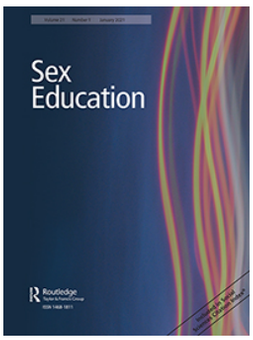

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Within and between heteronormativity and diversity: narratives of LGB teachers and coming and being out in schools

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ABSTRACT

Many schools are taking action to become inclusive of gender and sexual diversity, however, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer teachers (LGBTQ) continue to exist at the margins of both schools and research. This study reports on interviews with a group of self-identifying LGB teachers in England. Subsequent thematic analysis examined the subject positions that are available, particularly around being 'out' (or not) in school. Findings suggest that LGB teachers take on complex identity work to maintain their status both as LGB and as exemplary teachers. For many, their desire was to become 'authentic' LGB teachers, which for them involved being out in school. However, this is arduous work for people who can be too easily positioned as 'failing'. There are ways to navigate this, which principally involve becoming the agent of dominant discourses rather than their subject. Overall, there is pressure on the LGB teacher to exist, not because it is a discrete identity, but because of its marked absence from dominant discourses in schools. This is particularly relevant to the neoliberal context in which teachers are caught between performances of heteronormativity and diversity, and where sexuality is intimately related to authenticity.

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Introduction

LGBTQ people in UK schools currently sit at the juncture of shifting narratives. Reflective of the increased awareness of LGBTQ people in society and the increased Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Agenda there has been some affirmative movement within schools. The UK government has made some investment in anti homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying initiatives (Rudoe 2018), and more schools are actively drawing on the services provided by LGBTQ inclusive outreach groups.

However, this position follows decades of hostility, most fervently epitomised by the infamous Section 28[1] of the 1988 Local Government Act which stated that local authorities cannot 'intentionally promote homosexuality' (DES 1988). Whilst recent legislation in schools has respected the LGBT inclusive Equality Act 2010,[2] some guidance has been slower to adapt. For instance, from 2020 the statutory guidance for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) will be LGBT inclusive, although previous guidance stated 'there should

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be no direct promotion of sexual orientation' (DfEE 2000, 13). Currently therefore, schools are melting pots of differing messages to be navigated.

Within this context, experiences are diverse and uneven. Recently, there has been some reported reduction in homophobic bullying in schools, although 45% of LGBT students in the UK presently suffer bullying and half of LGBT students frequently hear homophobic language (Bradlow et al. 2017). Moreover, whilst McCormack (2014) suggests that schools have become more inclusive, many researchers, including McCormack, argue that schools are predominantly sites that (re)produce heteronormativity (Epstein 2000; Gray, Harris, and Jones 2016) through practices which privilege and legitimise heterosexuality along a gender binary as natural. In relation to this, Røthing (2008) suggests inclusion work is often 'homotolerant' and thus limiting; tolerance being a 'beacon of multicultural justice' (Brown 2006, 1) that offers the façade of liberty whilst instead maintaining already established hierarchies that (re)produce LGBTQ people as the Other (Brown 2006).

For LGBTQ teachers the landscape is more complex, particularly with respect to the clash of discourses surrounding sexuality and professional identities (Connell 2015; Jackson 2007; Neary 2013). LGBTQ teachers have historically existed in the margins of both society and research, although there are a number of recent studies beginning to address this (for example, Rudoe [2010, 2018]; Neary 2013; Gray 2013; Gray, Harris, and Jones 2016; Connell 2015; Lee 2019; Msibi 2019). In this paper, we add to this important body of work, by using data from semi-structured interviews with five self-identifying LGB teachers. Our aims are to give voice to a marginalised group and to highlight some of the complexities that arise for LGB teachers and their subject positioning within the available discourses. Our work is framed around 'coming and being out' as we argue this has resonance within the current neoliberal climate, in which schools are heternormative yet cognisant of performing diversity. Throughout our analysis, we are conscious of the need not to valorise the 'out' teacher (Rasmussen 2004). We begin by examining previous research concerning LGB teachers before moving to establish our theoretical and contextual framework. Throughout the article we use the terms LGB, LGBT, LGBT+ or LGBTQ[3] depending on the data discussed.

Research concerning LGB teacher identities

Many studies have reported that students and teachers alike feel that discussion of sexuality is both directly and indirectly silenced in schools (Epstein 2000; Sullivan 1993; Griffin 1991). Because of this, many sexual minority teachers adopt 'identity management strategies' (Griffin 1991; Woods and Harbeck 1992) to conceal their sexuality for fear of reprisal. More recent evidence suggests that heteronormative discursive practices lead LGB teachers to feel isolated and closeted about their sexuality at work (Gray 2013; Neary 2013), which contrasts with the wider cultural acceptance and greater visibility of LGBTQ public figures (Nixon and Givens 2004, 2007; Connell 2015). Many teachers have the desire to be out but do not always find a safe space given the privileging of heterosexuality in schools.

In a study in England, Wardle (2009), found that the majority of participants fell somewhere between totally closeted and totally out, but all would prefer to be out to the whole school population 'if this were a safe stance to take' (74). In an Australian context, Gray, Harris, and Jones (2016) argue that LGBTQ teachers operate in a "space of exclusion' that is dominated by discursive mechanisms that (re)produce heteronormativity' (286). However, they also found there was some space to interrupt these discourses. Gray (2013) has also

reasoned that, for teachers, coming and accordingly being out can be a political act or a psychological need. Similar results have been found in Ireland, where Neary (2013) reasoned there was a desire for honesty and disclosure, however this required negotiating the challenges of 'heteronormative policing' (583).

Jackson (2007) suggests lesbian and gay teachers follow a staged coming out process from *closeted teaching* phase (including a sub-phase of super-teacher); to a *gay poster child* phase; and finally to an *authentic teacher* phase. The super-teacher phase is demonstrated in the work of Rudoe (2010) and Msibi's (2019) 'hyper-professionalism', where extreme competence was utilised as a strategy to mitigate the potentially negative effects of an LGB identity becoming public.

Connell (2015) has argued that contemporary LGBTQ politics, which centres on an ethos of pride, is incompatible with the high expectations of professionalism placed upon teachers; she highlights the apparent conflict between the expected script of LGBTQ individuals to come out and how 'teachers are expected to perform a sexually neutral and gender-normative self in the classroom' (7). This conflict was also evident in Neary's (2013) and Jackson's (2007) work, where teachers position being LGB as discordant with their professionism.

This disparity can cause tensions, as teachers often invest much of themselves in their work blurring perceived boundaries between the public and private (Nias 1996). Many teachers choose to share details of their lives as a way to build rapport with students (Wardle 2009), but this opportunity to build relationships is often denied to LGB teachers as a 'heterosexual privilege' (Connell 2015, 69). Furthermore, many LGB teachers experience pressure to be out and to be role models for young people (Jackson 2007; Neary 2013). This occurs despite the fact that young people do not commonly look to teachers for role models (Bricheno and Thornton 2007). However, LGB teachers are particularly aware that their silence adds to the underlying heteronormativity in society (Nixon and Givens 2007).

Theoretical framework

In the light of these findings, our study was concerned with how individual LGB teachers take up subject positions within the discourses that are available. The analysis was informed by a range of poststructural, queer and feminist theory, much of it inspired by the work of Foucault. Specifically, we suggest the decentred self is a product of subjectivity within discourses (Walshaw 2007) – discourses being 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault [1972] 2002, 54). Within this context, individuals are 'subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his [*sic*] own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subjects to' (Foucault 2003a, 130). Individuals, therefore having a constrained agency within power such that technologies of the self work alongside technologies of domination (Foucault 2003b). However, wherever power circulates, so do opportunities for resistance (Foucault [1978] 1998).

Schools operate as a technology of power (Foucault [1978] 1998), in which 'the tiniest deviation from normal practice is noticed' (Walshaw 2007, 130) and often corrected. These rectifications are not achieved through force, but instead through normalisation, whereby people actively govern themselves for the good of the self and society (Foucault 2003c).

Hence, people act under the illusion of freedom, which is particularly pertinent within a broadly neoliberal society premised upon the autonomous self (Rose 1999). More specifically, schools not only produce but also privilege heterosexuality, which is central to the narrative of a reproductive future (Edelman 2004); hence the technologies within schools used to achieve this can be read as expressions of biopower, or 'numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations' (Foucault [1978] 1998, 140). In this context, LGB people's subject positioning can mean they are discursively constructed as 'failures', as they do not naturally uphold the social order that repays the debt of life to society (Edelman 2004; Halberstam 2005).

Within such a framework, coming out is bounded by the subject positions and discourses that are available, rather than a reflection of any 'true' identity. However, a dominant narrative in Western society is that sexuality constitutes the 'truth' of the subject (Foucault [1978] 1998); moreover 'if one tells the 'truth' about one's sexuality, this deepest truth about the self will become apparent enabling an authenticity that is in touch with one's true self (Besley 2005, 79). Hence, from a Foucauldian perspective coming or being out is not a neutral act but is instead the effect of multiple technologies of power, one aspect of which is in the act of confession (Besley 2005). While coming and being out can be understood as prideful, it is premised upon the narrative of the closet as shameful (Seidman 2003). From this perspective not coming out may be construed as an act of resistance and refusal to align with a dominant subject positioning (Sedgwick 1990; Ferfolja 2009).

Contextual framework

Our study took place in England where schools promote contradictory narratives that are simultaneously concerned with heteronormativity and the growing need to recognise diversity. Under the impact of Section 28 and its normative legacy, LGB teachers faced hostility to the extent that many fear negative consequences, including job loss if their sexuality is exposed (Griffin 1992; Newton and Risch 1981; Woods and Harbeck 1992). While Section 28 was repealed in late 2003,[4] its legacy permeates life in many schools. For example, some schools have been slow to address homophobic bullying in their polices (Rudoe 2010). Moreover, Lee (2019) notes that present day LGBT+ teachers who were taught during the era of Section 28 are less likely to be open about their sexuality and more likely to accept homophobia in schools.

The deviant narrative runs wider than Section 28, with Western discourses of childhood constructing 'youth as innocent, vulnerable, asexual, unknowing, [and] in need of protection' (Ferfolja 2007, 148), sexuality being one aspect of children's maturation that is viewed as problematic (Monk 2009). However, somewhat contradictorily, in UK society, constructions of sexuality for young people invariably follow an unmarked 'heteronormative logic' (Bragg et al. 2018, 421). As such, children are required simultaneously to be both asexual and heterosexual, following a clear line with respect to that which is deemed normatively appropriate.

Similarly, for LGB teachers 'the archetype of the ideal teacher is determined by heteronormativity: he or she should act, dress, speak, and self-present according to normative gender and sexual expectations' (Connell 2015, 65). Anything outside of this could be viewed as transgressing the boundaries of morality and normalcy and therefore

posing a risk to childhood innocence. As such, LGB teachers' sexualities historically are deemed to be in conflict with the subject position of a 'good' teacher; they are not only extraneous to this reality but positioned as dangerous to children. LGB teachers are therefore always already failing. Within this discourse, 'failing is something queers do and have always done' (Halberstam 2011, 3). LGB people are constructed as having failed at normative heterosexuality and may have failed themselves or their families – hence the importance of the counter narrative of pride.

However, the notion of LGBTQ as historically deviant in schools sits in contrast to current Pride discourses within society, and growing awareness of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives within schools; although both Pride in society and LGB policies within schools can be read as de-political neoliberal strategies, the former being heavily linked to consumerism, and the latter being actively instigated as a mechanism of control by the state (Monro and Richardson 2014). Within this context, currently schools are becoming more inclusive of diverse sexualities, yet remain bounded by heteronormativity (McCormack 2014). Our study thus asks what subject positions can LGB teachers occupy within this constraining yet shifting discursive framework in which narratives are often framed around the autonomous neoliberal self.

Methods and methodology

The participants in this study (Fabio, Mark, Lisa, Melissa, James – pseudonyms) were residents in the North East of England, and were accessed by convenience and partial snowballing sampling (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2011). The participants varied in gender, age, religion and teaching experience, although all had taught for at least two years. Four were White British, and one (Fabio) was from Brazil.

The second author conducted single semi-structured interviews, which she audio-recorded and later transcribed. These took place between June 2017 and February 2018 and varied in length from 30 to 60 minutes. Interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to the participants; venues included participants' homes, schools and a coffee shop. Each interview used a set of topic cards to facilitate discussion. These were devised via a thematic analysis of the literature to explore the following themes: coming out; identity; role models; personal life; and work life.

During the interview, participants were encouraged to look through the cards and to pick the ones they were happy to discuss; they were also told they did not have to discuss them all. As such, they were given an element of control over the pace and topics of the interviews. To facilitate the interviews, the second author actively listened (Holstein and Gubrium 2003), and engaged with the participants' ideas, encouraging reflection.

Our reading of the data was informed by thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes and patterns, and analysing connections (Willig 2014). This involved a flow between inductive and deductive coding (Merriam 2009), whilst repeated re-reading led to a set of codes. A reorganisation of the data followed, examining links between codes and drawing out overarching themes. This stage was iterative as we rechecked the interview data, whilst reflecting on the process (Roulston 2014). Within this, we drew inspiration from narrative enquiry (Clandinin and Connelly 2004), particularly the notion that participants' recollections were as important as the actual events in producing their 'reality'.

Both of the authors are insider researchers,[5] which, is common in recent 'political orientated' LGB research (Hayfield and Huxley 2015, 94). Throughout the research we were conscious of the fact that the narratives elicited were situationally and audience specific (Gorman-Murray, Johnston, and Waitt 2010); moreover, we were mindful that LGB populations are not homogenous.

The study was approved by Durham University's, School of Education ethical committee. Through the use of pseudonyms, active consent and the right to withdraw from the study at any point, we sought to provide an 'ethic of care' towards participants and ourselves, grounded in the relations between people (Christians 2000).

Results and discussion

Our findings are organised around three main themes, although there is overlap between them. The first (protective positioning), establishes the work undertaken by LGB teachers that leaves heteronormativity within schools largely unchallenged; the second (negotiating positioning) expands upon these findings with analysis informed by wider discourses of LGB people. The final area (disrupting positioning), explores interruptions to dominant discourses. The discussion is framed around both coming and being out – as this was significant within the analysis. Our intention is not to suggest that being out is the only valid LGB position, but we seek to highlight its importance and complexity, particularly when there is a growing awareness and expectation of LGB inclusion in society and school guidance.

Protective positioning: 'Because I'm a good teacher'

Although all the participants are now, to some extent, out to their colleagues, this was not always the case. The act of coming out requires negotiation between 'technologies of domination' and the 'technologies of the self' (Foucault 2003b) employed by each participant with respect to colleagues and students. Only James has always been out to all colleagues, believing that he would find his sexuality too difficult to conceal. In contrast, Lisa, Mark and Melissa had all begun their teaching careers closeted, sharing similar difficult memories from that period. Lisa described being 'withdrawn' and 'uncomfortable' before coming out to a select group of colleagues. Upon occasion, she had fabricated boyfriends in order to pass as heterosexual. Fabio, who was also out to some staff, similarly reported lying about the gender of his partner to older (16+) students.

A more nuanced level of self-protection concerned ambiguity in language choices. Lisa, James and Mark all mentioned using gender-neutral pronouns when referring to their partner at school; enabling some semblance of personal accuracy, without being explicitly out. Fabio, for instance, 'won't lie to staff' so used the term 'partner' as a means of hiding his sexuality (see Griffin 1991). Similarly, Lisa used the pronoun 'we' without explicitly stating who that involved. On the one hand this language use permits LGB teachers to connect their professional and personal identities. However, it does not directly challenge heteronormativity, and thus maintains schools as sites in which diverse or deviant (teacher) sexualities are silenced. These strategies were commonly found in our interviews but have also been documented in previous research (e.g. Msibi 2019; Connell 2015; Wardle 2009; Woods and Harbeck 1992; Griffin 1991).

A further protective strategy was to build a super-teacher identity as a means of deflecting attention from one's sexuality; Jackson's (2007) participants believed this 'placed a teacher beyond reproach' (60). This was evidenced by Lisa and Melissa, the latter stating: 'Because I'm a good teacher or senior leadership like my teaching style … I haven't experienced any discrimination. But [I have experienced] fear of discrimination because of potentially systemic homophobia, rather than overt'. Lisa similarly talked of working harder to prove her worth and build a identity that would be difficult to criticise. The super-teacher identity which displays a 'hyper-professionalism' (Msibi 2019, 389), demonstrates agency, resistance and to some extent is positive; however, its status primarily serves as a protection against being an outsider, and an expected failure. In this way, Melissa and Lisa compensated for any negative association of being LGB in schools; they were able to occupy the position of good teacher but only while remaining positioned within the dominant heterosexual discourse.

Each of these identity management strategies demonstrates how participants were involved in significant work negotiating subject positions because of their sexuality. As well as adopting a 'super-teacher' position, further strategies included adjusting the personal information they shared and the language they used. What each of these strategies has in common is that the LGB teacher is positioned as Other, and thus requires correction.

Negotiating positioning: 'I would like to be able to be myself fully'

Whilst the above strategies appeared useful, they did not challenge the school as a site of heterosexuality; moreover, they did not disrupt the subject position of 'good' (heterosexual) teacher. Although as noted, choosing not to be out can be a purposeful subject positioning (Sedgwick 1990; Ferfolja 2009), in this study, all the participants discussed the tension surrounding their lack of 'authenticity' in the workplace, which involved not only coming out, but actively being out. Here, we read authenticity, not as real but as a consequence of the importance of sexuality in determining the 'true' self (Foucault [1978] 1998) and the privileging of heterosexuality within schools.

Lisa identified an ex-colleague who was 'very guarded' to most teachers but very out to some: 'which is not how I like to live my life … I still like to be me, I don't want to completely hide' (Lisa). Here, Lisa distances herself from the colleague and their behaviour, which she determines incompatible or inauthentic. In contrast, the privileges of authenticity are afforded to heterosexual people without question. For instance, as Melissa put it:

> Although you're not meant to discuss your personal circumstances, someone that I worked with showed pictures of him at his wedding with his wife. If I'd done that … even though he breached the rules nothing was done. I would have been in a lot more trouble. (Melissa)

Melissa's narrative implies her school would have treated her differently if she were to occupy a position outside of heteronormativity; thus for Melissa, and despite Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, diversity within schools does not include LGB teachers. This is not an instance of overt discrimination but an illustration of the 'invisible privileges' (Connell 2015, 69) granted to heterosexual teachers on an everyday basis.

For Melissa, and some other participants, the impossibility of authenticity with regards to sexuality was deeply problematic. As Lisa stated: 'I hate lying about it – it makes me really uncomfortable'. Her frustration may be related to the internal conflicts that arise from employing different and possibly duplicitous identities. However, Lisa's dissatisfaction may also result from the failure to occupy the subject position of being an out, and hence authentic, LGB person. This failure may cause tension when the LGB teacher is aware they are contributing to the invisibility of LGB people in schools, where sexuality has historically been silenced and there is pressure to be a role model for students:

> That's part of the reason why I want to come out to the kids, to be a role model … if a student's struggling with something and they know that there is someone who may have been through something similar, that they have a chance to go to speak to someone, that would be really helpful. (Mark)

All participants believed that having role models for LGB students was important:

> Just people being authentic and genuine to who they are so that students … we should celebrate that [difference] so whether its LGBT, or people of colour, or people of different faiths, just by people being genuine and authentic to who they are and living the life that aligns with who they are, I think that it's just good to be good models for students generally. (Melissa)

Here, Melissa highlights how it is important to provide diverse role models for students, which she frames in terms of being 'authentic and genuine'. It is too simplistic to assume that honesty by itself results in being an effective role model, or that young people's role models are their teachers (Bricheno and Thornton 2007); however, Melissa highlights the damage caused by the absence of a subject position. There is pressure for the LGB teacher to exist, not because it being a discrete identity, but because of its general absence from discourses in contemporary schools.

All the participants other than Melissa who were not out to everyone said that they wished to be more open with their students. For some there was a sense of regret: 'I wish that I could be more out at school with students … there are some kids that are really struggling', stated Lisa. Despite saying that the context of her Catholic school made it impossible for her to be more open, Lisa expressed guilt for not being a pioneer: 'I think it's a shame that I'm not brave enough to do it as there's a lot of kids who need support.' She continued: 'I would love to be considered a role model for LGBT students, but I don't know whether I'm strong enough to ever be out to students.' Here, Lisa internalised her apparent 'failure' rather than viewed it as structural or institutional. This is emblematic of the individualistic response characteristic of a neoliberal society premised upon discourses of autonomy and self-improvement (Rose 1999).

Fabio's positioning was similar to Lisa's and his fear of being out acted as a barrier to openness: 'I wish I was brave enough to be out, to be talking about it with the kids … I would love to be that kind of role model, and maybe at one point I will turn that corner'. He stated, 'it would be lovely – I think I would be a much happier person … I would like to be able to be myself fully'. He cited an occasion when he was socialising out of school with his partner and another gay couple and saw two of his students, and described how uncomfortable he felt about potentially being seen. Fabio's narrative indicated how his teaching was not restricted to the boundary of the school site – but operated under

surveillance from the self, the school and society at large, which points to the blurring of private and public boundaries.

Both Fabio and Lisa experienced tension around their subject positioning and internalised shame around not being out and proud: 'I felt really bad for feeling embarrassed … I shouldn't have … it's something stupid that I kind of dread for some reason' (Fabio). As such, these discordant subject positions can cause conflict; arguably, the 'closeted' LGB teacher is either failing to occupy the position of (out) LGB person or the position of being the good (heterosexual) teacher.

Hence, LGB teachers continue to exist in the margins of school, which adds a further dimension to Connell's (2015) argument that Pride, and the professionalism required of teachers are discordant. While recent work (Bragg et al. 2018) suggests students are often aware of both diversity and heteronormativity in schools and can operate within and between them, in this study we suggest that pride in diversity for many LGB people is not present in the way that LGB teachers are framed. The LGB teacher is always already an outsider within school, and within this discursive framework is always already failing; failure being the narrative in which LGBTQ people are always already to be found (Halberstam 2011).

Disrupting dominant positioning: 'Poking away at conformity'

In order to navigate potentially conflicting subject positions, our research suggests that moving from the subject of discourses to the agent is a crucial aspect of being out in schools. This process can be aided by the self, partners and networks, or by systems, structures and colleagues at school. The importance of wider LGBTQ networks came across strongly in the interviews with James and Mark, who were both actively involved in their teaching union's LGBT+ network:

> If as an NQT [newly qualified teacher] I was alone and I wasn't able to share or find out about other people's experiences and how they deal with it, I don't think I would have coped as well as I have. I think if I hadn't had other people share their experiences and tell me it's going to be ok … it would have been a lot harder (James).

James also talked of the importance of his partner: 'I think having him helps when I come home and … he kind of reassures you that you're ok and that you're doing things right'. Similarly, Lisa talked about how she had very good support from her partner and friends who were teachers. Because of this, she did not feel the need for the support of a formal network. Most participants noted the presence of a partner in their lives as a significant influence on integrating their personal and professional identities. Melissa also signalled the importance of the community at her LGBT inclusive church and the support it provided.

In her current school, Melissa was the only participant who was explicitly out to students: 'I don't omit it, but I don't make like a big deal of it because that's my personal life, but a lot of the students here are very supportive'. Arguably by doing so she was able to disrupt dominant discourses and the associated failure. By resisting both the ideal of the heteronormative teacher and the confessional aspect of coming out, Melissa was able to actively be out. One reason Melissa felt she could be open was the school environment and culture, which is something she explicitly considered when applying for the job: 'the fact that this was a Stonewall school[6] was very appealing'. Wardle (2009) similarly found

that when looking for employment, LGB teachers often select schools for their LGB friendliness. This decision, however, can be problematic, as it maintains the silencing of diverse sexualities in less supportive schools.

In contrast, both Lisa and Mark experienced difficult circumstances leading them to make 'forced' disclosures:

> I had a really, really, really bad relationship with a guy who ended up being sent to prison, but he went crazy and contacted the school … So, I had to have a discussion with the head who was really supportive in the end. (Mark)

> The member of staff who was upset about the position [Lisa's promotion] said that me and the head of department were not fit to lead a department because we are gay, and we are not proper Catholics and she was going to tell the head … So, I was almost through a forced hand made to come out to my head teacher, which is not the way I would have done it, but actually … the head teacher was absolutely incredible. She said I should be proud of who I am, this is not a school that puts up with any discrimination, we believe in equality and diversity. (Lisa)

These experiences had a positive effect on Mark and Lisa, when they both gained acceptance from their headteachers at the point of coming out. Mark's affirmative experience of being out at school led him to be 'open from the start' in his new school. Lisa stated that being at school is 'much more positive' now that she was open with all colleagues. In a different situation a threatened disclosure could cause distress to LGB teachers. Both Mark and Lisa interrupted the negative narratives by refusing to be constrained by them, as they repositioned their apparent failure.

Finally, there were other ways of utilising agency and contributing to change without being out to everyone. Several participants recognised they were in a privileged position to counter discrimination in the classroom: 'I think having been a victim of discrimination … it's probably had that affect that I want to stand up for the people that are persecuted for whatever reason' (Mark). Melissa talked of using inclusive language in her classroom, when she thought other teachers might not. James – who unlike Melissa was not out to students but was out to staff at his school – placed LGBT matters firmly in the curriculum. He stated:

> I'll drop it in seven times a day … we'll do maths questions and I'll have two female names as a couple or it'll be in literacy … and I will often do stories of homosexual relationships, like all the time … when they did their posters they've put lots of rainbow flags … it's just constantly there.

Overall, James is optimistic that an inclusive curriculum is more important than presenting as an out LGB teacher: 'Hopefully in twenty years' time then my children in my class … I hope they will see me as kind of like that role model who sort of started poking away at conformity'.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, we have documented some of the ways in which LGB teachers take up available subject positions in school. Corroborating previous research (Ferfolja 2007; Neary 2013; Connell 2015), our analysis found that teachers can view being a teacher and LGB as in conflict. As a result, they may employ various techniques to protect their sexual identity at school (Woods and Harbeck 1992; Griffin 1991). Our reading suggests however that whilst heteronormativity continues to operate as a dominant discourse in schools, the performative

context of increased Equality, Diversity and Inclusion combined with the construction of the performed true self through sexuality (Foucault (1978) 1998), heightens the power of and thus the expectation of coming out. Because of this, LGB teachers currently find themselves in a difficult position, being governed both by heteronormativity and expectations of diversity.

These practices are largely driven by the discursive construction of LGB people as positioned by their sexuality, which is seen as to exist in tension with discourses of childhood innocence in relation to sexual matters. The unforgiving way in which discourses of deviance (sexuality) and innocence (childhood) permeate UK schools means that LGB teachers are always already outsiders, which contrasts to public discourses of Pride and current de-political neoliberal expectations surrounding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. As a result, for many teachers not being out in school, particularly with the pressure to be a positive role model for young people, (re)produces the failure narrative always already present in discourses of LGB people. This relation to self, students and society is particular to a school context in which LGB teachers find themselves trapped between heteronormativity and diversity.

However, and similar to Gray, Harris, and Jones (2016), we also found examples of LGB teachers utilising technologies of power to disturb dominant discourses; for instance, by actively injecting concern for LGBT inclusion into the curriculum, or by choosing to be out but not to forcefully 'come out' through an act of confession or performance. Nonetheless, the dominant heteronormative environment, does Other LGB teachers, and coming out (or not) is a pervasive presence under the neoliberal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda, which is presented unproblematically. Because of this, coming out requires significant work, that labours to negate any negative subject positions. This may include being ambiguous or insincere over a partners' gender or creating an unassailable super-teacher identity.

LGB narratives within schools are historically connected to overcoming struggle. Ranging from sexuality as deviant in the era of Section 28, to early polices framed around bullying in which LGB children were constructed as victims or at heightened risk (Rasmussen 2006). Building upon these discourses, schools are unquestionably still heteronormative spaces, where diversity is often found in the problems, or at the least in the margins of schooling. However, this is not recognised within the increased expectations surrounding Equality Diversity and Inclusion, which are premised upon a de-politicised and individualised neoliberal framework. These expectations, the heteronormative environment, and the intimate relation of sexuality to authenticity, add pressure on the LGB subject position; not because it being a discrete identity, but because of its marked absence from schooling. Teachers, therefore, who do not to take up the position of out LGB teacher can too easily position themselves as failing, a narrative in which LGB people are often to be found (Halberstam 2011). There are, however, avenues to negotiate these tensions and cause some disruption to technologies of power, particularly when LGB teachers are aware of the way in which they are positioned within dominant discourses.

Notes

1. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was an amendment to the Bill which stated that:

> A local authority shall not: a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality; b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

2. The Equality Act 2010 is an Act of the UK parliament which protects against discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
3. These are all variants of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. We make efforts to accurately reflect the data used, rather than a statement about the value of each term.
4. This repeal was part of a wider government agenda to extend the civil rights of LGBT people in the UK including equalising the age of consent, the introduction of civil partnerships and adoption by same-sex couples. The act was repealed in Scotland in 2000.
5. Both authors identify as lesbian, and both have been (or still are) school-teachers.
6. A Stonewall school is one that has made a commitment to LGBT education through the leading UK campaign group Stonewall.

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