the same reasons – they were cute, and their image was portrayed as an ideal male figure. Through my teens, I never vocalized anything about my sexuality either. Although I still tried dating girls, I never presented any girlfriend to my parents. I always thought I tried too hard, and it would seem very mechanical to bring a girl home as a date. Therefore, given all the issues I was experiencing at the time, the school has always been a way to keep the focus off my sexuality. With my grades

and school development, I could be recognized as the smart little kid who did not have time for girls.

After high school, entering the most famous and well-regarded public federal university in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul sounded like a success, according to my parents and other family members. And I also had managed well to keep hidden the identity I was most scared of. However, coming into university brings a young adult a lot of other perspectives on life. Somehow, at least in Brazil, it felt like the door had just opened for adult life, and I could finally start making decisions on my own. I had it all planned in my mind then. I would graduate, find a job and be financially stable, and only after that, I would come out to my family. In my head, getting a spot at a good university in a major that made my parents proud enough felt like an accomplishment and signified "normality". At least, it was like that until I started teaching.

At the age of 18, I finished an English language course and did my first language proficiency test. Thereafter, I was able to look for a job in English teaching as extensive teaching experience was not part of the requirements. A fact about English teaching in Brazil is that for language schools, the assets for finding a job usually include being fluent in English, sounding close enough to an English-native speaker (and that means using standard British or American English), and passing the training phases of the school you are applying to work for. When I got the job, I knew nothing about teaching methods/methodologies. For me, a great part of my practices was reproducing what I had as a language student and incorporating the school method of teaching.

Although teaching was new in my life, it was enough for me to notice I liked it and that students responded well to me as a teacher. They respected my knowledge, and they trusted me with their learning strategies. Often, students would come and ask me for tips and hints for

learning English more effectively. And due to their coming to me, we were always able to have good discussions about what means to learn English effectively. Soon, I felt like my major was not fulfilling me as I had hoped. Skipping university classes to teach had become a hobby, but I knew I needed to decide and face the consequences.

Once I decided to change my degree and pursue a major in teaching, my parents and family were a bit skeptical about the whole situation. Unfortunately, being a teacher did not sound very promising, at least not according to their values and ideas of a promising career. Honestly, I started teaching because I knew I would have a part of the course curriculum destined to be English language teaching, English language and literature, and English phonetics. I erased from my mind all other subject areas such as linguistics, Brazilian literature, history, psychology, and sociology of education among others. I was certain I was becoming a fully competent English teacher.

My program and job offered me good theoretical insights at the same time. Being able to work while I was studying made it possible for me to associate a lot of what happened in class with the theories and vice-versa. Amid this journey as a teacher and a student-teacher, criticality was present in most of the conferences I attended, in research I undertook as an undergraduate student, and within my classes. By criticality, I refer to how I learned that being an English teacher meant more than learning how to pronounce words or group them grammatically. Rather, English teaching had to do with understanding social and cultural backgrounds and using them to discuss and confront social aspects (Freire, 1998; Candau, 2014; Monte Mór, 2014; Menezes de Souza, 2011; 2017) such as family constructs, gender constructs in jobs and careers, the different -isms in society (e.g., racism, ableism, ageism, sexism). At the school I worked at, the teachers always engaged with critical pieces so classes would not only be about teaching the language as

a system. As for being critical, my interpretation has always taken into consideration that ideas are not universal and that students have different timings to process the learning.

One important piece in learning about criticality as I taught was the need to challenge standard teaching practices in my classroom, but at the same time, I was unable to contemplate something that resonated with me. Dealing with sexuality matters in class was never a comfortable topic for me. In changing norms of traditional teaching, I recall working with the students on issues of race and racism, as the materials portrayed whiteness as the norm, for instance. I could also deal with environmental issues by critically thinking about sustainability and the climate emergency. Moreover, I dealt with feminism in a few of my classes, and I helped my students to understand the importance of this movement. I presented all these critical stances through English teaching in a range from basic to advanced learners.

Selecting international teaching as a core part of this research relates to me being an international student and having taught internationally as well. Following the autoethnographic work I did in my M.A., in which I explored and analyzed the different cultural experiences I had and how they implied new views in my teaching, I gathered some other theoretical and practical views on what teachers understand and how they conduct their work in different cultures. For me, having part of my academic journey abroad has certainly been eye-opening. It showed me that despite my position as a scholar who comes from the global south, some of my intersectional identities such as education, my cis male identity, and even my white racial characteristics were essential for me to blend in and actively participate in classroom discussions, conferences, and informal academic and non-academic dialogues.

Canada has been present in many conferences in the field of applied linguistics, language teaching, and teacher education in Brazil. I recognize that often when I encounter Canadians, I

sometimes take up a positionality of expecting from them the answers for my contexts at home. The idea of 'good English' or 'native English', the privilege of living in North America, the attitudes, and the culture they present have always been present in my thoughts. As I grew as an emergent scholar, I began to learn that knowledges are plural, and offer many lenses to the same issue. I also learned that context is an essential aspect of research and that if you are not willing to accept yours, there is little you can do as an outsider making decisions on behalf of others.

Living in Canada for over four years now has taught me to appreciate the type of education I had as a child and as a young adult. Unfortunately, no matter how hard I try to show others in my circle of friends how lucky we are, my friends' experiences might not indicate the same. Today, as a Ph.D. student, I struggle with people who view the world with stereotypes. I get angry at my father who thinks Canada is a better place than Brazil without even trying to understand how different both localities are, and when he uses my living here as a trophy for his friends. I battle with myself because of friends who are outspoken about how critical and fair they are when it is reasonable to say they barely recognize their privilege in being where they are.

**Potential Contributions**

To my mind, the aspects of my identity, the questions I ask in my different contexts, and the struggles of living in an international context align with the purpose of this study. Understanding how experiences impact teaching practices is important for future researchers, teacher educators, and teachers. Investigating education beyond classrooms and universities sheds light on the realities everyone faces alongside being in classrooms. In this study, individuals' identities are unpacked to work through self and social constructs of (English) language teaching and learning amidst issues of acceptance and prejudice. The study offers the

potential for teachers and teacher educators to realize language is not neutral and that language impacts social attitudes and behaviour. For that reason, to work through/with teachers' identities and experiences, a theoretical framework on intersectionality is strategic to developing this study.

**Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality**

To help me navigate the identities and experiences of the LGBTQ teachers of this study, I opt for intersectionality as a theoretical framework (Crenshaw, 1991). As for its definition, "intersectionality can be defined as the relationships among multiple social dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). In simpler terms, it can be defined as the process through which multiple social identities converge and ultimately inform individual and group experiences (Shields, 2008). Under the same idea, structural intersectionality refers to how multiple social systems intersect to shape the experiences of and sometimes oppress, individuals (Crenshaw, 1991).

The critiques of intersectionality postulate that the theory is limited to race and gender issues. However, scholars such as Crenshaw (1991) and Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, and Tomlinson (2013) defend intersectionality as a theory that moves. The theory's initial focus on Black women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991) does not constrain the engagement of intersectionality with other power issues. Crenshaw (1991) used intersectionality to highlight how social movement organization and advocacy around violence against women elided the vulnerabilities of women of colour, particularly those from immigrant and socially disadvantaged communities. Crenshaw (1991) not only operated to dismantle institutionalized discourses which produce marginalization but also delved into how resistance (e.g., feminism) can legitimize

marginalization. Based on this analysis, I view intersectionality as a starting point for understanding how identity is a cultural and political product of society.

In higher education, for example, structural intersectionality can be used to make sense of how both racial and gender inequities converge to construct the experiences of women of colour. In another sphere, political intersectionality refers to how the multiple social groups to which an individual belongs pursue different political agendas, which can function to silence the voices of those who are at the intersection of those social groups (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, political intersectionality would explain a case in which racial minority students refuse to address discrimination against LGBTQ students of colour to avoid having those issues become public and risking 'tainting' the image of those communities of colour. Finally, when we use the terms intersectionality research, intersectionality framework, or intersectional analysis, "we are referring to the utilization of intersectionality to approach and conduct empirical social science research" (Museus & Griffin, 2011, p. 7).

Moreover, working with intersectionality does not imply measuring the level of oppression of people. That is not the type of comparison it brings to a study. It just emphasizes how unique experiences are about one another. In different words,

> Those employing intersectional analyses strive to understand the unique ways in which multiple intersecting social identities come together to shape one's experiences, making distinctions in how individuals experience and engage their environments as a result of their unique position at particular intersections, rather than focusing attention on a singular identity. (Museus & Griffin, 2011, p. 8)

**Core Ideas of Intersectionality**

According to Hankivsky (2014), intersectionality is the theory that approaches the complex aspects and means that shape human lives. The scope of intersectionality has afforded its use as a theory, methodology, and framework. In summary,

> intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., 'race'/ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments and other political and economic unions, religious institutions, and media). Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism, and patriarchy are created. (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 2)

Intersectionality also works as a tool for understanding social inequalities and inequities. As intersectionality considers social contexts, power relations and human experiences, it exposes inequity and inequality as a product of more than one factor. Furthermore, inequity and inequality are the results of the interactions of human experiences in each context given power and ideological influences. Some of the key elements of intersectionality are as follows (Hankivsky, 2014):

a) individuals cannot be categorized into single checkboxes, and it is important to note that social dynamics influence and operate differently in people's lives.

b) social problems are not pre-set by their categories and structures, and it is through intersectionality that these are discovered and further investigated.

c) geographic settings impact social and power dynamics; that is, racism, ableism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and sexism are different depending on geographical spaces and time, for instance.

d) people experience both oppression and privilege and their context will dictate how they go through that.

e) scholars should exercise their 'power' and reflect on what their 'reflexivity' can do (e.g., policy work and activism).

f) intersectionality aims at transforming and bringing together different groups in the interests of social justice.

The use of intersectionality is encouraging due to its means of seeing an individual as reflecting multiple identity aspects. Intersectionality offers a lens to facilitate delving into social change and can gather valid information regarding unfairness in cultural politics and policies. In addition, this lens facilitates the revisiting of power structures, and researchers/participants can challenge social areas which marginalize and silence minority groups. The origin of such marginalization and conflicts can be identified and show the roots and characteristics of a failed system. As a consequence, intersectionality enables more responses which are not served by a one-size-fits-all model.

Observably, inequality has been noticeably increasing as studies show the struggles of minority groups (e.g.: women of colour, LGBTQ people, Indigenous people) in different educational settings (Chow, Segal, & Tan, 2011; Crenshaw, 1991; Jiménez-Castellanos, 2017; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; Stephen & Curwood, 2021; Walby, 2011; Wren, 2021), and in considering the key elements of intersectionality, its practicality can be seen through a principled framework. As Hankivsky (2014) notes, the doing of intersectionality describes a cycle of:

"intersecting categories, multi-level analysis, power, reflexivity, time and space, diverse knowledges, social justice and equity" (p. 8). When examining intersecting categories, this approach is not a measuring tool for deciding which social category (e.g., class, race, gender) is more important than the other. And intersecting categories does not mean finding a collective impact of all categories put together. In fact, intersecting categories represent the interaction of the multiple identity aspects within the social structures, time, and place in which the interaction is happening.

The range of an intersectional analysis includes macro-meso-micro levels (global and national, provincial, and regional, community and grassroots); therefore, the relationships among these levels are not predetermined but rather illustrated (Hankivsky, 2014). That means that inequalities and inequities of identities, structures and representation are defined by power dynamics. As power is one of the key concepts in working with intersectionality, it is important to notice its dynamics in social structures. Power is embedded in social discourses, social knowledge, and human experiences. Power is pivotal in determining the positionality of an individual and is relational (Hankivsky, 2014). Therefore, even when working with intersectionality, acknowledging that this theory itself is a result of social discourses and a form of knowledge with its historical links to power is pivotal to mitigating its potentiality.

Explaining power as relational, Hankivsky (2014) writes that one can experience both oppression and power. Moreover, power relations include one having power over others and power with others. In the case of the processes of power over/with others, intersectionality helps identify that groups tend to fight for the title of most oppressed. That is strategic positioning, so political support, economic supplies and recognition are given to those groups. Through intersectionality, a researcher does not work with the dominant versus the oppressed. Rather, the

researcher interacts with the processes in which power stimulates inequity and encourages resistance.

Intersectionality highlights the need for reflective practice as it "recognizes multiple truths and a diversity of perspectives, while giving space to voices typically excluded" (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 10). Being reflexive provokes an ongoing dialogue that interrogates power and develops a critical self-awareness and consequently questions regarding truth claims being made and the social interests that they serve. Recognizing that truth is not static reveals that identities, privileges, and power change over time and place. Besides, intersectionality also leads to seeing the diversity of knowledges in different places. Hearing people who are typically marginalized celebrates the diversity of knowledges and challenges social behaviours to a more accepting stance.

To visually understand the aspects of intersectionality, the diagram below represents some of the core points of intersectionality. In the centre, Power, Privilege, and Identity are placed at the micro level of society. As it expands, the macro levels of society characterize the systems that rule social norms. The diagram serves as an illustration, and as intersectionality defends time and space as changeable, more can be added to the original wheel of intersectionality. As for this particular study, I acknowledge that language is an identity aspect that is not portrayed in Simpson's (2009) intersectional wheel. Therefore, it makes the study relevant to broadening the views of language as an identity matter.

Historically, intersectionality engages with interdisciplinary issues and transcends boundaries of social identities, power dynamics, cultural and political systems, and discourses (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013). Although the scope of intersectionality seeks a sum of an individual, working with intersectionality is defined as an analysis in progress.

According to Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, and Tomlinson (2013), intersectionality is an incomplete and conditional approach and those who use it have their particular way of making meaning out of their contexts of analyses. Therefore, "an alternative approach to knowing what intersectionality is to assess what intersectionality does as a starting point to thinking about what else the framework might be mobilized to do" (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013, p. 304).

**Figure 5**

*Adapted wheel of intersectionality diagram.*
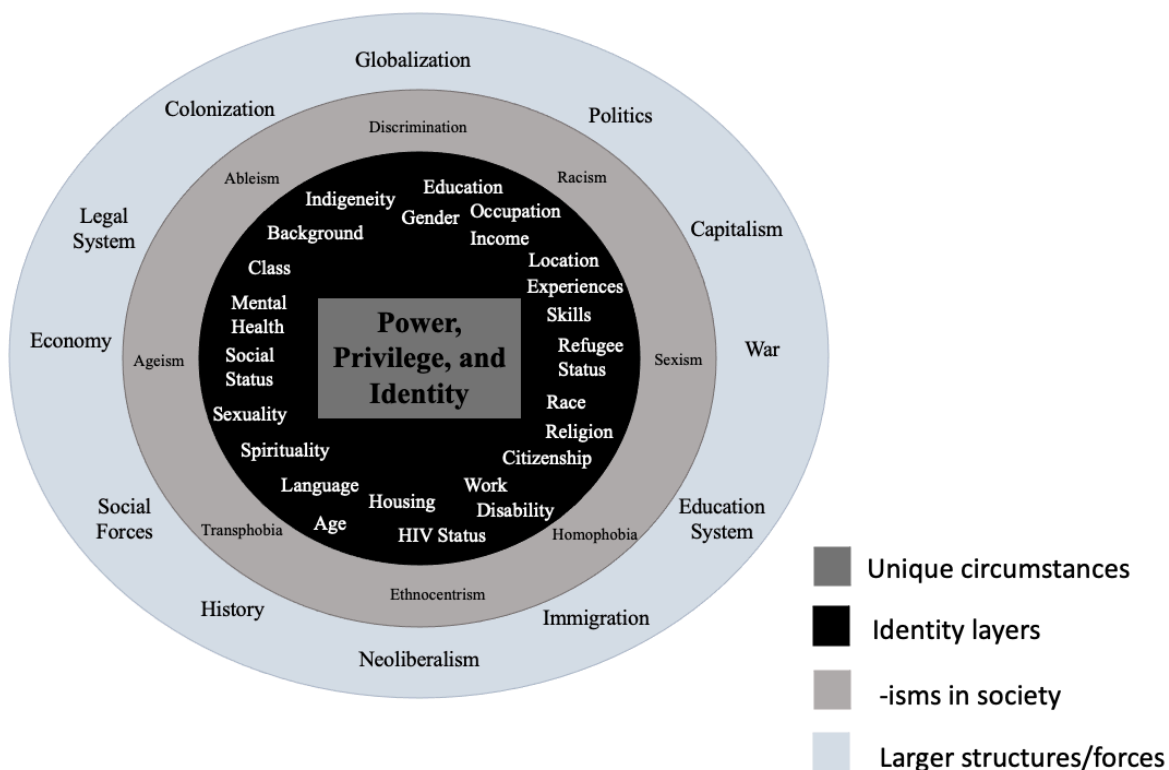


*Note*. From Everyone Belongs: A toolkit for applying intersectionality (p. 5), by J. Simpson, 2009.

This means intersectionality can be useful on a local to global scale of settings and the experiences portrayed through intersectionality can widen debates around structures of power.

Consequently, intersectionality marks social movement dimensions which turn an abstract articulation of the theory into an actual change of concept. Considering discrimination, marginalization, and privilege as common experiences in society, through intersectionality one can create a connection of how structures of oppression are mutual in society.

Considering that, "an intersectional lens can reveal, on a given issue and between separate identity groups, perspectives of both privilege and victimhood, and thereby create a connection around shared experiences" (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013 p. 306). That means, intersectionality breaks down one's sense of privilege and/or oppression by offering individuals a chance to understand the different dynamics of one's multiple-layered identity, Furthermore, an intersectional "analysis demonstrates both the importance of understanding colonial legacies through an intersectional prism and the importance of understanding how intersectionality moves beyond the metropole" (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013, p. 308).

Through colonial legacies, individuals are questioned about imposed concepts of truth which work as the idealization of social behaviour, values, and beliefs. Once challenged, such concepts enhance different stances and several other lenses towards what is acceptable and what is not. Hence, the idea of moving beyond the metropole becomes useful to enhance people from the margins, or those who are not part of the centre, to voice their views and needs, and consequently restructure power relationships.

Intersectionality as a theoretical framework reflects how "social structures produce and entrench power and marginalization, and by drawing attention to the ways that existing paradigms that produce knowledge and politics often function to normalize these dynamics" (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013, p. 310). In agreement with a critical research

stance, it is necessary to question and challenge natural social paradigms that might marginalize and oppress certain groups of people. The different people are individuals who "occupy intersecting positions in social structures. Those positions represent the socially constructed multiple inequalities of everyday life, an inequality regime in which diverse women and men are privileged or oppressed in many ways, sometimes simultaneously" (Chow, Segal & Tan, 2011, p. 3).

As Chow, Segal, and Tan (2011) also suggest, as much as individuals can exercise their agencies in society, there are also lots of barriers which impede social agency. Both agency and barrier suffer from the impact of power relations in society. The power relations determine traditions and often, traditions come with patriarchal standards. Yet, society is part of a system, and "systems that contain expectations about economic growth, family responsibilities, gender role ideology, distributions of power and resources, and laws that are not enacted or not enforced" (Chow, Segal & Tan, 2011, p. 3). Further, people's "options and goals are shaped by the systems within which they interact" (Chow, Segal & Tan, 2011, p. 3).

Jordan-Zachary (2007) uses intersectionality to explore how marginalized groups confront their omission from practices, structures, and institutions of society. She identifies the omission as an "unfair practice' which shows that there can be a difference in treatment depending on race and gender, factors that according to Jordan-Zachary (2007), are beyond human control. Jordan-Zachary's (2007) work is a genuine example of how to provoke thinking around what type of work can be done through intersectionality.

Though intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw (1989) in a work that discussed the relationality of race and gender in Black women's experiences, other definitions and uses have developed subsequently. Indeed, intersectionality allows an understanding of differences

"between and within groups" (Jordan-Zachary, 2007, P. 256). But besides challenging socially oppressive structures, Jordan-Zachary (2007) interprets intersectionality as a means of liberation. While a structural perspective of intersectionality focuses on the individuals' experiences about the impact of inequalities, and a political view focuses more on the impact of such inequalities in political strategies, the liberation intersectionality aims at voicing opportunities for marginalized groups.

Intersectionality as a liberation framework, according to Jordan-Zachary (2007), is the opportunity not only to understand the lived experiences [of Black women] but also liberation more broadly. Additionally, in the case of Jordan-Zachary (2007), the scholar "looks at how the social construction of poor Black women makes them simultaneously invisible and hypervisible to members within their community and those outside of their community" (p. 257). By exploring the facets of intersectionality in those Black women's lives, not only do new meanings originate from such discussions, but also new politics and policies for the agency.

Working with intersectionality, from an international perspective, demands integrating different historical locations. Globally, ideas and meanings travel beyond local boundaries and much of what is understood comes from media. This study is an asset to the field of education because it seeks to understand teachers in intersectional contexts in different countries in the world. Moreover, the starting point of the intersection of teachers' identities in this study is represented by their sexualities and gender. Borrowing from the notion of multiple inequalities in a globalized world (Walby, 2011), the migrations of teachers reflect "changes in social formations at the global-local levels" (p. 5). These teachers are impacting their current localities by simply being who they are and expressing their identities somehow.

From an intercultural and transnational perspective, "studies have emerged to help understand and explain the multiple linkages and interactions among global forces, local cultures, the flow of capital, people, ideas, and goods; and the processes of social change across national borders, cultures, and geographic space" (Chow, Segal & Tan, 2011, p. 7). As Levitt (2011) points out, the locality is historically situated and contextualized. However, such situatedness and contextualization originated from social interaction, which can be interpreted as a world without borders where peoples from different parts of the globe learn from one another and the transnational theories support identifying how inequalities work.

Transnationalism helps identify links between patriarchy, colonialism, racism, and the most varied forms of domination in the form of ideologies which dictate that men have power over women, that white people have some sort of superiority over other racialized groups, that certain cultures overrule others (e.g., developed and developing countries). The changes intersectionality seeks through these identities in transnational contexts can reflect political, economic, and cultural shifts. Transnationalism is itself intersectional and "the process is intersectional in that it reveals how difference, division, and inequality are compounded by the interlocking effects of gender, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, age/generation, and other dimensions, playing out as migrants move and travel across borders" (Chow, Segal & Tan, 2011, p. 8). Intersectionality indeed responds to such dynamics of power and contributes to the transformation of systemic structures.

This is not a study seeking to describe how marginalized groups are. Rather than merely identifying existing power structures, intersectionality can provide the basis for liberation. I will take care not to fall into separate systems. As presented, systems cannot be dissociated one from another (e.g., gay man or man who is gay?) and the goal is for "individuals not to use one's

social location to justify punishing them or omitting them from the structures and practices of society" (Jordan-Zachary, 2007, p. 261). Being aware of such a challenge brings me to work with the drawbacks of intersectionality as a theoretical framework.

**Challenges in Working with Intersectionality**

In seeking out social justice and equity, a study that works with a minority group can often be misinterpreted. As with any other type of research, there are ways of missing key points and issues, invalidating some research instruments and mistakenly analyzing data. To avoid trouble in researching with marginalized groups, Smyth (2014) stresses some values of a "socially just education" research: contextuality, relevance, communication style, awareness of identity and power differences, disclosure, reciprocation, empowerment, and time.

Regarding intersectionality, some of the challenges can be seen when the personal becomes the focus of and integral to the research. In that sense, some key questions should be thoughtfully considered in continuing with the research agenda just to make sure whether or not I am adequately proposing what I intend to critique (Jordan-Zachary, 2007). In accordance, do I want to explore as much? And what specifically do I want to explore? How can I honestly tell the story of others? And how can I make the proper decisions in portraying those stories? (Jordan-Zachary, 2007).

Intersectionality as a theoretical framework "still retains a notion of structural inequalities and operates with groups as the subject of equality policies rather than individuals but is attentive to the cross-cutting nature of structures of oppression and the overlapping nature of groups" (Squires, 2008, p. 55). However, intersectionality as a theoretical framework aligns with the mapping out of participants' experiences which are part of the analytical methodology of this

study. Mapping out the experiences of teachers will help me identify the intersections of the different identities in various places where teachers are.

Another challenge that can be seen from an intersectional approach is its categorical empirical analysis. The identities of the individuals in the study are categorized (e.g., Western, English speaker, LGBTQ, man, woman, non-binary) and even though I try to broaden the different identity aspects, I may end up limited by their definitions. Being aware of such a challenge enables me to carefully consider which categories I am using to describe an individual and how I am defining them. Therefore, the support in the literature and the feedback of the members of my doctoral committee helped me navigate through the intersections of identities.

Then, by identifying the intersections of identities, I will work through some of the local tensions experienced by the teachers. Geographically, a lot of these tensions might be explained given by the local contexts, policies, and laws. Once identifying those issues, the participants' experiences are used as an initiative for seeking change. From a micro to a macro level, changes can occur within the local communities (e.g., teachers' groups of friends, teachers' schools, and so on), as well as in a broader perspective (e.g., teachers' students can work on the re-conception of policies and laws) and that is where results will likely show some effect in teacher education, teaching, and living internationally.

Following the introduction and theoretical framework of this study, I present some key literature (Chapter 2) I use to ground and identify gaps to be addressed in this study. I analyze data in this research from theories in education, culture, language education, and sexuality to provide a scope of what these main areas offer the research. Later, in Chapter 3, I will address some of the methodological aspects while conducting this research and will provide a look at the study design.

In Chapter 4, I unpack the study participants' personal experiences and present six individual case studies that highlight these educators living and teaching abroad. From a more horizontal lens, I present chapters 5, and 6 and focus on findings, themes, and discussions that can be interpreted and considered across the interconnection of participants' experiences. In Chapter 7, I look back at the research questions to unpack how the identities of the educators in the study inform their advocacy, and how it is done through the use of the English language. Finally, the conclusions chapter provides some methodological considerations, implications, and limitations, and what to do moving forward.

**Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

Considering the context of this study and its participants, some of the key relevant terms in the literature are: English language teaching, identity and language teaching, colonialism in language teaching education, transnationalism, teacher education, advocacy, and LGBTQ teacher education. This literature review is a result of my past scholarly work on language teacher education, and the development of new understandings around sexual and gender identities, advocacy, and teacher mobility.

The LGBTQ teachers who are working abroad can contribute to new concepts around international teaching as they strive for matching the job descriptions and develop new pedagogies which reflect their identities. New pedagogies, in this context, include finding ways to navigate educators' sexual and gender identities while in and outside classrooms. This does not mean that only LGBTQ teachers are necessary agents of change. Being LGBTQ is an aspect of their identities that cannot be dissociated from their teaching practices, as "identity positions are materializations of discursively structured power relations" (Morgan & Clarke, 2011, p. 819). Therefore, LGBTQ teachers' attempt to fit into their job environments because of the lack of preparedness of schools in responding to such a teaching population (Mizzi, 2013; 2014; 2015) relates to heteronormative thinking imposed by standards of power relations.

Consequently, the experiences of LGBTQ teachers indirectly echo their preparedness to approach sexuality and gender issues in classrooms and schools, for example. Frequently, these educators dissociate their teacher identity from their LGBTQ identity because their education did not allow them to exercise any type of autonomy to incorporate such issues in their teaching practices (Mizzi, 2014; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Teachers are being prepared to cross borders and deal with cultural shock and cultural differences (Nieto, 2015; Moura & Morgan, 2020), but

none of these has addressed dealing with non-mainstream sexual or gender identities in schools. Therefore, Mizzi's work (2013; 2014; 2015) and the *Out There* study (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2018; 2021) challenge heteroprofessionalism and familiarize educators' international work on advocating for a change in the culture of schools in different ways.

In addition to understanding how LGBTQ teachers' advocacy develops, there is a need to see language as an important element of teachers' positionalities and actions. These LGBTQ teachers offer insight into how language works and further explore how language intersects with their LGBTQ identities and advocacy in their different teaching contexts. Thus, creating space to see how power relations are negotiated within international classrooms and schools. As Candau and Russo describe (2010), along with culture, language was one of the main tools to change and so-called 'civilize' Indigenous peoples in Latin America, for example. Therefore bilingualism, for instance, was a way of transitioning people from a poor to a more accepted culture.

Although multilingualism is a more predominant feature among the participants in the study, tentatively to explore and connect these issues, this literature review approaches relationships between culture and teacher education, the role of transnational sexuality in education, and teaching (in) English internationally as a complex and multifaceted ideological matter that contributes to (neo)colonial power dynamics. These are some relevant areas of scholarship that come from different fields of research (e.g., education, social sciences, applied linguistics) that overlap in reconfiguring other ways of thinking about international (teacher) education, moving away from seeing it as a form of tourism and bringing awareness to the social and cultural impacts it fosters.

**2.1 Culture and Teacher Education**

Connecting culture and teacher education to my research is a centred, up-front matter that can be used to understand the role of culture in society, its dynamics, and how it impacts and reshapes various educational contexts (e.g., teaching and learning processes, teacher-student interactions, research processes and others). Culture is key to unpacking differences in identity, comprehending social behaviour, and undoing social privileges (Thorne, Sauro, & Smith, 2015). Additionally, I see culture as pivotal in the knowing, analyzing, recognizing, doing, and seeing (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) of teacher educators when they prepare teachers for a global society.

Internationally, the encounter of different socio-cultural groups is part of the local, regional, national, and international public settings whether it occurs physically (e.g., within the nation-states) or virtually (e.g., through social media networks). Differences can raise tensions, conflicts, dialogues, and negotiations and as long as these aspects are multiplied, the need exists to take into account the historical and political and cultural constructs of each individual (Candau, 2010; 2014). Individuals are being historically marginalized because cultural and social constructs gave form to a standardized type of education.

Traditional models of education tend to focus on notions of what the best teaching method is, or how to apply technology in teaching and learning (Cummins & Davison, 2007). In that scenario, schools use and re-emphasize standard cultural aspects based on western and Eurocentric culture and colonial influences as they do not critically view what is being taught and only share prescribed lessons. Therefore, such practices silence voices, types of knowledge, beliefs, and people (Candau, 2010; 2014; Menezes de Souza, 2011; 2017; Moura, 2017) who do not conform to standard methods of teaching or content knowledge.

In the case of Candau and Russo's (2010) work, the promotion of a more diverse curriculum in Latin America mostly happens with the racialized and Indigenous movements. Diversity is seen as a mix of racialized people who mostly fit into two genders (male and female) in their work. Within their context of diversity, the first issue Candau and Russo (2010) present is Indigenous education. According to them, Indigenous education emerges as an intercultural issue because of the recent progress that seeks to give Indigenous persons visibility. Historically, Indigenous peoples have been subject to abusive policies and practices stemming from the racist belief that their cultures are inferior.

In Brazil, for example, Indigenous peoples can be seen as individuals who do not have access to a good education system, and they are struggling in bringing their culture and knowledges into the schools' curricula (Souza & Souza, 2017). A second example reflects the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirming the abusive treatment that students experienced at residential schools, and the attempt of Canada to eliminate and ignore Indigenous rights and ways of government (see more on http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Principles_English_Web.pdf). These two situations illustrate hegemonic cultures which dictate rules and force those peoples to adapt to new and often unfair contexts.

In this research, although you do not openly see cultures being judged by their race, status, and knowledge, or there are no cases of abuse and harassment reported, the culture that Western teachers carry as they move across borders can still act as an idealistic imposition (Chan & Parr, 2012). In other words, the Western culture carries standard values that are intended to overrule different local current ones, causing a cultural genocide (Candau & Russo, 2010; Done & Murphy, 2016; Giroux, 1992). Historically, Indigenous peoples' communities were imposed a

different lifestyle, justified as a better one. At schools, children would learn what the new 'good' values were, and they would channel them to their parents. Bilingualism was a strong colonial instrument, with corresponding educational policy targeting Indigenous people.

Western societies presented themselves as the common desired goal. And commonality and universality were both reached through the systematization of Indigenous languages and educational practices. Currently, higher education institutions seek to promote Indigenous language systems to highlight the importance of such cultures and give Indigenous people authorship of their knowledge (Souza, Dialo, & Souza, 2020; Souza & Souza, 2017).  Thus, as years went by, the Indigenous people themselves started participating in establishing educational goals in their own contexts and elsewhere (Smith, 1999).

Today, the weight of colonial bilingualism has shifted. Bilingualism is not an imposed language used to transition from one culture to another. Rather, bilingualism is sought out by people who envision better knowledge, quality of life, and higher social status given the economic drive that knowing two languages can have (DuBord, 2018). Bilingualism reasonably supports the maintenance of a threatened culture in the sense that bilingualism inserts the differences in cultures and problematizes them in educational settings (Mignolo, 2000; 2010; 2018; Candau & Russo, 2010).

In trying to create spaces for dialogues, more Indigenous peoples are taking over administrative positions at schools, and they are better able to exercise their autonomy in saying what works for Indigenous education, what Indigenous education is and what it is not (Smith, 1999; Candau & Russo, 2010). Besides Indigenous education, interculturality also aligns with the movements of Black people. Some of the complexity and nuances of the slave trade cannot be compared to Indigenous cultures, and I understand issues of racism are still a conflict among

them. But African cultures have not been properly introduced into educational curricula across various countries in the world (Done & Murphy, 2016; Cheek, 2016; Dei, 2010). Although the number of Black people differs from place to place, it is possible to see that Black people have not had their full citizenship recognized. Besides the key aspect of citizenship being the ability to vote, I believe that citizenship status should be associated with nation-state hierarchies of recognition and belonging. Violence and physical, social, and symbolic exclusion mark the lives of Black people around the world.

Both Indigenous and Black cultural movements in education relate to this study as they can be seen as trailblazer changes in the culture of schools and post-secondary institutions. However, the fact is that discussions about different cultures cannot be overlooked. Curriculum changes are still needed, and that is what this study can offer as an implication – work around diversity, citizenship, and identity are continuous and ever-changing. There are several discussions around racism, citizens' rights, and recognition of different cultural identities; however, little reference is made to the contributions of these people in educational contexts (Done & Murphy, 2016; Candau & Russo, 2010; Krog, 2016).

For example, Black movements in education serve to dismantle racial stereotypes and push back hierarchical notions. Such movements critique that marginalizing others due to race is systemically integrated into society (Candau & Russo, 2010). The result was society's colour blindness and refusal to acknowledge hierarchy and racialized prejudice (Cochran-Smith, 2015).

Within Indigenous and Black populations, a considerable number of advocates validate discourses which aim to dismantle Eurocentrism, homogeneity, and monoculturalism in education (Candau & Russo, 2010; Dei, 2020). That is, such movements contribute to the intercultural aspect of education because they reshape practices which do not discriminate but

rather promote and recognize the value of cultural differences (Harris, 2016). Interculturality, however, is not only about transgressing homogenous society on a race level. Culturally, sexual and gender identities have been defined around heteropatriarchy. Culture is a broad concept that encompasses a philosophical and political stance, a reading of what the world and society look/are like, and which process to use in sociopolitical interventions, including being aware of marginalized sexual and gender identities.

Culture in this context represents everyday life and how it impacts social relationships. Background and empowerment are some of the keywords in this type of education and they refer to understanding the role of culture in someone's identity and how to bring such identity out of subaltern and excluded classes. Drawing from an intersectional lens, however, is pivotal to determining that an individual can carry more privileges than disadvantages. In this study, for example, the educators' LGBTQ identity does not overrule their Western and English-speaking identities.

As a result of the encounter of different cultures and the impact of crossing borders, research has shown how power relations develop in classrooms where heteronormativity overrules LGBTQ identities (Mizzi, 2013; 2014; 2015), and where language sets a cultural preference for Western knowledges and emphasizes colonialism (Mignolo, 2018; Pennycook, 2007). Education practitioners – teachers, students, and researchers – are finding new ways of dialoguing productively about cultural differences, and the Latin American trajectory can be an example of how to expand such discussions to other contexts in the world, by allowing different types of knowledge to readjust Eurocentric-Northern knowledge systems.

Either through public politics or social and economic awareness, an intercultural approach to education contributes to the democratization of knowledge. Candau and Russo

(2010) assert that talking about interculturality in education does not mean incorporating a few themes in the curriculum – Black, Indigenous, critical. Instead, it is necessary to critically engage in ethical, ethical, epistemological, and political debates which strengthen democracy and social justice, as well as cultural difference recognition. For LGBTQ matters, theories that challenge binary male-female functions (Butler, 2006) and contest the social recognition of people in this community are pivotal in the democratization of new ways of knowing, as there is

> "[…] much to say about the production of the social and the social production of institutions; relations between citizenship, nation, pedagogy, and identity; and how people are positioned by and position themselves in relation to institutions, social imaginaries, everyday public pedagogies, and popular culture." (Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 2)

Concerning LGBTQ issues, more currently, queer scholarships strongly support and acknowledge a reflexive practise which is capable of transformation. Substantially, "queer studies have a natural inclination towards social movements and activism" (Kong, 2017, p. 258); however, sexual and gender minorities are still seen as a broad marginal community. The current studies on queer theory have placed it as a theoretical institutionalized form of knowledge and is a growing area within teaching and research scopes. Grounded in queer theories, power still flows among the relationships of LGBTQ representatives, and a question that should be asked is who holds the power when representing LGBTQ folks. As in the case of this research, Western research on queer theory has extensively impacted 'grassroots' studies and shaped a dominant view on what LGBTQ identities look like, excluding minorities and racialized LGBTQ people (to come below).

Utilizing the intercultural concept to respond to LGBTQ teachers who work internationally, Candau (2014) and Kong (2017) agree that education is facing changes and urges a need to reinvent the school as an institution. In evolving the subjectivities and identities of people towards understanding and improving a complex multicultural and unequal society, the act of teaching needs to be carefully considered in terms of teacher education and teacher development.

Moreover, there should be an understanding of what the difference is between being part of a traditional school and a reinvented one. Historically, schools' main goal was to educate people as if they were all the same. National and social laws determined people are the same regardless of their race, gender, or class, and that itself became the drawback of schools since they worked towards the homogeneity of society (Candau & Russo, 2010; Cummins & Davison, 2007). Rather than making use of diversity as a pedagogical tool, teachers were told they needed to make inequalities even to veil social differences, as Menezes de Souza (2017) and Monte Mór (2014) express in their studies of plural and multiliteracies.

Some school systems in some parts of the world do not allow persons with disabilities to attend mainstream schools for example, and in the 74 countries where homosexuality is outlawed, there would be no pretense of welcoming LGBTQ students. Therefore, thinking of a reinvented school, Candau (2014) asks for deeper and less superficial analyses of the type of schools and the types of societies that exist. Given current socio-cultural and economic contexts, new approaches emerge, and they redefine how society behaves. Therefore, discussing the local culture in reshaping society is pivotal to changing and creating forms of resistance. Culture is an important aspect and reflects the rapid dynamics with which history has changed. Because of

culture, power relations conflicts are increasing and consequently, cultural politics reconfigure society.

The socio-political contexts of participants' local countries are an example of human rights violations at different levels. The different situations (e.g., China banning effeminate men from being shown on TV; LGBTQ communities protesting for equal rights in Myanmar) represent how power can succumb and damage education because of an aversion and discrimination against LGBTQ people, racialized people, Indigenous people, and low-income individuals. Within the spectrum of LGBTQ communities, more often they are the target of prejudice, and this can be deeply elaborated through intersectionality (Grant & Zwier, 2011). People of race, older people, and people from marginalized social classes who also consider themselves to be LGBTQ suffer different types of attacks, intolerance, and discrimination.

With this reality, new definitions of society, identity, justice, and citizenship appear, and notions of marginalization and inequalities are broadened as a result. Education and culture are intertwined, and education is immersed in cultural and historical contexts. Neutrality does not serve an education free of cultural biases and the challenge Candau (2014) poses is to resist patterns that homogenize and make education monocultural. Indeed, social inclusion needs to be supported because students cannot be submissive to a logic of social patterns which marginalizes them.

If schools are to promote diversity, they should do it in a way which understands that schools are spaces for cross-cultural experiences, where fluidity and complexity create tensions and conflicts that can be worked through (Ozano & Khatri, 2017). The objective is to create spaces for diversity and reject neutrality and homogenization. What creates spaces for such diversity is the fight between marginalized and excluded social groups. Though they are the main

subjects putting in check notions of culture and identity issues, society is still responsible for marginalizing and excluding them.

There are not the same opportunities for everyone. Then, the next step is to recognize and emphasize the differences, and for that to happen it is necessary to guarantee the expression of different cultural identities in a determined context. Following the logic of the oppressed by Freire (1998), critical work should also seek the unlearning of privilege. The process of unlearning privilege is essential for realizing our complicity with the social patterns we use to supply and perpetuate oppression. It is part of the critical work to cause some discomfort with the questions we propose which are valuable to identifying the complexity of power disparities. To work critically means to have contextual sensitivity, and to rethink how research and teaching practices still play a role in the dissemination of normativity and dogmatism.

Consequently, rethinking the dimensions of praxis (Freire, 1998) as the action of being reflective towards social cultures takes up the role of transforming and acting upon the world to become more inclusive. Rather than providing answers for how to make the transformations happen, a Freirean-informed praxis focuses on challenging and questioning models of knowledge, politics, and ethics. That means to see culture as a constant process of evolving, construction, and reconstruction. It is dynamic and though each culture is rooted in its own social and historical constructs, they are subject to being modified. As we rethink teacher education and teaching practices, there should be an increase in opportunities that enhance awareness of our cultural identity construction (Candau, 2014).

To be conscious of cultural identities means to realize how the process of hybridizations goes on and which aspects are silenced within contexts. Knowing about cultural identities in teaching, educators can explore cultural points within their own identities, and they are more

capable of being sensitive and offering the same opportunities for that to happen in educational practices (Martin & Morgan, 2019; Mignolo, 2018; Moura, 2017). Second, working with the notion of self and other requires recognizing that the other should not mean marginalizing or excluding people because they are different (Cheek 2016; Kubota & Miller, 2017). Rather, people should be offered a chance to have a critical space for cultural production.

Coming from the definition of social action as being significant for social agents in the way they code and make meaning of a system, culture is every social practice which expresses and communicates meaning (Menezes de Souza, 2017; Monte Mór 2014). How we interpret and make sense of cultural meanings results from our social actions that lead to how we see and understand such meanings (Menezes de Souza, 2011). Culture is intertwined with social actions, and it is not a surprise that fields such as education fundamentally seek to comprehend, explain, and model theories. Culture has an important function in how society is structured (Candau, 2014; Candau & Russo, 2010).

Culture is also related to the development of a global environment and its economic and material resources. Technology, people, mobility, and media impact and sustain global exchanges, which means information, knowledge, capital, investments, goods, and other products circulate in cultural spaces and reshape them (Godwin-Jones, 2017). Hall (1997), Bax (2003), and Canagarajah (2012) assert that the global cultures give space to rapid social changes as well as to cultural displacement. By that, I understand that the local is a result of rapid flows that come from social interactions and knowledge exchanges where identity is always in the process of transformation. The local and global are relevant for identity formation and renegotiation, which means that individuals are constantly changing and reconfiguring ways of knowing, seeing, and understanding.

As Heller (2002) contextualizes, with the growth of multinational industries and markets, certain cultural products have become standard, and technologies can erase particularities and differences as they reproduce such products as homogenized and westernized. The global market tends to produce a uniform reform in society, and the capital has been poorly distributed. By capital, I understand that power is likely not only material capital but also ideological capital and capital of knowledge which, in the case of the English language, for instance, can relate to its commodification and colonial impacts (Heller, 2002).

Amidst contradictions, global markets weaken some other societies' standards of living and directions for social development. When global culture is considered, the differences that arise from the encounter with others disrupt homogeneous concepts of social groups and allow the creation of new cultural products (e.g., international education; IB curriculum). Therefore, new identities are crucial for local diversity which contributes to the global culture and makes it difficult to maintain homogeneity (Hall, 1997).

Characterizing the spread of a global culture is the process of translocation (Hall, 1997). Translocation seeks to explore a place and understand its "series of processes, featured by its fluidity and movement, that has an impact in the ways which we position ourselves in the world" (Photographers Gallery, 1997, p. 4). Within translocation, the global culture takes form and impacts society either/both positively or/and negatively. The global culture can establish traditions and conservatism. Religions, for example, and nationalist practices can be considered conservative cultural reactions, resulting from the dissemination of controlled norms that a global culture imposes. Another example, shown in the next session, highlights how cultural norms change and challenge what we understand by sexualities as a result of transnational interactions and mobility.

## 2.2 Transnational Sexualities

Transnational sexualities reference the movement across national borders and its impact of it on sexuality studies and is also a methodological tool used to engage in sexuality ideals, according to Blackwood (2005). In this research, transnational sexualities converse with the literature about culture, because focusing on sexualities, the LGBTQ teachers from the *Out There Study* (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2018; 2021) pinpoint particular aspects of cultural identities and help me develop a logical conception of the role of sexuality in teacher practice. As Chow, Segal, and Tan (2011) claim, local contexts became transnational as information and knowledge flow, trespassing borders (Menezes de Souza, 2017).

Borrowing from critiques of colonialism, imperialism, and racialization, transnational sexualities as a theory suits a more critical perspective which defies questions of sexuality as well as highlights questions of nationalism, culture, capital, globalization, and others. Within the scope of marginalized groups, transnational sexualities intersect what is viewed as marginal (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, class) and rather than only attributing voice to those who are in the margins, it can challenge the notion of how the categories, practices, and politics developed marginalization in the first place.

As research shows, "[…] the term transnational has become so ubiquitous in cultural, literary and critical studies that much of its political valence seems to have become evacuated" (Swarr & Nagar, 2010, p. 4). As Swarr and Nagar (2010) also affirm, transnational can have different foci:

> theorizing migration as a transnational process; to signal the demise or irrelevance of the nation-state in the current phase of globalization; as a synonym of diasporic; to designate a form of postcolonialism; and as an alternative to the problems of the global and the

international, articulated primarily by Western or Euro-American second-wave corporations, for which becoming global marks an expansion into new markets. (p. 4)

In accordance, "living somewhere for a time, experiencing life in transnational or diasporic encounter zones certainly forces us to come to terms with the experience of quite different local settings and specifics in our everyday practice" (Hacker, 2009, p. 69). In addition to Hacker's statement, when further asked about the connection between geography and sexuality, the impact of being LGBTQ, in general, is different in different places.

According to Browne, Lim, and Brown (2009), seeing how sexualities work in different geographic spaces is to explore themes that interplay sexualized difference, social relations, institutions, desires, and spaces. Overall, all these aspects are intertwined; consequently, depending on how findings in this research emerge, this study will have to address many of these aspects. Mostly, the focus is on recognizing the fluidity and importance of spatial and temporal contexts (Browne; Lim, Brown, 2009). By that, "the central theme of this explosion of work has been the exploration of the relationship between sexualities, space and place – questions about how sexualities are geographical, or the question of how spaces and places are sexualized" (Browne, Lim, & Brown, 2009, p. 1).

Through theories which explain how bodies shape social contexts, a study on sexuality contributes to seeing the institutionalization of sexuality on levels such as local and global, national, and transnational. According to Browne, Lim, and Brown (2009), for example, some understandings such as kissing in public (including who should kiss in public; if this is acceptable at all, it is generally more acceptable for heterosexual couples to do so) is the result of a public rule which is unspoken yet accepted. The aforementioned example may not be a general case, but in understanding the relationship between sexuality and space in my context of

research, this example is relevant when discussing the meaning of home, for instance. Browne, Lim, and Brown (2009) explain how the sense of home can differ from person to person, given the associated social rules and personal experiences.

For some people, home has a sense of security and safety whereas for LGBTQ people, for instance, it can be uncomfortable and a place of anxiety. The authors explain that for LGBTQ people, home "can be shaped by the assumptions of heterosexuality that are present in their social relations with parents, siblings, neighbours and others in and around the home" (Browne, Lim, Brown, 2009, p. 3). Having those assumptions present in their social environments is key for regulating normative and standard behaviours, identities, and practices which causes LGBTQ people to understand that the norm is to be married, have kids and have a family.

From a local to a more transnational perspective, Browne, Lim, and Brown (2009) exemplify that people who do not follow the "common-sense" sexual orientation and gender identity can face difficulties in crossing borders, for example. As in the case of the *Out There Study* (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2018; 2021), where same-sex couples teach in other countries where their spouse's, partner's, or children's status are not recognized, getting a visa becomes an issue. Those people need to be strategic and go through a complicated process because indeed the exclusion of LGBTQ people's relationships and families has become a normative construction of nation, citizenry, and citizenship.

There is a connection between LGBTQ people and the spaces they inhabit. Their identities, whether related to language, class, sexuality, or gender, manifest according to norms. And accordingly, "what these examples demonstrate is that sexuality – its regulation, norms, institutions, pleasures and desires – cannot be understood without understanding the space through which it is constituted, practised, and lived" (Browne, Lim, Brown, 2009, p. 4).

Politically, sexualization is institutionalized and heteronormativity is the centre of such an act. Understanding the power relations and the marginalization of LGBT people's lives/desires is pivotal to seeing that 'being in the closet' is not only a denial of one's identity but also a practical and political outcome of marginalization. Delving deeper into the issue of representation of LGBTQ people in society, LGBTQ movements have gained some force in discussing the effect of globalization on sexuality (Levitt, 2011; Chow, Segal, & Tan, 2011; Walby, 2011).

The globalization of knowledge has promoted a universalization of knowledge (Appadurai, 2000; Richardson &Abbott, 2009) which represents all kinds of communities and their diversities but does not belong to anyone other than Western institutions. Globalization of knowledge is synonymous with innovation, access, technology tools, and money, thus its attribution to Western culture as this is considered a place where to find those. When considering sexuality, Altman (2001) brings attention to an 'essential political aphorism' that leads to the social obligation to develop a particular form of identity. In terms of identity, global means people should appear to be "home everywhere, yet at the same time, none of them can know more than a fragment of the world" (Altman, 2001, p. xi).

An additional reason for the obstacles that globalization raises, according to Binnie (2004), is that considerable work on globalization has been heteronormatively developed, and few studies have theorized the link between globalization, nationality, and sexuality. Sexuality within globalization studies still holds an image of a homophobic context which denies the idea of being gay, for example, and Binnie (2004) draws our attention to the need for a queer perspective on the subject. In the scope of queering globalization (Altman, 2001; Binnie, 2004), the idea of interplaying globalization along with nationality and sexuality is also an attempt to

find out "what commonalities and points of difference can be ascertained by comparing and contrasting different formations of nation and sexualities and local experiences of global processes" (Binnie, 2004, p. 2).

Globalization, though it has expanded awareness of the world, has led to homogeneous thinking and increased inequalities. As globalization has been directed by the capital and the consumerism of society, studies of sexuality, for example, have become "academically fashionable" (Altman, 2001, p.1) in recent years. Additionally, there has been a need to understand sexuality outside of its social, cultural, political, and economic boundaries. Among the traditional organization of society regarding sexuality, the development of ideologies about sex and gender take place (for example, marriage should happen for love; a family is constituted by a man and a woman in its centrality). Altman (2001) frames this normative process as follows:

> society regulates sex through religious and cultural prohibitions, ceremonies, and rules; through legal, scientific, hygiene, and health policies; through government restrictions and encouragement; and through a whole range of practices which form part of everyday life and constitute the sex/gender system. (p. 3)

On the other hand and following the premise of universal knowledge (Richardson & Abbott, 2009; Altman, 2001; Appadurai, 2007), sexual cultures should be globally grounded as a form of "resist[ing] a globalizing discourse of sexuality" (Binnie, 2004, p. 3) and to encourage other claims of truth and knowledges which can reframe the current literature on sexuality and globalization. That means, crossing cultures to speak of sexualities decentralizes the 'sameness' and the norms of global centrality that Western researchers have presented about sexuality.

Advances in understanding necessitate acknowledging other knowledges in sexuality which help to expand points of view on the subject.

This intercultural dimension configures a broader view of how LGBTQ people can be labelled under the same connotation when instead, those links between identities, sexuality, gender, culture, and place are enough to make the labelling definable. Concerning labels, LGBTQ can be mainstreamed and therefore establish a sense of what Browne, Lim, and Brown (2007) call "homonormativity" (to be seen in section 2.4). By that, it is understood that a few LGBTQ people have access to a "degree of liberation because of their inclusion into more mainstream capitalist social relations, whilst many working-class gays and queers of colour are still denied access to these privileges" (p. 12). Another example relates to the experiences of trans identities that tend to be marginalized within the LGBTQ spectrum, too. Hence, how do western LGBTQ constructed identities navigate their lives in other local, national, and international understandings? And what are the implications of LGBTQ labels in terms of imposing Western ideologies on other countries?

Following Binnie's (2004) example, due to an "accelerated Americanization and homogenization of gay culture", the current "globalized gay culture is said to represent a false consciousness on the part of those who passively consume it" (p. 6). Though there have been many American studies on gay and lesbian sexualities, Binnie (2004) does not defend an anti-American stance. Rather, he argues for further understanding of the reason why American culture/studies seem to be so appealing to the gay and lesbian community, for instance. The solution, consequently, would consider a collaboration among researchers from both the center and periphery to rectify and rebuild queer perspectives and knowledge on sexuality. Such

collaboration would constitute an act of moving away from (neo)colonial thoughts that the West can provide all the answers and set all the examples.

Transnational sexualities focus "on gender and sexual relations at multiple spatial scales, from the body and family to the state and beyond" (Knopp, 2009, p. 29). Moreover, "as a project, queer geography has been deconstructive and critical, and suspicious of certainties, universal truths, and ontological imaginations about the way the world works that are mechanistic or instrumental" (Knopp, 2009, p. 29). In summary, transnational sexualities, in this study, establish the relationship between the significance of sexualities, human social life, and institutions.

The relationship of these aspects though is something hybrid and fluid and therefore redefines spatial geographies (Binnie, 2004; Browne, Lim, & Brown, 2007), which is relevant to transnationalism. In understanding how sexuality and place relate to each other, queer geographies offer an understanding of spatial ontologies which include placelessness and movement (Blackwood, 2005; Hacker, 2009). Regarding a sense of safety, for example, many LGBTQ people may assume a vulnerable position because of the social space in which they are located. A place can be seen as violent, and a sense of marginalization or exclusion confronts the subject. Other places can be safer and there is a spatial element to that feeling (Binnie, 2004).

Something to consider about LGBTQ spaces is what the implications are for LGBTQ people in terms of citizenship, border crossing, and immigration. Seeing such implications is pivotal for seeing what transnational sexuality can do for LGBTQ people's personal, home, and community relationships after asserting non-conforming sex or gender orientation. As a result of all the thinking about transnational sexualities, they can help with the understanding of spatialities of resistance to sexual and gender regimes. What forms of activism and resistance might challenge

the hegemony of current sexual gender regimes? What kinds of spatial strategies, in particular, might be effective?

Through transnational sexualities, it is possible to deal with cultural politics when questioning which issues can be treated in different spaces and why. That implicates discussions around moral landscapes and therefore has a dialogue about dominant moralities in different spaces and how they function. In considering spaces and localities, "geography needs to expand its empirical terrain to include more of these messy realities, including fluidity, hybridity, incompleteness, moralities, desires, and embodiment" (Knopp, 2009, p. 33).

After exploring notions around culture, teachers' preparedness to approach LGBTQ matters in classrooms, and sexualities and their spaces, I focus on the language aspect of identity. Below, I bring together the literature on teaching internationally and examine the role of language in society.

## 2.3 Language and International Teaching

In this section, I attend to the dynamics of language, as one of the intersectional aspects I use to analyze LGBTQ teachers' experiences in international teaching contexts.

From a language teaching perspective, starting with Giroux's (1992) perspective of language as a dominant cultural colonial tool for hegemonic reinforcement, I discuss the need to challenge the perception of language as neutral as well as rethink teaching in terms of working from a pedagogy of differences (Mantoan, 2017). Giroux (1992) understood the outcomes of language as an ideological product and legacy of colonialism. Moreover,

> The neoliberal hegemony has also prompted debates about what constitutes appropriate
> and effective critical language education, about how to ensure that this is more than just
> an uncritical education in technocratic English as globalized and globalizing lingua

franca, in financial literacy, entrepreneurial literacy, information literacy and so forth.

(Morgan & Clarke, 2011, p. 829)

When thinking of the meaning of language in society, social institutions exercise power and legitimize meaning through practices that include language as the tool to constitute their authority. Within authority, colonialism is implicated in discourses that keep privileges and oppression active in society, which allows institutional conditions of knowledge. That is, through language, institutions are emphasizing and determining agendas that foster dominant ways of thinking and acting. Giroux (1992), Mignolo (2010; 2018) and Kumaravadivelu (2016) go further in the discussion on language and power dominance as there is a need to address the relationship between language and issues of knowledge and power.

Indeed, language is not neutral in social practices, and consequently, its use in dominant discourses may impact democratic practices in society. That is educators, often unintentionally, legitimate specific relations of power through teaching practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Pennycook, 2007; Cummins & Davison, 2007). Once teaching practices negate multiple languages and the complexities of the subjects' positionality in cultures, they follow dominant knowledges which hegemonize and universalize ways of knowing (Mignolo, 2010; 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2016).

In response to the universalization of knowledge, teachers should try and resist dominant discourses (Pennycook, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Mignolo, 2010; 2017). Educators would rather pluralize and contextualize their practices (Monte Mór, 2014), rather than work under the domain of hegemonic practices (Menezes de Souza, 2017). That is, in the name of diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity, educators need to develop transgressive strategies which challenge norms of discourse and power. Yet, the challenge is at the same time a "call for new

ideas, pedagogical strategies, and social movements capable of constructing a politics of difference" (Giroux, 1992, p. 21).

Following the argument against universal standards of literacy, for instance, language is not a "stylized aesthetic of clarity" (Giroux, 1992, p. 25). This means educators cannot assume language to be transparent and easily recognized. Language is significantly attached to identity, though language insufficiently conveys all the intentions and desires of individuals; moreover, language enables conveying more than what the individual initially intends (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). Language can interfere with partiality and decrease the possibilities of democracy. When dealing with language, then, educators and teacher education programs ought to represent the construction of "multiple social identities, public cultures, and forms of political practices" (Giroux, 1992, p. 25) within teaching practices.

Kumaravadivelu's (2016) work on English teaching regarding native speakerism, for example, is a clear example of how to understand language within educational settings. In their respective work, Kumaravadivelu (2016) and Mignolo (2000) address a mainstream reality in academia where non-native English speakers are subalterns who can speak up. Usually, English as a second language speakers put themselves in a position of inferiority due to English not being their first language, and both Kumaravadivelu (2016) and Mignolo (2000) offer support for English as a Second Language (ESL) educators to confront native standard language teaching methods.

Kumaravadivelu (2016), for example, starts with an assumption involving [English] native speakers and non-native speakers concerning the area of expertise one ought to follow in academia. Using his example, Kumaravadivelu (2016) states that once he had found out he would like to work with English language teaching methods, experienced scholars in the area

responded negatively to his wishes since it was expected that "they would never let a non-native speaker get established in the areas of methods and materials" (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, p. 66). Relating to my study, in terms of thinking about teachers' identities,

> native speaker and the non-native speaker seemed to be the only two identities entertained in Second Language Acquisition and applied linguistics. Based on this somewhat insular model, pedagogical interventions were directed entirely towards informing/changing learner attributes to align ever more closely with the target of native speaker competence – an inherently political approach that ironically disavowed politics and ignored mainstream prejudices and power hierarchies that marginalized learner opportunities. (Morgan & Clarke, 2011, p. 820)

Consequently, language is arguably important to identify other elements of one's identity such as race, gender, sexuality, and others. Morgan and Clarke (2011) explore identity within sameness and difference. According to them, "identity relies on a repertoire of communicative resources (e.g., rituals, texts, and signs) through/by which categories of difference/individuality are perceived, maintained, or resisted and these communicative resources are fundamentally social in nature" (Morgan & Clarke, 2011, p. 817). Moreover, identity can be perceived either as unchangeable, which characterizes the unity/sameness or as part of social categories that are mutable. In any case, second language education (SLE) employs and considers identity in studies because,

> despite the dominant Western narrative, which views these developments in terms of the growth of individual choice and freedom, they can also be seen as reflective of our increasing (self-) subjection to discourses of commoditization and consumptions. (Morgan & Clarke, 2011, p. 818)

Following the neoliberal characteristic of the English language today, I understand that English can be a medium for acquiring "habits of industry, obedience, punctuality, order, neatness, cleanliness and general good behaviour" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 14). Thus, the role of English teaching has produced overall images of English as a superior language and implications can be seen in English language teaching (ELT) because of the benefits people perceive from learning the language.

What I am therefore suggesting here is that the relationship between English and LGBTQ identity, in ELT, has involved "the ubiquitous reinforcement of heterosexual norms through language learning tasks, course texts and teaching habits" (Morgan & Clarke, 2007, p. 823). The normalization of dominant sexualities in texts (Moita-Lopes, 2006), for instance, does not contribute to empathy with particular minority groups and rather silences such groups.

The concept of English, according to Pennycook (2007), is that people perceive it as a neocolonial language. As an international language, English offers its learners a variety of benefits such as "access to science, technology, education, employment, and mass culture" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 17). However, on the other hand, English also represents an obstacle as it cannot be neutral and implicates global inequality through education and employment opportunities which require particular proficiency. English has a role in global power relationships and international teaching contexts afford an ideal opportunity for analyzing this role.

From a language education perspective, it is important to understand the process of international teaching and its effects on today's global society. International teaching has gained some focus within North American and European countries as teachers can pursue international experiences after getting their degrees. In neocolonial times, as in the case of Hong Kong, being

taught in English as the medium of instruction offered people passports to greater literature at universities, as well as the passport to a better world (Pennycook, 2007). The terms 'greater literature' and 'better world' are key to seeing moral and traditional views and to representing English as a glorifying language, which supports English as a hegemonic, unneutral, and powerful language, even in international teaching contexts, as seen below.

## 2.3.1 International Teaching

As a researcher in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), it is urgent to critically analyze the main positions in the debate on international teaching and broaden the views toward other content areas in education. International teaching in this study can be seen as an opportunity for teachers to "notice taken-for-granted practices and assumptions, rather than simply celebrating a romanticized vision of honesty and empathy" (Kubota & Miller, 2017). As some program developers and researchers acknowledge, teachers should try to reflect on their practices, prioritize the value-laden and sociopolitical nature of practice teaching abroad and strive to facilitate ethical and critical practices (Morgan & Martin, 2014; Martin & Morgan, 2015; 2019), which are relevant for experienced as well as novice educators.

This study uses a transdisciplinary approach and draws transcultural attention to how teachers' experiences and practices are shaped within an international context. This includes a brief look at how teacher education programs address teachers' preparedness, though this will not be the focus of this study. The complexity of dealing with various socio-cultural contexts helps reshape the values and beliefs of a global society (Richardson & Abbott, 2009). As for an international experience, a transcultural perspective suggests changes towards more ethical practices, which means considering personal experiences in the learning/teaching process (Martin & Morgan, 2015; 2019).

International teaching means not only crossing national borders but also reconfiguring ways of thinking. The outcomes of border crossing can reflect both the liberation of the state of mind, borrowing from the notions of the oppressed (Freire, 1996) and the profit of current educational institutions which deal with the marketization of knowledge through internationalization programs (Martinez, 2017). As much as the border crossing is a result of the neoliberal society, as institutions profit from the validation of particular forms of knowledge, it is also part of a movement that seeks horizontal social relationships. According to Cushner and Brennan (2007), international teaching outcomes can include "enhancing language and communication skills, increasing flexibility or open-mindedness, developing an ability to empathize or understand the position of the other, and a beginning recognitions of other value systems and ways of behaving" (p. 58).

International educators indeed contribute to the development of global knowledge (Burdrow & Tarc, 2018). With respect to teaching pedagogies and educational philosophies, international teaching can provide teachers and teacher educators with self-awareness which allows them to make decisions and (re)develop their principles of teaching (Moura, 2017; Morgan & Martin, 2014; Martin & Morgan, 2015; 2019). That said, teaching internationally allows educators and teacher educators to reconcile their views and other scholars' contributions on rethinking the role of education in society.

Nowadays, the awareness teachers and students need in schools reflects the vast flow of information and mobility of people around the world (Harris, 2016). The modernization of the West and its economic growth marks a new configuration in power, patriarchy, authority, and ethics (Mignolo, 2000). Progress is closely associated with the modernization of the Western

world, and consequently, fields such as science and technology have legitimized notions of knowledge (Godwin-Jones, 2017).

As an inheritance of the Enlightenment traditions, as Giroux (1992) posits, the legitimation of Western culture as models of thinking, acting, and behaving represents a struggle in democracy. Although democratization is claimed within the modernization of the world, little space is given to challenge hegemonic dominions. How border crossing works in today's society is relevant to rethinking what people who cross borders are doing, why they are doing it, and how they are doing it (Giroux, 1992). From a critical perspective, although creating new social spheres and reshaping knowledge as encounters with different ways of knowing may benefit democratic practices, it would be appropriate to consider whether all migrations are not, in fact, contributing to the hegemonizing of colonial and conventional politics (Kubota & Miller, 2017; Mignolo, 2018).

Concerning students' learning, Santoro (2007; 2009) affirms that teacher education programs should include tools which allow teachers to properly address the needs of their students in an international context. Teaching practices can end up limiting the enhancement of the learners' knowledge, and teachers often come to international contexts with a one-size-fits-all method that cannot possibly work well in each context. By knowing who their students are, teacher educators should recognize the host community and the needs of students beyond the classroom. That is, there should be an understanding of students' local history, their cultural background they have, and more importantly, a comprehension that their identities are a social and historical construct.

Additionally, linguistic awareness is necessary for teachers to be aware of the limitations of the teacher as an English-native speaker in a foreign country. Moura (2017), as an English as a

foreign language speaker, addresses that becoming a teacher in international settings goes beyond the knowledge of the language system. The role of a teacher as a non-mainstream, English native speaker encourages different types of understandings as society is culturally and socially fluid. Hence, the localities of the individuals contribute to the construction of their identities and that should be celebrated, rather than marginalized and fitted into the dominant language teaching boundaries.

Then, considering pedagogical strategies, informing practices do not exclusively relate to the teaching of language systems. Nor is it all about critically analyzing cultural and social factors in which the teaching takes place. Teacher education programs should challenge hegemonic views of the culture of the other as much as understanding what teaching means. Teaching can show teachers how to see and respond to their students in a cultural and global matter. Teaching should be both contextual and interdependent, as much as it should be participatory. International teachers and students are developing global social structures, and teachers should be prepared to question their cultural backgrounds and truths to collaborate with others in the making of a more just and democratic society.

Teacher educators must critically analyze their attitudes towards preparing new teachers to join the teaching force (Kissock & Richardson, 2010). Some of the critical responsibilities include: 1) embracing global perspectives, which means understanding the value of learning from differences, and integrating global perspectives which associate with critiquing or interrogating global perspectives based on local contexts priorities; 2) adopting and achieving global standards; that is, working towards the recognition of divergent of standards which enable mutual recognition of different ways of knowing; 3) serving our global village; as teacher educators open up possibilities for pre-service teachers to experience other cultural societies, this

type of experience employs global skills in them, therefore new teachers are being prepared to face global issues in different and creative other forms; and, 4)working toward the broadening of students' perspectives as students reflect on the future of the world and develop their paths throughout their journey.

Finally, in addition, some of the strategies for resisting neocolonial practices of teaching (in) English internationally include articulating one's interests and ideologies, accommodating personal interests through English; and using hybrid codes or translanguaging to revisit the concept we have of English (Pennycook, 2007). As Cummins and Davison (2007) indicate,

> When English is taught in former colonial contexts, the language carries complex baggage related to its historical role in establishing and reinforcing patterns of power relations both between colonizer and colonized and within the colonized population. In non-colonial contexts, access to English is also associated with social stratification both concerning who gets access and the social advantages for access […]. In non-colonial contexts where it is seen as a 'foreign' language, English has traditionally been regarded as the polite guest that knows its place and does not obviously intrude into the sphere of the dominant language. (p. 3-4)

Therefore, a strategy for providing teachers with useful tools and theories to move away from colonial patterns should be revisiting educational practices as the issue is in a system which still treats knowledge as a source of capital, and language as a form of reaching that capital. The politics of international teaching should be reflected to challenge hegemonic teaching constructs that see teaching (in) English as an ideological practice followed by a pedagogical business (Cummins & Davison, 2007). And because of it, understanding the (neo)colonial matters in teaching English, or through the medium of English, is a way to get marginalized groups to resist

power dynamics, create awareness around (neo)colonialism and its impact on today's society (Pennycook, 2007), and develop agency. By developing an agency, we can unpack advocacy, and what that looks like when it comes from LGBTQ people, as demonstrated below.

**2.4 Queer Theories and LGBTQ Advocacy through Language**

The term queer has been used in different research contexts as a non-conventional political inquiry (Jagose, 1996). Queer theorists, in the 1990s, started questioning gender expectation, gender bias, and heterosexism which prompted a movement that challenged binary identity stereotypes (Buttler, 2006; Jagose, 1996; Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010).

This study is paramount to broad queer research and queering spaces theories in the sense of questioning how many transgressions of dominant cis heteronormativity is essentially happening (Fikes, 2021) in different spaces and in the classrooms or schools. Queer theories contrast the different queer spaces defined by Fikes (2021) as personal and intimate spaces; city and public spaces; and larger geographies and global spaces. For instance, from the LGBTQ people's personal and intimate stances, they are being seen and recognized but are they challenging heteronormative standards? From the city and public space perspective, there is a social responsibility towards LGBTQ people in different spaces, but that is because their bodies are not disrupting gender binaries (e.g., crossdressing). Then, geographically and/or globally, the participation of LGBTQ people in the workplace, for example, does not challenge regimes of power and knowledge that oppress, exclude, and even kill LGBTQ people in different countries (De Souza & Pádua Carrieri, 2015)

Within the intersectional lens, even when there are stances of advocacy from the LGBTQ communities, queer theories also help in the dismantling of homonormativity (Kumashiro, 2000; 2002). This means members in those communities are using their privileged *loci* (e.g.,

nationality, class, race, and others) to foster visibility that privileges groups and normalizes certain identities (e.g., masculine gay men being predominantly accepted within the LGBTQ spectrum).

Some of the literature on LGBTQ identities in classrooms reflect what researchers around the globe have done to instigate an awareness of how teaching practices oppress and marginalize voices of sexual and gender minorities (Kaiser, 2017; Moore, 2016; Nelson, 1999; Reygan & Steyn, 2017; Sene & Ferreira, 2018). Sexual identities are seemingly suppressed by the content that a neoliberal pedagogical curriculum demands. For example, this study approaches how certain participants mirror demands for "good quality" teaching because of the role they play in an elite system; how they need to advance cutting-edge school departments necessary to teach and learn an international curriculum; and the inherent outcomes of this teaching as their students have accesses to international travel and Western education.

In the case of students who do not have English as their first or native language, such a curriculum may impede LGBTQ students from developing meaningful language skills as they negotiate their identities within a heteronormative curriculum (Kaiser, 2017). Abbott, Ellis, and Abbott (2015) show how teachers uphold heteronormativity in classrooms and may not pay attention to the discourses they use in class. Although teachers should be assisting their students in the formation of their identities and becoming members of the community and the world, teachers are provoked to question how to address such topics in class when depending on how the teachers do it, they can instigate harassment, hate speech and homophobia (Kaiser, 2017; Moore, 2016; Nelson, 1999).

Reygan and Steyn (2017) also raise the need to prepare educators to deal with issues of oppression, discrimination, and diversity in classrooms. They argue that schools work as a place

of reproduction of inequalities, and diversity is not well addressed within these settings. The authors suggest a Critical Diversity Literacy approach to focus on diversity beyond the racial aspect, also considering religion, socioeconomic status, sexuality and gender identities, and others. Tentatively, Reygan and Steyn (2017) recognize the different identities and acknowledge unequal and hegemonic positionalities within the educational system through critical pedagogy.

From a Brazilian context, Sene, and Ferreira (2018) question the role of education in changing perceptions and making society more inclusive and equal. They base their argument on contrast to heteronormative patterns of sexual and gender identity roles. Because of such normalizations created around what it means to be "normal", gender and sexuality issues and all the intersectionality issues around race, religion, social class, and others have become taboo in the education settings. Moreover, Sene and Ferreira (2018) state that when issues occur in classes, discussions often lead to the universalization and stereotyping of concepts, ideas, and views.

Based on that, I argue that schools need to work together and go beyond the resistance of power relations and set a social justice agenda (Done & Murphy, 2016) which means future queer research in education ought to delve deeper into an analysis of what inclusion looks like in different contexts. Researchers are urged to explore different perspectives, especially in transnational mobility scenarios where individuals go back and forth, and their socio-cultural backgrounds constantly transgress and reshape their identities. Along with problematizing and redesigning the sexual and gender matrix of intelligibility, studies need to include other identity aspects (e.g., religion, nationality, race, class, etc.) to continue discussions about the complexities of creating disruptive knowledge in different localities. Addressing diversity and social justice within ESL teaching is widely supported by scholars (Nelson, 1999; Kaiser, 2017; Moore, 2016)

who converse among their theories and propose that language has historically, discursively, and socially shaped dominant and minoritized identities (Sene & Ferreira, 2018).

Hence, English can work to deconstruct identity patterns (Martins & Castro, 2016), act beyond the standards (Krog, 2016), and neutrally assess student-centred practices (James & Augustin, 2017; Jones & Adams, 2016) to construct other realities through more human and meaningful pedagogies. As shown in this study (see Chapter 5), educators who work internationally are aware of the impact they have on their schools as English speakers, recognize imperialist and colonial legacies of the language, and use their knowledge to attend to students' needs but also position themselves in critical, sometimes threatening, scenarios.

But before delving into the findings, the following chapter addresses the methodological choices made in this study.

**Chapter 3 - Methodology and Study Design**

This chapter focuses on the methodological aspects of this qualitative study, which draws data from a research project called *Out There: A Study of LGBTQ Teachers Working Overseas* (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2018). Once LGBTQ teachers were recruited, the research team conducted the first round of interviews. These interviews served as a starting point for the research team to get to know the participants (e.g., participants' backgrounds, expectations of moving abroad, and preparation before leaving).

Initial interviews were conducted either just prior to or shortly after teachers arrived in their teaching contexts. After their first interviews, the LGBTQ teachers were invited to take photographs of the places where they lived, with the second part of the study discussing the photos and understanding what they had to talk about the teachers' teaching experiences abroad. Both interviews and reflection sections of the photos were transcribed for coding and data analysis. Emergent themes and data analysis were subsequently developed.

For this research, a post-critical case study fits the goals and research questions since the experiences of the participants inform descriptive and heuristic practices that explore critical perspectives of LGBTQ educators in international education settings. Along with their qualitative features, descriptively the data serve to thoroughly describe participants' experiences and explain how the research questions and research goals are portrayed in those teachers' contexts. Then, heuristically a case study extends the understanding of a case, brings out new meanings to the reader, and presents other forms of interpretation (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

In addition, Stake (1995) affirms that a case study "is an exercise in such depth, and the study is an opportunity to see what others have not seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own

lives, to engage the best of our interpretive powers" (p. 136). Therefore, a case study is a form of capturing the wholeness of a case through individuals' contexts, relationships, processes, and practices. Culturally, the use of case studies in research methodologies has also an impact on the understanding of individuals, communities, and contexts.

A case study carries out the practicalities of research in terms of allowing researchers to go deeper into issues that surround them from local to global perspectives. This type of methodology approaches and portrays the complexity of the learning and teaching processes in education and shows the familiarity of the researcher with the context in which the research takes place. In navigating such processes, it is important for the researcher to critically look at their choices in terms of using and shaping data collection and analysis.

In going beyond the universalities of scientific research, case study researchers viewed the importance of enhancing decision-making processes due to the interactions and relationships between the case and society in a wider sense. As a case study becomes a located research exercise (within personal, professional, local, or global communities), communication and practices are key to developing a rich data collection and consequently expanding resources to address a research issue. For this study, however, I opted to conduct a post-critical case study, developing a sense of post-critical methodologies, which is important in redefining the research goals and agenda.

## 3.1 Post-Critical Case Study in Education

In recent years, post-structural theories have indicated a post-critical instance that reshaped how researchers define their research goals and articulate theories to develop new practices and seek social change. The prefix post- in such theories "[…] does not merely connote a progression in time, but rather a fundamental shift from one conceptual understanding to

another, thereby marking a sustainable challenge to existing paradigms of knowledge"
(Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 3). These theories challenge the status quo and address issues around
social justice, colonial impacts past and present, and power relationships in the fields such as the
social sciences, education, psychology, and many others.

Through a post-critical instance, I argue that

[…] as subjects of form, we are to contest the politically inflected truth games of

discursive texturing and renderings of science in a way commensurate with a

poststructuralist understanding of the critical and ethical we need to engage with the risk

of illegitimacy and deploy our freedom as subjects of scholarly governance in the art of

not being governed quite so much. (Henderson, 2018, p. 538).

A post-critical ontology still moves away from ideologically neutral mentalities and the
intersectional lens of this study becomes a tool to unpack and elaborate on specific contextual
issues of participants. Moreover, post-criticality enhances opportunities to delve into notions of
privilege and oppression with no intention of emancipation or liberation per se. Differently, these
theories critique the criteria and coherencies of truth and reconsider different subjects have
fragmented aspects.

Moreover, researchers often need to be creative in terms of determining the best ways to
implement research methodologies given that time, space, and borders are reshaped in the world
due to globalization processes that facilitate the movement of new ideas, norms, and cultural
values; individuals have a fragmented and ever-changing identity; the global and colonial
English language baggage excludes and marginalizes types of knowledge that come from
peripherical contexts; and methodological perspectives ought to be plural and suit a broader
range of abilities and ways of knowing (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Moura & Bruz, 2021).

Working through and with research methodologies demands careful efforts from academics working with post-critical theories. Researchers need to position themselves about standards that extant methodologies present. It is valid to note that, as much as research findings can reveal a whole new set of perspectives on a research issue, so does the research methodology and that is why there should be a focus on doing it critically.

Paraíso (2012) calls the process of being open to new research methodology paradigms the act of expanding the "theoretical-methodological vocabulary". That means realizing some procedures help researchers read the research context artifacts in a way that considers their locality, values, and cultures. Below, there is an attentive approach to developing the notion of criticality in research methodologies. It is a timely argument that in an era where information is all around and a vast number of people claim themselves to be critical, there should be some theorization and reflection of what is understood by being critical before subsequently adopting the stance of a post-critical approach.

### 3.2 *Out There* Study Participants

Regarding the LGBTQ teachers in this study (see Figure 6), the participants of the *Out There* Study (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2019) worked in over 15 different countries across the globe. As a requirement of the study, teachers moved from Western countries (the U.S., Canada, or countries in Europe) to assume teaching positions in non-Western countries (located in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America). In total, 23 Western teachers participated in the study and varied from all sexual and gender identities of the LGBTQ spectrum with a predominance of gay male participants. Some of the teachers were more recent international teachers, while others had years of experience. Some of the teacher participants were in their

working country for the first time, while some moved from country to country as they built their

international careers.

**Figure 6**

*Overview of the number of participants from Out There: A Study of LGBTQ Teachers Working
Overseas.*

## Participant Backgrounds

- 43 potential participants contacted us, and from that number we recruited 23 LGBTQ international educators who come from various sexuality and gender backgrounds.

| Lesbian | Gay Man | Bisexual | Trans | Queer |
|---------|---------|----------|-------|-------|
| 4 | 16 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

- 19 participants are white and 4 participants are people of colour; no declared disability
- Participants originated from: **Canada (9), United States (10), United Kingdom (3),** and **Spain(1).**
- **3 married couples**
- **2 sets of participants have children with them**
- **K-12 Teacher (22)** and **Higher Education Faculty (1)**
- Participants are working in: **Kenya (1), South Korea (1), China (5), Japan (2), Egypt (1), Macao (2), Cambodia (1), Thailand (2), Vietnam (1), Brazil (1), Myanmar (1), Hong Kong (1), "Caribbean Region" (3),** and **Czechia (1)**
- **1 "consultant" participant in Finland (USA)**

*Note.* Source: PowerPoint Presentation – Preliminary findings of Out There: LGBTQ Educators

Working Overseas presented at Millennium Library in Winnipeg, MB, on May 11th, 2019.

Of the group of teachers who participated in the *Out There* Study, six agreed to take part

in this follow-up research. The criteria used to determine the educators' eligibility criteria

included: a) representation from across the spectrum of LGBTQ teachers – this study had 3

(three) gay men, 1 (one) trans woman, and 1 (one) queer non-binary, and 1 (one) lesbian; and b)

inclusion of teachers who expressed their intersectional identity during the first two interviews in

the *Out There* study (e.g., Japanese born; married or single; parents; multilingual). As for the

representation of each of the LGBTQ identities in the overall study, table 1 shows there was a

predominance of gay male participants in the study. The numbers of lesbian, trans, bisexual and

queer people could have been different if, in the original *Out There* Study, more teachers of varied identities who volunteered met the range of eligibility criteria. In terms of race, most participants identify as white; however, some identified mixed-race backgrounds (e.g., parents who were Latinos).

**Table 1**

*List of participants*

| Louisa | Lesbian | EAL Department |
|---|---|---|
| **Andrew** | Gay | ESL Higher Ed. |
| **Michael** | Gay | ESL JET Program |
| **Ted** | Gay | ELL Elementary |
| **Evan** | Gay | ELL |
| **Jon** | Gay | ESL |
| **Chris** | Gay | ESL JET Program |
| **Stephen** | Gay | FSL |
| **Jose** | Gay | Spanish |
| **Stephanie** | Pansexual | Higher Ed. |
| **Karen** | Lesbian | International Office |
| **Daniel** | Gay | Principal |
| **Katherine** | Trans | K-12 |
| **Peter** | Trans | K-12 |
| **Jake** | Queer non-binary | Elementary |
| **James** | Gay | Elementary |
| **Lawrence** | Gay | Elementary |
| **Carlos** | Gay | K-12 |
| **Francesca** | Lesbian | K-12 |
| **Richard** | Gay | Elementary |
| **Jeff** | Gay | K-12 |
| **Ahmed** | Gay | Math |
| **Rick** | Gay | K-12 |

*Note.* Pseudonyms, sexual and gender identities, and field of work.

The research I am drawing data from was approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) of the University of Manitoba after reviewing the project proposal.

**3.3 Establishing the New Research Goals**

As a research assistant, I was involved in most of the study. Robert Mizzi and Clea Schmidt wrote the project proposal and submitted it for Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funding before I arrived in Canada. When the project funding was granted, I soon became a member of the research team and worked with the principal investigators at all other subsequent stages: ethical approval, recruitment, data collection, analysis, and knowledge mobilization. As part of the agreement with the principal investigators, I have permission to use the data and further develop a related topic of interest for my doctoral thesis.

Through the interviews with the LGBTQ teachers, I noticed some different approaches toward pedagogy and the negotiation of their own identities within their roles, which will be discussed in the following chapters. Some teachers exercised LGBTQ advocacy more openly and vocally, while others acted instinctively depending on the circumstances around them. In terms of practices, teachers also expressed their strategic approaches in working around the curriculum, so students can have extra perspectives regarding the content they engage within classrooms. This has been translated into teachers pushing the boundaries in school administration to include materials and class activities that would approach a queer lens in the agenda of the school (e.g., conversation classes about gender and sexuality, introducing literary books for children); and students also found in teachers the space to confide in and come out, for instance.

The purpose of the current research is to consider the critical and (de)colonial impact of language in LGBTQ teachers' advocacy. I already know from the larger study that criticality and advocacy were aspects of the participants' work; new dimensions in the follow-up research explored the intersection of de-colonialism and language in these teachers' professional and personal lives. As the world constantly changes, it is pivotal to analyze teachers within the most

varied locations exercising their critical standpoints. Being critical contributes to the way students and teachers themselves see the world and the other (Monte Mór, 2014).

Instead, in this context, being critical means challenging hegemonic practices and being sensitive and situated within one's locus. LGBTQ perspectives are an important, plural, and underrepresented contribution to social change. Through LGBTQ understandings of teaching internationally, teaching pedagogies become more approachable for broader audiences, and new understandings of culture and education take place in school settings. As the *Out There* study demonstrated, LGBTQ teachers embrace new ways of doing things in the classroom, in the school, and the local and national contexts, and it is timely to hear what we/they have to say.

Data for the *Out There* study was collected from January 2018 to June 2019. The participants first had an open-ended interview and subsequently a second reflection section with the research team based on photographs submitted through the Photovoice component of the study. The questions in the first interview pertained to the participants' personal and professional backgrounds. Aligning with standards for qualitative research, the interviews were an important source of data and helped identify core themes that the research team linked with theories to verify and analyze the findings. Followed by some questions on pre-departure preparation, the participants were asked about the selection processes they underwent to work at their current schools; the job interviews; visa processes; as well as feelings towards their new workplace and new cultural environment; challenges and struggles they faced when accepting their positions; and other experiences in general regarding the international teaching opportunity.

Next, the participants were asked to take part in the Photovoice component of the study. They took photos in their overseas contexts and sent them to the research team, and we set up a reflection section to review and discuss the photos. For the reflection sections, the research team

carefully attempted to understand how the photos were connected to the participants' personal and professional identities. Whether they expressed leisure pursuits, work-related experiences, or more symbolic images, the photos enabled the participants to represent the place they live and work and reflect on daily experiences using their narratives.

As I am drawing on existing data from another study, the idea is to expand on the goals of the *Out There* study (figure 7). Also, using a different lens, I would argue that the experiences of the international LGBTQ teachers are important in redefining classroom pedagogies, school administration practices, and social justice advocacy.

**Figure 7**

*Overlap and points of departure from the Out There study.*
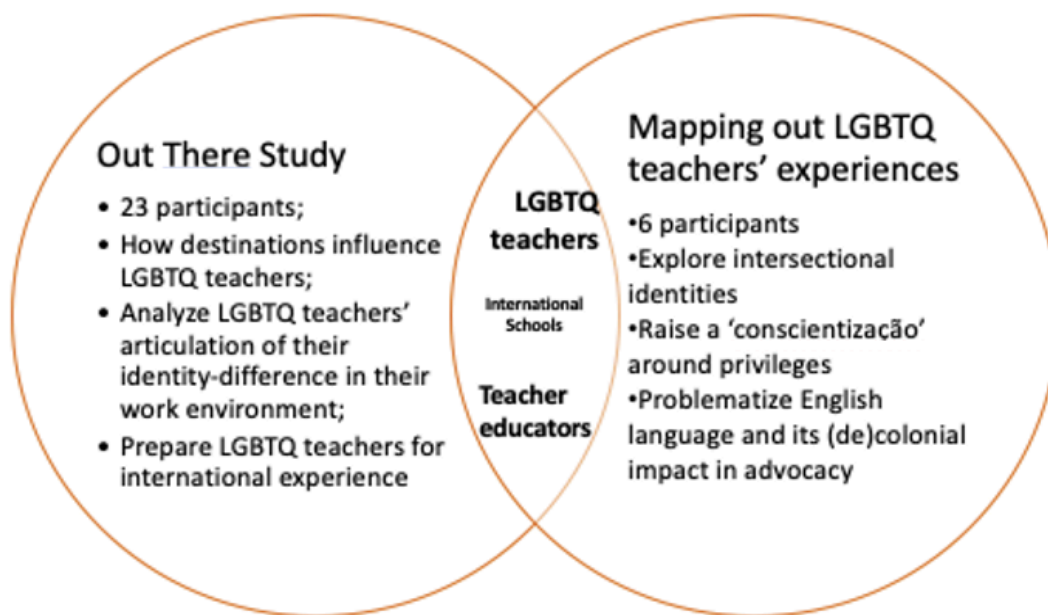


*Note.* Differences and intersecting core ideas from the studies with LGBTQ educators.

To sufficiently address these aspects above, I collected additional data from six participants. The 23 original participants were divided into four different groups (see Table 2): 1) participants with ESL/EFL teaching background; 2) participants who teach second languages

other than English (i.e., Spanish and French); 3) participants who have administrative positions; and 4) participants from regular K-12. Besides putting participants into these groups, their sexual and gender identities were considered to guarantee the inclusion of a more varied range in the LGTQ spectrum.

**Table 2**

*Participants were grouped by teaching expertise.*

| Participants with ESL/ELL background | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Louisa** | Lesbian | EAL Department | Eligible |
| **Andrew** | Gay | ESL Higher Ed. | No Answer |
| **Michael** | Gay | ESL JET Program | Not an educator anymore |
| **Ted** | Gay | ELL Elementary | Inactive email |
| **Evan** | Gay | ELL | Inactive email |
| **Jon** | Gay | ESL | No Answer |
| **Chris** | Gay | ESL JET Program | Eligible |
| **Spanish/French as a Second Language** | | | |
| **Stephen** | Gay | FSL | Not teaching |
| **Jose** | Gay | Spanish | No Answer |
| **Participants in admin positions** | | | |
| **Stephanie** | Pansexual | Higher Ed. | No Answer |
| **Karen** | Lesbian | International Office | No Answer |
| **Daniel** | Gay | Principal | - |
| **K-12 Teaching** | | | |
| **Katherine** | Trans | K-12 | Eligible |
| **Peter** | Trans | K-12 | Missed interviews |
| **Jake** | Queer non-binary | Elementary | Eligible |
| **James** | Gay | Elementary | Eligible |
| **Lawrence** | Gay | Elementary | Eligible |
| **Carlos** | Gay | K-12 | - |
| **Francesca** | Lesbian | K-12 | - |
| **Richard** | Gay | Elementary | - |
| **Jeff** | Gay | K-12 | - |
| **Ahmed** | Gay | Math | - |
| **Rick** | Gay | K-12 | - |

*Note.* Personal grouping of participants according to their work experiences.

As I reached out to almost all participants, some were not considered eligible because they were not teaching abroad anymore at the time this recruitment happened, and a few more did not respond to the invitations. A few participants were not contacted (represented by [-] in the Table above) since the number of educators needed for this study had been met. Among the six participants that were recruited (indicated as Eligible in the Table above), this study considered the experiences of Louisa in China, Chris in Japan, Katherine in the Czech Republic, Jake in Thailand, James in Myanmar, and Lawrence in the Dominican Republic. Although Louisa is included in the group of participants with an ESL/ELL background, she had obtained an administration position, adding a different perspective.

**3.4 Context of Participants: Mapping Out Political and LGBTQ Scenarios around the World**

The contexts of these participants play a role in their teaching and personal experiences. Place "[…] affords an agentive tool for educators to use as a teaching tool" (White & Downey, 2021, p. 13). Thus, this section portrays some of the LGBTQ laws and tensions in the different localities present in this study, as well as these localities' political circumstances (see Table 3). All information about LGBTQ rights in these countries comes from Equaldex (https://www.equaldex.com). Equaldex is a collaborative LGBTQ knowledge base where people often update information about same-sex marriage, adoption, discrimination, and others. While this source voices the perspectives of individuals with a personal interest in these circumstances, some of these descriptors may have changed concerning actual and ongoing legal developments in the countries portrayed in this study. To provide some specific language background on these countries, the six participants have also described each of their contexts from a linguistic perspective (e.g., multilingual countries, monolingual).

**Table 3**

*Participants' contexts of teaching.*

| Country | Political context | Linguistic scenario | Homosexuality | Transgender legal status | Same-sex adoption | LGBTQ Discrimination |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| China | Liberal democracy / Authoritarian | Multilingual | Seen as a mental disorder | Transitioning surgery is legally accepted | No protective laws | No protective laws |
| Japan | Liberal democracy | Multilingual | No regulations | Transitioning surgery is legally accepted | No protective laws | No protective laws |
| Czech Republic | Democratic / Populist / Technocratic | Multilingual | Legal | Transitioning surgery is legally accepted (cannot be married to do so) | Laws that protect same-sex marriages and adoption | Laws that protect LGBTQ people against any discrimination |
| Thailand | Volatile democracy / Military | Multilingual | Legal | Transitioning surgery is accepted, but individuals are not allowed to change their assigned gender in government documents | No protective laws | Laws that protect LGBTQ people against any discrimination |
| Myanmar | Authoritarian / New democracy | Multilingual | Illegal | Illegal | No protective laws | No protective laws |
| Dominican Republic | Democratic | Multilingual | Legal | No protective laws | Laws that protect same-sex marriages and adoption by single parents | Laws that protect LGBTQ people against any discrimination |

*Note.* Key aspects of LGBTQ realities in the countries of participants in the study.

It is important to note that despite the laws in these countries they do not guarantee an

LGBTQ person will have their rights granted or be unscathed from homophobia or transphobia

in such contexts. Furthermore, political landscapes are not static and even established rights can

be retracted (e.g., the reproductive rights debacle in the USA). Politically, a few scholars have

written about the state of democracy in various countries (Ligas, 2021; Wilkinson & Gabriëls,

2020) and views in their research, but non-academic sources also identify some gaps and challenges in the understanding of such scenarios.

For example, Pew Research Center ([https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/30/global-views-political-systems/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/30/global-views-political-systems/)) offers insights on how different countries in the world view political systems in general, including democracy and military rule for example, which can greatly impact the safety and rights of LGBTQ people. The report found on this website came from a 38-nation survey that explored the global notions of political system by each country in the study.

### 3.4.1 China

In China, homosexuality was decriminalized in 1997. However, it is considered a mental disorder and the government still prohibits discussion about homosexuality in political, educational, and social venues. With regards to marriage, there are no laws that recognize same-sex relationships or marriages, but Hong Kong and Beijing tend to be ahead of the rest of the country. In Beijing, the government recognized some limited purposes such as cohabitation, and there had been a symbolic 'First Gay marriage' there in 2009. In Hong Kong, same-sex marriages from other countries can be recognized while local unions are not recognized.

China has a legal status that allows transgender people to go through a gender transitioning surgery. Concerning same-sex adoption, LGBTQ discrimination, employment discrimination, LGBTQ people serving the military, and blood donations by gay men, there are no legal laws that protect these people's rights. And China banned conversion therapy, making it illegal in 2014, after a court decision in Beijing.

Linguistically, Chinese people speak mostly Mandarin, however, it is a multilingual country. China has over one hundred Chinese-related languages, including Hanyu, Cantonese,

and Tibetan to name a few, but languages such as Portuguese and English are also spoken in the country.

Politically, Zhai (2019) argues that China is not viewed as a liberal democracy, however, the perception of democracy might differ among Chinese citizens. Though in an authoritarian regime, Zhai's (2019) study shows that popular understandings of democracy are linked to how the state itself deals with popular demands. For example, if/when the authoritarian state attends to and satisfies the population and its needs, the level of satisfaction implicates the notion of democracy, according to Zhai (2019). When inquiring about what people understand of democracy, Zhai (2019) affirms quite a few Chinese citizens view education and information connectedness as part of a democratic system, which China has developed well. However, because democracy includes elections as one aspect of a democratic system, then the current state of China does not follow that.

More recently, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, China has been targeted with hate speech and cultural racism (Chan & Strabucchi, 2021). The actions of the government are indeed problematic given the current political regime in the country (Zhai, 2019); however, the Chinese context does implicate that equity, diversity, and inclusion, especially among LGBTQ+ people, are at stake within the country.

### 3.4.2 Japan

Being LGBTQ is not illegal in Japan, though marriage is unrecognized. Like China, some Japanese cities recognize and celebrate same-sex civil unions, but nationwide approval is still pending. It is legal to undertake gender reassignment, and transgender people are allowed to legally change their gender after surgery. Same-sex adoption is ambiguous as there are no regulations addressing the issue.

In terms of discrimination, employment, and housing, in the majority of cities in Japan, no laws or protections exist for LGBTQ people. In the military, LGBTQ persons can serve as long as they follow the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. According to the Japanese Blood Bank, LGBTQ people can donate blood, but since 2011, Red Cross Japan has reduced deferral for high HIV risk individuals from 12 to 6 months. And conversion therapy has not been fully banned yet. Despite the legalities that the government presents, LGBTQ people are overrepresented in different Japanese public sectors and people within that community are seldom covered by labour unions, for instance. Moreover, Japanese citizens still tend to hide their sexualities and gender identities in workplaces, schools, and at home for fear of oppression (Zhang, 2021).

Linguistically, Japan is erroneously considered a monolingual country with influences from Korea. Some different European countries have encouraged Japanese people to learn Korean and/or English. This view is problematic in the sense that Japan's linguistic diversity has not been accepted, and the marginalization of people who speak other languages and variants is a recurrent issue in the country.

Politically, Japan's role in global affairs (Stokes & Delvin, 2018) is important and the country "[…] is officially a liberal democratic country characterized by regular elections with the presence of legitimized political parties" (Ito-Morales, 2017, p. 116); nonetheless, Japanese nationals still carry traditional stigma around being LGBTQ+ and other social issues matters (Ito-Morales, 2017; Stokes & Delvin, 2018; Takahashi, 2021).

### 3.4.3 The Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is somewhat progressive in terms of LGBTQ issues. It is not illegal to be LGBTQ, and civil unions have been recognized there since 2018. However, despite legal protections, the country cannot guarantee that the law translates into positive or safe experiences

for LGBTQ people (see more in Chapter 4) as there are not any affirmative protections for LGBTQ in the country.

It is legal to change gender in the Czech Republic, however, as Katherine's experiences show, one needs to go through surgery, and if married one would need to divorce before changing legal gender in their documents. After surgery, the process includes getting a new birth certificate and/or a personal number (Birth Number). Adoption is possible if it is made by a single person. And any type of discrimination for sexual or gender identity is illegal in the country. LGBTQ people can openly serve in the military, but they cannot donate blood. The conversion therapy ban is still pending, but it is not criminalized or regulated.

Historically, Czech and Bohemian are the official languages of the country, but you can find languages that result from the fusion of Slovak, Polish, German, and Latin, too. The Czech Republic's political context shows an increase in populism and technocracy (Guasti, 2020), which reshapes and gives new meanings to what is understood by democracy. According to Guasti (2020) populism and technocracy "rely on a non-pluralist conception of society, the existence of a unified general interest, and an unmediated relationship between the people and the elite" (p. 473).

The political regime in the Czech Republic does not guarantee that LGBTQ+ people will be granted their human rights. This context puts LGBTQ+ diversity into perspective and challenges us to problematize why it is possible to express one's sexual identity, but when it comes to gender identity, the barriers are still too many. Katherine's example highlighted that trans people have no voice or place within the country. And despite the attempt of bringing people and the elite together to find common ground in politics, the oppression of people who

challenge the binary notion of male/female is an ongoing issue (Guasti, 2020; Králíčková, 2021; Simons et al, 2021).

### 3.4.4 Thailand

In Thailand, it is not illegal to identify as an LGBTQ person, and marriage is not recognized, although civil unions were legalized in 2019. Changing legal gender in Thailand cannot happen, and individuals who have gone through gender reassignment can only change their names in government documents, not their gender.

The Thai Constitution prohibits any sort of discrimination against LGBTQ people, as well as any discrimination against diverse sexual and gender identities in workplaces, housing, and the military. Blood donation is currently banned as the country opted out of receiving gay male blood donations. Conversion therapy has not been banned in Thailand, and it is not criminalized either. In terms of language diversity, the country's main language is Thai, but it is multilingual since it has different dialects and tribal languages. English and Mandarin are among the most common additional language that people learn in Thailand.

Thailand is a context of volatility and damage to what was once called democracy (Elinoff, 2019). With military interventions, the government openly stated that too much freedom has brought the country issues it would not have had in case the government exercised more power. Political debates are being silenced, and the military service has used physical force to detain any activists associated with more democratic views. Furthermore, the natural environment of the country is at risk as members of the administration discuss a spatial cleansing, which will "clear the way for infrastructure projects and restore spatial, political, and moral order to the country" (Elinoff, 2019 p. 158). Thailand's democracy is being suppressed,

and the political aspirations of the country do not seem promising, which can impact the legality and rights of LGBTQ people.

### 3.4.5 Myanmar

Myanmar has imprisonment as punishment for LGBTQ people, and one person can get between 10 years to life in prison for being LGBTQ. Things are slowly changing in Myanmar, and one of the biggest LGBTQ events in the country was the Pride Parade in 2018. Same-sex marriage is also unrecognized. There are no laws in place for changing one's legal gender. Same-sex adoption is legal in the country, but there are no laws and protections for LGBTQ who suffers discrimination in the country, housing, or work environment. There seems to have no discrimination against LGBTQ people serving the military or donating blood. And conversion therapy does not have a clear stand in the law in Myanmar.

The country is a multilingual country due to its several different ethnic groups. Burma, or Burmese, is the official language which is learned at the country's state schools.

Given the challenges of a democratic system in Myanmar imposed by its authoritarianism, scholars such as Stokke and Aung (2020) analyze this change and describe Myanmar as "a relatively stable hybrid regime" (p. 274) instead. After fifty years of dictatorship, in 2011, the power was given to a civilian government. Though the new government started implementing reforms that somehow follow a more democratic approach (e.g., support of civil and political freedom, electoral democracy, support of peace and economic liberalization), its party still originated from the military. Hence, the definition of a hybrid regime justifies that democracy is still under military rules.

More recently, despite the attempt of the government to move forward with initiatives to peacefully approach political negotiations, the military has forcefully demonstrated its authority

and used its power to prevent any constitutional amendments. Moreover, as the continuing use of military power suppresses and damages the democracy in the country, protesters have tried to raise awareness and speak out, aiming at maintaining democracy and resisting the feeling of fear toward the ruling military (Fenn, 2021).

### 3.4.6 The Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic also presents some unclear legal regulations toward LGBTQ people. It is not illegal to identify as an LGBTQ person, but marriage is still unrecognized among locals. Foreign same-sex marriage is recognized, and same-sex marriage legalization status is still pending for the Dominican Republic Citizens. And again, the legal status of the country does not guarantee LGBTQ people will feel safe and protected in the country.

Adoption is allowed if it is made by single people, according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ruling in 2018. The status of the country towards changing legal gender is still ambiguous as there are no laws in place for transgender people. Concerning overall discrimination, the Dominican Republic has laws that protect and guarantee the safety of LGBTQ people in housing and work environments, the military, and blood donation centres. The country has not banned conversion therapy, though its status is also pending.

The country is also multilingual, mostly because of the immigration history of Asian people to the country, but its official language is Spanish. English is established as a higher-class language, followed by French and some variations of French. That is due to the number of individuals who learn English through private education, which means only a certain population of the country has to access to the capital to pay for their learning.

Politically, the recent government administration of the Dominican Republic ended sixteen years of centre-left Dominican Liberation Party ruling. Unfortunately, tensions arose

with the president elected in who is willing to recover the country financially after the COVID-19 outbreak, but who also announced the building of a fence and the toughening of relationships with Haiti. Democratization is considerably new in the country (Tillman, 2021), as militarism ended in the 1970s, and the country is in the transition to a stronger democratic system.

## 3.5 Developing New Research Methods

The starting point of the analysis of the data is the two first interviews from the *Out There* study. After the original themes were found, this study built on the broader identity discussion from the bigger project. The supporting data collected through one more round of interviews with these six participants focused on a new set of questions (see Appendix C) that helped broaden concepts of identity, language, and advocacy. The questions, which had a focus on the English language within their teaching context, helped answer the new research questions.

Methodologically, because each participant in the study has had their varied struggles and successes in their teaching countries, data was organized to explore each of the individual's shared experiences (see table 4). These experiences were treated as individual case studies, that highlighted important aspects of participants' intersectional identities.

To delve into each case study, I drew on some aspects of the narratives in data analysis to approach each participant's professional and personal experiences. As defined by Creswell (2013), a case study aims at "developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases" (p. 104). Therefore, these educators' stories provided a chance to voice different concerns about local and international understandings of what it means to be an LGBTQ educator. In the analysis process, the mapping out of these study participants, who are living abroad, raised points that should be carefully considered as results of interactions between their local and international relationships.

**Table 4**

*Individual cases in the study.*

| Participant | Individual Cases |
|---|---|
| Katherine | *"What's being trans like?" From "we will allow you to transition" to "I admire you"* |
| Louisa | *"I've never been that much of an advocate": a lesbian school administrator's case of change in China* |
| Chris | *"It's a CELTA course… I want to be a bit more employable": a case of identity construction of a gay ESL teacher (assistant)* |
| Jake | *"I don't care enough about the culture of work to not advocate": a case of a gay non-binary person decolonizing teaching and workplace* |
| Lawrence | *"I use the kids' language and the issues that have come up between the kids": an 'a-ha moments' case of a gay teacher* |
| James | *"It is important to me to tell my story about what happened in Indonesia": a case of a veteran gay teacher* |

*Note.* Each case is based on individual participants' reflections.

For each of the individual case studies, I drew on data from the main project to establish each case and analyze them. With the data collected, I was able to identify experiences that have been relevant to reshaping these educators' practices. All participants had two interviews, and I had access to all their transcripts. From the six participants, Katherine's transcripts were not fully

done as there had been some technical issues recording the interviews. So, to map out

Katherine's experiences shared in those interviews, I relied on notes made during the meetings.

Within this research, a cartographic method (Santoro, 2014) for data analysis was used to

understand the particularities of each participant, so later they could be compared to develop the

analysis and discussion. My choice of cartography to analyze the study data reflects the

possibility of listening to what participants have to say, identifying similarities in experiences at

a transnational level, and creatively presenting data through an array of images and narratives.

### 3.5.1 Cartographic Method for Data Analysis

As a strategy for data analysis and taking into consideration the range of identity aspects

of the participants in the study, a cartographic method suited my research agenda as it is

> […] dynamic, as it leverages rapidly changing data, embraces new forms of technology,
>
> and is applied to constantly change phenomena. Cartography is insightful, as maps and
>
> their users are expected to deliver insight to shape the future. Cartography is responsive
>
> because map users are making and changing maps themselves, and maps are in turn
>
> causing users to change. And finally, cartography is diverse as a wide range of data,
>
> users, interfaces, and problems constitute the context within which mapping is applied"
>
> (Griffin, Robinson, & Roth, 2017, p. 4).

Santoro (2014) implies that as researchers who work with culturally diverse subjects,

there is a need to be sensitive and reflective about the stories we hear, share, and retell.

Whichever research goals we have as researchers, the questions we want to ask are impacted by

our experiences and the way we understand the world. In this research, for instance, the context

where I come from informs questions about identity (e.g., LGBTQ and teacher identity) and

teaching. For a greater part of my professional life, I have tried to dissociate different layers of

my identity, thinking that in the classrooms, one (e.g., LGBTQ identity) should not interfere with the other (e.g., teacher identity).

The positioning of a researcher needs to be interrogated as assumptions have already been made and they influence the way we carry out our research agenda. In support of a more robust data analysis, Santoro (2014) noticed how complex the experiences of her research subjects were due to the intersecting information gathered through the interviews. The participants in this study are examples of complex multilayered intersectional identities. Their positionalities in schools, for instance, worked as catalysts to the unlearning of colonial and heteronormative standards of behaviour both in and outside classrooms (Grant, 2011).

As also noted, the experiences of the subjects of research changed given the myriad of people and things that happened in those research subjects' lives regarding their relationships with other people and relationships with their localities. Events contributed to the shifting of identities and such changes can be framed through a postmodern lens which features the particularities, situatedness, and fragmentation of life experiences and how they coexist with participants' practices (Santoro, 2014).

Concerning the concept of mapmaking from data in an educational context, Santoro (2014) states it is a tool which creates a visual representation of social features. As some of the characteristics of mapmaking, it illustrates the multiplicity, heterogeneity, and messiness of knowledge construction. Therefore, it portrays elements of human experiences that play a significant role in working through an issue. Santoro (2014) defines different types of maps: situational, meso-level, and positional.

A situational map, according to Santoro (2014), represents major elements in a situation. At a meso-level, the social world/arena maps work on the description of social worlds where the

study takes place. And the positional map refers to the positions taken in the data within the discursive issues. The researcher creates the map based on the narratives and stories of the interviews. A biographical narrative can accompany the map then created, which gives the reader some insights into what had been said (situational mapmaking). After highlighting what arose out of the interviews, a relational map is created so there could be a crossover among the other maps to see where things converge and diverge (Santoro, 2014).

Through mapmaking, it is possible to explore the unknown and communicate the known. In this way, maps are useful tools for knowledge mobilization and knowledge construction. Regarding methods that are needed for map making, questionnaires, interview observations, and ethnographic methods, in general, are useful for developing and analyzing maps. Maps can establish and perpetuate power relationships. And cultural and social cartographers extend research into those realms of human existence not amenable to quantification inspiring such questions as how can I represent the complexities of the world through map use? How is my data producing credible and useful information?

In this study, mapping out participants' experiences validated the post-critical and intersectional individualities of LGBTQ educators. In addition to theorizing experiences of the LGBTQ community members, a look at each participant's stories was pivotal to identifying how plural and diverse their trajectories are. To justify a more intersectional approach to this research, Museus and Griffin (2011) highlight the limited views of qualitative and quantitative studies when they rely on "socially constructed and commonly used concepts" of identity categories to label their objects and subjects of research. According to them,

> research that categorizes students along singular dimensions of identity provides limited
>
> information, which can restrict the ability of higher education scholars and institutional

researchers to fully – and sometimes accurately – understand and respond to problems

that exist in […] education. (Museus & Griffin, 2011, p. 5)

Therefore, analyzing data by considering a single feature of people's identities leave

questions unanswered and problems unaddressed. An intersectional approach, in this case, can

help researchers to conduct their studies and ask different questions, and consequently generate

different discussions. Asking participants 'who are you?' is unlikely to generate a robust answer

if only one aspect of identity is prioritized. The spectrum of identity is extensive as it refers to

people's race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and many other aspects of identity.

And in analyzing the intersecting identities of the LGBTQ teachers in this study, a cartographic

approach is key for meaningfully engaging with such aspects.

### 3.6 Interconnecting Participants' Experiences

The cartographic approach allows me to work with the data both vertically and

horizontally. Vertically, I conducted an analysis and discussions of each participant separately,

highlighting their struggles and successes in teaching internationally. Horizontally, I was able to

interconnect all individuals' maps and come up with discussions that a majority of participants

have mentioned in their discussions with the researchers. Each analysis provides an in-depth look

into participants' selves, whereas the interconnected data offers input to their teaching

experiences more broadly (see Figure 8).

In the interconnected data, all participants shared insights on language and identity based

on their experiences teaching (in) English. Therefore, discussions about English and identity,

English and power, and English and intersectionality and privilege are some of the most

recurrent findings in the third round of interviews with the participants (see Chapter 5). Their

experiences varied considerably, mostly because of their sexual and gender identities. For

example, the cis gay men in the study tended to encounter fewer barriers than the transwoman participant. Nonetheless, professional development, especially towards more queer pedagogies, is a key aspect of these teachers' lives.

**Figure 8**

*Interconnected experiences of educators in the study.*
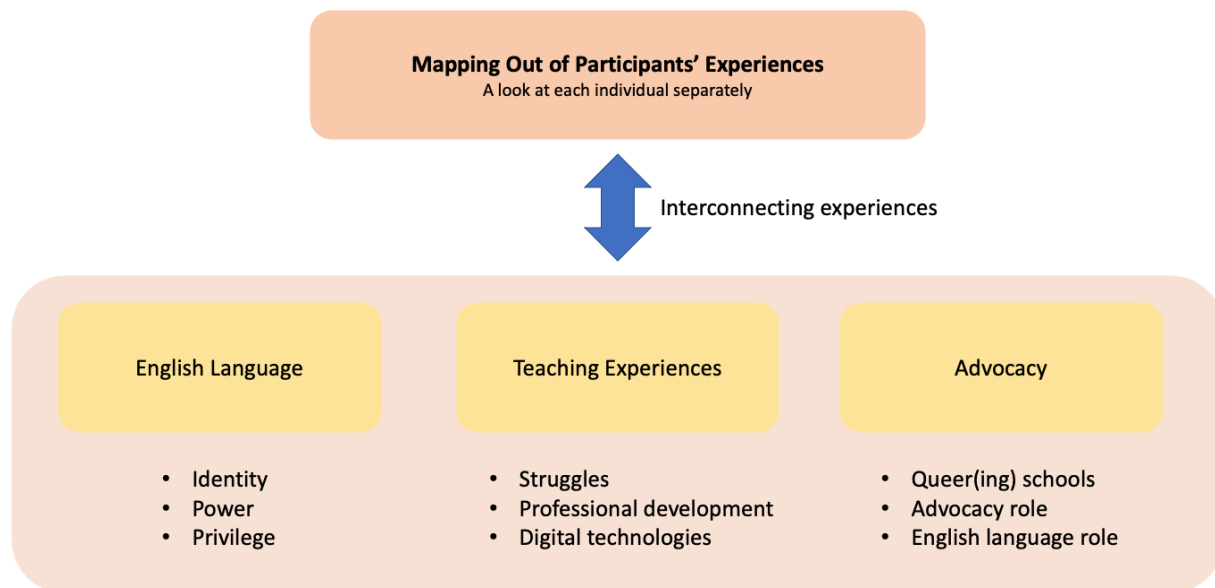


*Note.* These themes were observed across all participants' experiences.

To reflect on how participants themselves think of intersectionality and to approach what it means to be aware of one's intersectional identities, the educators had a chance to look at the intersectional wheel (Simpson, 2009) and reflect on it (see Appendix C). The question about intersectionality explored educators' perceptions of Western LGBTQ people and how they relate to questions of power, privilege, and identity within their international contexts. From the limitations they shared and because professional development programs are inclined to avoid sexual and gender identity matters in educational practices, these educators have relied on online communities and social media to find and create relevant discussions around queer inclusion (see Chapter 6).

Ultimately, concerning advocacy, all insights emerged from the participants' responses in all interviews, which supported significant discussions and strategies for queering (international) education, understanding advocacy and LGBTQ marginalization, enhancing professional development, and looking into the role of technologies in LGBTQ educators' experiences abroad (see Chapter 6). As a goal determined by this study, the role of the English language in helping these educators advocate is unquestionable, leading the data analysis into revisiting the three research questions developed here.

## 3.7 Ethical Considerations

In terms of maintaining an ethical relationship with participants, the recruited educators were given options to minimize their vulnerability while participating in this study. For example, oral consent reduces paper trails, allowing participants to protect their identity while sharing their stories and experiences in schools that could be more readily identifiable.

When thinking of the different power dynamics in the educators' contexts, some participants in higher positions at schools (e.g., administrators) were more vocal and open about their opinions, whereas teachers, for instance, tended to perceive and reflect on the insecurities generated by challenging school culture. As seen previously in this chapter, participants' countries and localities of teaching varied significantly, as certain localities were very hostile towards LGBTQ people.

My positionality as a researcher had to be mitigated, too. Though the participants of the study felt safe to share their opinions and answer my questions, I still developed my observations, interview questions, and analysis plans from a position of power as I determined the steps in the study. From a post-critical lens (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Paraíso, 2012), my background as a Brazilian researcher was on one hand advantageous due to the interplay of

different cultures, but on the other, problematic in terms of unlearning cultural pragmatic concepts such as queering schools, trans people's experience, and power dynamics as seen in the discussion chapters.

The power dynamic also permeated my choices for data use, especially when participants had provided photos that were later reflected on. Although participants were encouraged to focus on places rather than people, the majority still consented to include photos of themselves. When confidentiality and risk of participants were discussed before the interviews for this study, in particular, a few participants even questioned the use of pseudonyms and wondered why their identities had to be masked, implying that this research has the potential to change research paradigms but still falls into the systematization of data collection and analysis. Participants who consented to their pictures being displayed were notified of the potential risks but still agreed to have the photos presented here. For potential safety reasons, however, their names were replaced by pseudonyms.

Some of the drawbacks I have found in participating and thinking about this research include my worry, as a researcher, in sharing my views for fearing they are going to sound insufficient or that I am constantly changing my mind about something. What I write today may not be what I believe tomorrow, and it becomes a potentially endless process of understanding when to submit a final version of a draft. As the first part of data had been already collected for the study of LGBTQ teachers working overseas, the overlap of the main project with my own made it harder to set new goals and move on.

Also, when determining validity, as an exercise to move away from my own bias, Paraíso (2002) suggests that to disconnect from what critical research is, researchers cannot limit their practices. That means they cannot be held hostage to a certain research methodology because

they are most likely comfortable with it. If they do it and do not reconsider other ways of seeing and doing research, their practices become narrow. Consequently, going beyond myself is necessary for seeing a new meaning to something I think I know.

For this study, approaching it with an open mind and flexibility to understand that the research process is not stagnant was a strategy I found to understand how the analysis evolved during this time. In addition, feedback from my advisor, and dialogues with friends from academia and my personal social circle enabled me to look at this data more critically and carefully. Assumptions, judgement, and common-sense knowledge had always been challenged to validate the plurality of knowledges and experiences of the educators in the study.

## Chapter 4 - Mapping Out Participants' Experiences

The chapter portrays and discusses participants' individual experiences overseas. All findings presented in this, and future chapters come from transcriptions of the different sets of interviews with each participant. Looking into the different intersectional identities of each participant throughout this chapter enables a new understanding of the complexity of different identity layers and how they impact each individual in their different contexts (Hankivsky, 2014; McCall, 2005).

The first case presents Louisa, a married lesbian cis woman who worked as an administrator in an international school in China and sought to improve teaching efficacy.

The second case is about Chris, the participant who identified as gay and was in Japan through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program.

The third case introduces Katherine, a trans woman who taught in the Czech Republic and advocated for trans people's rights through her teaching and scholarly work.

The fourth case represents a non-binary person named Jake, an elementary school teacher who learned to navigate decolonization, privilege, and power in Thailand.

The fifth case in this study is about James, a veteran gay teacher whose teaching contexts were unique to other LGBTQ teachers working abroad.

The sixth and last case introduces Lawrence, a gay cis man who also worked in elementary education in Latin America and made sure to speak the language of the students.

Participants' voices are shown in the following chapters. Their reflections from interviews (e.g., through quotes) and photographs were included to facilitate the discussions and meaning-making processes. For the first part of the analysis, in Katherine's case, the first two interviews obtained through the *Out There* study could not be transcribed due to technological

issues. However, notes were taken from all the researchers who conducted those interviews, and email exchanges that contained relevant information were also used to describe her experiences accurately.

**4.1 Case 1: "I've never been that much of an advocate": a lesbian school administrator's case of change in China**

Louisa is a lesbian administrator, married to a teacher who worked at the same school. As an established professional, she was looking into having her own child with her wife. Louisa's experiences teaching abroad were also extensive, having a background in adult literacy and English language teaching. As an American, she was an athlete and received awards due to her commitment to work. Louisa was an experienced administrator at an international school, and a band singer in China. As years go by, Louisa found herself reconnecting spiritually, and travelling with her wife to know different cultures and peoples.

**Figure 9**

*Louisa's singing on the left, and prayers on the right.*



*Note.* Louisa's reflections touched base on different identity aspects including hobbies and spirituality.

As a married couple, Louisa and her wife had not had numerous difficulties with visas and paperwork as both are educators and able to sponsor their own visas separately. However, they did encounter situations in which same sex married couples had bigger bureaucratic issues. Because same-sex marriage is not recognized in China, Louisa and her partner also had barriers trying to get pregnant:

> […] Fertility is reserved for married couples who have been trying, under their doctor's supervision, for some time. So, they try on their own, then they try under a doctor's supervision. Technically, our marriage isn't recognized here. So, we would not qualify.
>
> […] It's not an option in Hong Kong even though they're slightly more progressive. It is not an option in Taiwan. I am sure it's an option in Thailand. But we're talking about the same amount, you know, the same amount of problems, the same amount of time and energy.

On the professional level, Louisa's experiences as an administrator changed over the years. When reflecting on setting up their department teams, Louisa explained that her school was a lot more attentive to who they were hiring: "[…] it's like, do you have a degree? It needs to get validated. They're not just simply accepting your degree". This example highlights the intent of international schools to recruit capable employees, and according to Louisa, was a shift in how schools operated. International schools sought dedicated administrative staff who, like Louisa, could

> "[…] handle a lot of school initiatives. So, I do a lot with our school improvement plan. So, I oversee all the heads of the department. For all departments. Special needs, guidance, arts and design, social studies. Everything. I oversee all of them. So, the biggest part of my job is to work with them to make sure that they have a systematic

approach for the coming year or the next coming years. So, I work with them on measurable goals and inventories. Just to keep things on track and all that.

Louisa did not discuss curriculum diversity a lot, but research shows that international schools follow a rather heteronormative curriculum (Jones-Redmond, 2007), and for LGBTQ people, this means more marginalization and oppression. When analyzing the concept of inclusive practices, inclusion is often directed to supporting people who have disability needs (Steck & Perry, 2016; Capper & Young, 2014). For example, when school administrators and policies are thinking of supportive practices for the students, some intersectionality aspects (Capper & Young, 2014) are not taken into consideration. That means that being inclusive has been continuously linked to the fact that you need to have a visible condition, so schools can act upon those to solve the problem. Educational institutions do not attempt to understand that inclusion is also subjective, personal, and contextual, as in the example of LGBTQ+ people who do not visibly show any physical limitations but carry emotional and mental overwhelmingness for trying to adapt to a heteronormative context. Louisa's comment on managing school improvement of inclusion, too, could be potentially problematic to question her definition of inclusive practices in her school.

When commenting on the hiring processes, Louisa shared that

[…] by the school's curriculum, by the way, we hire and whom we hire, we target mid-career teachers with five years or more. We target mid-career teachers with families. We're not looking for the Canadian retired teachers with a salary. We're not really looking for the first-year teachers. We'll take them if we have to. But we're now looking for those teachers under five years of experience and more. It's actually detrimental to

our program because we are still moving so fast being in this change. We still have a long way to go. And we don't have the time.

According to Capper and Young (2014), the issue is that "inclusion is not central in the educational leadership for social justice discourse; rather, it remains marginalized, ill-defined, and undebated" (p. 159). Indeed, administrators aim at having a broader community engagement and supporting students with their needs, but what also needs to be problematized is the reason why they think of those. The literature is extensive in saying that the neoliberal agenda, mostly on international education, has a greater impact and emphasis on student achievement (Jones-Redmond, 2007; Steck & Perry, 2016; Capper & Young, 2014), and educators need to balance and critically evaluate their classroom and work choices.

One of the research questions in this study investigates the role of advocacy and the participants' work to draw attention to LGBTQ issues in their international contexts. As discussed in Chapter 7, advocacy has different levels depending mostly on how individuals see the role of advocacy in their lives (Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2011). With that in mind, the case of Louisa illustrates the role of an administrator who does not see herself as much of an LGBTQ advocate. Instead, she is an advocate of a "[…] better and more efficient" curriculum.

Achievement has been a central goal in Louisa's administrative decisions as she needed to justify the investments put in their schools by the parents of the students:

[…] We're heavily invested in a change. We just spent the last four years figuratively and literally tearing that school down and rebuilding it. And a massive part of that, we even built a new campus. Figuratively, we've ripped our school apart and rebuilt it. We're going into a big accreditation. That's a lot of work. There are of course changes because it requires an extra, you know, just taking my role one step farther […]. To stay on the

top, being one of the best schools, well the best school in the city right now, […] what we look for in our school culture, we need that experience to come too. It's not that new teachers don't have that, it's other things that they don't have that are detrimental to our program.

From a social justice lens, the focus on quality and efficacy in teaching are objectively treated. Therefore, more inclusive practices should be considered as the overemphasized thinking of achievement can be detrimental to the development of more critical and social attitudes (Capper & Young, 2014).

The financial stability can be positive for Anglo-Western educators who consolidate their careers abroad (Tarc, Tarc, & Wu, 2019). In Louisa's case, as an administrator,

[…] I can say confidently that we're in a very good position career-wise. I think we have a lot of respect at school. We're both seen as being part of the leadership. We're always consulted on so many things. In terms of where we are professionally, I don't think it would be any better, it couldn't be any better anywhere else. We've also worked here for years too. Well, we're not struggling. Even with our personal life, a healthy and loving relationship. But wanting to move on to that next phase of getting pregnant, that's been hard for us. […] we're not coming back [to Canada] and living in our parents' basement just to try and do that.

## 4.2 Case 2: "I want to be a bit more employable": a case of identity construction of a gay ESL teacher (assistant)

The third individual case presents Chris' experiences as a teacher in his early-career years. Chris is a gay British teacher in Japan. Although having been born in Japan, Chris went back to the UK at a young age and got his drama background by attending universities where he

grew up. Chris was a young professional who found in the JET Program the chance to teach abroad for the first time. As a gay male, Chris has taken the time teaching in Japan to figure out his own identity, both as a teacher and a gay British man. Chris was interested in being immersed in whichever culture he is in, therefore he looked for language classes to learn the local language and engage with the community to learn a bit more from the local culture. After a few years of teaching in the same program, Chris has found smooth ways of addressing and discussing LGBTQ issues around his workplace, offering students an opportunity to safely talk about them, for example, in English conversation classes. When interviewed, Chris was taking his master's in English language teaching and learning because in Japan, due to opportunities to grow professionally when he completed more credentials.

This case contributes to the theories of the formation of teachers' identities (Trent, 2016) as this teacher offers insights on identity construction based on discourse, agency, practice, and language (Trent, 2016; Ellwood, 2006). Unfortunately, international education schools, mostly in the ESL industry, see profit opportunities in young fluent/native English speakers. Hiring someone who comes from countries such as the USA, Canada, the UK, or Australia is a problematic issue as they are hired on the basis of the language they speak and nationality, erasing any other identity dimension from the process (Trent, 2016; Mizzi, 2014).

In Chris' example,

[…] when applying for this position, I went over the paperwork in the initial application. Two references. One essay. Then the interview at the embassy in London. And a short English grammar test. And in the interview, they just asked quite a few questions. "What would you teach about British culture?" Or general questions about Japan too. And it was just one interview.

In studies about teacher identity construction, especially in the early years of their careers, the experiences presented in this section show and confirm, once again, identity as dynamic. In this example, this teacher is negotiating his identity construction by working through expectations and realities of being inside a classroom; the relations with others (e.g., colleagues, students, school board); and the agency of being able to be vocal about other aspects of his identity that could have been absent in schools before. According to Trent (2016), certain meanings pass as non-negotiable in educational contexts, and the privilege of so-called native-English speakers is also non-negotiable in many settings.

For someone like Chris, who is also negotiating their LGBTQ identity along with their teacher identity, the process of moving abroad can become a struggle:

> […] I guess when I came to Japan, I really didn't know the landscape of what it is like to be gay in Japan. Do I come out? How do I approach that at work? I was feeling pretty apprehensive about it. Every situation is different, and there is quite a lot of generic advice. Like you can't come out, or you can wait until you feel comfortable to go.

For the ESL field, this case indicates that teachers' identities cannot be concentrated on only the language one speaks. Rather, understanding teachers' identities as multileveled and multifaceted align with the deconstruction of standardized North American or British English teaching and testing (Pilcher & Richards, 2017). In terms of schools' preparedness when receiving LGBTQ educators (Mizzi, 2014), I would argue that the matter of invisibility of LGBTQ people, for example, is deeper and rooted in a system that obligates teachers to fit into school curriculum boxes. When thinking of the wider Japanese society, the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is clear in Chris' experiences as an international teacher in a society that carries oppressive traditions and stigma.

Chris, as a teacher, found ways to incorporate LGBTQ knowledge in and out of the classroom, through conversations with colleagues, engagement with the LGBTQ community, and blog posts he himself wrote to inform future LGBTQ teachers who travel to Japan for the JET Program (see Figure 10:

> I think the more I've been in Japan, the more comfortable I have found to be open. I feel proud to live here. Proud to be working as an openly gay man at school. […] being part of the LGBT community has helped me to be more open. I feel like I have built more confidence. So, I can be more out even, not just at work but in other areas of my life. […] I realized I can talk about LGBT topics with my colleagues.

**Figure 10**

*Blog themes*
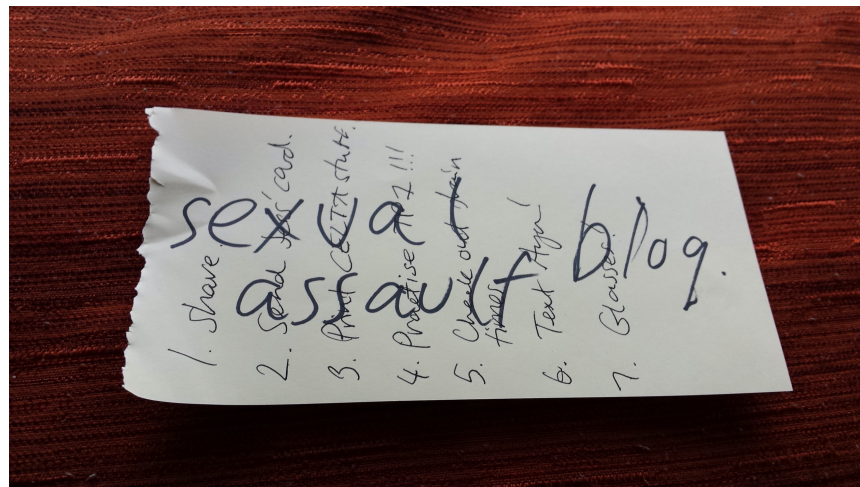


*Note.* Chris' notes for ideas for future posts.

**4.3 Case 3: "What's being trans like?" A case from "we will allow you to transition" to "I admire you"**

Katherine is a trans woman who has vast experience teaching abroad. With a background in politics, master's, and Ph.D., Katherine was very vocal about trans issues and structural feminism both at school and in academic events such as panel presentations in Europe: "[…] So,

I'm conscious that I'm educated. […] that I'm well spoken. I'm conscious, that I have a rather nondescript accent. I transitioned after I left Saudi. And a lot of my ex-students have been extremely supportive. And so, that for me suggests that they learn more than simply English".

**Figure 11**

*Katherine's sign to stop transphobia.*



*Note.* Katherine's advocacy is portrayed in the choice of showing a face picture.

The lack of supportive laws for trans people in the Czech Republic is a constant reminder that this population is constantly suppressed in and out of classrooms. Although Katherine faced transphobia at the school, from both colleagues and students, Katherine has found the means to voice concerns and fight for equality as shared:

> […] I was two years presenting as a man, and then things happened in my life. And then I
>
> transitioned, what, one year and always very public and so forth. If I had transitioned in
>
> the UK, it would've been completely different. […] to transition in this country, in the

Czech Republic. You have to be sterilized. I had to get divorced […]. Twenty-four years

of marriage, I think 24 years married in this country is that achievement. For you with

one partner, transitioning, it's a miracle. And yet the law requires trans people to be

divorced because same-sex marriage is illegal in this country. Oh, so legally it would

have been much easier in the UK. But also, I mean, the UK these days is not a very

friendly place to trans people.

The socio, political, and cultural context of the Czech Republic contributes to the

marginalization of trans people and Katherine's case illustrates a problematic way of dealing

with trans people/educators in the country. Despite the attempt to say it is not what happens,

transphobia is a current issue within the LGBTQ community in the Czech Republic and across

the globe, and this narrative challenges how the exclusion of trans people is being ignored in

inclusive pedagogies and teaching practices (Buterman, 2015), or even in school administrations

(Mizzi, 2013; 2014). Trans people's exclusion is a matter of civil rights (Duque, 2020;

Buterman, 2015), and most administrators are "failing to uphold the statute, regulation, or policy

(Buterman, 2015, p. 45) even when there is little legislation on the subject. That said, inclusion

practices are utopian for trans people in general, and what this example calls for is a more

foundational structural reform.

Katherine navigated difficult scenarios where there was misgendering or where the

school board needed to permit the transition.  As Buterman (2015) shows, no one should be

discriminated against on the basis of their gender identity. And while "many educators already

practice inclusion, […] this practice is inconsistent across educators as a whole" (p. 46), resulting

in exclusionary practices (Buterman, 2015) or the invisibility of trans people (Duque, 2020). Hart

and Hart (2018) describe that a gay, lesbian, or bi person, for example, will not need to disclose

their sexuality in the workspace, as they can conform to gender expression norms. But a trans person generally has their identity status revealed and cannot hide that.

Despite being excellent, hard-working educators and receiving support from students and staff, transgender people, as presented here, often struggle with legal proceedings which can be non-existent for them. In those cases, being trans transfers from being a personal choice to become an administrative and often public matter. Buterman's (2015) narrative is an example of how the administration lacks empathy and respect toward trans people when they implicate themselves in teachers' transitioning processes.

Contacting educators' unions and lawyers is abuse and generates trauma, as "no one needs to call their lawyer to ask about this legality [i.e., transitioning] on your behalf" (Buterman, 2015, p. 33). Katherine's experience having to talk to the school's administrators demonstrates that school culture is preoccupied with teachers' cis-normative imaginaries and behaviours. Although Katherine was able to go through the transitioning process, the awareness of and battle against transphobia fell short as "[…] the source of a lot of the prejudice against me is my voice and not my language. I mean, there is active prejudice against trans people. Using inappropriate pronouns. So misgendering".

Among educators, other teachers can be also absent and less likely to advocate for peers and students (Hart & Hart, 2018). The policies, community attitudes, and lack of administrative support only confirm that current systems have gaps in inclusion, empathy, and care practices (DePalma, 2010; Kearns, Mitton-Kükner, & Tompkins, 2017). In Katherine's example, after having a class observed by an administrator,

> […] the report came back throughout the day. It was very good because it was a very
>
> good lesson. And it used my initials and it said DY does this. He also does that. And this

is somebody who, for the past two years, is simply presenting as a woman, and casually using inappropriate pronouns. They call me sir. Even if I can, I can wear a dress and heels. I'm under disciplinary measures because, well, basically because my stress levels are up here and I'm under the measures. When you told me about administration, it was pointed out to me that as a trans person I have no rights. We will not back you up. And if there are any. If there is anything, I would go just transfer [into] the classroom, because they cannot do things in law. The fraction of litigation. And because I have no legal status, you know, I don't do anything.

Katherine's teaching is purposefully designed to educate their students, and despite the hardships, students realize that Katherine is a happier person in the class. Not being oblivious to the fact that Katherine's depth of voice is an issue in the classroom that causes misgendering, Katherine reflects that if in the UK, there would have been more legal protection both in and outside school:

[…] I do think I would have had more legal protection like employment protection, and health care than I do in this country. It is pretty precarious in this country. Even more so if you're in a professional position because you have no rights as a trans person. Period. Again, I faced homophobia every day. That doesn't sound cool.

Katherine's personal experiences suggest that transphobia can be one of the most challenging issues an LGBTQ person can go through. Notwithstanding race, class, nationality, education, economic status, and employability, gender non-confirming people struggle to fit into the male-female identity functions (Butler, 2006).

**4.4 Case 4: "I don't care enough about the culture of work to not advocate": a case of a gay non-binary person decolonizing teaching and workplace**

The fourth individual case is that of Jake. Jake is an American non-binary person who is also married. They live in Thailand where Jake teaches, and their husband writes books. Jake's experiences abroad started in Germany, then Korea, Kuwait where they met their husband, and now Thailand. Their husband's graduate work has inspired Jake to increase their self-awareness as a non-binary teacher who teaches in English. Privilege, colonialism, and culture are keywords in Jake's shared experiences teaching abroad. While sometimes they face some administrative backlash for advocating for a more inclusive curriculum, Jake has found on the social media platform Twitter a community that they can share ideas with and broaden discussions around micro-aggressions, racism, and heteronormativity at schools. Jake recognized a few groups of people (e.g., trans Black women, Indigenous people) are still silenced in many aspects of society today, and it is through the #queer_educhat that they learn, empathize, and support non-dominant teaching practices.

Jake exercised a different level of advocacy, being direct in their efforts at school to change curriculum and adapt materials that include more queer, Black, and Indigenous knowledges. However, as advocacy is explored in its section (see Chapter 7), this case will focus on the example of what decolonizing education can look like (Pardo, 2019; Mignolo, 2010; 2018; Kumaravadivelu, 2016). For Jake, this meant creating new teaching resources as

> […] everything was kind of very niche, or it was sort of on the outside. There weren't big
> Twitter chats about queer students. There weren't a lot of groups that were active that
> had, you know, that heard voices of trans people of colour. So, I started a hashtag chat a
> couple of weeks ago, it's #queer_educhat and I surveyed people around Twitter and said I

want to talk about this. This chat is happening right now, and I want to talk about queer educators that are teaching right now. Issues about queer students and queer teachers, but no one is having these conversations regularly.

Culturally, Jake challenged white queer movements by saying:

[…] now the next challenge is kind of finding queer people of colour and trans people and getting those people involved in the conversation because what I also notice is that Twitter is primarily educators who are white cisgender. And I am actively searching for queer African Americans, queer people of colour, and queer trans individuals on Twitter to reach out to them and have a more inclusive voice. […], specifically, trans Black women who are the most marginalized and the most disadvantaged in the community. It continues to be disadvantaged and those voices are often the ones that are silenced. And you know, the queer white movement has happened already, and you know, marriage is legal in the States, but we need to talk about trans rights. We need to put this at the forefront. And we need to have these conversations because those are the people who are dying every day. Those are the people who are being harmed. Those are the people who are committing suicide every day.

With the example above, borrowing from the concept of White Fragility introduced by DiAngelo and Dyson (2018), the notion of culture should be addressed and problematized. Because of the acclaimed plurality and individuality of different cultures, people tend to overlook their own constructed prejudices and oppression practices (DiAngelo & Dyson, 2018). In the case of Jake's experiences which included working for missionary schools, administrative staff and other teachers tended to hide behind the fact that because they are religious, they are not perpetuating oppression and marginalization. Culture, especially religious culture, is responsible

for the maintenance of belief systems that categorize "only bad people are racist, as well as how individualism allows white people to exempt themselves from forces" of discrimination (DiAngelo & Dyson, 2018, p. 20). But according to Jake, their school is

> […] very heteronormative [and homogeneous]. Out of 500 hundred kids, two kids are African American. The board is all or primarily, they're all 55-old middle-class white Americans who are conservative and Christians. And over the past few months, I have had some negative experiences about me being out that I am trying to navigate. So, I know I am not protected, and that's kind of my word against theirs.

Jake, during the data collection process, was uncertain of their future at the school they were teaching. For being an active advocate, the administration did not seem happy with Jake's choices of classroom activities that included queer perspectives. Jake's attempt to change the monocultural aspect of their school can be seen in their pedagogical choices. Choosing to incorporate books that address different races, sexual and gender identities, and cultures, in general, was not accepted by the school board. Consequently, being vocal about the lack of support of the school resulted in "[…] subtle micro-aggressions, passive interactions that on the surface wouldn't seem like anything but, we know". These incidents did not stop Jake though:

> […] Ever since these things started happening, I am realizing the importance of teachers being advocates and how it is an inevitable reality of our profession. And through education, we have the privilege to uplift those voices. So, that's what I am seeking to do in subtle ways now. Because I am feeling like I am under a magnifying glass. For instance, we just had a facilitator coming from New York to train us on curriculum, a curriculum we're adopting next year. And we had little name tags on our shirts. And I wrote my name on my name tag, but I also wrote my pronouns. I sort of, to my

administrators, I am supporting that. I am making that visible. But in a way that they can't fight me for writing my pronouns. They can't police pronouns. It'd be a ridiculous conversation.

The plurality of cultures has not been enough to dismantle the submission, subordination, and exclusion of cultures and peoples that are seen as more inferior to others – Black people, Indigenous, LGBTQ people, disabled people, and others (Pardo, 2019), for example. In Jake's example, their plural identity did not change the school's culture of homophobia and marginalization. With the intent of building more critical social practices (Menezes de Souza, 2011; Pardo, 2019), decolonizing becomes a pivotal strategy in day-to-day lives at home and within the community (Hunt & Holmes, 2015), but also in the deeper epistemic ways of knowing of society.

Jake's self-education strategies (see figure 12) include "[…] trying to find my niche, kind of my way in. As I learn more, and as I pay attention more, […] educating myself, and for the kids", by purchasing and reading their partner's theoretical books that informed their teacher identity.

This case study offers insights to consider the impact of coloniality (Pardo, 2019) on education. That is the result of neoliberal capitalism practices that privilege the culture of whiteness and its ideologies in different hierarchical and intersectional aspects such as religious, racial/ethnic, gender and sexuality. In Jake's example, they have been trying to navigate such ideologies by acknowledging their place of origin, their language and race, and their socio-economic status as international teachers to challenge mainstream cultural concepts and create safer spaces for students in their classes.

**Figure 12**

*Jake's self-education shelves*



*Note*. Jake had a bookshelf at home with different materials that helped them educate themselves about decolonizing education.

## 4.5 Case 5: "It is important to me to tell my story about what happened in Indonesia": a case of a veteran gay teacher

This fifth individual case presents the intersection of a veteran LGBTQ gay teacher, who is an educator with a long career, called James. In this study, this participant's experiences are relevant to show a different perspective of teachers who are teaching internationally, and how after many years of work, they still thrive in their careers (Bradley, 2019; Young, 2020).

James is the most experienced teacher among all the participants in the study. As another American gay teacher, James has been to some unusual countries (see figure 13) that have been identified as dangerous for LGBTQ people (e.g., Indonesia, and Israel). James came out later in his life, according to him, and has found in teaching the chance to show his students different

horizons. James' experiences are a collection of (un)learning moments about negotiating his sexuality and teacher identities in different new places.

**Figure 13**

*Indonesia*



*Note.* This was a meaningful place to James, and he expected it to be his everlasting home.

Due to homophobia, James saw his plans change after a pedophile incident was linked to the LGBTQ identity of a person. As James described,

> […] Well, I was in Indonesia. And I actually had planned to stay there until I retire. I didn't want to leave. I still have a house there. But […], a big scandal hit an international school in Jakarta. A little boy, a 6-year-old boy had been molested by a group of janitors and so the story went. Indonesia is primarily a Muslim country, and it doesn't have a law against LGBT people per se. However, it is still very homophobic, and it is a different world, you know. Anyway, [being gay] was an unspoken thing. But it was never an issue. And then when this incident happened in Jakarta, my passport was in for processing, and actually, the visa wasn't still processed and then it was supposed to be returned to me, but

the principal at the time said to me well, you can come back for just one more year. And you have to go after one more year.

The concept of thriving is important here, because as opposed to what Young (2020) presents, this teacher is not dissatisfied with the profession, nor presented burnout signs. Thriving, in his context as an international educator, meant to navigate homophobic social systemic functions to have the right to teach and live with dignity. Young (2020) introduces a concept of demoralization of teachers, which reflects the realities of what it means to be and become a good teacher. This case contributes to such moral considerations when notwithstanding the fact one can be a good and professional teacher, the environment and local cultures may impact and limit their development and particular opportunities due to their sexuality or gender identity.

James is supportive of locals he meets on his long walks or bike rides, having helped refugees to come to Canada. James recognizes the values he carries as an American man who teaches English in so-called 'underdeveloped' countries. James is also very reflective of how different cultures have their peculiarities, and how that ends up interplaying with the culture he brings from travelling internationally as a teacher, as shared below:

> […] For me, these experiences make me think about my own experience compared to other people. How fortunate I am. And fortunately, because of my land of birth and my education, of course. But you know, I have, compared to so many people I know now, I have no limitations. It kind of makes me sad for them but also appreciative of my own fortune. I could never have imagined what was going to happen to me when I came overseas. And I am so grateful that I did. I would never change that. But I think the key is an open mind and an open heart.

**4.6 Case 6: "I use the kids' language and the issues that have come up between the kids":**

**an 'a-ha moments' case of a gay teacher in the Dominican Republic**

The sixth individual case presented here, that of Lawrence, a gay teacher in a Latin American country, adds to the previous case of decolonizing education. Here, however, the discussions evolve around the subtle and important pedagogical insights – so-called 'a-ha moments' – from this teacher with his students and community.

Lawrence is a proud American gay teacher who is in the Dominican Republic. Coming from a very feminist family, where the women of the family developed an essential role in breaking down gender stereotypes, Lawrence teaches and questions a lot of the straight privileges in society. He will wear a purse, do drag, paint his nails, and address toxic masculinity in the classroom even though he teaches elementary school. Lawrence sees few boundaries when he thinks of bringing people out of their comfort zone and engaging his colleagues and students in more positive spaces:

> […] The school is gay-friendly but that's kind of the extent of it. So, that was kind of my expectation coming in. So, it'd be really a homophobic place. I would say that again the reality has gone beyond my expectations in a positive way. I deliberately chose to wear a purse around the city a lot. And I've also worn 'amor és amor' which means love is love. I have a black shirt from the holocaust museum in Mexico City. So, I wear that shirt a lot. And I would say that people have responded either indifferently or just not negatively. I feel like they're kind of friendly about it. I would say that there's an element of discomfort.

**Figure 14**

*"[…] This is not cultural appropriation" (Lawrence)*



*Note.* Lawrence's advocacy is also portrayed in the choice of having his face shown in a photo.

As an active member of the LGBTQ community, Lawrence goes to pride events and meets with friends to help create awareness around LGBTQ people:

> […] I had a friend who is a model and super gay. He watches RuPaul and he's constantly buried in things from that show, And I had a bunch of friends who were gamers come over. And the four of us played this hard game. So, his being his fabulous self it was just kind of fun to be in that you know. Because at that point, we sort of had a dominant presence. Both I and he were gay, we were very outspoken, very flamboyant, and very much into embracing our culture and the other guys were just like there. And I think it was good exposure for them. And they didn't cringe or, they didn't get uncomfortable as far as I can tell. But I think it was something very new for them. I don't think there's this much mainstream exposure for people here to queer experiences.

Although Lawrence's current teaching context has a more underground gay community, he believes that society is moving forward as he has been able to introduce some inclusive strategies to his teaching:

> […] in my classroom […] I haven't read them a book about queer people or queer experiences. It's all been sort of, I don't want to say ad hoc, but organic. For example, there'll be a couple of boys and they'll be like sharing a square on the carpet. And another boy would be like "they can't do that". And I was like, why not? And he was "well, they're too close to each other. The boys cannot be that close to each other". And of course, all the girls around the room were holding hands, but now the two boys are too close. Now, we have a problem. And I was like, "are they hurting you"? And he's like, "no". And I was like, "okay. I don't think it's a real problem for you then".

Lawrence's ability to find moments to create space for conversations that students would not have otherwise can be called a-ha moments. Looking into research studies, an a-ha moment could often mean finding and dealing with unexpected moments in a classroom (Bruz et al, 2021; Capan, Garbe, & Zöhrer, 2020; Nieto, 2015; Weiss & Helskog, 2020). These moments can be identified right at the moment they happened (Weiss & Helskog, 2020), or through a post-teaching reflection (Capan, Garbe, & Zöhrer, 2020; Martin & Morgan, 2019). Despite the circumstances, a-ha moments can be also called critical moments, which means one is making use of an event (e.g., a student's question, a conflict, or a planned lesson) to foster the unlearning of privileges and power that permeate society (Nieto, 2015).

In Lawrence's case:

> […] I have those types of conversations. It's not from an adult perspective to the kids. It's from the kids' perspective to kind of the adult issues that play. For me as an adult, I

recognize this, you know, some of these kids are growing up with homophobic messages and ideas of how they should behave, boys and girls. So, I am wrestling with those. But I use the kids' language and the issues that have come up between the kids as sort of my platform for that. It is a delicate dance. I feel like changing hearts and minds is a gradual process. I am not really sure if an extreme act, like not only will they provoke a backlash, but they'd also actually move things not in a particularly positive direction in the first place. I mean, just when I think of the whole spectrum of progressive things I could do, I feel like you have to do baby steps. It is not only protecting yourself, but it is also just pragmatic.

This case study introduces how non-school informal scenarios (e.g., board games night, off-school events) can serve as a space for people to model and raise awareness within the community (Capan, Garbe, & Zöhrer, 2020). According to Weiss & Helskog (2020). Therefore, the a-ha moments are an opportunity to develop:

a) communication skills, by openly discussing thoughts of daily human life.

b) interpersonal skills, as you are often participating in discussions with others, therefore increasing one's sense of community.

c) self-awareness, by negotiating one's feelings and delving deeper into fundamental issues.

d) assertiveness, once you are laying out all perspectives of a specific matter.

e) creativity and reflection thinking, allowing people to freely express their ideas and opinions in their own capacity.

The pillars of these a-ha moments, in the context of LGBTQ educators, work towards the enhancement of more democratic and social citizenship (Nieto, 2015; Weiss & Helskog, 2020).

Therefore, the actions undertaken by the participants worked toward enabling social cohesion, mutual respect, and dialogue among those involved in interconnections and relationships in/out of a classroom.

After unpacking each participant's teaching experiences, another key element is to analyze how language plays a role in these educators' identities. Exploring their linguistic background and their immersion in different cultures that speak different languages inform future discussions about language and identity construction. With a focus on English, participants' most fluent and/or native language, the next chapter introduces crucial elements about power and privilege.

# Chapter 5 - The role of the English Language in Discussions about Power, Privilege, and Identity

This chapter discusses the role of the English language in terms of power, privilege, and identity. Language, in particular, English in the context of this study, is an extension of the intersectionality wheel (Simpson, 2009) that adds to the complexity of seeing and understanding how different identity layers can influence one's surroundings. To start these discussions, the participants' linguistic backgrounds are introduced below.

## 5.1 Participants' Linguistic Background

Before delving into the conceptions that educators had about the English language, it is important to see where they stand in terms of languages they speak or had been exposed to. When asked to describe their linguistic background, all participants in this study indicated having English proficiency or English being their first/native language:

"[…] I usually say my native language is English because for most of my life I have used English as my native language. I feel comfortable in English, and I use English to communicate as my first language". (Chris)

"[…] I grew up speaking English" (Lawrence)

"[…] I speak English, I was obviously raised speaking English growing up in California". (James)

"[…] I'm only really fluent in English". (Louisa)

Although English was the most fluent/native language for participants, each of them had exposure to other languages, often through geographical locations. For example:

[…] I was exposed to Spanish, but I didn't learn the language. But some names around where I lived. They were Spanish. So, learning what those meant and all of that was the

connection to the Spanish language, Spanish, Spanish and Mexican culture that had, you know, that came before the US. (James)

"[…] At times, I've been very proficient in Spanish. I lived in Arizona for five years, so it's very proficient". (Louisa)

One participant, Chris, was born in Japan and "[…] I spoke Japanese with my brothers. Japanese was a language which I could speak with my brothers, but my parents weren't so fluent in Japanese". When his family moved back to the U.K., he "[…] had extra classes to get them [Chris and his brothers] to a higher standard or the same standards and level of English as other people in their class". Lawrence, on the other hand, "[…] had a little bit of instruction in Mandarin" growing up in the USA. According to him,

[…] When I was a little child, my aunt had a colleague at the museum where she worked, and the colleague was Taiwanese. And he said I'm not really sure exactly how that lined up. I imagine that my aunt sort of suggested that he provides, you know, Mandarin instruction. (Lawrence).

Their work environments also contributed to participants' experiences learning another language. For Louisa, "[…] I've also had high proficiency in sign language. I worked alongside someone who was hearing impaired for many years. And he had to communicate. So, I was actually very proficient in sign as well". But now, in China, "[…] I would say I could be a lot better in Chinese, but I have a fairly good level of proficiency in speaking and listening, reading, and writing. I get by confidently here".

Lawrence "[…] became more proficient with Mandarin" as he studied Mandarin for a year in China later in his life, "[…] and then when I was 26, I went to Mexico, and as I was teaching there, I learned Spanish, fairly often to chat with my friends that speak Spanish".

Katherine identified as being "[…] very little multilingual, and very conscious of that", however, "[…] my Czech is ok. Well, I would call it transaction Czech conversations about dogs. That is, for the time it takes to go down six floors, you can really say that's a lovely dog".

> With Jake, who was still learning Thai, they described their level of proficiency as […] intermediate to advanced. And I especially, recently, was able to articulate, you know, the socio-political status right now of the U.S. to my Thai teacher, beyond rudimentary sort of good and bad scenarios. So, we were having conversations about Black Lives Matter and systemic racism and how the government is handling COVID. So, I've been focusing my Thai conversations around those issues.

> James, who was "[…] pushed into a bilingual approach to education in California", developed additional Spanish language skills:

> […] So, it kind of got me hooked on learning Spanish. By no means I am fluent. I mean, I haven't been around anyone who speaks Spanish now for over sixteen years. So, most of it is gone. But, you know, but there's an appreciation of that language in that this beauty that I sense in it for me, you know? (James)

> With an extensive amount of time in an international teaching career, James was also exposed to Indonesian, Portuguese "[…] which was also similar to Spanish. Easier for me to decipher […] access and try to use", and now Burmese, though he said "[…] I find the language really difficult for me to access because I can't read it. It's been the major thing for me".

> One other comment, from both James and Louisa, addresses how learning and practicing a language is also contextual. For James, the lack of opportunity to practice Burmese was an issue. As he noted "[…] at the same time, it's like, when you're teaching, and you teach in English and you're at a school where you speak English all day long. And I live by myself. So, I

come home to some plants. They don't really care what language I speak". Louisa, however, encountered more chances to exercise her proficiency in the Chinese language with her band. She noted that her opportunities to practice Chinese were "[…] definitely music related because my band, the guys in my band are all Chinese".

These participants' language learning/speaking experiences foreground the following sections in this chapter. When discussing intersectionality and language, participants realized that being around other languages, even when they did not identify as proficient, allowed them to make sense of different meanings (Ellwood, 2006; Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). The participants recognized that miscommunication or translation issues pertain to this process of being around other languages. Overall, these educators realized that language plays an important role in the construction of their own identities.

For example, the participants in the study knew English works as a catalyst to facilitate knowledge exchange (Cummins & Davison, 2007; Lander, 2018; Paiz, 2019). Predominantly when considering their LGBTQ identity, these participants realized that English allowed them to navigate their identities more easily. Though schools tend to omit LGBTQ sexual and gender identities from classroom practices (Paiz, 2019; Trent, 2016), these participants connected their experiences to the English language and how it permeates power and privilege that mitigated some of the challenges of belonging to sexual minorities. As explored in the subsequent sessions in this chapter, participants were actively incorporating ideas to further raise awareness and engage the schools' communities in conversations about LGBTQ+ matters.

Given its status as a language of access, English is powerful because of the idealized notion that English can grant a better quality of education and life. According to Pennycook

(2007), this is translated into the colonial views that Western knowledge and culture are superior. On a different level, participants shared that English is potentially a resource when working towards a more inclusive pedagogy since books and texts are all mostly written in English (West, 2017). Despite the usefulness of English in challenging cultural and social paradigms (Rivers & Zotzmann, 2017), the participants who were interviewed were aware of the privilege they had as fluent/native speakers and how that made a difference for them while navigating concerning contexts as LGBTQ people (Burton, 2019; Okazaki, 2005). That is, the awareness of English-native speakerism and its privileges yet were not sufficient for these educators to proactively engage with or look for their students' first language to find new classroom materials.

Finally, from a post-critical lens (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; 2012) the interviewed educators raised awareness of the fact that the English language, in all its capacity to improve particular knowledge, is also associated with exclusion and marginalization. Thus, working with inclusive approaches in classrooms ought to take into account the ideologies that pedagogical practices can carry through language (Sauntson, 2018), as explored in the sections below.

## 5.2 English Language and Intersectionality

Within the experiences of the study participants developing their language skills and broadening their linguistic repertoire while working abroad, intersectionality is useful to understand the relationship between language, culture, and community (Ramirez & Ross, 2019). In a broader aspect, language, culture, and community encompasses race, sexuality, gender, and all other dimensions of one's being (Ramirez & Ross, 2019). Intersectionality offers a counter-narrative to research that analyzes only one identity dimension and rather presents the multifarious convergence of different identity makers, linking those to structures of power (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019; Berson, 2019; Crenshaw, 1991).

Participants were asked to think of how their LGBTQ identity has transformed or has been performed differently through their experiences teaching and living abroad. Three participants directly indicated that their identities constantly shifted. The first indication of a shifting identity is Chris' case when he stated, "[…] I think when I first came to Japan, I feel like I went back into the closet to an extent. Partially because it seems that a lot of Japanese people can't recognize certain traits of being gay".

Lawrence reflected upon a nuanced identity as follows: "[…] I think culture affects the way we experience that sexuality profoundly. You know, I've lived in a number of different cultures now. And you know, each one navigates sexuality in different ways". Lawrence further explained that living in Kansas City gave him the experience of a more religious and conservative culture, "[…] whereas, you know, then I went to college. Way more progressive, more out, and open, visible and so forth, even in the U.S or even in an American context". When in China, despite the activists fighting for pride marches, "[…] I found gay sexuality to be very subterranean. And kind of, it was sort of like a dirty secret. People would not be able to, you know, gay couples did not kiss in public or hold hands; […] most people thought that was shameful, even queer people you know".

In Louisa's experience with shifting identity, she shared how her perspective about getting legally married changed over the years. Although she had always been out, and people knew about her relationship, she stated "[…] I don't care that we can't get married". That changed

> […] after being with [current wife's name] for like a year. My whole perspective on that
>
> changed. Like, I really wanted to be married. And it wasn't because marriage was a big
>
> issue […] Regardless of if the law changed in the US, we were still married in Canada

first. I guess I would say that my identity only changed in that regard because my partner changed. And, you know, maybe, I grew a little bit, being abroad, I became more of the person that I should have been […] I became a little bit more cultured.

As identity is discursively created within time and space (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019), language plays a role not only in the understanding that identity is ever-changing, but also to consider that agency and power structures can be translated through and with languages (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019; Berson, 2019). In research, interplaying intersectionality and language can be observed through studies about native speakers (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019) where the power in a classroom is established by the linguistic status of English native speakers.

When thinking of Western identity and speaking English, James says that "[…] everywhere I have lived, the reality of what LGBT is has existed. It's not a Western thing, it is a human thing […] I know some people say, 'oh no, doesn't even exist here until the Westerners came in, and that's just nonsense". Indeed, while diverse sexualities and gender identities existed, the LGBTQ+ acronym originated in the West and may not convey the range of other knowledges and experiences that other cultures have (Baucom, 2018). For Katherine, while thinking of the role of the English language in their identity, "[…] it's an advantage [to speak English] because I have an edge. Because I'm educated. And also, the literature that we discuss, and use is largely still done in English. I think English has helped me feel like I am part of a community a bit more".

In addition to other identity features, intersecting sexuality and gender with language contributes to studies on teacher identity and intersectionality as more concretely, our personal and individual identities impact our professional development (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019; Berson, 2019; Ramirez & Ross, 2019; Crenshaw, 1991). Moreover, being an international

educator implies that the sociocultural context of teaching also influences one's practices (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). The findings in this study identify the variables of educators interplaying society, exploring where they come from and where they are, school; what the institutions bring as values and beliefs, classrooms; and the place where they can make choices and develop their pedagogy.

Along the intersectional lens, the cultural aspect was also prevalent among the participants' views of identity. For instance, Chris' comment below is an example of how a queer perspective can be transgressive as he said:

[…] it is difficult to communicate that [being gay], usually in the UK, I don't have to come out because there are like signs to say, 'oh I am gay', without saying I'm gay. Whether that's like fashion choices, like things like wear, whether it's something like a lot slimmer fitting. Or whether it's like a different colour of ties or something more garish, you know, like haircuts. It's a little bit like being a bit more effeminate with my body language. All mannerisms like having a high-pitched voice.

James raised a difference between cultural beliefs around male-to-female transgender people: "[…] You've probably heard in Thailand about ladyboys. They are accepted in very much every part of the culture. You know, there, transgender people in there, especially in terms of male to female". However, in Myanmar, it appeared to be the opposite. The acceptance of female-to-male transgender people was not an issue, despite the country being predominantly Buddhist and Muslim, and having no laws that support LGBTQ people against discrimination.

For Jake, they problematized the cross-cultural responses to the concepts of identity and its multiple layers in international schools. For them, "[…] there is little to no training on culture, culturally responsive teaching and how there is no training on anti-bias or diversity or anti-

racism and colonialism in teaching, especially in the international school. There was virtually none".

Race, gender, religion, age, sexuality, and geography were some of the intersectional points that the participants in this study raised when reflecting on their own identities. For Louisa, her age and where she was from play/ed an important role in how she saw advocacy, for example:

> […] I'm forty-six and I'm past, you know, the advocacy of […] I mean I'm past feeling bad about the lack of advocacy that I've given back to the LGBT community. To be honest, I lived you know, I came out in the late 90s and I lived in rural Kentucky for 15 years. I was open. It was really a non-issue, but there wasn't that big of an LGBT community […] we just existed […] I didn't grow up within the LGBT community advocating for LGBT things like to care about marriage.

Within this context, this study also considers that pedagogy is not fixed, nor neutral. As stated before, the narratives of these educators and their emotions corroborate the theorization and reflection of their pedagogical practices and the outcomes of those both in and out of their workplaces (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). Thus, this study has the potential to deconstruct hierarchies of power and social justice by furthering notions of sexuality, gender, language, and education through the voices of non-streamed LGBTQ gay cis men and their perceptions of their identities within their working teaching contexts.

Louisa offered more insights about advocacy in her international context when she shared that after moving to China, "[…] I realized that the situation [about being LGBTQ] is quite stifling". While she does not see herself as an activist, she supported the LGBTQ causes, however thinking about it from a school curriculum perspective:

[…] I absolutely support, you know, I make sure that when we redid our sex ed curriculum, I made sure that we put sex culture and LGBT issues. Like, I made sure we did that in our school because that wasn't a thing that I had any exposure to. So, that goes all the way down to fourth grade now. We're intentionally bringing LGBT issues into, you know, all the way into fourth grade.

The intersectionality of language, identity, and community can be seen through participants' different experiences. For Chris, his whiteness increased his privilege and hid his sexual identity. From a racial intersectional perspective, as Chris postulated, "[…] in Japan, as a white foreigner, maybe like the signal [of being gay] was just hidden by me being white and not Japanese". Differently, for Louisa, being lesbian and married played a role in her insecurity when having to access Chinese health care. As she contemplated a more serious health scare, she noted her identity could have been an issue:

[…] And one of the reasons it was scary was because it wasn't like a common cold where you could just be like, just go to the doctor by yourself. This is a person that [possibly now requires] chemotherapy. And yes, it was in my mind […] If they don't think about me as her partner and they don't allow me to do anything for her. I didn't know what was going to happen there. But it was nothing. (Louisa)

The experiences presented here go beyond the native-speaker power dimensions. Though there is a variety of experiences represented here with a focus on identity shifting, coming out stories, and cultural acceptance of LGBTQ people, the concentration only on the LGBTQ educators' perspectives has its limitations. The identities of the teachers in the study did not allow the study to further investigate, for example, sociocultural stereotypes (Berson, 2019; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019), objectification of these teachers in the host countries, or even

the perceptions of these teachers by students and institutions (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019) given their race, socioeconomic status, nationalities, and languages they speak.

Participants in this study often had the privilege to express their LGBTQ identity more openly, too. Whether because they had partners and school staff and students knew, or because they were able to speak safely about being LGBTQ among their colleagues and students, the findings of this study do not offer insight into LGBTQ BIPOC people's experiences abroad, for example. Therefore, care needs to be taken not to universalize privileged white LGBTQ educators' experiences. To continue with reflections on the English language and identity, the following discussion specifically introduces the relationship between language and identity, exploring standardized constructs of educators who work internationally and have fluency in English language speaking.

## 5.3 English Language and Identity

One of the goals of the study was to understand how participants see the relationship between language and identity, and the elements that such a relationship brings to their daily interpersonal experiences. Based on that, interview questions addressed perceptions and impacts of participants as English speakers during their personal and professional experiences overseas, and their views on the treatment they receive for being an English speaker.

First, when asked about how they perceived their background as fluent English speakers and what impact that had on their personal and professional experiences, participants identified a) the emphasis on access to the English language today and the native English-speaking countries' standards; b) professional teaching development and training; c) English language as both liberal and colonial, and d) what the colonial values carried through English are; e) cultural

awareness through English and other languages; and finally, f) the impact of capital (business) on teaching (in) English.

Considering that the language one speaks is an aspect of identity, this section analyzes participants' awareness of the role of English in their identities as Western LGBTQ educators. Sauntson (2018) and Shelton (2019), for example, draw attention to the socio-cultural and language features of educators who work towards an inclusive pedagogy. From all the different ways English permeates agency, and in this context advocacy, this language serves different purposes and the most varied degrees it is performed.

For Louisa, as a fluent and native-English speaker, she explains how certain standards are needed in a conversation or interaction among different people. In her words,

> […] For a native English speaker, we expect certain things. Eye contact. We expect, you know, a level of competence that is sort of a cue that that person is trustworthy or, you know, there's so much that we have in our language. And we also have. I think we also have tones that are respectful tones, right? (Louisa)

These expectations become problematic when people from different cultures interact and English conventions are expected to prevail. Being in an international teaching context reveals how accessing the English language and reaching that status of fluency and native-speaking standards are closely related to the financial resources of learners. Katherine explains that declaring the wealth status of English learners in some different contexts, justifying that their assets not only allow them to experience 'good' English learning but also give them the opportunity to travel and seek out citizenship in English-speaking countries. According to Katherine, English language education means opening doors to Western nations:

[…] And so, in Jeddah, for example, we had very high, a high status where a lot of members of the royal family and very high-status Saudis and a lot of some significant Lebanese and other Egyptians and Syrians and most of our students would go to North America or the U.K. Many of them already had U.S. passports. So as far as they were concerned, it was the English language or English language education. It was a means to an end, and it was very clear what it does. (Katherine)

Chris, as he reflected on his positionality as a fluent English-speaking teacher, added to the notion of native-speaker standards by suggesting that he used his native speakerism as a strategy for teaching: "[…] And so, the only kind of anything that I had was like my native language. Knowing this is correct English or this is not English. Why is it wrong?" (Chris). Considering Chris had not had any teacher education prior to starting his teaching experience in the JET program is a perspective that needs to be challenged. The JET Program, as well as other international schools and programs, is heavily invested in the so-called native speaker teachers without prioritizing teaching qualifications (Honna & Takeshita, 2014; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019).

In this study, participants recognize some of the impact of English as a colonial language (Pennycook, 2007), as it opens their students' horizons to new and other cultures but is still a source of privilege to know the language. These Western LGBTQ educators negotiate their English-speaking identities to promote inclusion and advocate for safer spaces and inclusive curricula. However, their shared experiences below still show that being aware of these social or inclusive priorities [or identity-oriented goals] does not avoid certain systems [and teaching priorities] to be maintained. For instance, there is still a tendency to think of effective language teaching and learning (Sauntson, 2018; Sene & Ferreira, 2018) as rooted in English native

speakers propagating the discourse that they need to be role models of the language, contributing to the economic value of learning the language (Sauntson, 2018; Pennycook, 2007).

Katherine, for example, after decades of teaching internationally, thought modelling a good standard of English includes being adaptable and seeing what students need (e.g., richer vocabulary). Katherine also suggested teachers ought to be aware of their duties and what they are supposed to do to help their students succeed in learning English. For Katherine,

> […] I think as a teacher, you should model language. And so, I've been doing that for 30 years. Modelling. Well, I would go on it. It is a good standard of English. I also mean that with the students, I think you need to be adaptable. To have a rich vocabulary but be able to communicate things and use a variety of words and to use them. And I'm very conscious of the fact that. That as a teacher, I'm supposed to stretch that vocabulary in a useful way. (Katherine)

Moving from the practicalities of teaching (in) English to a more theoretical approach to understanding the English language, participants defined and exemplified the English language as being both a liberal and colonial language (Pennycook, 2007). According to Katherine, when in Saudi Arabia, the English language status was higher as it was seen as carrying liberal views. Surely, the IB (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) school as an institution took some advantage of being liberal itself, as a vast portion of liberal content is/was taught in English: "[…] Well, in Saudi Arabia, you I think we were probably the most liberal institution in the whole country. And to associate English with particular liberal values is something which I'm sure the IB would love to do". (Katherine)

Jake, in Thailand, expressed that their readings (e.g., visibility of trans BIPOC educators in schools) have offered them insights to think of colonialism more often. And when asked about

colonialism in English teaching, they affirmed that colonialism affects how they relate to people in their international local context by saying "[…] I'm glad that you brought up colonialism in English because that's where my mind went to. And I think it absolutely affects how I converse with students and with my Thai teachers and I'm well aware of that". (Jake)

For James, the thought of English as a colonial language may have started years ago while he was still a child, and he may not have been able to identify it back then. But as he shared his grandmother's experience, it is possible to notice the imposition of English language speaking in different cultures, and people being frightened of using their language:

> […] Why she didn't speak Irish, I don't remember the exact answer, but I just got the sense that she would be punished if she used the Irish language where she was because she would have been in Ireland at the time when it was still under British rule and where she was in the northern part of Ireland. (James)

Although the imposition of speaking a language is hardly seen nowadays, Jake supposed that colonial values (e.g., mostly ideal Western traditions) are the challenge in today's society, and those are certainly transmitted through the English language (Kubota & Miller, 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2016). To be mindful of colonial impositions through the English language, Jake undertook their knowledge in the international local context to try to dissociate from a hierarchical power position. As Mignolo (2018) defines it, decolonizing means to decentre grand narratives. But in addition, it is an act of deconstructing settler-imposed systems (Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012) that oppress and marginalize. In Jake's example, this decolonizing action happens when they apply their knowledge in the Thai language and experiences within that culture to foster conversations with their students. Jake, however, acknowledged the limitations of being a foreigner educator, as they could never assume a Thai positionality, but only imagine

what it would be like. Jake's example around discussing and understanding privilege went as follows:

> […] privilege comes with English speaking, but also the colonial aspects of it, especially working in an international school that is founded originally as a missionary school. I try to frame conversations in Thai, not from an English-speaking standpoint, but from the Thai speaker's standpoint, which is quite difficult as I'm not fluent in Thai. (Jake)

The way these participants addressed who they are as Western teachers and the language they spoke generated ideas around cultural sensitivity and how schools perpetrate cis-normative norms (Harris, 2016). Jake, for example, understood the weight of one's cultural background and tried to navigate tensions while trying to balance how to approach people:

> […] But there's also the cultural aspect of it that I'm obviously not a part of. So, I have to be very mindful of how I approach these conversations in Thai, but also in English, too. When I speak with Thai English speakers, I try to be aware of the colonial aspect of English as well. In Thai, speaking can be very indirect in addressing problems… directness is seen almost as being rude in some instances. Whereas in English it's the opposite. You want to be super direct. (Jake)

The English language, as an aspect of identity that can help one unlearn behaviours and values for social change (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) leverages the participant's self-identity deconstruction. For example, a few participants commented how language carries out values and beliefs which are helpful for their cultural negotiation, as Lawrence said "[…] indeed, learning Spanish or Chinese affected my awareness of my own identity as an English speaker. I feel like it affected more the way that I thought about my

identity as an American. I think that there are just a lot of values and perspectives that are wrapped up in our language". Lawrence justified this by also sharing:

> […] When you start to learn a new language, it kind of forces you to think about things in a different way, you know? So, for example, in China, you'll say thank you. And then, you know, they'll say like […], which literally translates to there's no need for politeness, you know, or […], which is like that's not necessary. And so, there's just kind of like a very different way of thinking about those sorts of polite phrases and words like in the United States, like, you use those polite phrases and words to show respect and to establish like a positive dynamic. Whereas like in China, at least if you look at the words literally, you know, it's almost as if those polite words are sort of a formality that suggests that you're not actually very close. (Lawrence)

In a different experience, James recollected his cultural awareness back when he used to have conversations with his immigrant parents. With both being from Ireland, James stressed that in his inquiries about his grandparents' Irish linguistic background, his grandmother would barely remember anything as "[…] she just gave the sense that they would be in trouble if they use language. And she said the only thing she remembers was her prayers" (James). Yet, something that would strongly be part of James' initial experience with understanding the role of language in society as a younger man.

These teachers' perceptions about their identity as English speakers validate and emphasize a neoliberal educational agenda of international schools (Howson & Lall, 2019; Mccafferty, 2010; West, 2017). Though only one participant explicitly mentioned it, international schools have established their statements taking advantage of the benefits that being an English speaker can bring to the population. With English considered a language of access,

for instance, international schools assume roles which sell an image that they will change the world: "[…] But we are because I mean, the IB is big business. But they also have a mission statement, which is about changing the world". (Katherine)

The language of access then becomes a language of power, bringing the participants to realize that English is not neutral (Descarries, 2014). However, being able to speak English fluently is associated with white imperialism and superiority; native-speakerism language standards; privilege, wealth, and education; racism and discrimination; and developed countries as a destination for progress (Nieto, 2015; Pennycook, 2007; Pilcher & Richards, 2017; West, 2017).

Reflecting on white imperialism and superiority, first, Jake shared their experiences in seeing local Thai people associating English language speakers with high social status. Moreover, they shared their frustration in seeing Thai people putting themselves in a position of being mistaken for not knowing or being as fluent in English as someone considered a native speaker of the language:

> […] English is viewed in Thailand as a source of privilege. Well, an upper socioeconomic status, and even recently my friend on Facebook posted a picture of a sign outside of a cafe and the sign said, English is not our first language. We apologize for any mistakes that we make. Please be patient with us. Something along those lines which I thought was so, they just elicited a lot of emotions for me because this is a Thai cafe in Thailand. And the fact that they had to apologize for their lack of language, so to speak, is just to me, really upsetting because it should be the other way around in my eyes. (Jake)

Jokingly, Katherine was not so sure about how people view English speakers and said "[…] I have no idea how they regarded me. Probably Evil White Imperialist. So, status as an

English speaker. Inside school is quite high in the sense that that's what you're supposed to do". Despite the humorous tone, Katherine went on and justified that English was "[…] their learning language" and that the high status just makes sense as realistically, English is used primarily in classes only, allowing students to use other languages when not in the classroom.

The fact that these teachers have English as their first or native language made them realize that international schools incentivize native-speakerism language standards (Honna & Takeshita, 2014). Both James and Chris had comments on their different experiences where English native-speakerism is just a category that students put the teacher in. James became cognizant of his English native-speaker status when he was travelling to visit a friend and suddenly saw himself in a class of young adults who wanted to interact with him due to his English language. James said

> […] I met a friend who was learning English, who actually speaks English very well. And he brought me to his school. And immediately the teacher there said, can you teach this class? What? What? I'm not an English teacher. I tried to explain that I teach in English. But the children, most of the children this year, all of the children speak in English. So, I'm not teaching English. So that was an interesting experience and quite fun.

James' experience in that particular school also highlights a common-sense ideal that many other countries have – English native-speakers are automatically seen as English teachers by the fact they learned the language growing up (Honna & Takeshita, 2014). From a cultural perspective, Chan & Parr (2012) discussed ethical dilemmas which influence how individuals see and take on different cultures. International school administrations emphasize cultural marginalization (Done & Murphy, 2016) and educators end up falling into the system. In addition, considering the participants' awareness of who their students are in the international

schools they teach, they suggest that becoming fluent in English in their international contexts

relates to privilege, wealth, and education, therefore the neoliberal context determines how a

teacher should behave in terms of what they need to be teaching in those classrooms (West,

2017).

As an example, in Jake's view, being/becoming a fluent English speaker required having

access to money and being able to attend, or pay for, good quality schools. For Louisa, the

Chinese parents of the students at her school were not invested in the cultural aspects of

language. Rather, they wanted to see results, meaning their children ought to be speaking English

like a native. Louisa said she sometimes saw subtle problems in the interactions of her staff with

parents in the form of micro-aggressions, mostly given the hierarchical way they communicate

among themselves: "[…] I'm just saying that in language. Just if you break it down to, like, the

linguistic pieces of that, like there's no discriminatory way that we speak to each other. Of

course, there's micro aggression".

However, observing the nuances of one's identity, and being fluent in English does not

eliminate issues of racism and discrimination (DiAngelo & Dyson, 2018; Grant & Zwier, 2011).

Lawrence illustrated racist and discriminatory circumstances, but first attested to his

intersectional positionality by saying "[…] I'm white and I'm male and I'm American and I speak

English. And so, all of those kind of weave together and how people perceive me and how they

treat me". In contrast, his African American friend was treated poorly, despite her English being

as good as his: "[…] she was African American and the way that they treated her was really

different. Even though her English was just as proficient as my English, her race sort of

superseded our speaking skills". The interplay of a race, and perhaps gender, that are not

mainstream or dominant is an example of how intersectionality can enact further actions against social inequalities and human rights (Gayle & Childress, 2021; Grant & Zwier, 2011).

Although there were tensions in how people perceived English speakers, all teachers in this study commented on how English is a means for their students' travelling to developed countries. For example, Chris suggested English as the vessel to achieving this goal of travelling abroad as "[…] a lot of the students really seek English classes. And not just for them to be able to speak it, but for international cultural exchange. They want to go to Canada or New Zealand because they want to get out of Japan. And being able to study English is a vessel to do that". (Chris)

For James, developed countries were the main destinations for people who are learning English in his context. However, more specifically, James explains that leaving Myanmar and going to those countries is the goal for a better life:

> […] We know for them that English is a ticket to something and somewhere better. Even a better job, you know, because having English, you open the world to them, especially being fluent. Or even leaving and going elsewhere. Anyone, to work in Dubai or, you know, immigrate to the States or Canada or Europe or wherever or Australia. And for them, they see English as their ticket as well. (James)

When it comes to language and identity, intersectionality is a good tool to understand how different discriminatory and marginalizing social systems are enacted differently (Sauntson, 2019; Shelton, 2019; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). To date, research shows that in settings where students are learning (in) English, the curriculum represents the dominant heteronormative framing of identities (Sauntson, 2018). Understandably, English-speaking countries seem to have the most progressive policies, mostly toward LGBTQ people. However, the analysis above

showed that when race, class, and economic status are intersectional to one's identity, those who come from BIPOC and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities still face social injustices (Gayle & Childress, 2021).

Sexual and gender diversity is not experienced in classrooms, and consequently, students feel a lack of representation. Racism, classicism, sexism, and several other -isms (Rivers & Zotzmann, 2017) are not topics that are approached in classrooms either. From the teachers' perspectives, the LGBTQ aspect will be tackled in Chapter 6 'queering international schools', where these educators and school staff found resistance to discussing, implementing, and changing anti-gay discourses, harassment, and violence in the classrooms (Cavanaugh, 2019; Goldstein, Russel, & Daley, 2007; Moita-Lopes, 2006; Paiz, 2019; Shelton, 2019). However, one other aspect to be analyzed is how the English language and power interplay through an intersectional lens, which is done in the section below.

**5.4 English Language: International Limitations and Opportunities**

This section explores the limitations and opportunities of the language within international school contexts. Through the eyes of Western LGBTQ educators, the English language exercises different roles in advocating and being inclusive (as seen above) but also presents challenges in communication (Pilcher & Richards, 2017; Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017) and the potential to question structural oppressive systems, which is addressed as -isms of the society later in this section.

According to participants, the most common issues around language use were communication problems, which were prevalent in their international experiences. Four of the six participants directly stated communication being an issue, including issues outside the school

where they tried to use the local language, or inside the school where they dealt with students in English. For example,

> […] I often have, like, miscommunication, whether it's at the bakery or work or the post office. Sometimes it may be my lack of Japanese. Sometimes people see my face and they don't recognize I am speaking Japanese. And so, it takes them a bit of time to kind of decipher my accent or what I'm trying to say. [At school], sometimes they'll say something to me. Maybe their grammar is wrong, but I understand them at times. Maybe they say something I don't really understand what they're saying. (Chris)

In Katherine's experience, "[…] I think, given the fact that I make an attempt in Czech, people around here are very forgiving simply because I try to converse in Czech".

> For Louisa,

> […] I think the way that Chinese people speak to each other is very curt, right? Yeah, very curt. Like, I would never speak to appear in that, you know, with that curtness. So, that would be my like, my observation from listening to the Chinese language and listening to the interactions. In terms of English. No, not really. I mean, from English to Chinese, the only thing that ever happens usually is just a misunderstanding, because we use particular words that aren't used the same way in Chinese culture. So, it's the exact same word that they wouldn't necessarily use it that way. So, I mean, obviously, those things just happen naturally because you have to communicate.

As Lawrence reflected on present communication with students, compared to where he previously was before, his students would understand "[…] basic things. They could understand, in English, 'how are you?' and 'I'm fine, thank you'. And you know, but like even that, it is not really communication. That's just parroting".

These initial challenges in communication, using English or local languages in the countries where participants worked, contributed to the loss of opportunities to fight against social equalities. From a language acquisition perspective, Norton and Toohey (2011) highlight that language learners can be aware of mostly economic benefits (e.g., finding a bilingual job) and some social advantages (e.g., such as buying bread at a bakery) when speaking an additional language. The educators in this study seemed to adhere to that view when using English in their day-to-day lives. Nonetheless, their identities are "[…] widespread representations of complex and embodied language learners living in socially stratified worlds that constrain as well as enable the exercise of human agency (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 437). That is, issues in communication also impacted the enactment of social change, especially when considering oppressive issues such as transphobia.

Yet, thinking of communication, two other sub-findings that emerged from conversations with two of the participants refer to issues in translation, and transphobia. The translation piece was mentioned by Louisa, when she stated, "[…] things get lost in translation". Louisa illustrated this by providing an example of a communication situation among school administrators and parents:

> […] things get lost in translation. So, let's say if you're having a difficult conversation with a parent. Chinese culture. You know, parents don't want to hear that their kids are, have a special need, for example. I'll use that. That's, culturally that's an issue. So, if I have to have somebody translate for me when I'm speaking to a parent, I need that translator to say exactly what I say. And not be passive around that cultural norm that the parent doesn't want to hear, that their child has a special need, right? Or that they need to go get diagnosed or they need to have an outside person do observation for the child. If

you talk to anybody in this case, they'll probably say the same thing. That translator is not

going to say what exactly I said. They're going to, you know, do things like that to make

it more passive because they know that that parent does not want to hear that. So, I have

to tell the translator, no, you didn't tell them what I just said, or you better tell them

exactly what I said verbatim. Exactly what I said. That's a huge problem. I mean, that's a

huge problem with anybody. I would say anybody in this country, any foreigner that has

to have a translation for a difficult conversation that involves some kind of cultural aspect

where you're just like, OK, I need to make sure that that is being translated directly, as

I'm saying, not being passively changed to suffice.

Borrowing from intercultural theories (Chan & Parr, 2012; Souza, Dialo, & Souza, 2020),

the negotiation of new meanings and expectations that Louisa tried to create with some of her

student's parents can be observed above. Louisa's expectations towards straightforwardly

indicating what their students' needs become a cultural issue when considering what the parents

expected to hear. The job of the translator, then, is not only to facilitate communication but to

minimize cultural issues among the educators and local citizens (Chan & Parr, 2012).

In addition to the translation matter, Katherine shared an experience of transphobia.

Despite their willingness to communicate using the local language, and their good teaching skills

in class, one struggle they faced is the fact that their voice did not match their physical features:

"[…] one [incident] is about my voice, and one is about the language I use. I mean, there is

active prejudice against trans people". Katherine transgressed the notion of language by adding a

tone of voice as an impediment to breaking gender binary constructs (Buterman, 2015; Spade,

2015). The functionality of male-female systems constrains Katherine's language use in Czech,

causing instances of oppression triggered by the assumption that Katherine cannot be seen as a woman if having a voice perceived as male.

From some of the other participants' experiences using both local and English languages in their international contexts, it is possible to observe that: English functions as a language of access and as an opportunity to be sensitive to one's stories; if not critically considered, English can also overrule the local culture's values. In the first case of English as providing access, "[…] they [students] have presumably been in English immersive classrooms for four years. And a lot of them, you know, spent the summer in Miami, or their father is from the US. They have all these, you know, it's way more integrated with English" (Lawrence). It is feasible to say that the role of parents being from English-speaking countries provides access to a child that other children might not have.

Regarding English as a chance to listen to the 'other' (Sauntson, 2018), James extended his English-speaker's identity to foster his students' individual growth. According to James,

[…] I think it [positionality as an English speaker] just opens you up to be sensitive. I mean, you are sensitive to the world around you because you have to navigate that world in a way that it's in many ways unfamiliar. But who people are and that they are, there is a certain universality about that, you know, that even without language, you can sense that about them. And I spent a lot of time with them [students] and with the class about having or coming to self-acceptance of who you are as a person, no matter what anyone else thinks.

However, regardless of its sensitivity, English still has the potential to dominate local culture's values and beliefs (West, 2017). James further shared that:

[…] The teacher teaches English over Myanmar culture and language. They might have the same educational level as a Myanmar student, maybe who's a grade two or three. They might have fluency in the language in terms of being able to communicate in a conversation, but they don't have the academic language. So, all these children are being groomed to go to university outside of here with the hope that if they go outside, they get this education in a foreign university, that they will then bring back that knowledge to Myanmar. And some might. But I'm guessing that many won't come back. And the thing is, even those who come back, they won't have the same skills. You know that somebody who was born and raised here in Myanmar, culture, and language to access things in the same exact […] This is just something to think about. And I wonder, you're having this experience. That's a good thing. And the hope is that they go to university to come back and bring this knowledge and help build up Myanmar society, culture, and all that, you know? I don't know how much that is wishful thinking. How much should that be? So, my worry for them is that here, they are in their culture, and they're cut off from their culture in some respects. Like I know a couple of kids who only speak English. They don't even speak Myanmar, but they are Myanmar citizens. And I've experienced that in other places as well. You know, I remember this boy when I lived in Iraq, he refused to speak his native language. He would not speak it. He would only speak English. And all of his siblings only spoke English. They refused to speak the native language. And I kept thinking, but you have to be able to, you have to have your language in order to, you're going to live here and be part of this culture.

The example above also critically indicates that internalized colonization is an issue among people who are more immersed in English language culture (Ahmed & Morgan, 2021;

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Lin & Motha, 2020). The desire to dissociate oneself from their own culture and become part of what is believed to be a 'superior' one speaks to the colonial impacts of the English language idealization of a group of people. Within this paradigm that language impacts culture and one's identity, both Jake and Lawrence complemented this intersection of language and culture (Sauntson, 2018; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019) with examples of how to be more culturally responsive and dialogue with locals to develop more awareness among different people. Lawrence's strategy was to use Spanish in class and at school. In addition to the benefit of improving his Spanish language skills, this act recognized that some of his students and school staff were not fully proficient in English. For Jake, using Thai to express concern with gendered behaviours at school, and making sure he addressed it politely combined activism with a sensitivity to the local context:

> […] I think here, there's no gendered language, there's no pronoun for he or she. It's just you. Which I find really liberating. So, I don't have to worry about it. Behaviours are still very gendered and there's still a lot of gender reinforcement. So, especially with kids. I think once a parent asks if they can bring treats for students for a birthday. And she asks how many girls and how many boys are in the class? I checked with my Thai colleague to make sure I was polite, but also kind of direct, like, can you bring just the same treat for everybody? Doesn't have to be gender. Can we just everybody have the same thing? And she was very responsive, in fact. So, I think a non-Thai speaker and also perhaps in a non-queer person, that person, maybe would approach that differently, maybe with frustration or like an eye roll or something. Whereas, you know, I have the context of a queer person, but also the context of a Thai speaker to kind of guide my decisions.

After participants were invited to think about issues that can arise from learning/speaking a language, I unpacked the agency that English supports when these educators addressed the -isms in society (e.g., sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, classicism, and others).

**5.4.1 Language and the Battle Against the -Isms**

In this section, -ism encompasses the intersectional wheel issues of racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and others. In an attempt to understand how the English language can facilitate the battle against such -isms, participants were asked about the relationship between language and the goal of dismantling systemic injustices. One comment, from Katherine, challenged the use of language to develop concepts in tokenistic ways:

[…] We have rather tokenistic weeks like LGBT week or feminist fortnight, nonsense like that. And I am very engaged in those sorts of things. I think they are very important. But they are tokenistic in the sense that we have a rainbow bank so that they raise it, just to legitimize those identities within the school community […] those are the types of how you talk about those things when you're asking about English.

That is, English and any other language cannot be used neutrally and not critically address social issues, but legitimize identity norms (Done & Murphy, 2016; Nieto, 2015; Okazaki, 2006). In the example above, a teacher or administrator can incorporate different linguistic tools (e.g., stickers or lectures) to be more inclusive. Nevertheless, if transphobia and homophobia instances are not tackled properly (e.g., deconstruct the binary view of what women's and men's voices sound like), inclusion strategies are then tokenistic and ineffective (Done & Murphy, 2016; Nieto, 2015; Okazaki, 2006).

English can indeed be a tool to raise awareness around the -isms in society. For Chris, "[…] I think English can be a tool to talk to students about isms in general. And there are a lot of

ways to integrate a social, human, you know, topics through themes or situations in English teaching". Louisa complemented the idea of the English language working as a tool by saying "[…] they [students] should be using language as a tool to express their needs and express their opinions, but also using it, listening as a tool, too. Take in the message to develop their own empathy". Louisa further indicated that language should be empathetic, and develop emotional exchanges:

> […] Language plays a huge role now because it's not just about spoken language. It's about listening. The exchange of that. And regardless of where it is, […] if they're speaking, it's all of a different race of a different class… And I think if schools, in general, are focusing on the message, focus on helping kids get through the emotional part of an exchange, you know, like language can have an emotional exchange that can be, your experiences and all those things dictate how you react. Like, kids at this point, we're trying to shape them to be able to have to understand, like the exchanges that they have. To understand them objectively, you know, and not be influenced by all those isms that you talked about. You know, […] we want those to be very far away from their mind in it in a communicative environment.

Focusing on the English language, participants demonstrated their view of English as being the language of access, too. Despite all considerations of language, identity, and culture, "[…] English is very powerful because a lot of LGBT stuff is in English. For example, the word gay […] The idea of gay is associated with the word, and the word is English" (Katherine). James corroborated this view when he stated that the

> […] Influence of Western culture helps to open a new understanding about something that's always existed in these cultures and kind of provides light to understanding. So, I

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don't see it as, you know, LGBT as a Western concept. It exists everywhere. But what I

do see it as. With the growing acceptance of who we are, Western culture starts to spread.

That helps educate people here. The way to access that information is in English.

Culturally, international schools appropriate from structural Western ideologies as if they

were more progressive and accepting (Mignolo, 2010; Pardo, 2019). Indeed, every country and

culture has their own conceptions about being LGBTQ. But we cannot deny that globalization

contributed to the standardization of what it means to be LGBTQ (Binnie, 2004), defining norms

and imaginaries of queerness.

English language a) has the potential to be transformative: "[…] that is the transformative

power of the language here in terms of LGBT, because it's helping to bring understanding. And

that's what's being translated into local" (James), but can also b) address and combat, or simply

reinforce social issues:

> […] It is really striking.  I mean, I'm living in the Dominican Republic now, and there
>
> definitely is machismo. You know, gender is real. And I'm like, the way people grapple
>
> with it is really striking to me. And no, women's voices just aren't respected as much. I
>
> think language does play a role. I mean, it's like linguistics, you know, like language. It
>
> expresses the way we think. But it also shapes the way that we think. And there's just like
>
> these familiar patterns of talking that affect the way that we even make sense of the
>
> world. (Lawrence).

Pedagogically thinking, English (as a medium of instruction, too) should be used as a tool

to challenge social stereotypes, patterns, and systems (Candau, 2014; Descarries, 2014). A few

participants presented some pedagogical ideas for using English to battle mostly social problems,

using local news artifacts (e.g., newspaper articles), English materials, and even classroom experiences with students. Chris tackled gender-neutral language in a lesson:

> […] I did a lesson, a reading lesson about gender-neutral language. Regarding a newspaper article in which, a news website. The Japanese airline company. Maybe the first of October. They changed the way that they announce their passengers in English. Instead of using ladies and gentlemen, they used more gender-neutral announcements.

The example above contributes to the efforts of doing something about gender diversity in schools that Airton (2018) defends. Even though Chris did not purposefully aim at classroom or school examples, the use of local news impacts how students, both local and international, can make sense of "gender-expansive educational policies and practices" (Airton, 2018, p. 805) that will reflect how such conversations are being expanded outside of the schools. In a different example, Jake took some of their lockdown time during COVID-19 to do research, read, and self-reflect on their teaching practices.

> […] So, now since school started, I'm embedding so many of the social justice expert aspects of teaching and learning into the curriculum. I've seen a lot of success with it, with my students, and it's helped inform my decisions and how I tackle aspects of the curriculum, but I have to teach and help. It's helped me twist around pieces of the curriculum to be focused on social justice, and it helps me see what we're learning through the lens of immigration, or the lens of queerness or racism.

For Lawrence, addressing isms in the classroom should not sound as abstract for his third graders. When discussing social issues in education, an erroneous positionality to have is one where educators say children can be too young to understand such concepts or that it is all in the

heads of the adults and that children do not see differences (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). As an example,

> […] Sometimes you can sort of address abstract issues like racism and, you know, discrimination. You can address those abstract issues with really concrete practices and interactions that third graders can grapple with. You know, if I might talk to my third graders about how society oppresses certain marginalized groups like it might just be too abstract for them. But when we have a classroom discussion and, you know, a girl starts talking and so the boys start turning her out because of the machismo in this culture, then I address that. And it's like, oh, Billy, can you explain what Sara just said? You know, we listen to everybody. (Lawrence)

Surely, having students who are older makes it easier to negotiate activities and discussions in the classroom, but including these conversations in class should not be categorized by age, but further reflected on how educators must rethink activities and concepts for the children at the age that they are teaching (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). For Chris,

> […] I was very upfront and said, what do you want to learn? You know, we were going to do debates. Here is a list of themes or ideas or controversial topics. What interests you? And one of the topics that they were interested in was LGBTQIP+. And so, it was good to get feedback of what they are interested in. And I did. I incorporated that into one of the debates.

More of these queering pedagogical insights (Cavanaugh, 2019) will be discussed in chapter 7. But from this section, it is important to note that the power dynamics present where the English language works as means of communication are relevant to discussing intersections

of language, identity, and privilege. Below, the participants' shared experiences are examples of what they viewed as connecting these identity layers.

**5.5 English Language and Privilege**

To discuss English and privilege, there needs to be some attention to different ideologies that permeate the language and those who speak it. Firstly, related to native-speakerness, Burton (2019) discusses the idealization and privilege given to her as an English teacher in South Korea based on her whiteness, linguistic status, and Canadian nationality. Bringing that notion to this study participants' Western (e.g., American, Canadian, European) backgrounds, the place where they come from enacts power dynamics that are transferred to privileged stances (Burton, 2019; Haidar, 2019) that happen mostly through language.

Secondly, English, as a language, carries the meaning of self-improvement and the opportunity to find privilege (Haidar, 2019) through discourses of finding better employment and/or better quality of life (Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017) in those educators' teaching contexts. These educators are therefore being central to the construction of an ideally better culture abroad with their students. And finally, learning English can be an indicator of social class (Haidar, 2019) marginalization and oppression. As seen in the analysis of English as a language of access, not all families have the financial resources to send their children to international schools. Thus, learning and speaking English are linked to social inequalities.

Privilege is heightened both directly and indirectly when Haidar (2019) argues that "English is used as a control mechanism to play a gate-keeping role in access to higher education and key social positions" (p. 42). In developing and underdeveloped countries, being fluent in English speaking could mean having an opportunity for a different life. Following Haidar's (2019) resignification of Bourdieu's (1991) language and symbolic power, in the neoliberal

society of today, people understand that they need English to attract employability and maintain a social and intellectual status. Hence "English has symbolic power and is considered necessary for survival" (Haidar, 2019, p. 47).

With that in mind, the participants reflected on the relationality of language, power, identity, and privilege. Participants were specifically asked about their identity and experiences as Western LGBTQ educators, and how those relate to the circumstances of power, privilege, and identity within their international contexts. To support participants' responses, they had the opportunity to see and think about the intersectionality wheel (Simpson, 2009), and how the different identity aspects work combined with systemic and sociopolitical influence. The intersectional wheel does not fully acknowledge all types of unique circumstances, aspects of identities, types of discrimination and/or larger structures that reinforce exclusion. However, it was seen as a good conversation starter by participants and allowed them to relate the different dimensions of their identities with the bigger and outer social systems they live in.

When participants talked about their insights regarding the intersectionality wheel, the first thing to note is that participants, in general, expressed how their identities are quite layered. However, when looking into the intersectionality wheel, Katherine, for instance, suggested the wheel is quite personal and provocative as it is

> […] Your understanding of identity? Because this is not universal. This is open to question. What if the subject (me in this instance) does not agree with the intersectional perspective? There is a growing literature on feminism and political theory which runs contrary to intersectionality. And as for the diagram, does it show a source of the oppression? Does the diagram imply that all forms of oppression are equal? (Katherine).

Katherine's post-critical view of the intersectionality wheel reinforces the fluidity of one's identity, and how marginalization can act upon each individual differently. It is a post-critical stance because what Katherine does is dismantle identity (Chow, Segal, & Tan, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019) and forms of oppression that are universally categorized, interpreting that people experience oppression differently, hence reinforcing intersectionality per se. However, in starting the conversation and raising awareness, Jake and James shared how discussions exist to facilitate the meaning-making process and learn from one another, rather than imposing a singular ideal on anyone. Jake shared that […] I am simply posing questions and asking the kids to just think of their own responses or their own solutions. There is no right or wrong answer. Given this scenario or with this knowledge, what do you think should happen or what do you think about this?".

For James, he emphasized "[…] I'm not here telling people all you have to think this way. You have to be like this. You have to know this. I have made several friends with local, mostly gay men here. For me, it's a lot listening to their stories, listening to what their life is like, what it's like to be gay here." The participants' positionality and awareness of their 'whiteness' are evident in the responses and relate to instances of discrimination, oppression, and more significantly transphobia (DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Kearns, Mitton-Kükner, & Tompkins, 2017; Loutzenheiser, 2014). Discrimination, oppression, and transphobia reinforce marginalization in this study. The concepts of each vocabulary had not been discussed with the participants in this research, however, they appear in our dialogues during data collection.

Chris, for example, stated "[…] I am white. I have a certain amount of privilege, you know, being a white person in Japan", but that does not stop discrimination against him. For him, "[…] at the same time, being in Japan has its own problems. What it's a sort of discrimination.

For example, not being allowed in places for not being Japanese. Or like on dating sites, there are people who say, no foreigners". Chris' experience with what he defines as discrimination, nonetheless, "[…] is not substantial, or does not have a substantial impact on me personally, because I am white" (Chris).

Using a different lens, Louisa shared that privilege is circumstantial, mostly given the neoliberal market that international schools operate within (Done & Murphy, 2016; Mccafferty, 2010). According to Louisa, "[…] when I think about privilege as it relates to my context internationally, I don't have the privilege. Particularly, I don't have, you know, my whiteness or whatever that is, that's irrelevant because of the community I serve". She said that because the financial role is inverted in her context, and it is not the white families who are wealthy: "[…] all of the white kids in my school are the poorest kids. All of my teachers' kids are the poorest kids. All of my Chinese kids have the power. All my Chinese families have the power. You know, they're wealthy". The intersectional aspect of class and socioeconomic status again works as a determinant to understanding and unpacking privilege among the educators in the study (Haidar, 2019; McCall, 2005).

 Moving away from privilege and capital, Katherine theorizes privilege and presents a more social and post-critical perspective by saying:

> […] When it comes to privilege, I know how privilege is used within identity. And certainly privileges, it is like an active concept, and racism an active concept. And you being an English speaker, in education, it meant you were in much higher status. And so, you could go to many places where brown-skinned people and non-English speakers could not go. (Katherine)

Katherine described that oppression is structural and can be looked at in multiple ways (Freire, 1998). As an example of social structural transphobia and oppression, Katherine shared "[…] what I can say is that structurally, trans people in particular in this country, are denied access to healthcare. They are denied certain basic human rights. And so cultural violence in the UK and the Czech Republic is that trans people are not part of the national narrative". When describing murder rates among trans people, Katherine suggests that type of violence is direct transphobia, but what people do not consider is how violence can be redefined when the suicide rate is contemplated. Katherine explained,

> […] If you actually look in terms of direct violence as interpreted by suicide, then somebody in my position is 50 percent more likely to commit suicide, 50 percent likely to attempt suicide simply because I'm out in the open. Which is higher than the rest of the population. And so, it's difficult to deny this is oppression. Now, looking at the way we're here, it's a bit different because my understanding of oppression is different from this. If you look at other types of society, gender nonconforming is maybe not the norm, but that there is an accepted degree, of gender non-conformity in other Indigenous societies.

Following Katherine's example above, deconstructing what oppression means involves re-evaluating oppressive attitudes (Kumashiro, 2000; 2002). Oppression is not a result of violent behaviour or verbal harassment, but more broadly, oppression can be translated into the feeling of not fitting in and not finding empathy, acceptance, and support. Katherine's call to understanding oppression and transphobia aligns with Talburt and Rasmussen's (2010) critique that society has not properly addressed social inequalities. The social culture is still limited in understanding oppressive systems, which makes conversations about intersectionality and social justice too superficial, to begin with (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

More broadly, the cultural aspect of understanding identity, privilege, power, and language, and how these are linked to oppression and marginalization is key to unpacking our positionality. Both Lawrence and James, for instance, presented insights that are important to consider when mitigating identity, privilege, power, and language. In Lawrence's experience, *machismo* or an exaggerated masculinity is so present in the international culture that Lawrence himself finds it conflicting to fight it. "[…] I think that there was an element of normalcy about it [machismo] that I don't think would have existed in a lot of American contexts". (Lawrence)

Balancing cultural values seems to be a challenge when considering questions of power and oppression (Grant & Zwier, 2011). Lawrence also stated that "[…] I feel like my values are from when I grew up […]. I came from a very feminist household. My mom was very outspoken […] Like I was saying earlier, the machismo is sometimes really off-putting to me". Although he tried to reconfigure the way people think of machismo, Lawrence is still careful not to impose or judge the locals' customs, which is a paradox for those who engage in critical work and want to change social inequalities, but also have the responsibility to validate and understand others' cultures (Kubota & Miller, 2017; Squires, 2008; West, 2017)

James' awareness resulted in not imposing or judging as an exercise of understanding where you are and come from. For him,

> […] I understand that the family holds on to who you are and your connection to them. Every person I know here is the same. It's the same in Indonesia, the same in Iraq. But they can't imagine not having a family. They find it difficult to think that I live alone. And some worry about me because I live. I say, well, most of my life, I've lived like this. I don't even think about it. (James)

In the classroom, Jake and Lawrence addressed how to start addressing notions of identity and power with students. As both Jake and Lawrence work in primary education, finding resources to pose questions that, according to them, might impact the way they think of an issue. After reading books about immigration, borders, and refugees with their students, for example, Jake "[…] just put up a hypothetical situation, and the students come up with their own responses. The only criteria is it has to make sense of the story". Jake exemplifies this pedagogical approach by saying

[…] I asked the kids, how would the story, how would this story change if this barrier, this wall, or this border didn't exist? What would be different about the story? The stories you read were about refugees trying to cross borders for various reasons. And I just let the kids go. We didn't have conversations about, you know, why borders are bad or anything.

In another example, Lawrence tried

[…] to incorporate diverse representations in the literature that I share, for example, we read a story about, you know, a girl with a job and how she was mistreated by some students in their school. And you know how you work through that […]. I think it's important that the kids, you know, have that exposure.

From an administrator's perspective, Louisa commented about the role of the school as an institution and the importance/impact of the market/access when dealing with issues of power and privilege (Mccafferty, 2010). For Louisa, "[…] one of the biggest challenges in education is that social, you know, social equality. And creating identity. So, schools are supposed to be like sort of creating the social […], schools are supposed to be building what society should be".

Although Louisa attributed some responsibility to the school, she also raised important questions that challenge the current neoliberal educational agenda. As she worked for a private international school, she noted who has capital, access, and more resources to develop credentials which configure a better school curriculum. In Louisa's experience,

> […] my parents look at me and just go, they do not care where you're from. They want their kids to go to a Canadian school and get a diploma, but they're not thinking 'oh look at you, amazing white person'. They're like 'what are your credentials? Show us your grit'. They want to know every school you went to. How many teachers went to top schools? They want to know all the professional development that you're doing.

Considering privilege, Louisa affirmed that international education educators are not the ones who are privileged, but the ones who have to work under a system that provides those who pay "[…] 30, 40, 50 thousand US dollars a year to go to my school" (Louisa). In complying with the school's system, educators benefitted financially as well, which cannot be overlooked and taken as a non-privileged scenario for them. All in all, it is important to recognize the fluidity and different nuances of privilege, and how it may affect individuals and society in different ways. Now, after seeing each participants' experiences and their conceptions of language and identity, the next chapter will explore possible lessons from these educators' interconnecting experiences, considering what has been presented so far.

**Chapter 6 – Interconnecting Teachers' Experiences**

In this chapter, the overlapping insights from participants generated common themes about educators' experiences abroad. Such experiences can aid in developing more sensitive lenses towards the inclusion of an LGBTQ agenda for different teaching capacities (e.g., educators' barriers in a foreign country, professional development, and online communities explored in this chapter). From a more horizontal analysis (Wibeck & Linnér, 2021), the compiled experiences and stories of the study participants provide discussions that can be strategic to the development of a more inclusive queer agenda, for instance.

In this chapter, the sessions unpack the marginalization of trans people, which is visible even within the LGBTQ community itself; teachers' professional development; and the role of digital technology and online communities in LGBTQ teachers' experiences.

## 6.1 Different Sexualities and Gender Identities Determine One's Struggles

Under the category of struggles that study participants faced in their international experiences, some key aspects were professionalism, being part of an LGBTQ community, the prospect of returning home, and transphobia. Importantly, the role of sexual identities and gender identities were exceptionally different; therefore, participants' experiences grappling with their barriers or challenges significantly changed, too.

Professionally, the participants expressed their concerns with the level of professional stimulation they experienced while teaching internationally. According to them, the classroom environment was different (easier to handle) than Western classrooms as children tended to be better behaved and there was usually tuition paid to be studying in such schools. The neoliberal agenda in these contexts set the tone for students' and teachers' behaviour in international schools. That can arguably be translated into the idea that private schools are intrinsically related

to a better quality of education, which consequently relates to achieving a higher position in the labour market and the improvement of the economy (Mccafferty, 2010), as it is the case in developing and under developing countries. These neoliberal agendas are not often culturally sensitive (Howson & Lall, 2019), meaning teachers need to find the tools to critically act within their classrooms (Done & Murphy, 2016; West, 2017).

Jake, for example, still seeks out activities and teacher learning as:

[…] There are two things I am currently struggling with. The first thing is professionalism. And that isn't necessarily a good thing. I think I studied teaching, and teaching is something that I want to do for the rest of my life, and I'll probably always be in a classroom. And I didn't join teaching because it is easy. So, I am finding that currently, I have to really seek out professional stimulation on my own because I am not getting it. Not from my school. And hopefully, that will change in the coming years. But I am really, especially at this point in my career, I am really hungry for that professional stimulation. (Jake)

When reaching out to the community, these teachers also expressed the characteristics of a secretive LGBTQ community in these countries. Sometimes, it was not easy to find a niche to belong to, and participants ended up reflecting on past and current experiences. Lawrence shared "[…] it's been harder, you know. Like, I feel like, in Mexico City, there were more organized spaces and events and groups. I feel it's like a bit more subterranean here. You have to know someone to kind of get in. But I am part of a board game community". (Lawrence)

The local socio-political contexts immensely impacted how LGBTQ people act in social encounters. Although the Dominican Republic, for example, has laws that combat any type of discrimination against LGBTQ people, Lawrence's experiences reveal the opposite. Arguably,

the cultural homophobia (Carroll, 2016) and unacceptance of LGBTQ people in public spaces and events are rooted in heteronormative standards (Jones-Redmond, 2007). In the case of international schools, Mizzi (2013) insists on challenging the culture of international workspaces to give more visibility to dissident sexual and gender minorities.

For educators who have spent a longer time abroad, the outcomes of a financially stable life can become an issue when choosing to extend their contracts or not. Although some of these participants consider the possibility of returning to their home countries, after a few years of being an educator internationally, the thought of it can be challenging as they become more stable in their job positions and create deeper connections with local communities. For Louisa, for instance, going back to either the US or Canada would have required giving up certain opportunities and privileges that she and her wife would not have had in their home countries. Besides, having to adapt to new social settings would be challenging, as Louisa explains:

> […] The other part we struggle with is when we were going to come back. And if we want to. Career-wise, we don't need to. It's really silly. Come back and do what? I am not going to get a job at a public school [in Canada]. I am American. And we don't necessarily want to go to the US right now considering the state there. It's really easy for me to go and buy a house in Michigan. It's only 3 hours away [from Canada]. I could buy a million-dollar house. I could do that, and we have all types of job opportunities. It's the social environment we're not attracted to. (Louisa)

International schools are well known for their good salary base and that is one of the attractions for teachers wanting to work abroad. Educators' satisfaction with their salary can be pivotal in their decision-making processes (Roberts, Mancuso, & Yoshida, 2010), which often can create susceptibility to accepting poor work and social environment conditions. For example,

in addition to community struggles and professional development, transphobia is still one of the biggest issues among transgender educators abroad. Given this study had Katherine as a participant, who is a transgender woman, sharing some experiences teaching internationally, the discrimination, oppression and marginalization were confirmed when Katherine said:

> […] So, the fact is, I have been presenting as a woman. Which is a bit problematic. I know I don't look or sound like one. So, I get a lot of shit with students and colleagues and I'm very conscious of my voice because I think I'm, I mean, I've done voice training once. It's like language learning. Lots of exercises. But also, an idea. So, my voice is such a part of my identity that I'm quite happy with it. I think it's rather nice. (Katherine)

Katherine's being discriminated against for their voice is an example of how transphobia is rooted today in the most basic daily activities (Conlin, 2020). The male-female binary systems function as a ruling guide to how men and women should behave, act, speak, and develop day-to-day tasks (Butler, 2006; Conlin, 2020; Junqueira, 2009; Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010). Moreover, it shows that transphobia can be not taken seriously as there is a lack of legal support for transgender people in many countries around the world. Katherine commented that "[…] I have all the things about hate speech or things like this, discrimination, they cannot discriminate against me because I don't exist as a legal constitute", constituting issues of gender non-conforming individuals in schools, too (Spade, 2015).

Analyzing these educators' experiences, findings suggest approaching LGBTQ matters from a multi-layered and dynamic lens. Alm and Martinsson (2017) have argued against a transnational LGBTQ community perspective which, according to them, critiques the narratives of Western scholars and theorists. The tendency among creating visibility across the globe for

LGBTQ people has brought inclusive thoughts and attention to several sexual rights and gender equality. However, there is a need to recognize LGBTQ matters as cultural products as well.

As an example of a cultural product, the rainbow flag, for example, is a symbolic worldwide recognized symbol. The rainbow flag itself enables community building, calling out for equality for and inclusion of LGBTQ members within different social aspects (Rosenberg, 2021; Alm & Martinsson, 2017). Nonetheless, the community ideal of LGBTQ people, also seen as a transnational community as it travels the world, is dangerous in the sense that "a substantial amount of people that do not conform to normative ideals about gender and sexuality, around the globe, experience similar exposure to discrimination and violence, and that they can be united" (Alm & Martinsson, 2017, p. 220).

When thinking about where to belong and whether an LGBTQ community fits the inclusion and diversity personal criteria of individuals, the impact of homonationalism needs to be considered to see what type of connections and disconnections affect society (Alm & Martinsson, 2017; Braidotti, 2016; Pischetola, Miranda, & Albuquerque, 2021). The ideal of an LGBTQ community that is unique and in conformity with all its members' struggles being the same contributes to what is called homonationalism (Alm & Martinsson, 2017). Homonationalism, in this context, refers to how the community itself is performing its agency and enabling problematic constructions of such community, occasioning the standardization of class, and reinforcing inequality.

This study, for instance, aims to break that pattern by providing the specific and individual challenges of participants with different identity characteristics. The struggles within their profession and their willingness to belong, whether in the workplace, country or home, result from fractioned encounters. They grew up in different communities, received different

types of education, and developed their own values and beliefs along the way. Yet, they were still part of an educated critical political middle-class community which cannot summarize the struggles of an entire community.

As for the limitations found here, through the intersectional lens, the study has not addressed questions pertaining to LGBTQ BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) members. It is limited in the sense of how we investigate the inclusion of homeless people or people with HIV. It leaves aside so many more questions and experiences of people who are aging or have disabilities. And as Rosenberg (2021) proposes, belonging is still being represented by folks that do not counter the whiteness and anti-Black racism existent in so many countries.

Within the LGBTQ spectrum, and through Katherine's experiences, it is observable that class, race, education, and language are not sufficient to respect and be inclusive of trans people. Spade (2015) advocates for a more critical trans politics which goes beyond the legal recognition and inclusion of trans people in society. It is an attempt to "transform current logics of state, civil society security, and social equality… that perpetually questions its own effectiveness, that refuses to take for granted stories about what counts as change that actually maintains certain structures and categories" (Spade, 2015, p.2).

Despite changes in the past few years in legislation and laws that eliminate segregation and prohibit discrimination against people because of their sex, race, and disability, trans people, in general, are among the highly vulnerable people affected by social prejudices (Spade, 2015). Surely, laws may have progressed, but they can also regress as observed in the United States. Trans people tend to be invisible to society (Duque, 2020) and their invisibility is a historical, cultural, and social construct that often resists hierarchies of power but rarely names and refuses

the state violence it produces. Katherine's experiences, as a trans person, do not diminish any other participant's struggles. They rather emphasize the identity diversification within a community and impose the resignification of regimes of practices and knowledges (Spade, 2015).

Following the abovementioned discussion, teachers can benefit from teaching agendas that do not romanticize LGBTQ awareness and social justice. It is not only a matter of having gender-neutral bathrooms, using the right pronouns, and hiring disabled LGBTQ people at universities. The structural impact of oppression still exists, and a few successful LGBTQ community members do not reflect the reality of an entire community. And to present more of that, the next section elaborates on what these educators experience when seeking professional development.

## 6.2 Professional Development

The majority of participants in the study pursued professional development. This professional development included graduate studies, taking courses in the field, and/or finding opportunities for self-learning with other people and readings. Lawrence, for example, completed a master's in elementary education prior to going overseas to teach, and at the time of the research taught third grade in the Dominican Republic. Louisa had also completed a master's degree before moving to China. As she explained,

> […] I am also doing my doctorate now too. So, I am also trying to speak at conferences as well. I've already done three conferences this year. I've spoken at three international conferences already and I have one more coming up at the end of April. That'll be the last one. So, I just really need to get to that. And the one in Shanghai, I just did it in March.

Actually, it was the first time I started talking about my dissertation topic. And that was really good. Because it helps to talk about it and not just write about it. (Louisa)

In Chris' case, back in 2018, he wanted to explore the field of teaching English as a Second Language, therefore "[…] every weekend, I take a weekend course in (name of the region). So, I have been going there a lot. It is a CELTA course. About teaching English as a Second Language to adults. So, I want to be a bit more employable. It helps with my job search which is ongoing" (Chris). At the time of the research, Chris was also doing his master's degree in the field of second language teaching and learning.

Finally, Jake was married to a doctoral scholar. According to Jake, their motivation to seek professional development and understand how social justice issues interplay with education came from a home with their partner. Jake purchased books that can foreground their educational choices and practices, and they intended to share those with other teachers and students, not only in Thailand but also elsewhere.

Jake shared that "[…] I am going to read the books that I have at home, you know, when it is appropriate for the units that we're doing, I am going to talk about my husband and share what my life is like and create or talk about creating a safe space and what that means". (Jake)

When it comes to professional development programs, they did not seem to address much of what the real issues in classrooms are. Based on the participants' experiences, the focus of professional development was usually efficacy of content delivery, and how to deliver content more objectively. Contextually, in Brazil, for example, educators tend to be heavily invested in continuing education programs. Such programs allow teachers and administrators to take courses and enroll in programs to seek and improve the quality of teaching, new pedagogies, and teacher practices (Alferes & Mainardes, 2011). In Manitoba, the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) is

an example of how Canadian associations organize Professional Development (PD) workshops and events (https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/professional-development-2/) to support learning and teaching and professional development of teachers in the province.

Those teachers who do not take any other courses, nor go back to school for another degree, have the opportunity to participate in long-standing research relationships with universities, too. Emergent scholars and faculty members have often established research projects that attend local schools (Marques, 2016) and international teacher programs (Moura & Bruz, 2021) to introduce reflections on different teachers' practices.

This study, however, further challenges the idea of professional development when participants' individualities and different localities add complexity to a how-to-teach workshop. Through the shared experiences of participants in the study, being LGBTQ and trying to adopt a more inclusive teaching agenda in the schools they work at can put them in difficult positions at times. These teachers have found more freedom to explicitly show their interest and work on LGBTQ matters in teaching in graduate programs, as is the case of Chris. But others like Jake have encountered hardships when suggesting a more inclusive queer literature at their school, mostly due to their willingness to battle whiteness privilege and power in education (Payne & Smith, 2018; Cortez, de Souza, Salvador, & Oliveira, 2019).

Considering privilege and power in education, Cortez et al (2019) presents a historical perspective on sexism, misogyny, homo- and transphobia in the workplace. Although the teaching force is represented largely by the female figure, roles in the administration, for example, are still dominated by straight cis men (Payne & Smith, 2018). Research shows that cis women and LGBTQ people are more likely to face some sort of verbal or physical violence in the workplace (Cortez et al, 2019).

Such violence can reflect prejudice, discrimination, and segregation of women and LGBTQ people, manifesting sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny. These all have in common the notion of man as an almost sacred ideal, in which the straight cis white male figure is given as both the biologically and socially accepted norm. And whatever does not fit that characteristic – the feminine – is seen as incomplete and imperfect (Cortez et al, 2019). The reinforcement of binarism in the workplace is not helpful to the inclusion of people who do not share stereotypical male characteristics and emphasizes the hegemonic figure of the male.

With LGBTQ identity central to this study, the teachers who shared their stories help make more visible the challenges that permeate a male-dominated workforce but question the incapacity of LGBTQ teachers to be recognized and have their needs met in the profession. LGBTQ laws and rights are constantly being drafted and suggested for schools to start reshaping what it means to create an inclusive school, and yet "school administrators are committed to safety for all but are reticent to address gender and sexual diversity outside the boundaries of the antibullying curriculum" (Payne & Smith, 2018, p. 184).

Parents are responsible for the pressure on schools to affirm diversity within their families, too. Students and teachers have emphasized the psychological and physical importance of opening spaces for dialogues in classrooms. And when there is so much awareness around being an inclusive school, educating others and discussing sexualities and gender identities are not only part of an educator's job (Payne & Smith, 2018; Cortez et al, 2019). That means that school administrators, staff, and other educational actors also have the autonomy to question and problematize LGBTQ+ matters within different settings.

Administrators and professional development programs can be complacent in ignoring verbal, physical, and psychological harassment of LGBTQ people in schools. The neutrality with

which educators and administrators approach professional development, and the superficial inclusive agenda of courses, workshops, and events are still harmful to those who cannot find support in heteronormative schools across the globe (Jones-Redmond, 2007).

To find ways of being heard and voicing concerns that are pertinent to their contexts, participants in the study encountered in online communities a chance to express themselves and their needs. Below, the data and discussion investigate the role of the technologies and online communities in the lives of these LGBTQ teachers.

## 6.3 The Role of Digital Technologies/Online Communities in LGBTQ Teachers' Lives

Probably one of the most prevalent strategies for building community and professional development that these participants use has to do with online access and the use of digital technologies. From a pre-departure context where these teachers cannot find information about being LGBTQ in these countries to the moment they arrive and want to meet new people, learn about the culture, develop their teaching practices, and socialize, online platforms are fundamental in the experiences of these teachers.

Being able to use communication platforms facilitates relationships (Miller, 2017), but also highlights how some of these countries regulate and control their citizens. Louisa, for instance, shared the fact that she and her wife participate in a WeChat message group. WeChat is a Chinese message app, and it is monitored by the government. According to Louisa,

> […] WeChat is all monitored. That group as well, it is all monitored. It could skirt as not acceptable. So, we have to make sure that nothing is inappropriate there. So, it is just for us to get a place where we can get together, we can talk and help each other and stuff like that. So, our friend makes sure that it doesn't put anybody in an uncomfortable position.

Despite the government's control over how the citizens use the app, it still functions as a social approach to bring lesbians together in the community in China. Within a group of people who share similar interests, social media can effectively work as a strategy to foster a sense of belonging and community among individuals (Reed & Dunn, 2021). Louisa, for instance, described it as:

> […] Now, in terms of the gay and lesbian scene in China, our best friend, started a group called [group name] and that's just a lesbian group. It's not that we're not open to others. She is just sort of keeping it for lesbians in the community. Just on our chat group right now, we have 88 members. So, there's basically women in and around the area. 88 women identifying as lesbians. She doesn't have bisexuals either. So, we do, about once a month or every other month, depending on the season, we have had a party, get-togethers, we've had movie nights, or we just rent a big space. I know they've done karaoke at different times. We haven't been able to do all that. (Louisa)

James, on the other hand, found in the local online newspaper the chance to find a new community. "[…] One of the things I did do was go to an online newspaper, I read there's an LGBT choir here. And they have a way to contact them, and I was 'oh I would love to join the choir'. So, I contacted them, and I wanted to attend a performance that they were giving" (James). Observing Myanmar's socio-cultural contexts and the implications of being LGBTQ in the country, LGBTQ locals and ex-pats need some subtle means of communication and online communities to socialize. Miller (2017) argues that adjacent forms of communication still impact the identity-making of people who are marginalized by mainstream cultures.

On a more personal level, a few participants encountered challenges hearing information about what it is like to be LGBTQ in their teaching contexts. So, prior to embarking, Lawrence

found the chance to connect to an online community, inquire and reflect more about how to navigate certain issues.

> […] So, I have to go through this whole process of applying and so forth, and then, talk to the staff and find out what the climate is like. Because it's not just very publicly available. Like, in that school, they even had a little blog post about LGBT educators, and you know, kind of doing the thing to ask the question. (Lawrence)

As forums and web pages were central for Lawrence to discuss what support was out there, he emphasized how frustrating the experience had been considering in an online setting, LGBTQ people can also experience homophobia/transphobia. Using the term 'straight privilege', Lawrence defined his experience confronting and being confronted by straight people who minimize LGBTQ people's challenges and suggest a "we-are-all-humans" approach, as stated below:

> […] And there were a bunch of super, I don't even know what the word is, I don't really know what straight privilege was until I was on this forum. I was so frustrated. The prompt was LGBT people face different environments around the world, do you guys have any place you recommend or worry about? And the majority of responses were talking about "you know why gay people have to do things all about them and have the same rights?" and "can we all just be teachers?" and I was so angry. I was like "could you just not highjack this forum for your own views and let people who actually need this information to survive have this forum?" So, anyway, that was a very helpful forum. There were basically three posts that were somehow helpful and everyone else was talking about, you know, pontificating or whatever. So, that was frustrating. But now I

found a Facebook group that just started about queer educators around the globe.

(Lawrence)

In Lawrence's example, a "we-are-all-humans" view should be questioned, and a more relevant inquiry is needed to recognize the social construct of justice and acceptance. For instance, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) addressed that the knowledge of social justice in people is superficial because of what is proposed through mainstream society. Moreover, they state that

Society is structured in ways that make us all complicit in systems of inequality; there is no neutral ground. Thus, an effective critical social justice [lens] will unsettle mainstream perspectives and institutional discourse, challenge our views about ourselves, what we think we know about society, how it works, and our place in it. (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 30)

After having experienced the same lack of information about what it is to be gay in Japan, Chris began a blog to share information with whoever is/has been in a similar position. Chris said "[…] I also address what being gay and foreign in Japan is like in a blog. Like, experiences of being gay and foreigner here. The blog is not updated. It's like information that I wanted to know before coming here".

Considering profiles on social media, participants made the most of social networking sites to contact family and friends around the world. However, teachers like James took extra precautions online and tried to keep his personal and teacher lives separate. While sharing his experience, James indicated

[…] I have two Facebook accounts. One that I keep most things for school, you know. And others for friends and all of that. One is my other life. It is quite common to do that. Because you have to keep those lives separate to kind of keep yourself safe. So, that name

on Skype is the same Facebook name I use. It was more of my life as a gay man as opposed to family, teacher, school, and all that. (James)

In saying that he needed one separate Facebook account to keep himself safe, he suspected that one of his work visas was denied because someone might have found out about the "gay account" and rejected his application.

Returning to the professional development aspect, Twitter has been a meaningful tool for Jake to connect with other teachers globally and advocate for marginalized groups in education. Jake noticed international teachers were not receiving any sort of preparation to advocate and include social justice in their practices. To raise awareness around trans people of colour and Indigenous people, Jake considers their time on Twitter and online group discussions as an impactful enhancement in their professional careers. As Jake alleged,

[…] Twitter has been my biggest resource right now. I got very involved in Twitter about a year ago. Specifically with the English language learning hashtags. And talking about co-teaching and connecting with other ELL educators, that's been like 90% of my professional development has come from Twitter. Things on Twitter. But then, over the past six months or so, with this rising urgency that I had to be more of q queer advocate and advocate more for people of difference, I went to Twitter to look for resources and there weren't any. (Jake)

For educators, mostly in the last few months with the COVID-19 pandemic, digital technologies and online communities have been central to discussions about social inclusion, interaction and belonging (Reed & Dunn, 2021), opportunities and disruptions in the future of education (Wren, 2021; Stephens & Curwood, 2021). The data presented through this study further the role of digital technologies and online communities in the lives of LGBTQ people as

they found online ways to navigate their sense of belonging, used digital social media as a space for informal professional development, and relied on websites to find valuable information about being LGBTQ in their teaching contexts, sometimes facing unsafe scenarios.

Following the participants' shared experiences, teacher education programs could be questioned in terms of how their agendas inquire about and make people's placemaking and voices recognized (Yu & Blain, 2019; Miller, 2017). By placemaking, Yu and Blain (2019) explore how one can exercise their double identities – national and LGBTQ – in international spaces and use social media to rebuild their sense of home and belonging. Through the intersections of the internet and outernet (Yu & Blain, 2019), online communities are identified as safer spaces, where mostly vulnerable people, and in this case, LGBTQ people, can find others, relate to similar experiences, and reconstruct an LGBTQ community narrative that is both inaccurate and harmful (Yu & Blain, 2019; Miller, 2017; Dym, Brubaker, Fiesler, & Semaan, 2019).

As international teachers, none of the participants in this study easily found or discussed information about being LGBTQ with recruiters and school administrators prior to arriving in their teaching contexts. Observing a systemic marginalization of LGBTQ identity in the education spaces (Dym, Brubaker, Fiesler, & Semaan, 2019), it is notable that LGBTQ identities seem to be omitted from the processes of hiring Anglo-Western educators (Budrow & Tarc, 2018; Tarc, Tarc, & Wu, 2019), and are stigmatized in the school curriculum as LGBTQ issues, images, role models, and histories reinforce the inexistence of this groups' members, therefore excluding them from society (Miller, 2017; Dym et al, 2019).

Coming out and being out as LGBTQ educators can be anxiety-inducing, isolating, and sometimes dangerous (Dym et al, 2019). In the workplace, these educators can face their

professionalism and careers being placed in jeopardy and the escape way is often found in online communities, where they find support for stigmatized issues. With a safer sense of finding and creating communities online,

> […] For LGBTQ people living in hostile spaces, online communities offer a place to recover, explore their identity, and contribute to community resources. Simultaneously, online communities can also be invaluable sources of support, particularly for finding and connecting with others going through similar experiences (Dym et al, 2019, p. 2).

This is a call to understanding that LGBTQ identities are historical-sociocultural constructs (Dym et al, 2019; Miller, 2017; Yu & Blain, 2019). Historically, LGBTQ people are given as abnormal (e.g., homosexuality being considered a disease) and that culturally can cause LGBTQ people to live in dissonance with their own identity (Rich, 2010; Sedgwick, 1993). That is, their reality does not match or fit in the normal historical cultural conception of identity (e.g., the binary man and woman). Socially, through media representations, LGBTQ identity expressions are limited and rather perversive (Dym et al, 2019). And these educators working in online communities, using digital technologies, challenge those perceptions of their identities by advocating, creating communities, professionally developing themselves, and trying to negotiate their identities in those teaching contexts (Miller, 2017).

Online communities in the lives of LGBTQ educators serve to invite exploration of LGBTQ identities without the fear of judgement or expectations of putting their career at risk. As Dym, Brubaker, Fiesler, and Semaan (2019) argue, "sometimes the only place safe enough to talk about being gay was online" (p. 2). Surely access to devices and internet connection should be considered under the intersectional lens as to who is benefitting from online communities. Although my participants found opportunities to be socially included in their contexts, digital

inclusion can be difficult to access for people who do not have the technological resources to participate in these communities (Pletsch, Oliveira, & Colacique, 2020).

Once COVID-19 hit the globe, social inequalities multiplied in education (Pletsch, Oliveira, & Colacique, 2020). Adding to the research in which online communities work towards the well-being of these educators (Zervoulis, Smith, Reed, & Dinos, 2020), and studies that frame technologies and online communities as central to developing a critical education (Nagle, 2018; Reese & Carissimo, 2021), this study underscores the potential of online settings to demystify LGBTQ identities in international settings. Expanding access to people who might be disadvantaged by a lack of digital access and opportunities to queer educational practices, as presented below, impact teachers' advocacy, and needs to be cautiously discerned.

**6.4 Queering International Schools**

Queering international schools align with the concept of including and applying non-dominant intersectional identities in daily school activities, with school staff, teachers and students involved (Cavanaugh, 2020; Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007; Airton, 2013). Queering, in this context, calls educators out to identify that often, they are unconsciously affirming the hetero/cis normative systems and norms, "the belief system that straight people are normal, natural, and expected" (Cavanaugh, 2019, p. 36). Notwithstanding the fact that queer scholars can also be normalizing LGBTQ identity options and performances. Language (Paiz, 2020) in its different capacities also has the power to normalize oppressive mindsets Whether through 'this is so gay' as a fun momentaneous descriptive, or the lack of images to include non-binary bathroom signs, all types of languages can perpetuate marginalization.

With that in mind, one way of queering international schools, from some of my participants' perspectives, was to be open about it in their workplace and sometimes push the

boundaries in terms of what to wear, for instance. Louisa demonstrated that "[…] I've always been out. I've never been closeted professionally". Her marriage was positively regarded at the school where she worked, and all Chinese and foreign staff were aware of their relationship. The school acknowledged both Louisa and her wife were together and that made it often easier to resolve any administrative matters.

> […] They [school] acknowledge our marriage as valid and they're not looking at me as a single woman at work. I can go down easily and sign for her tax payment. Or stuff that nobody is disputing that. [current wife's name] can go as well and they will be 'go ahead'. You know, I can say, [current wife's name] needs it. It also helps the administration at our school, you know. In terms of personal things, the insurance. If they can't get a hold of [current wife's name], they can ask me that question, you know. I know the answer and I can answer. So, our Chinese staff that handles that, there was never a question 'oh you're married?'. New staff who come in will be like 'oh', they sort of think about it for a minute and they're like oh okay. But in terms of the Chinese staff that we've had, we have high retention, so pretty much everyone knows us, and they've seen our relationship a lot. (Louisa)

Louisa's experiences as a married lesbian, however, were not common for every LGBTQ couple. From an intersectional perspective, Louisa's being an administrator and her wife's being a teacher who had been hired by the same school could have facilitated the school's recognition of them as a married couple. Their lesbian identities were left aside as their roles in administration played a bigger influence on how they were treated. Following Walby's (2011) notion of intersectionality and inequalities, it is possible to understand how the power of a

society that is driven by globalization ephemerally dissociates the quality of work from sexual and gender identities.

Chris, though, chose a more subtle way of being out at his school and had expectations that his co-workers would engage in more conversations about being LGBTQ as he said: "[…] At school, a lot of the staff at school know that I am gay, and I've got LGBT rainbow stickers on my desk. So, I don't know, I thought they would speak more about it and get the conversations started" (Chris).

In terms of setting up new boundaries, Lawrence shared how he has been able to change his school history by using accessories that could be binarily set as a norm (Sedgwick, 1993), or wearing pieces of clothes with messages that will eventually break down barriers and help the community to evolve:

> […] Like I said, I wear a purse, and I wear a shirt that is gay-friendly. I've tried making
> my spaces more differently. So, I feel like it is a story, at this point, a story of change.
> The school community has just been evolving. And I think it's been the courage of these
> teachers, and queer people who refused to sit silently that the story has been evolving that
> way, you know. Like, I choose to put rainbow hearts on my bulletin board, like, I make it
> very clear what kind of classroom teacher they have. And who they're working with. And
> I think that breaks down barriers. But I think it's an ongoing journey. The community is
> still evolving. (Lawrence)

With the strategies of putting up rainbow stickers, being open and talking about their partners, or simply wearing an accessory to redefine gender norms (Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010), these educators' students are finding safe spaces to come out themselves.

**Figure 15**

*Chris' English board*



*Note.* Attempt to start conversations about queer issues.

As an example, Chris not only set up a rainbow-looking English board (Figure 15) to start conversations that include LGBTQ matters but also showed himself reliable so a student could come out during the English Club:

> […] One of our students, she's part of the English club. And I kept telling them, my English club, about my boyfriend when it comes up. And they asked, so it kind of encouraged her to express her feelings for another English club member, same sex, which, I think, it was the first time she had expressed it to her friend. And I think she felt comfortable doing it because we had just discussed LGBT, and it was just the three of us in a quite safe environment. (Chris)

Teachers' pedagogical work and choices have served as tools for queering the thinking, doing, and acting of education. Jake's experience was an example of how school administration can still be reluctant in accepting a more diverse and inclusive teaching approach (Kumashiro,

2000; 2002). Jake also reported the delicate position they were put in as depending on how much they pushed, their supervisors could not guarantee their job safety anymore.

> […] But what stands this kind of confrontation is when I purchased some children's books that explore identity and that have those themes about finding who you are and who you are is okay. And I wanted to read those to my students. There was a lot of pushbacks from the administration. They weren't queer books. They were picture books with animals and fantasy characters, but they had those queer themes of identity. And I was told I wasn't allowed to have those on campus. And that, you know, me being out, well, my superintendent is supportive of me as a person said that she could not protect me if the board decides to take action or decides that they don't want me around anymore. Regardless of my teaching. Just because they feel like I am trying to indoctrinate or spread some type of message when all I really want is for us to be visible. (Jake)

Confronting the school system is often seen as an indoctrination action, and repeatedly puts teachers in a position of being vilified (Antunes & Duque, 2020). Through the lens of decolonization, teacher educators should be acting toward the deconstruction and reconstruction of education through queering workspaces (Cavanaugh, 2020; Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007; Airton, 2013). That is, queering means to recognize LGBTQ matters as both personal and political, but also as a limited resilient and liberating process. Moreover, "queering can be understood as counter-discourse and a critical imagination; it offers people a language and lens to critically examine gender and sexual diversity efforts in our schooling" (Cavanaugh, 2019, p. 149).

Queering international schools is reconstructive when it works alongside the changing of dominant LGBTQ narratives and supports safer spaces for individuals. Teacher education

programs still lack preparedness in dealing with queer history (Mizzi, 2014). Queering education is still overlooked and avoided, which makes teachers less susceptible to including LGBTQ content in their classrooms (Cavanaugh, 2019; Airton, 2013). In the international education contexts, if international schools often mirror English-speaking countries' curricula, the chances of finding LGBTQ content are likely even less. The teachers in the study have justified how hard it is to include such content in their agenda, having to go through board meetings and have them approved first.

Trans people are still the most disadvantaged population within schools (Antunes & Duque, 2020), as Katherine's constant struggle with transphobia at school. The visibility of sexual differences has grown in the past few years, but gender non-conformity is reluctantly explored (Cavanaugh, 2019; Airton, 2013; Antunes & Duque, 2020). In times when schools are characterized by their pluralities and democratization, educators are not really changing, but privileging particular notions of gender norms and what is or is not accepted in terms of sexual and gender identity/expression. Therefore, advocacy among LGBTQ people grows into a far-reaching strategy for inclusive practices, with educators in this study needing to be strategic and creative about how to implement discussion in class even when administrators deny any materials purchases or support, for instance.

By breaking the silence, Chris was able to subtly find allies and advocate for a space to include resources about being LGBTQ in Japan, for example. As Chris said,

> […] When I think about the JET Program, I think they could be more vocal about supporting LGBT identities, too. Because there's this government program, they are very, like "if the government doesn't want to talk about it, then we can't talk about it". So, I wish they were a bit more vocal about it, taking more initiatives to do that. I think in the

local prefecture, we have some really supportive allies on the board of education. So, I've had an LGBT booth in the last few years at the orientation of the year for new teachers. That happened because I requested LGBT support at orientation. And so, they invited me. So, it made me happy they had somebody to conduct resources about being LGBT in Japan. Something I've never had. They were way supportive. (Chris)

From an administrative lens, both Chris and Louisa worked to advocate for changes in bureaucratic services. Louisa's Ph.D. work focused on school advocacy, and although she had not had her research goals lined up at the time she was interviewed, she aimed at reformulating the strategic planning of a few Chinese schools and thinking of students' learning efficacy.

[…] My dissertation is in improvement sciences. So, it's basically for school advocacy. How international schools maintain advocacy through proper improvement planning. And, you know, how they consider retention and how they analyze their capacity in a short term to get things done. And have lower retention, or when they are not an ideal place to work, maybe. Like, tracking their rate of progress over time. Basically advocacy, their capacity, looking at that. I have 53 schools though at my disposal and my company. It's likely that I'll be working at those schools. Before, we had four schools that were international schools and 49 schools that are Chinese private high schools that are in our company. So, I've really decided that I am going to stick with that because we don't have the strategic planning. The real question is how do you maintain it with shifting advocacy? That's the real question. How do you plan for that? What do principals, or heads of schools, or superintendents or whatever, what do they put in place that is effective? And how can that be used globally and wherever to show a sort of shared practice or transfer practice? (Louisa)

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As the participants' identities were reshaped throughout their time abroad, they also noticed a change in their advocacy goals. While some participants tended to it more quietly and subtly, participants like Jake underscored how their queer identity urged them to advocate for social justice more actively and vocally. According to Jake, another challenge they faced was "[…] of an issue of advocacy. In the past few months, my queer identity is more and more important to me. It is something I am open about with students and peers. But internationally, I am not protected by the same laws as I would be in the US. Especially at my school*"* (Jake). Social justice advocacy varies tremendously from one country to another, and in the case of Jake, it might have jeopardized their position at school due to a more conservative school board.

For Katherine, social justice advocacy was linked to advocating for trans rights. However, other participants like Jake and Chris also brought up fighting and raising awareness about transphobia. During his interview process, prior to departing to Japan, Chris said "[…] I mentioned that at university I did a project about going into school, a whole business plan about going to secondary schools and teaching workshops on how to cut homophobia and transphobia in schools*".* (Chris)

The movements against transphobia that these educators fought for are part of a long battle against gender roles, gender norms, and the male-female gender binary (Butler, 2006). Being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or a gender-conforming queer does not precisely challenge existing systems and functions (Seffner, 2011). There is no resistance to heterosexual norms when gender-conforming LGBQ people blend into the crowd; after all, they still tend to be seen as belonging to the male-female schemes (Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010). Fighting transphobia still requires a post-critical positionality of educators not to overlook the problem and think that a rainbow sticker will allow trans people to thrive.

In Latin America, a post-critical stance could be observed through Lawrence's advocacy as it contributed to the battle against heteronormativity. At school, Lawrence planned activities that broke barriers and incorporated a more diverse lens to holidays that attract romance among straight people, for example.

[…] For Valentine's Day, it's sort of a very heteronormative holiday in a way. I think most of the representation in the media or advertising shows straight couples. So, I chose to sort of challenge that narrative and paradigm with a short film called, I want to say heartbreak. It's a really cute short film. Heartbeat. I think it's called heartbeat. Anyways, it's super adorable. The most physical contact that it had was holding hands. So, I thought it was appropriate. And I chose to show it to my students. I just wanted to say to them okay guys, you know, valentine's day means different things for different people. And we all care about people. And this video highlights how other people can be mean to you, the way you are or the way you feel. And it broke this boy's heart. So, we had that conversation. And my kids were like, there was one kid with the mindset that one of the boys was a woman. Like he didn't think two boys could have a romantic interest, and I know this boy who was well this isn't appropriate. And I was like, no it's appropriate. (Lawrence)

Participants were still vulnerable in their personal and professional lives, no matter their level of advocacy. But this study has shown that these educators were willing to take risks and they found resources to provoke change. Lawrence, for example, worked with his students in class and tried to navigate the culture of *machismo*, including and developing a queer agenda and practice. And while there were still parents who seemed to be more conservative, he believed change was happening as he said:

[…] But I knew I was kind of taking a risk, you know. I was, I wonder if these kids are going to go home and be like mommy you won't believe the video I saw today. And who knows? Maybe the principal will come and schedule meetings. But funny enough, some of the kids were oh I saw this movie. So, you know, I think there's a real, I just feel like the culture of the parent community and the families has evolved. There are still some parents who have conservative feelings, that disagree or feel uncomfortable. But I think that by and large, lots of them are moving forward. So, I think that I am on the crest of a wave, you know. (Lawrence)

For Jake, the need for a change in the work culture was paramount and they were willing to keep fighting for a more diverse and inclusive curriculum at school. Jake was conscious of the outcomes, as they said "[…] I know that I am putting my position at risk, so to speak, by being an advocate and being out, and I was just going to do it. I don't care enough about the culture of work to not advocate". (Jake)

The examples above show administrators and teachers can break the silence and hold the authority to challenge normativity in their schools. In addition, students' activisms were also nurtured, their sense of responsibility to the community expanded, and the work of these teachers acted as a collective encouragement and individual resilience combined with social responsibility (Payne and Smith, 2017). Aside from the fact that the teachers in this study all identified as members of the LGBTQ community, the advocacy for a more just and safer environment also stemmed from the experiences and practices of teachers who are also non-LGBTQ.

**Chapter 7 – Unpacking Advocacy through the Research Questions**

Revisiting the research questions of this study accomplishes the established research goals and provides insights into advocacy. This chapter explores how the intersectional aspects of participants' experiences were fluid and ever-changing, impacting the queering of international schools. It also summarizes Western LGBTQ teachers' perceptions of advocacy in their experiences, and the different levels of advocacy that educators took. Later in the chapter, educators' views of the influence of the English language in their contexts are introduced, along with the impact of how LGBTQ educators perceive their language identity and social issues.

**7.1 What intersectional aspects (e.g., language, sexual and gender identity, culture, neoliberalism, and others) are present in the LGBTQ educators' experiences teaching overseas?**

This study has illustrated that teachers' experiences are not fixed, and they varied considerably in different times, places, contexts, and interactions. That said, their identities also developed, and with their transnational mobility, new types of queerness emerged (Lam, 2020). In the context of international education and the mobility of LGBTQ educators, intersectionality was shown to be dynamic and the new and re-signified social and cultural conditions of place and time afforded the emergence of other forms of queer life that presented new challenges (Lam, 2020; Lander, 2018; Mizzi, 2015).

Yet, although transnational sexualities and intersectionality allow "the globalization of queer culture through the circulation of ideas, images, media texts, commodities, and business models, [and] more and more resources are available for queer people to imagine or plan for a life in a place they think will be better" (Lander, 2018, p. 130), these theories still call out for a more complex analysis of these LGBTQ educators' experiences. Indeed, these migratory

processes developed new understandings of LGBTQ migration (Mizzi, 2015) and the reestablishment of moral conduct and family relationships for LGBTQ people (Lam, 2020), but the experiences were not consistent or equal to all members of this group (Lander, 2018; Lam, 2020).

When thinking of queering international schools, for example, the use of queering as a verb implies the action of confronting ideals (Cavanaugh, 2019). Moreover, it is a question about the necessity of queer schools, which include discussions around identifying the wider hetero/cis normative society that accentuates the white male figure as ideal in neoliberalism (Cavanaugh, 2019; Antunes & Duque, 2020). Neoliberal here privileges economic goals and leaves aside whichever non-economic concerns societies have. Mostly when looking into the ESL industry (Paiz 2019), the commercialization of the English language has become central to organizations and educational institutions that profit from students' investments in learning how to become global citizens.

As examples in schools in different countries, studies in Canada and Brazil have shown that an average of 60% of students who are LGBTQ feel or have felt unsafe in their school spaces (Cavanaugh, 2019; Antunes & Duque, 2020). The percentage is also high when around 42% of trans or non-binary students encounter difficulties with gender expressions within schools. Education, mostly those who profit financially from having students on campus, has certainly been a catalyst for the maintenance of gender and sexual identity norms which have perpetuated different types of oppression, including verbal and physical harassment (Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007).

Within this study, the educators showed that the reality abovementioned is not different in their teaching contexts. Each participant described their experiences that are unique and

culturally and socially shaped. Individuals' positionalities (e.g., administrator, teacher), sexualities (e.g., gay, lesbian, pansexual), gender identities (e.g., trans), spirituality, class, and education, to name a few, impacted participants' trying to queer international school in the most diverse ways.

Considering previous studies on sexualities and gender identity, Cavanaugh (2019) reflects that "at best, it appears that research and work around gender and sexuality in schools are important measures to support a marginalized population and at worst they are a special cause that is taking space away from other important topics" (p. 32). This argument that basic curriculum – math and science– overwhelms teachers' practices and there is no time to include social identities in classroom discussions, for instance, urges educators and teacher educators to problematize why it is hard for schools to provide safer spaces for LGBTQ people (Cavanaugh, 2019; Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007; Airton, 2013).

The educators' diverse identity aspects brought in this study are some of the examples of experiences that one can find to work in a heteronormative system in order to include plural perspectives and start more meaningful conversations. But, to what extent these educators realize their role as advocates of the LGBTQ+ community should also be critically reflected.

## 7.2 To what extent do LGBTQ teachers advocate and perceive the role of advocacy in their professional and personal practices?

Advocacy among educators can be seen in different ways through theories of the critical race (Crenshaw, 1989; Gayle & Childress, 2021), critical education, including critical language teacher education (Kubota & Miller, 2017, Okazaki, 2005; Schmidt & Schneider, 2016), and postmodern and poststructural research (Braidoti, 2016; Paraíso, 2012). Within the LGBTQ context, Taylor, Peter, Campbell, Meyer, Ristock, and Short (2015) advanced efforts to

implement a more LGBTQ-inclusive education in schools in Manitoba, Canada. Duque (2020) discusses the visibility of trans people, affirming that the historical and colonial social regimes do not acknowledge and marginalize men and women who transition. Internationally, Mizzi's work (2013; 2014; 2015) sheds light on the fact that LGBTQ educators are involved with mobility and transgressing boundaries of heteronormativity abroad. However, despite all the above-mentioned work and others, the safety of LGBTQ school staff and students is still in jeopardy.

As one of the research questions of this study sought to understand how teachers perceive their advocacy in their teaching international contexts, this section raises some examples of how advocacy varied from person to person. The participants in this study were in different stages in their careers, and they also seem to understand advocacy differently. For the purposes of this study, participants were not asked to define advocacy per se. Rather, their stories were central to identifying some of the advocating work they have done overseas.

Overall, schools across the globe "are notoriously unsafe places, both physically and emotionally, for LGBT youth" (Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2011, p. 308). Incidents of violence and harassment, and antigay, homophobic, and transphobic slurs are still present in such contexts (Taylor, Peter, Campbell, Meyer, Ristock, & Short, 2015; Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2011), which is heightened when considering the experiences of Black people and people of colour, non-Western, and Indigenous peoples. Indeed, Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) groups have impacted schools somewhat positively, as participants in this study also shared, by combating and destabilizing some antigay school environments. But silence is often still the favoured solution of administrators, teachers, advisors, and students to deal with any LGBTQ issues.

For the educators interviewed in the study, the priority was to address social justice and equity issues openly in classrooms, to work through and beyond the colonial ideals of merits and equality embedded in many Western and neoliberal settings. Teachers can facilitate the engagement of community members in conversations that normalize different forms of sexual and gender identities, thus changing the ecosystem of schools. Although the concept of advocacy was not discussed in the interviews with the participants in the study, their practices and experiences at school reflected different levels of advocacy. Their contexts and different identity layers exercise some influence on their choices, but still, provide them with strategies to implement and show what a safer space can look like.

In Chris' experiences, he tried to offer insights into how program administration could prepare and welcome LGBTQ staff in Japan, in a supportive manner. Chris described LGBTQ issues by stating that the program aligned with the "if-they-do-not-talk-it-does-not-exist" attitude. This stance of the program seems problematic as silence can be observed as a key practice in schools (Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2011) instigating both denial and avoidance of conversations that could help LGBTQ people in general. Structurally, silence can be present in student-teacher-administration interactions, school curriculum, activities, and programs. Scholars suggest schools need to go through systemic reform to change broader social contexts. This means recognizing that LGBTQ students do not have access to equal learning opportunities, and schools must implement safer spaces to promote a greater sense of belonging to a community, promote self-understanding and acceptance when dealing with internalized homophobia and transphobia, and decrease antigay behaviours (Taylor, Peter, Campbell, Meyer, Ristock, & Short, 2015; Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2011; Kaiser, 2017; Payne & Smith, 2018).

Payne and Smith (2018) imply the challenges of working with the non-LGBTQ staff at schools as professional developments involving LGBTQ content seems to be not relevant to their context. Lawrence's experiences looking for information about the school he was going to teach is an example that straight educators and schools' administration are leaving conversations about sexual and gender identities aside. For those non-LGBTQ teachers, they feel any LGBTQ matter will attract community backlash, or that students are too 'young and innocent' to understand such things. Non-LGBTQ school personnel have held back opportunities to increase awareness, share respect, and understand the difference. Thus, school administrators are invited to be "in a position to serve as gatekeepers for social justice work and to substantially influence the impact of social justice initiatives in schools" (Payne & Smith, 2018, p. 186).

Diversity is a ubiquitous term in education and being LGBTQ can be ranked as the lowest of the priorities in many educational settings. A debate around intersectionality may raise a few more complex insights into this challenge, but it is necessary to problematize heteronormative sexual and gender regulations (Taylor, Peter, Campbell, Meyer, Ristock, & Short, 2015; Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2011; Kaiser, 2017; Payne & Smith, 2018).

One thing to note when talking about advocacy is that advocating often seems to come from a place of privilege (Morgan, 2016). Whether it is skin colour (e.g., white), capital, place of origin (e.g., Western countries), or language one speaks, certain privileges allow people to achieve their advocacy goals more comfortably. The participants in this study acknowledged their privileges in different ways, whether through where they came from, their social status or work status, their education, and the language they spoke. For that reason, focusing more on the language aspect of it, the next questions sought to illuminate how study participants understood their opportunities as native and/or fluent English speakers.

**7.3 To what extent does English (as the subject or medium of instruction, and/or as the first or native language of the teachers) influence teachers' potential awareness and action concerning sociopolitical issues in their teaching contexts?**

This question sought to reveal how language and culture (re)create sexual and gender identities (Nelson, 1999). In heteronormative contexts, when heterosexual teachers are asked whether they are married or dating, there is seldom concern or hesitation to share with students and staff what their status is. On the other hand, an LGBTQ teacher potentially faces a tough, rather risky, decision to reveal such information (Lander, 2018). Studies that show the connection between teacher identity and LGBTQ identity reinforce the nature of identity as "diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social space" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 417), but LGBTQ teachers, for example, cannot easily choose to reveal diversity.

Scholars also show that every time we speak, we (re)negotiate ourselves in relation to the larger social context we are in, therefore reorganizing our relationships and even our intersectional layers. Agency is key and expresses how our fluid identities are a critical component in the sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape inside a classroom (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Nelson, 2010). But despite studies confirming we are constantly changing, LGBTQ identities continue to be neglected, impacting individuals' participation in activities, their learning, and social skills (Moore, Edwards, Halpin, & George, 2002; Lander, 2018). With most of these studies' findings coming from the field of language teaching and my own interest and experience in language education, what the participants in this study shared about their English speaker identities facilitated an understanding of how the English language and its roles have evolved.

The most recurring view of English, according to the participants, was English as a language of access. Some of the participants recognized that English offered them certain advantages in certain social spheres. Louisa mentioned the fact that she was part of a band, made up mostly of Chinese men, and she was invited to join because she spoke English. In an academic context, Katherine reflected on invitations to join panel presentations because of English and the advantages the language offers, too.

On the same matter of English as a language that provides access, Jake argued that a lot of resources, especially for their professional development, can be found mostly in English. One comment they made is that whenever there is a discussion that includes privilege and power, people are limited to information due to the fact of these being written and studied in English.

James agreed that readings, activities, and classroom resources are mostly in English. In addition, not only is English the language for accessing all this information but to access them, first access to capital (money) is needed. According to James, in Myanmar, citizens who have access to money can be granted access to learning English, and therefore, English will grant them access to the world. In James' example, access to a good – and expensive – education in addition to the access that the internet has provided to people allow them to find out more about other cultures, and peoples and reshape their own identities.

James' reflection on how English allowed him to be teaching internationally adds a different feature to how the language essentially helps redefine one person's identity. Along with English providing several different accesses for people, as seen before, it also carries a role in reshaping one's identity and revealing cross-cultural experiences, bringing people to revisit their personal values and associate with the new cultural values. These participants learned to unlearn

themselves and the things they know, which is the result of a post-critical analysis (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Moura & Bruz, 2021).

Although the dynamics of cultures are immeasurable, balancing socio-cultural values with personal values was present in the participants' lives overseas as well. English as the spoken language in these contexts dominated shaped interactions and new knowledges that these educators carry themselves and absorb from their interactions with others (Trent, 2016). In a different scenario, Lawrence mentioned understanding how people may act and behave differently, according to their own cultures, but at the same time, he cannot dissociate himself from his American principles. Hence learning how to navigate his own privilege (Burton, 2019) was a lesson to empathize with others' experiences as he said: "[…] But like, that's my American lens. You know, like the Dominican experience is different. They have different pressures than I am dealing with. You know, and different opportunities than I've had".

Participants' awareness of their positionality as English speakers generated insights for understanding how social structures are also influenced by language (Hult, 2008). More broadly, Katherine, for example, argued that understanding privilege goes beyond understanding someone's whiteness. The way society works has rather influenced their experiences, more than the individual understanding of being privileged. The participants' post-critical perspectives raise the possibility that knowing one is privileged has limited impact when one's social context does not acknowledge such privilege (Paraíso, 2012; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017):

Although many of these experiences around identity, privilege, and power surprised the participants in this study, they were still careful not to impose any values and dictate what is right or wrong. All participants seemed to be flexible and understanding of their students' and colleagues' own contexts, both individual and cultural.

The teachers' experiences presented here contribute to Nelson's (2010) unpacking of second language socialization and sexual migration. From Nelson's (2010) perspective, non-Western LGBTQ people migrate for reasons associated with their gender and sexual identities, and the classroom in the new context might be the place where an LGBTQ person looks for topics and perspectives that are otherwise constructed as unspeakable where they come from. The awareness of these movements is changing school curricula and classroom discourses (Nelson, 2010; Taylor, Peter, Campbell, Meyer, Ristock, & Short, 2015; Kaiser, 2017).

This research (Mizzi, Schmidt, & Moura, 2019) furthers such awareness but switches the subjects to the Western LGBTQ people that migrated to teach in relatively less safe spaces. The study adds to the complexity of the issues that arise due to transcultural mobility and expands support systems for LGBTQ people. The most important lesson learned here is to understand that the English language still is hegemonic and facilitates entry into a global community. Nonetheless, being part of such a global community cannot make us oblivious and ignorant of the social impact we carry through our mobility.

The lived experiences and social identities of the LGBTQ teachers here are examples of how identity, knowledge, discourse, and community are unique but intertwined (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). Perceptions of culture are diverse, and they need to be incorporated into the schools' curricula (Kumashiro, 2002; Ramirez & Ross, 2019). Future research still needs to investigate how LGBTQ people of colour, two-spirited and other LGBTQ Indigenous peoples, and predominantly trans people navigate such contexts when their participation in studies like this is minimal to non-existent.

As a researcher and emergent scholar, unpacking the identities, experiences, and advocacy strategies of others made me realize conversations can happen in classrooms, chat

rooms, and corridors of educational institutions. We can take risks, broaden our understandings, and openly discuss cultural variations of concepts of things we carry with us. Our identities are fluid, our languages and discourses are always changing, and finally, we cannot normalize social homogenization because oppression and marginalization are rooted and naturalized in our society (Kumashiro, 2000; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

## 8. Conclusions

In summary, this study highlights the importance of analyzing the relationship between mobile transcultural LGBTQ identities and globalized and international education. As Harris and Gray (2014) pointed out, mobile individuals reshape changes and create new demands not only in education but also on the economic and ideological levels. Some of these changes and demands emerge from concerns linked to technical skills. In this case, teachers moved to different environments and readapted their teaching skills and linguistic skills. As the findings of this study suggest, language constitutes a pivotal identity layer which can transform behaviours, ideals, beliefs, and cultural skills. This holds especially true when individuals are immersed and navigate perspectives that can be similar to theirs, but that also challenge their views of the world (Arber, Blackmore, & Vongalis-Macrow, 2014; Harris & Gray, 2014).

On a different level, considering globalized and international education, the mobility of these teachers reflects the international teacher labour market, cultural exchange programs, and internationalization per se, which are not new phenomena. However, "what is new is the rapid intensity with which the mobility of educators, educational goods, and people have increased for schools" (Arber, Blackmore, & Vongalis-Macrow, 2014, p. 1), and the emphasis on the economic growth that mobility has brought to these schools. Western teachers are valuable to international schools for the money they attract and problematic for the social standards they maintain as fluent Western English speakers, as seen in the discussions provided in this research.

Although the mobility of these teachers informs the negotiation of identities, cultures, languages, and the integration of local and global interconnections, little attention is given to the subjectivities of this exchange in a classroom. Yet, though international schools stress the ideology of educationalism – "the notion of lifelong learning and values of learning for its own

sake […] in more culturally diverse schools" (Arber, Blackmore, & Vongalis-Macrow, 2014, p. 2), instrumentalism and idealism still seem to prevail. As seen through the experiences of the educators in this research, the focus of international education relies on teaching students the English language so it can open doors for opportunities abroad and enhance individuals' chances to be financially successful, as per a capitalist agenda.  According to Arber, Blackmore, and Vongalis-Macrow (2014),

> Instrumentalism is where student mobility is about economic gains and acquiring
> employability attributes […] Idealism is premised upon the notion of internationalization
> as an intrinsically good thing in terms of fostering good, morally conscious citizens,
> which in primary and secondary education is the objective of citizenship education, and
> thus becoming good global citizens. (p. 2)

That said, international teachers in non-Western countries address the fact that being a good global citizen means more than mirroring Western cultures and validates non-Western cultures as well. In research, scholars recognize that international teaching and teacher mobility have more implications than pedagogical, curricular, and scholar. As Arber, Blackmore, and Vongalis-Macrow (2014) and Harris and Gray (2014) note, teaching abroad impacts identities, workforce planning, and other supplies in teacher education that go beyond day-to-day classroom content.

For instance, the participants in this study showed the different dynamics in navigating gender and sexual identities in their schools, and in some cases their daily struggles in being accepted in such environments. In terms of planning, being married necessitated strategies so both parties could obtain visas or access social and health benefits. These teachers also

constantly pushed the boundaries in education, trying to insert classroom materials that deregulated heteronormative practices.

Reflecting on the outcomes of this study, this chapter presents some further considerations to move forward. Also, revisiting the methodological implications used in this study enables the identification of limitations that could be considered in future research and educators', administrators', and other educational actors' practices.

## 8.1 Methodological Implications: Post-critically Thinking of a Case Study

One of the challenges of conducting research, in my view, is that the researcher can end up following prescribed premises and assumptions of the research context and research objects/subjects. When doing that, the study falls into the categorization of data and the researcher does not give much attention to what the trajectory of the study attributes to their work. An important aspect that I noticed from this research is that social conditions, social relationships, the geopolitical and cultural spaces have changed, and all those changes implicate changes in pedagogy and ways of decolonizing teaching and learning.

However, a lot more aspects are intrinsic to how changes affect education overall. Highlighting social changes without mentioning the specific aspects of what generated the change means superficially navigating through the issues while doing research. As an example from the study, it is important to emphasize how gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, culture, locality, nationality, communities and multiculturality impact changes under the bigger umbrella of social change. Along with understanding the changes and how they affect social dynamics, the second aspect of a post-critical engagement with research is revisiting the notion of truth (Freire, 1998; Menezes de Souza, 2011; Kubota & Miller, 2017).

Borrowing from Paraíso (2012), through discourses individuals all pursue their own versions of truths. However, ways of thinking and expressing thoughts are always partial given individuals' experiences are shaped by different factors. Experiences shape what people see and understand, and in theoretical analysis, their partiality leads researchers to what is chosen and how to operate. A post-critical research methodology seeks a dialogical and conversational practice. The research then is constructed through discourses and language, and both reproduce and create other practices, objects, and meanings.

As a methodological limitation here, three interviews with each participant were not enough to discuss reality and the dialogical and conversational practice was lost due to its discontinuity. Research interviews addressed temporal and momentaneous realities. Undoubtedly, the data presented here inform future practices, create awareness, and foster new meaning-making processes, but as a researcher, my feeling is that research can omit and miss a lot of unknown plural truths.

A language is an inevitable tool for making meaning. Expressing, representing, and describing research aspects are pivotal in the negotiation of data analysis. With language comes the idea of the subject, and the subject is the result of its power and knowledge relationships. The subject is a sum of heterogeneous encounters expressed through language and discourse, experiences, and surroundings. How then, should a researcher narrow down their research studies but at the same time attend to all the different aspects of the subject? How do power relations work in subjects? The assumptions in educational research are still hierarchically organized, giving way to inequalities and prejudice.

In post-critical research, there should be a space where "discourses can be unnaturalized, questioned, and deconstructed, where ruptures can be introduced, in a constant transformation of

power relationships that had been placed before" (Paraíso, 2012, p. 31). For instance, the discourse about effective education that some educators presented in this work could have been unpacked more critically. Efficacy differs from person to person, culture to culture, and several subjectivities in education can be left aside for the goal of teaching one how to speak English so they can travel abroad and succeed. As much as some of the contexts of the educators interviewed in this study show that local citizens' realities are not favourable, these educators at times overlooked the fact that wider cultures can be marginalized even when teachers think they are doing their jobs just teaching those students for a better quality of life.

One aspect here is to be aware of difference and multiplicity rather than identity and diversity. Identity is reduced to a common ground of diversity and researchers do not realize what differences are apparent amidst cultural data. Talking about multiplicity means understanding the sums of a subject. The importance of an intersectional lens is that it deconstructs identities instead of broadly categorizing an individual. The goal is to disassemble what has been assembled to verify the differences and various aspects of functioning in society. These educators were dealing with students who were portrayed as having money and different accesses (e.g., travels, education). But the real purpose of a study like this ought to be to find out how educators reassessed what they knew prior to engaging with the interview questions.

Using a post-critical methodology for education research, there is a need to articulate an in-depth understanding of research methodologies and to understand how theory informs a study by revisiting what is known about research methodologies. Therefore, breaking down disciplinary boundaries is essential for the researcher to work through different methods. The notion of movement and flow carries a post-critical methodology to a new understanding of how data is generated and analyzed. The new systems for such tasks also become more engaging and

reliable. The process is akin to a puzzle in which different methods are creatively gathered to meet the research goals. For this research, for example, the use of interviews, reflections on photographs, and the mapping out of teachers' experiences for understanding language in an international teaching context were useful ways of processing and rethinking data, in the sense that the participants had different opportunities to reflect about and share their experiences abroad. The interviews in different stages were strategic to go back and revisit experiences that at first glance could have been overlooked. In a post-critical case study, interview questions and answers are not the main focus, but also the social settings, politics, policies, and cultures. I listened to my participants and tried to understand how I was implicated in the international education contexts under study. In this process, I had to be careful not to underestimate any insights on account of wanting to create new meanings through the pieces I collected through the journey.

Finally, to analyze power relationships, the place is key to analyzing the construction of historical knowledge. This post-critical case study research aimed at dismantling true and legitimized knowledges where power is strategic and not owned. Doing post-critical research means being open to seeing other things, so we expand our own concepts and knowledge.

## 8.2 Other Limitations

Thinking beyond mobility and sexuality, the transnational movement of these LGBTQ educators challenged normativity and conformity of sexuality and gender stereotypes (Lam, 2020; Mizzi, 2015). Thus, it is critical to acknowledge that the new ways of knowing what it means to be an LGBTQ individual in an international context are not available to certain groups of people (Lam, 2020). This study did not explore or inform the experiences of BIPOC intersectional communities. These individuals are often marginalized from research studies, but

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they are part of the teaching working force internationally. In addition, the lack of access to BIPOC people was prominently amplified by social events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. For this study, the last set of data was collected during the worldwide COVID-19 outbreaks late in 2020, while the first two interviews happened before the outbreaks in 2018-2019.

At the end of 2020, all educators were working in remote and hybrid teaching and learning. Rules about lockdowns varied from place to place but as things were recent and restrictions were constantly changing, little was discussed about the impact of the pandemic on these teachers' lives in the interviews. The example of the effect of COVID-19 in the world is an example of how dynamic social constructs are, thus requiring a change in attitudes. One question it poses is among many people losing and/or having their jobs interrupted, these educators were able to keep working and maintain their income.

COVID-19 has amplified social injustices and inequalities since it started in March 2020 (Bell, 2021). According to Shah, Stat, Shankar, Schwind, and Sittaramane (2020), for instance, millions of people have been pushed into poverty in the world, and millions more have had their finances negatively impacted with a drop of nearly 20% in their income. For older adults and people who live in poor environments – a few being some of these educators' countries of teaching and working – health outcomes have exacerbated inequities and disparities. Considering the broader social systems (e.g., employment, housing, food, education, and health care), determinants of quality of health and health promotion worsened during the pandemic. In addition, racial issues, lack of access to healthcare and other long-standing injustices became worse due to food security and job or income losses.

According to Shah, Stat, Shankar, Schwind, and Sittaramane (2020), "the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), and rurality, coupled with poor

health status due to comorbidities, is expected to isolate the most disadvantaged during the COVID-19 crisis" (p. 318). In the Canadian and American contexts, "it took a pandemic for us to finally deem the low-paid workers who provide our food, care for the sick and elders, and dispose of our waste to be deemed essential. And these essential workers are disproportionally women and people of colour" (Bell, 2021, p. 411-412).

Vaccines were not in place during any of the stages of data collection in this study. However, it is important to note that through an intersectional lens, the ever-changing social dynamics allow us to understand and problematize the allocation of COVID-19 vaccines (Gayle & Childress, 2021) and who has access to them. Although emergent safe and effective vaccines could have been prioritized in vulnerable communities, the COVID-19 vaccine 'businesses' only reinforced underlying inequalities and unfair access to COVID-19 vaccination. One aspect that this study neglected to consider is the extent to which international Western teachers took their place in who gets vaccinated first, compared to locals who might have had no choice about the matter.

The COVID-19 crisis, in fact, highlights the ongoing social changes in society and has emphasized that a global pandemic can show how unfair and challenging systems are. The pandemic is another portal, and we should take this crisis as an opportunity for transformation in how we do work around social justice and inclusion (Roy, 2020). From basic needs such as water, personal hygiene supplies, and masks, to ongoing needs as vaccines and access to health care, housing, and education, these educators are amidst disproportionate communities, tremendously felt more among people of colour (Bell, 2021).

The COVID-19 highlights how oppressed and marginalized peoples are ensuring their survival, waiting in line for donations, while others just wait in line to do groceries (Roy, 2020).

This is one more example of social disparities worldwide, and even when advocating for more inclusive and safer spaces, we need to be attentive to the new challenges that life events cause in society. Now, thinking back about advocacy among these Western LGBTQ educators, the second research question positions the educators' perceptions of change in their professional and personal lives.

**8.3 Moving Forward**

Future inquiries can 1) unpack BIPOC LGBTQ educators' experiences working internationally; 2) seek to respond to how COVID-19 impact the ed teaching experiences of teachers abroad; 3) further discussions about queering international schools' cultures and praxis; and 4) enhance educators' social change skills to fight homophobic, transphobic, and other oppressive instances in education.

Unpacking BIPOC LGBTQ educators' experiences working internationally, in my view, is the biggest gap this study could have addressed. Although there were more participants from BIPOC communities intending to participate in the original *Out There* study, their eligibility criteria were impacted as those who connected with the researchers had returned home from their international teaching. Their experiences, after intersecting more layers of racial differences, could result in very different approaches to fighting against social inequalities.

The COVID-19 pandemic context shifted several aspects of education. Remote teaching and learning, for instance, could have affected students' learning and teachers' practices as technological skills were lacking for some educators teaching in online settings. From a language education perspective, remote learning could have added more nuances and barriers to language acquisition, especially among those who learn English as a second or additional language. Social aspects of learning, mental health, and coping skills mechanisms arose as key learning outcomes

as the result of remote teaching and learning in the past two years. When intersected with LGBTQ matters, results may significantly change more as vulnerable LGBTQ people were spending more time in unsafe places (e.g., at home in a potentially unsupportive environment).

Considering the queering schools movement, this research invites queer scholars to look beyond performative inclusive actions (e.g., gender-neutral language, rainbow stickers). Discussions validated subtle forms of introducing queer topics in classrooms and schools' curricula, but that only emphasized that queering schools is still not part of the norm. Challenging cis-hetero paradigms should include actions that will dismantle male-female binary functions. Fighting transphobia is a recurring emergency, and clearer policies are needed to effectively guarantee trans people's rights.

Some further actions that future studies could aim at developing can include:

◊ Providing future international educators with an LGBTQ tool kit in job fairs, so candidates can have an idea of what it is like to be LGBTQ in those communities.

◊ Expanding online LGBTQ communities where educators can find their place to reflect on their practices, share their experiences, and collaborate with others to foster more inclusive practices.

◊ Including LGBTQ matters in ongoing PD sessions and bringing in educators who are LGBTQ and know first-hand the challenges and successes of working internationally.

◊ Broadening the concept of intersectionality, identity, and power to further investigate and understand our positionality is shaped by social, economic, and cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes.

Finally, future research should seek to enhance educators' abilities to face and challenge social inequalities in general. Although the focus of LGBTQ work can be translated into fighting

homophobia and transphobia, the intersectional lens of this work expands knowledge of different

problems that are related to one's identity too (e.g., racism against BIPOC LGBTQ people).

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Written Permission from Out There Study PI and CI

To whom it may concern,

I authorize Gustavo Henrique da Cunha Moura to use the data from the *Out There: a study of LGBTQ educators working overseas* (E2017:104 HS21207). Mr. Moura has worked with us in the project and his new study will inform teacher education programs, professional teacher development, and strategies that will enhance language awareness among all English speakers.

If you have any further questions, please contact us using the information below.

**Appendix B: Informed Consent Letter**

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education

Research Project Title:  Mapping LGBTQ educators' experiences teaching (in) English internationally: unpacking advocacy
Researcher:  Mr. Gustavo Moura

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent.  It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve.   If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask.  Please take the time to read this carefully.

I agree to take part in the study, Mapping LGBTQ educators' experiences teaching (in) English internationally: unpacking advocacy

I understand that my participation will involve:
A reflection session regarding the concept of English as a medium of instruction in international schools
30 min. to review the transcript
I understand that names will not be identified in any report or presentation that may arise from the study.
I understand that there is no financial compensation for my participation.
I understand that the findings of this study may be presented to academic audiences (including workshop and conference presentations, reports, and refereed/non-refereed journal articles) and non-academic audiences (presentations and recommendations to community leaders and policymakers).
I understand that there are no repercussions for (non-)participation.
I understand that the University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.
I understand that interview transcripts will be available only to the research team (Dr. Mizzi/Researcher, Dr. Schmidt/Researcher, and Mr. Moura/Research Assistant).  Pseudonyms will be used for participants in all written records generated by the research, and consent forms will be housed in a separate location from the data, from which all identifiers will be removed as soon as the interviews are transcribed. Data will be stored in a locked office in a password-protected computer, and relevant project forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher. All data from the project will be destroyed after 5 years.
I understand that a summary of the findings of the study will be sent to me via e-mail within two months of the conclusion of the project (by December 2019).

Your consent, either written or oral, on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate.  In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or

involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

There is a 24-hour helpline available to you if you experience distress as a result of completing the interview.
Klinic Community Health Centre (ph: […])

Participant's Signature: _____
Researcher's Signature: _____
Date: _____

Would you like a copy of the final research report?
a) Yes                              b) No
If yes, how would you like to receive the report? Please provide your address (email or postal) so that we can send you the report.
Email address:
This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact Robert Mizzi or Clea Schmidt (contact below) or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at […] or email: […].

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the researcher at: […]

Mr. Gustavo Moura
University of Manitoba

# Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your linguistic background.
2. How do you perceive your background as a fluent English speaker? What impact does this have on your personal and professional experiences overseas?
3. How are you treated as a fluent English speaker in the country where you're currently working? How have you been treated in other international contexts?
4. Do you think English, as a medium of instruction, might impact your students' and peers' values or behaviors? Why (not)? And if yes, how?
5. How would you describe the multilingual context you are situated in?
6. What is something you learned from being in a bi/multilingual context?
7. Do you think your LGBTQ identity has transformed or is performed differently in the course of your experience teaching and living abroad? If so, how?
8. Personally, what are/were some of the critical incidents around your experiences both at school and outside school where language was an issue?
9. When you think of the *-isms* in society (e.g.; sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, classism), what is the role of language in how you address them in and outside the classrooms?
10. When you see the intersectionality wheel below (include reference), how does your experience as a Western LGBTQ educator relate to the circumstances of power, privilege, and identity within your international teaching context?



*Wheel of intersectionality diagram. From Everyone Belongs: A toolkit for applying intersectionality (p. 5), by J. Simpson, 2009. Retrieved from https://www.luthercollege.edu/public/images/Intersectionality_Tookit_and_other_resources.pdf. Copyright 2014 by IGLYO*

11. How does your position as an English language speaker impact how you perceive social issues in general?

**Appendix D: Confidentiality Pledge – for Research Assistant(s)**

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

As a research assistant for the Building Positive Spaces for LGBTQ Identities project, I realize that I may read or overhear personal and confidential information shared by the interview participants. To show my respect to the participants interviewed or who have shared information in the online survey, I promise to keep all information confidential.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to maintain confidentiality regarding the Building Positive Spaces for LGBTQ Identities project. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved faculties from their legal and professional responsibilities.

Researcher Name and Contact Information: […]

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at […], or e-mail […].

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

---------------------Provide for Signatures as Required----------------------

Participant's Signature _____

Date: November 16, 2017