

THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY

Exploring Strategies for Teachers to Address Parental Resistance to SOGI-Inclusive
Education in British Columbia's K-12 System

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the parental resistance faced by teachers in the British Columbia K-12 system when implementing SOGI-inclusive education, as well as the strategies they developed to address it. Using the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy and UDL, I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight participants who actively and firmly practiced SOGI-inclusive education and analyzed the data using thematic analysis. A critical analysis of the interviews revealed that resistance to SOGI-inclusive education originates not only from parents but also from colleagues and teams formed within the wider community. The forms of resistance and harassment are also diverse, including email inquiries, verbal abuse, online exposure, and physical stalking and more. Based on the strategies of teachers practicing SOGI, using teaching methods that reflect lived experiences to integrate SOGI content into the classroom emerged as a primary approach. Teachers are aware of the high correlation between SOGI-inclusive education and the political climate. Some also actively engaged beyond the campus, participating in broader community and political activities, and forming alliances with both school-based and external stakeholders to ensure a long-term development path for SOGI.

Keywords: SOGI-inclusive education, strategies, K-12, British Columbia

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Introduction

Background Information

In recent years, the importance of integrating sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) into school curriculums has become increasingly recognized as a pivotal factor in fostering inclusive educational environments. British Columbia (BC), Canada, has been at the forefront of this movement, implementing policies aimed at making schools safe and inclusive for all students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity (Taylor et al., 2015). Following regulations that took effect on December 31, 2016, all school districts and independent schools in BC are mandated to include specific references to SOGI within their anti-bullying policies (Education and Child Care, 2017). Additionally, teachers are encouraged to incorporate discussions on the B.C. Human Rights Code and SOGI topics into their curriculum delivery (Engagement, n.d.).

However, the movement towards inclusivity has faced consistent resistance, particularly from some parents concerned about the incorporation of SOGI into school curriculums. In September 2023, anti-SOGI nationwide rallies “1 Million March 4 Children” were held to called for “the elimination of the SOGI curriculum, pronouns, gender ideology, and mixed bathrooms in schools” (Benzie, 2023, para. 3), claiming they were marching “to protect our children from indoctrination and sexualization” (Holliday, 2023, para.3). The SOGI 123 initiative, developed by ARC foundation in 2016, has also become a focus of debate. On October 6, 2023, John Rustad, the leader of the BC Conservatives, voiced opposition to this initiative, “We need to remove that and make sure parents have their rights and engage with their kids in schools” (Pawson, 2024, para. 4).

This ongoing debate highlights the complex dynamics between educational policy development and societal values, underscoring the challenges of implementing inclusive educational practices in a diverse society. As mentioned by Roberts (2020) the literature on this topic has a lot of information about the conversations about students who freely describe their sexuality as lesbian, gay bisexual transgender or queer (LGBTQ), and relating to the risk they face. Though there is still debate on how serious a problem this really was, the opposing view argues that schools have transformed to become rather welcoming premises where learners possess an all-inclusive mindset concerning society. As social attitudes towards SOGI evolve and legal frameworks supporting SOGI rights are strengthened, educational practices must also adapt. There is a notable gap in literature specifically focused on providing teachers with actionable strategies to overcome parental resistance.

Research Rationale

As societal attitudes and legal frameworks surrounding SOGI evolve, there is a pressing need for educational practices to adapt to foster a culture of respect and understanding. Researchers underscore the benefits of SOGI-inclusive education in enhancing student well-being and academic success. However, stigmatization and misconceptions about SOGI-inclusive education remain significant barriers. These issues, often fueled by misinformation, perpetuate an exclusionary environment that discriminates against LGBTQ2S+ students, thus undermining the goals of inclusive education.

Discrepancy Between Perceptions and Reality of Inclusivity

Early research consistently highlights the adverse conditions faced by LGBTQ2S+ students. A survey by Almeida et al. (2009) in Boston, Massachusetts, revealed that LGBTQ2S+ students reported significantly higher rates of depressive symptoms and suicidal

ideation compared to their heterosexual, non-transgender peers. Further studies across Canadian schools corroborate these findings, showing that LGBTQ youth often experience elevated levels of homophobic bullying, both physical and verbal, and generally receive lower levels of family support, school connectedness, and community support (Chamberland et al., 2009; Taylor & Peter, 2011; Saewyc et al., 2009; Busseri et al., 2008; Prokopenko & Hango, 2022).

Despite some perceptions that educational environments have become sufficiently inclusive, data from the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey demonstrate persistent high rates of bullying among gender-diverse youth in BC's public schools, "The overwhelming majority (82%) of trans boys had been the victims of bullying, as had 70% of non-binary youth. Over half of trans girls (60%) and questioning youth (65%) had also been victims of at least one form of bullying" (Saewyc et al., 2021, p. 17). Further, recent trend analyses suggest that despite the growing visibility of sexual minority identity and lives, sexual identity-based disparities in victimization have persisted over time (Poteat et al., 2020). In Kelowna, B.C., the parents of a transgender middle school student had to withdraw their 13-year-old from École K.L.O. Middle School after the student endured severe bullying. "There would be large groups of boys standing around in circles... barking and jeering, and at times yelling things like 'kill yourself'" (Walker, 2022, para. 3).

According to the 2021 census data from Statistics Canada, BC has the highest proportion of transgender and non-binary individuals among Canadian provinces at 0.44%, trailing only behind Nova Scotia (0.48%) and Yukon (0.47%) when including all provinces and territories (Szeto, 2022). Thus, it is critical and urgent for developing educational strategies that effectively support this diversity.

Existing SOGI Legislation and Policy

Policies regarding SOGI inclusive education vary across Canadian provinces, reflecting the diversity of local educational authority and differing approaches to inclusive education. Notably, BC stands out as a province particularly proactive in fostering SOGI inclusiveness. Legislative and policy measures in BC support SOGI inclusion within the educational framework.

Effective in 2020, Policy 713 applies to all public schools and is designed to create a supportive school environment in New Brunswick for all students who identify as LGBTQI2S+ (Mazerolle, 2023). In 2023, the Higgs government in New Brunswick stated that they were reconsidering policies on SOGI and made some changes in Policy 713 due to strong opposition from some parents, such as no longer requiring teachers to use the preferred pronouns or names of transgender or non-binary students under 16 without parental consent (Perry, 2023). Additionally, the policy removes the provision that allowed students to participate in extracurricular activities consistent with their gender identity (The Canadian Press, 2023).

BC's SOGI Policies and Collaborative Initiatives

Considering the previously mentioned context, the B.C. Ministry of Education has instructed all 60 school boards and independent school authorities to embed SOGI references in their codes of conduct, following the amendment to the B.C. Human Rights Code in July 2016 that identified gender identity and expression as protected against discrimination (BC Gov News, 2016). The province has also established a new provincial K-12 SOGI Collaborative with 11 educational and community partner organizations. Overall, the purpose of BC's SOGI policies is to “help students understand and respect their differences” and

“create a safe, accepting, respectful, and welcoming learning environment” (Fleming, 2023, para. 2).

To effectively implement these inclusive policies, the BC Ministry of Education’s SOGI Working Group has produced a SOGI policy guide detailing the components necessary for a comprehensive SOGI educational framework. This guide establishes three core objectives of SOGI education: visibility, Protection, and Inclusion. It also outlines ten essential components for school districts to develop and refine SOGI-inclusive policies. These include the establishment of a common language, implementation of safety and anti-harassment protocols, support for self-identification, assurance of confidentiality, provision of appropriate dress code guidelines, integration of gender-inclusive activities, delivery of educator training, enhancement of facilities, and promotion of inclusive learning environments (SOGI 123, n.d.).

Subsequently, the SOGI-Inclusive Education Resource Guide (The BC K-12 SOGI Collaborative, 2020) serves as a practical supplement to the SOGI Policy Guide, offering detailed methodologies for the implementation and reinforcement of SOGI-inclusive educational practices. It provides specific recommendations on supporting student transitions, establishing universal or all-gender restrooms and locker rooms, and displaying the rainbow symbol.

Several school districts responded positively to these directives. For example, the Vancouver School Board, one of the earliest adopters, implemented a standalone SOGI policy in 2004 and later developed a policy handbook to ensure a safe, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming environment (Galina & Galina, 2011). The Langley School District introduced an Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy in 2014, revised it in 2021 to

clarify inappropriate behaviours and enhance protections against discrimination and harassment (School District NO. 35 Langley, 2021). Additionally, on June 1, 2016, the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District implemented a comprehensive Inclusion Policy with advanced SOGI administrative procedures, ensuring inclusivity and respect across all policies, procedures, programs, and communications. This policy embraces a broad spectrum of diversity, covering both “visible and invisible differences such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion, culture, and socio-economic status” (Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools, 2016, para. 4).

Implementing SOGI Inclusive Practices in Education

The BC Ministry of Education asserts that SOGI is not a standalone curriculum but rather a component of diversity integrated across various grades and subjects (SOGI 123, n.d.). To facilitate this integration, the Ministry has devised lesson plans for both elementary and secondary education that align with the broader curriculum. Furthermore, the SOGI 123 initiative offers “A Curated List of SOGI-Inclusive Books for K-12 Schools” (Bittner, n.d.), this collection of resources included picture books, novels, and non-fiction, covering themes including Family Diversity, LGBTQ+ History, and Gender Identity. Although the use of SOGI 123 educational materials is not mandatory, it is recommended as a resource that can be integrated into various subjects to promote inclusion.

Other Canadian provinces such as Ontario and Alberta have adopted distinct policies. Ontario revised its sexual education curriculum in 2015 to explicitly include content on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. However, in 2024, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith announced that in Alberta, students 15 years old and younger must have parental permission to use a name and pronoun different from the one they were given

at birth, and children and youth aged 16 and 17 must notify their parents if they choose to do so in school; schools must notify parents and opt-in when students participate in education involving gender identity, sexual orientation, or human sexuality (Bellefontaine, 2024). It can be seen that the approaches, climates and levels of commitment vary from province to province in Canada, making it critical to explore and refine SOGI education strategies.

Stigmatization and Misconception about SOGI-Inclusive Education

As societal attitudes increasingly affirm the legitimacy of the LGBTQ community, the tools used to foster inclusivity in educational settings must evolve to address the ongoing challenges of stigmatization. Sources indicates that significant misconceptions about SOGI-inclusive education contribute to this issue, with false claims that such content has been recently and covertly integrated into curricula, is imposed upon children, contains pornographic material, infringes on parental rights, and equates to sexual health education (Action4Canada, n.d.; Moman, 2024). These misconceptions exacerbate parental resistance and stem from fears that SOGI education imposes specific values or lifestyles, fueling opposition from certain community segments.

This stigmatization not only prevents the achievement of a genuinely inclusive educational environment but also serves as a major obstacle to the broader acceptance and integration of SOGI principles within school communities. Addressing these misconceptions is crucial not only to reduce resistance but also to enhance the effectiveness of educational initiatives (Kosciw at al., 2020).

Political Polarization

Political polarization refers to the movement of political attitudes away from the center and toward ideological extremes (Weismueller et al., 2024). This phenomenon often

results in two opposing camps with less and less in common, intensifies conflict and reduces cooperation. Palonen (2009) claims that political polarization is a political tool—one that seeks to delineate boundaries between “us” and “them” and delineate communities that are perceived as moral orders. Such differing moral systems “provide fertile ground for political polarization and underlie battles about specific cultural issues such as abortion, gay rights...” (Fiorina & Abrams, 2008, p. 568). In the context of SOGI-inclusive education in BC, polarization was evident as stakeholders were deeply divided on ideological lines (Dominato & Quartermain, 2024).

The progressive side advocates that inclusion and protection of LGBTQ2S+ individuals are necessary conditions for a just society. Progressive political parties including the Liberal Party, the Green Party, and the New Democratic Party (NDP), as well as educators and human rights organizations, all advocate SOGI education, arguing that SOGI education helps understand and respect gender diversity, which they believe is essential to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment (BC Greens, 2024; Your BC NDP Team, 2022). The opposition is mainly conservative or right-leaning parties and groups, such as the leader of BC Conservative Party, John Rustad (2023), argue that discussions of gender and sexual orientation should be confined to the family, and schools should not interfere, social issues such as gender identity should be completely removed from public schools to refocus on academic subjects.

Secondly, the debate surrounding parental rights to information remains a contentious issue. Opponents use “parental rights” as a shining sword to argue that parents should have the authority to decide their children’s exposure to this educational content, “taking away parents’ rights at any level is not right” (Rustad, 2023). On the other hand, supporters

believe that this position often conceals prejudice against homosexuals and transgender people. Clint Johnston, president of the BC Teachers' Federation, noted that these rallies used "parental consent" as a dog whistle to promote homophobia and transphobia across North America, representing a "coordinated attack" on the LGBTQ+ community (Johnston, 2023). British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender asserted that denying the existence of transgender and gender diverse people, including efforts to remove transgender and LGBTQ2SAI+ people from the province's curriculum, is fundamentally an act of hate. (DeRosa, 2023).

Lastly, the opposition between the two sides is sharply evident in their rhetoric and accusations. Opponents use terms such as "homophobia," "transphobia," "hateful and self-righteous," and "fascist" to attack supporters of anti-SOGI inclusive education (Judd, 2023), while supporters face wrongful labeling as "pedophiles," "groomers," and accused of advocating for the use of puberty blockers and providing pornographic material (Gelineau, 2024).

This heating debate discloses the fundamental societal conflicts between handling SOGI and educational freedom, it is imperative that we need for more communication, understanding, and inclusiveness in the formulation and implementation of SOGI education policies.

Broader Current Global Tensions

Globally, SOGI-inclusive education is not merely a domestic affair within Canada but also touches on broader global tensions involving identity politics, human rights, and cultural conflicts. Discussions around SOGI and LGBTQ2S+ rights are often intertwined with larger issues of identity politics and cultural warfare. In the United States, the United Kingdom, and

some European countries, similar to Canada, the inclusion of SOGI education in schools has sparked debates that reflect broader societal value divisions (Kasai et al., 2024; McGill, 2014; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2016). A national report of Italy exposed significant inclusivity gaps for LGBTQ2S+ students in Italian schools, with 50% facing discrimination and some experiencing staff aggression (Bertelli & Viggiani, 2021). The result of England is also worrying, a considerable number of secondary school teachers (86%) and nearly half of primary school teachers (45%) report having witnessed homophobic or transphobic bullying (Bertelli & Viggiani, 2021). In Hong Kong, the absence of gender recognition and anti-discrimination laws leaves SOGI minority students without guaranteed affirmative and rights-based education, exacerbating the challenge of fostering inclusive environments (Kwok, 2024).

The disparity in legal frameworks and policy implementation also varies greatly in how countries legally recognize LGBTQ+ rights; this has created “deadlocks” within intergovernmental institutions, such as the UN Human Rights Council, on LGBTQI rights (Voss, 2018). Western countries provide legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, while some countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia enforce laws that criminalize LGBTQ+ expressions and behaviours (Vermeersch, 2023). Tying foreign aid to LGBTQ2S+ rights, as some Western nations do, is often seen by recipient countries viewing these conditions as infringements on their internal affairs (Kretz, 2013) and asking for respect for their domestic law, domestic political context and traditional values (Voss, 2018). In Uganda, proposed laws severely restricting LGBTQ2S+ rights and prescribing harsh penalties were met with public criticism from President Museveni, who accused Western countries of attempting to impose

their practices on others and should “stop wasting the time of humanity” (Jazeera, 2023, para. 20).

Despite broad cultural differences, the pursuit of fundamental human rights should transcend these differences and the view of cultural sovereignty (Sen, 2017). Therefore, exploring SOGI-inclusive education strategies is also a crucial step for global societal development. By enhancing the fairness and inclusiveness of educational systems, education can surpass a venue for knowledge transmission, but also a frontier for cultural respect and the advancement of human rights.

The Need for Teacher Resources and for the Creation of Comprehensive and Practical Strategies

Despite the availability of various resources such as *SOGI 123* in BC, which provides tools for policy and curriculum inclusivity, along with the BC Teachers Federation’s workshops and the *Out in Schools* programs that foster the creation of Queer Straight Alliances, educators face significant challenges. A notable gap remains in training and resources, which are critical barriers to the effective implementation of SOGI-inclusive education (Taylor et al., 2015; Greytak et al., 2013).

According to Robinson & Ferfolja (2010), pre-service teachers often do not prioritize equality and broader social justice issues in their educational focus. Research from Every Teacher Project’s 2013 online survey on Canadian K–12 educators underscores a similar issue, noting that it is “lack of training and fear of backlash that prevents them” from engaging with SOGI-related curriculum, rather than “religious belief or moral conflict” as commonly presumed (Taylor et al., 2011). This is echoed in findings by Case and Meier

(2014), who observed that inadequately trained counselors and educators are unprepared to meet the needs of transgender students.

Short (2017) emphasizes that true inclusion in schools extends beyond symbolic gestures; it requires a systemic, cultural shift towards creating an LGBTQ2S+-positive environment across all grades and spaces, transcending a mere reactive stance to incidents. Many schools claim these symbols ensure the safety of LGBTQ2S+ students; however, students themselves often do not feel protected by these measures alone (Fine & Sadowski, 2017). This contradictory spotlight the imperative for ongoing research and the creation of comprehensive, practical strategies that empower educators to more effectively navigate the complexities of SOGI inclusivity, thus ensuring a genuinely safe and welcoming educational climate for all students.

Another challenging issue is how to convey this knowledge to students while minimizing intervention in their autonomy. As one teacher in a study mentioned,

with very young children you don't want to make them think that they have to be gay, for example. But I guess in the same way you are not wanting to make them feel that they have to be heterosexual, and they may not be heterosexual (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2010, p. 850).

Positionality Statement

My distinctive background places me in an advantageous position to explore the emerging strategies of SOGI inclusive education. As a bisexual woman and a member of the Han ethnic community—where such identities are often neither recognized nor accepted. From 2019 to 2021, I pursued a master's degree in fine art in China, where I explored the

fields of art education and feminist art; from there, I investigated the interplay between art and societal change.

Since I moved to Canada in 2023, I have actively engaged with LGBTQ2S+ initiatives across BC. I have participated in local community activities such as counter-protests, rainbow reads, pride walks, etc. Through these involvements, I have enriched my connection with the local community and deepened my understanding of the social dynamics at play. My role as a life skills worker at youth shelters has helped me build a grounded sense of the realities faced by LGBTQ2S+ youth.

Investigating in this topic has always been on my bucket list. My unique cross-cultural insights, artistic background, and personal experiences serve as a passion engine to reduce the stigma associated with diverse identities within educational contexts.

Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the challenges and strategies for navigating parental resistance to SOGI-inclusive education in BC's K-12 system. The specific research objectives are:

- (i) Investigate teachers' experiences with parental resistance and how it manifests.
- (ii) Explore teachers' strategies for addressing resistance, incorporating SOGI topics into teaching, and fostering a safe and inclusive school environment.
- (iii) Investigate how teachers perceive the future of SOGI-inclusive education and their future engagement with that change.

In this study, I use the acronym LGBTQ2S+ to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Two-Spirit individuals, along with other diverse sexual and gender identities encompassed by the "+". This acronym reflects the most commonly accepted

terminology in BC, where Two-Spirit acknowledges Indigenous peoples' unique identities and roles in the region.

Literature Review

Teaching and Practice of Inclusive Education

Definition and Scope

When discussing the specific definition of inclusive education, it is important to note that, despite becoming a global field of educational research, the definition of inclusive education has varied over time and across regions (Brusling & Pepin, 2003). “Politicians, researchers, and practitioners perceive inclusive education differently concerning what schools can and should do to help inclusive education succeed” (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021, p. 423). However, in general, inclusive education aims to provide all students in a just and responsive education (Nevøy et al., 2014).

Narrow and Broad Definitions of Inclusion

Typically, the narrow definition of inclusion focuses on children with learning difficulties and disabilities (Arduin, 2015). Research shows that in some countries, especially in the Global South, attention is focused almost exclusively on children with disabilities, as inclusive education tends to address the large gaps left by Education for All (Miles & Singal, 2010).

The broad definition of inclusion encompasses diversity and social justice, extending beyond just mainstreaming and disability to include “facets of school life such as community, social capital, equality, and respect” (Thomas, 2013, p. 474). According to Thomas (2013), “the term ‘inclusive education’ now refers to the education of all children, not just those with disabilities” (p. 473), this aligns with the Salamanca Declaration of 1994. Ainscow et al. (2006) developed a typology for thinking about inclusion, which expands the term “inclusive” to include: inclusion as “education for all” and inclusion concerning all groups

vulnerable to exclusion. Most international organizations have adopted “education for all” as a widely accepted alternative expression (Haug, 2017). This broader understanding aims to identify and dismantle barriers to education for all children, ensuring “they have access to, are present in, and can participate in and achieve optimal academic and social outcomes from school” (Roger, 2018, p. 2).

However, the broad concept of inclusive education has sparked debates within the academic community. “Since the broad definition concerns not only persons with disabilities, there is a risk that the interests of those with disabilities might become secondary or even be overlooked when pursuing other minority interests” (Haug, 2017, p. 209). Proponents counter that learning difficulties are not inherent but are socially constructed (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Furthermore, the belief in “ability” raises additional issues, statistics showing that various minority groups are often identified as having learning difficulties and are disproportionately represented in special education. If inclusive education is narrowly defined as pertaining only to persons with disabilities, “it is often the longstanding, deficit-related beliefs of the field of special education—beliefs that it is ability and disability, not poverty, difference or life experience—that have succeeded in ‘explaining’ success or failure” (Thomas, 2013, p. 476). This narrow definition overlooks broader social and cultural factors that influence educational outcomes.

Graham (2020) notes that some scholars in the academic community are reluctant to define inclusion strictly; they describe it as a journey, not a destination, or as a process, not a place. Other scholars have attempted to reconceptualize the relationship between education for all and inclusive education, seeking to closely integrate the two to develop more coherent

and sustainable strategies that meet the educational needs of marginalized children (Miles & Singal, 2010).

Definition of Inclusive Education in This Study

In this study, when the term “inclusive education” is mentioned, it refers to its broad definition. “In some countries, the responsibility for the education of disabled children does not lie with the Ministry of Education but with Health or Social Welfare departments because these children are considered ‘ineducable’” (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 3). This attitude implies that “disabled children are not always considered to be part of humanity” (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 3). This exclusionary attitude also applies to LGBTQ2S+ students. Despite “homosexuality being removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1973” (Cohen & Oreg, 2025, p. 2) and no longer being considered a mental illness by official medical institutions, the reality remains far from ideal. For instance, a study shows that in Nigeria, students suspected or assumed to be homosexual are subjected to “deserve investigation and disciplinary actions” (Okanlawon, 2021, p. 24).

Therefore, the exclusion of LGBTQ2S+ students in the school environment shares the same underlying logic as the exclusion of students with so-called “learning disabilities.” This logic is based on a “separatist mindset,” this mindset divides students into “normal” and “abnormal” categories and considers the “abnormal” students as harmful or detrimental to the “normal” students. Concepts such as “learning disabilities,” disability, race, and gender are interconnected. As Thomas (2013) states, “And too often, even when the easy palliatives of ‘learning disability’ are eschewed, there is recourse to explanation in other easily identifiable issues in other forms of separateness: disability, race and gender” (p. 478). This demonstrates that the inherent nature of these issues is rooted in the mainstream and traditional forces

suppressing resources for marginalized groups, which cannot hope to drive improvement while in a state of isolation.

“The varying groups of which we are part or with which we have contact, and the ways in which a desire to increase social justice and lessen oppression allows coalition building and alliances among groups” (Swartz, 2003, p. 57-58). Sen (1999) argues that the core educational values should “help to determine the nature and reach of individual freedoms” (p. 534). Education, it is argued, enables people “to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning” (UNESCO, 1990, p. 3).

Therefore, when developing strategies for educators on SOGI issues, it is more appropriate and necessary to adopt the broad definition of inclusive education. This definition not only more comprehensively covers and protects all student groups but also challenges and changes exclusionary attitudes based on a “separatist mindset.” It promotes social justice and diversity, ensuring that all students can achieve their full potential in education. “Inclusive education provides an opportunity for society to critically examine its social institutions and structures” (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 14).

According to the definition of SOGI-inclusive education which appears in *SOGI 1 2 3 Parent Guide*, “SOGI-inclusive education is about making sure that schools have inclusive policies, welcoming learning environments, and teaching resources that showcase the diversity of our world” (SOGI 1 2 3, 2024).

Evolution of the Theoretical Foundations of Inclusive Education

20th Century: From Segregation to Integration

Historically, students with disabilities or special needs were often segregated from mainstream education, with the focus on adapting these students to separate environments where they would receive specialized instruction. (Wehmeyer, 2022). What we now refer to as inclusive education was initially called special education. Scholars such as Lewis proposed ideas about intelligence testing and assessment, laying the foundation for special education. In many texts, the term “exceptional children” is used, primarily referring to children with disabilities, its underlying logic indicated that the placement and segregation education given more concentrated professional intervention and support (Graham, 2020).

Some scholars argue that the 1950s and 1960s, marked by the civil rights movement, anti-war protests, and the Vietnam War, were a period of significant change and turmoil in American society. This era saw the emergence of new anti-discrimination sentiments worldwide, which fostered a reduction in public respect for authority and an increased skepticism regarding the significance and worth of professional knowledge (Thomas, 2013). Many scholars during this period questioned the rationale of segregated education (Dunn, 1968; Reynolds, 1962). “One reason for the introduction of inclusive education was the experiences with integration as the organizational principle for special education during the 1960s” (Haug, 2017, p. 208). Additionally, during this period, John Rawls (1971) introduced principles of social justice that advocated for equal opportunities for all, including educational opportunities. He critiqued utilitarianism that sacrificed the rights of the few for the benefit of the many, and this theory served as a strong theoretical foundation for educational equity. The idea that teaching should be a socially just practice also plays a role in promoting “the ideals of peace, freedom, and social justice” (UNESCO, 1996).

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural development theory also profoundly influenced the development of inclusive education. This theory posits that learning is inherently social, or 'socio-cultural' in academic terms, relying heavily on the learning environment, where "meaning, narrative, and apprenticeship" are crucial (Thomas, 2013, p. 486). "Students' success or failure at school is due less to 'learning disabilities' and more to an array of factors around which acceptance and inclusion are constructed" (Thomas, 2013, p. 477).

During this period, John Rawls (1971) critiqued utilitarianism sacrificed the rights of the few for the benefit of the many, and his social justice theory served as a strong theoretical foundation for educational equity. The idea that teaching should be a socially just practice also plays a role in promoting "the ideals of peace, freedom, and social justice" (UNESCO, 1996).

In the mid-20th century, skepticism about "learning disabilities" and segregated education grew, leading to an expansion of the concept of inclusive education. This shift is deeply linked to the human rights approach that emerged during the early days of the civil rights movement. Some legislative frameworks collectively underscored the necessity of ensuring that students with disabilities receive equal educational opportunities as their non-disabled peers. The concept of integration became more prominent. During the 1970s, the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), which was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. Similarly, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms reinforced the principle that education is a fundamental right that must be accessible to all students, regardless of their abilities (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982; Turnbull, 2005). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),

passed in 1990, further strengthened the rights of individuals with disabilities by prohibiting discrimination in all areas of public life, including education (ADA, 1990).

The Shift Toward Full Inclusion in Education

“Contrary to intentions, the practice of integration did not eliminate segregation, marginalization, discrimination, or devaluation in mainstream school settings” (Haug, 2017, p. 208). Consequently, in the 1990s, the shift towards full inclusion gained momentum supported by various international mandates, such as the Salamanca Statement (1994), which expand the notion of inclusion in details, stating that schools should accommodate all children, “this should includes disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities, and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas and groups” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6).

“Since Salamanca, the term “inclusive education” has taken on multiple meanings across the globe” (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 9). However, some scholars argue that, in reality, “inclusive education is still like an island, considered a separate territory from mainstream education, with its own discourses, policies, and practices” (Thomas, 2013, p. 475).

Niholm (2021) points out that some problems with inclusive education persist: “the lack of knowledge on how to actually create classrooms that are truly inclusive, the persistence of segregated educational practices, and the diverse opinions among teachers and parents about its appropriateness” (p. 358).

21st Century: Exploring the Link Between Policy and Practices

Some early theorists, such as Skrtic, deconstruct special education to construct inclusive education. However, some researchers argue that these theories are “too removed

from practices” (Niholm, 2021, p. 367) or challenging to translate into real practice (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). When it comes to inclusive education, the most practical thing is a good theory (Niholm, 2021; Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). They focus more on “how case studies that integrate theory and practice can be designed” (Niholm, 2021, p. 361) and think “we should not expect to arrive at universally valid theories of how to develop inclusive practices” (Niholm, 2021, p. 367) but rather conclude case by case. Therefore, “the case-study approach thus seems particularly suited for testing and developing theories about how to develop more inclusive practices” (Niholm, 2021, p. 362-363).

In the 1970s and 1980s, disability activists increasingly criticized the medical model of individual disability (Barnes & Mercer, 2006). As stated in the first statement of UPIAS, “Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society” (UPIAS, 1975. p. 20). This argument provided a critical foundation for the social model of disability, “the distinction between disability (social exclusion) and impairment (physical limitation) and the claim that disabled people are an oppressed group” (Shakespeare, 2006, p. 215). They discussed that functional “incapacity” leads to classifying individuals as “invalids,” making disability their defining trait and generalizing their incapacity. This creates a “personal tragedy” view, seeing them as victims needing care and dependence, a perspective central to current social welfare policies for disabled people (Barnes et al., 2010).

“Once defined as a disabled person, the individual is stigmatized, and social expectations about how, for example, those with a visual or hearing impairment should behave, or what they are capable of doing, exert an influence independent of their impairment” (Barnes et al., 2010, p. 163). Thus, in the context of the social model, disability

is described as “the outcome of an oppressive relationship between people with impairments and the rest of society” (Finkelstein, 1980, p. 47). Therefore, “any meaningful solution must be directed at societal change rather than individual adjustment and rehabilitation” (Barnes et al., 2010, p. 163).

With the advent of the social model of disability, prior concepts such as the medical or rehabilitation models were challenged. In the field of education, UDL emerged and became one of the primary pedagogies explored over the past two decades to create more inclusive school environments. UDL encourages “the design of flexible and accessible learning experiences for all, regardless of learner characteristics” (Bray et al., 2024, p. 113). It is pointed out that “UDL privileges the autonomy of the learner and attempts to reduce occasions when the student has to rely on others to obtain inclusive access to learning” (Fovet, 2021, p. 31).

The development of UDL is based on multiple academic theories. Neuroscience research reveals that UDL is based on three major brain networks that process information: the recognition network, the strategy network, and the emotion network (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Gardner (1983) argues that schools should recognize and cultivate all types of intelligence of students, rather than solely focusing on linguistic and logical-mathematical ones. UDL accommodates these different intelligences by offering multiple ways to present information, to engage in class content, and to express learning outcome. Technology integration plays a significant role in this process. For example, Facebook has become extremely important for students with social, emotional and behavioral disorders (SEBD) in adjusting to school and managing peer relationships, a study has found (Fovet, 2009). UDL touches on non-traditional assessment methods. As Rose (2000) noted: “Although there are

remarkable individual differences among students in our classrooms, most existing methods of assessment have not been designed with these individual differences in mind” (p. 47). Recent research indicates that international students and Indigenous students in Canada can also benefit from UDL (Fovet, 2021).

Building on the principles of UDL, modern inclusive education integrates the concepts of social justice and equity education, it differentiates between equity and equality, advocating for providing resources and opportunities tailored to the diverse needs of students to ensure all can succeed (Banks, 2010).

Successful Practice in Addressing LGBTQ+-related School Bullying

“The multidimensionality of school climate is represented in the research literature, which defines school climate in four ways: academic, community, safety, and institutional environment” (Wang & Degol, 2016, p. 317). In a school environment that does not value inclusivity, students who are perceived as different due to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc., are likely experience exclusion, discrimination, or bullying. This leads to several negative outcomes, such as poorer academic achievement (Samara et al., 2021), psychological distress (Rigby, 2003), and peer relationship problems (Hay et al., 2004).

Bullying is closely linked to exclusion; both are assertions of dominance and operate on similar principles of power inequality and systemic oppression at their cores. Bullying often manifests as isolating individuals, therefore reinforcing social hierarchies and maintaining their status within the peer group results in the social exclusion of the victim. Segregation reinforces social hierarchies by keeping marginalized students out of mainstream educational opportunities (Slee, 2011), it deprives certain groups of access to the same

educational resources and opportunities as their peers, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and exacerbating power imbalances between dominant and marginalized groups (Ainscow, 2005).

In the case of bullying, school environments that do not actively combat discriminatory behaviours enable bullying to persist. Similarly, educational policies and practices that do not prioritize inclusion allow exclusive education systems to thrive (MacIntyre, 2000). As a result, in exclusionary educational environments, the frequency of bullying is higher.

The Well-being Challenges of LGBTQ2S+ Students and the Vital Role of Schools

For LGBTQ2S+ students, microaggressions (Pierce, 1970) are manifestations of heterosexism, cisgenderism, and negative attitudes toward LGBTQ2S+ individuals (Couillard & Higbee, 2018, p. 12). According to Sue's (2010) typology of microaggressions, Couillard and Higbee (2018) identify micro-assaults against LGBTQ+ individuals as intentional, hurtful language, such as referring to someone as a "fag," "pansy" etc., "Micro-insults may be more covert, including the use of sarcasm or nonverbal cues such as rolling the eyes" (Couillard & Higbee, 2018, p. 12), or micro-invalidations, "which ignores a person's claimed identity negate a person's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, or lived experiences" (Couillard & Higbee, 2018, p. 12).

Research indicates the significant mental health challenges faced by LGBTQ2S+ youth. Veale et al. (2017) highlighted that, among transgender youth in Canada, "three out of four reported Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) behaviours in the past year, nearly half experienced extreme stress in the past 30 days, and a third attempted suicide in the last year" (p. 213). Similarly, London-Nadeau et al. (2023) reported that while transgender and non-

binary (TNB) youth in Quebec generally exhibit good physical health, a majority experience significant mental health challenges, including high levels of self-harm and suicidality. LGBTQ youth also likely to experience homelessness due to family rejection, which, in turn, exacerbates mental health challenges. Housing insecurity significantly raises the risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours among transgender young adults (Gaveras, 2024).

Many studies emphasize the critical role of supportive school environments for LGBTQ2S+ youth, showing a strong correlation between school safety and decreased rates of suicidality (Taliaferro et al., 2019; Gower et al., 2018; Bird, 2024). Pistella et al. (2020) revealed “transgender students have healthier eating habits when the school context is perceived as a safe place compared to transgender students in less safe schools” (p. 40). Thus, “it is clear that regardless of gender identity, school safety is associated with all healthy weight-related behaviors” (p. 40). Veale et al. (2017) further noted that “when they have supportive family and school environments, even when they have high exposure to enacted stigma, the stress is buffered to an extent” (p. 214). Regarding substance use issues, Bird et al. (2024) emphasized that school connectedness is linked to reduced rates of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use, both in the short term and over time among LGBQ youth.

Foundational Protection: Anti-Bully Policies

Throughout most of the 20th century, LGBTQ topics were almost entirely invisible in school curricula and campus culture. Hunter (1990) conducted a study on 500 adolescents at the Hetrick-Martin Institute in 1988, these adolescents were typically referred to the institute by peers, media, schools, and emergency shelters and were often seen as problematic youth, 41% of the sample reported experiencing violence from family members, peers, or strangers.

During the 1980s and 1990s, some educators and organizations began advocating for the inclusion of LGBTQ content in schools under the influence of civil rights movement (Faderman, 2015). Efforts in this period primarily focused on raising awareness of homosexuality and bisexuality and reducing discrimination and bullying. For instance, in 1990, the United States passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which, while primarily focused on academic achievement, also emphasized the importance of protecting students from discrimination (Block, 2006).

Emphasis on Anti-Bullying and Discrimination Policies in the 2000s

Entering the 21st century, several states and school districts began formally adopting policies to protect LGBTQ2S+ students from victimization. In 2011, California passed the FAIR Education Act, “it amends the California Education Code to include the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful reference to contributions by people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ community in history and social studies curriculum” (Our Family Coalition, n.d.) The American Psychological Association (2015) released a guide summarizing the implementation recommendations and school-based protective factors for LGBTQI students.

In Canada’s context, The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) guarantees education as a fundamental right for everyone. Initially, policies focused on preventing bullying and protecting victims. For example, Alberta launched the Safe and Caring Schools Initiative in 1996 to provide a collaborative and comprehensive approach to reducing violence in schools (Alberta Education, n.d.). In 2007, the BC Ministry of Education required all schools that include standards for appropriate school behaviour (School District 91, n.d.).

Despite these enhancements, challenges still remain. The 2009 National School Climate Survey by GLSEN found 33.8% of students who reported mistreatment said that

staff members “did nothing address incidents of harassment or assault” (Kosciw et al., 2009, p. 38). In 2020, this percentage increased to 60.5% (Kosciw et al., 2020). Biegel and Kuehl (2010) also disclosed the minimal coverage of LGBT issues in many teacher-education programs and PD trainings (p. 2). In 2008, murder of Lawrence King, who was shot by a classmate after coming out (Freund, 2008).

Changing Nature of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In many ancient mythologies, the combination of male and female characteristics is a frequent theme (Nanda, 1999). Many ancient societies also acknowledged non-binary identities and same-sex relationships within their cultural or spiritual contexts. Indigenous cultures in precolonial North America honored gender-variant individuals such as the winkt, nadleehe, and lhamana (Jourian, 2015); the Hijra community in South Asia has held a sacred role since antiquity (Nanda, 1999).

In 19th century, there was a shift toward the medicalization and pathologization of LGBT individuals. Homosexuals being the most extensively documented group in the pathologization literature (McGuire, 2022). Homosexuality was designated a mental illness in medical systems, officially codified in the DSM-I by the APA in 1952 (Drescher, 2015).

The mid-20th century, “The Kinsey Scale” was first published in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948), it ranges a spectrum of sexual orientation through the 0–6 with an special category of “X” (heterosexuality, bisexual, homosexuality) (Kinsey et al., 1948; Kinsey Institute, n.d.). At the same time, German-born doctor Benjamin began to use assessment criteria to identify the “true transexual” who should have the right to access gender-affirming care (Benjamin, 1966; Marrow, 2023). This period also saw progress in the acceptance of homosexuality, with the decriminalization of same-sex relationships in some

Western countries and the influence of advocacy movements like the 1969 Stonewall Riots, which became a key moment in LGBTQ+ history (Duberman, 1993).

During the feminist and queer theory movements of the 1970s and 1980s, Butler's work illustrating the way that gender is not a fixed biological reality but a socially constructed and performative process (Butler, 1990). Building on Butler's ideas, queer theorists critiqued the intersections of power, identity, and heteronormativity, emphasizing the fluidity and multiplicity of gender and sexual identities. These frameworks also introduce the concept of intersectionality, which Crenshaw (1989) introduced to examine how factors such as race, gender, and class intersect to form systemic oppression. This framework has been widely used by scholars to analyze the overlapping dimensions of various identities, including sexual orientation and gender identity, and to explore the mechanisms of social and structural inequality (Dustin & Held, 2018; Russell & McCurdy, 2023). The term "SOGI" emerged in early 21st-century international human rights and education discourse, gaining prominence with the 2006 Yogyakarta Principles, which scholars regard as "a very good example of queer-informed legal text" (Akı, 2025, p. 108).

Curriculum and Support Enhancements in the 2010s

During the 2010s, LGBTQ education expanded to more states and districts. Many schools have begun implementing comprehensive anti-bullying policies and incorporating LGBTQ-related content into their curricula (Russell & McGuire, 2008). In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, a landmark victory (Human Rights Watch, 2015). In Canada, policy has begun to focus on updating the curriculum and providing systemic support and resources. Policy 703 amends curriculum to "reflect the diversity of all of New Brunswick's people and challenge prejudice and discrimination (Government of New

Brunswick, n.d., p.19). In 2013, Manitoba passed the bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act, the act mandates that schools must promote “the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities,” and “use the name ‘gay-straight alliance’ or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils” (Government of Manitoba, 2013). In 2015, Ontario updated its Health and Physical Education curriculum guidelines to include LGBTQ content, covering topics such as healthy relationships, consent, mental health, online safety and the risks of “sexting.” (Ontario Newsroom, 2015). Following the 2016 passage of the British Columbia Human Rights Code, which ensures that gender identity and gender expression are protected under the Act, the Ministry of Education announced that school districts and independent schools across the province must explicitly mention sexual orientation and gender identity in their anti-bullying policies. (Education and Child Care, 2016).

Effectiveness of Anti-Bullying Policies

The effectiveness of anti-bullying policies in reducing bullying is always a topic of debate. Some confirmed the benefits of having policies. “On average, about twice as many educators reported that policies were effective to some degree as those who reported that they were not effective” (Hall, 2017, p. 56). Consistent findings across studies show that schools with anti-bullying policies that enumerate protections based on SOGI offer better protection for LGBTQ2S+ students (Bauman et al., 2008; Callaghan et al., 2024), and “reported less harassment and more frequent and effective intervention by school personnel” (Hall, 2017, p. 45).

However, some indicates that there is no or less relationship between the existence of policies and the reduction of bullying behaviour. Kull et al. (2016) suggest that generic anti-bullying policies do not significantly reduce student experiences of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying or discrimination. O'Brennan et al. (2014) use data of 5,064 members of the National Education Association (NEA), found no relationship between having a district anti-bullying policy and educators' comfort in intervening in both general and discriminatory bullying.

Several potential reasons have been proposed for the controversy regarding the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies. First, there is a lack of data on the implementation of policies (Hall, 2017). Simply having a policy does not equal with consistent and effective implementation. There are also issues related to the content of the policies; the way policies are written can directly affect how educators interpret them. At last, some studies have found that direct and overt forms of bullying may be more easily addressed by policy interventions, however, social and relational bullying shows no significant difference in occurrence between schools with high-quality policies and those with low-quality policies; in fact, it may even occur more frequently in schools with high-quality policies (Young et al., 2013; Ordonez, 2006; Woods & Wolke, 2003).

While the formulation of policies is fundamental and necessary, research highlighting the “ineffectiveness” of these policies underscores the need for further efforts in policy development and implementation. Anti-bullying policies must be not only well-formulated but also consistently and effectively enforced to achieve the desired outcomes.

Critical Examination of Current Bystander Intervention Programs

A bystander is knowledgeable about unjust acts, such as bullying, and does nothing to prevent the injustice (Knight, 2017). The murder of Kitty Genovese in 1964, reportedly witnessed by 38 bystanders but failed to intervene (McLeod, 2019), significantly arose public and academic interest to exam this phenomenon, especially in psychological field. This incident led to the formulation of the “bystander effect” by social psychologists Bibb Latané and John Darley (1970), their experiments in 1968 proposed that the chance of a bystander intervening in an emergency decrease as the number of witnesses increases, as the diffusion of responsibility, social influence, and fear of making a mistake in front of others.

Bystander Intervention Strategies (5D) are defined as “safe and positive options to prevent harm or intervene when confronted with an incident of sexual misconduct” (National Defence, 2022). The “5D” is Distract, Be Direct, Delegate, Delay, and Non-verbal Disapproval. The goal is to transform passive bystanders into active upstanders who can prevent or mitigate harm in their communities and school environments, targeting individuals to change climates and social norms that foster and tolerate violence (Blackburn et al., 2024).

Green Doc, as one of the examples of bystander intervention programs. Coker et al. (2011)’s evaluation indicated “intervention effectiveness to reduce sexual violence perpetration, victimization, and other forms of interpersonal violence over time” (p. 575). Another evaluated example is the “Bringing in the Bystander” program, Inman et al. (2018) found “students experienced increases in behavioral self-efficacy and reductions in rape myth acceptance three weeks after completing the BitB training” (p. 519).

Issues with Current Approaches

Bystander training programs should recognize the diverse contexts in which harassment and violence can occur. However, Kirk-Provencher et al. (2023) examined 28

empirical peer-reviewed evaluations of bystander intervention programs, only 3 studies (10.7%) in the program included content representing Sexual and Gender Minority. Also, educators lack scientific training that connects LGBTI+ issues and bystander intervention to create safer spaces (McShane & Farren, 2023). Coker et al. (2020) found that “the bystander intervention appears to work best to reduce violence for sexual majority youth” (p. 434). Waterman et al. (2022) examined Bringing in the Bystander program, found that “the intervention effects for the past 12-month sexual harassment and stalking perpetration were stronger for younger participants and heterosexual participants” (p. 96).

Scholars have realized the need for programs specifically designed to address the unique needs and narratives of sexual orientations and gender minority. Research has shown that a bystander’s attitude or biases about or towards a group might prevent them from intervening, thus reinforcing a group-specific relationship-level vulnerability factor (António et al., 2020; Edwards, 2023). One lab-based study found that “white women in college may choose not to help Black women at risk for sexual assault” (Katz et al., 2017, p. 273). Edwards (2023) hypothesized that if the potential victim holds an identity that carries specific rape myths (e.g., that bisexual women or sexual minority men are hypersexual and thus cannot be raped), more research is needed to understand what informs willingness to intervene.

Another issue is the challenge heterosexual men face in becoming allies to LGBTI+ individuals. Cisgender and heterosexual men were reported as the main aggressors of sexual and gender minority (Hequembourg et al., 2013, 2015; Morris & Balsam, 2003; Sutton et al., 2022). Obeying to masculine norms includes not appearing effeminate and expressing negative attitudes towards those who violate gender roles (Falomir-Pichastor & Mugny,

2009). Previous studies suggest that boys, more than girls, use homophobic name-calling to assert their dominance over others (Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Epstein, 2001). When it comes to intervention, concerns over being perceived as gay or having their masculinity questioned deter these men from intervening (Goldstein, 2017; Dessel et al., 2017; Phoenix et al., 2003; Plummer, 2001). To address these issues, new training approaches have emerged, such as the New Alternative Masculinities' approach helps show that men who stand up are not only more egalitarian and fairer but also more confident and attractive at different levels (Duque et al., 2021b; Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2021).

A recent study found that the greater the concern over being misidentified as a sexual minority, the less assertive behavioral intentions were reported, regardless of the participant's gender (de Jesus, 2019). Social contagion concern, a concern over being misidentified as a sexual minority and its consequences for responses to intergroup contact with sexual minorities (Buck et al., 2013; Cascio & Plant, 2016), can be a key factor decreasing the willingness to intervene on behalf of victims of homophobic bullying (António et al., 2020; Duhigg et al., 2010). Studies have suggested, illustrating the potential of common identities to address social contagion concerns (António et al., 2020; Dovidio et al., 2017).

Poteat and Vecho (2016) have identified characteristics that may predict intervention against homophobic bullying, such as “gender, courage, altruism, justice sensitivity and the number of LGBT friends” (p. 17), they suggested these qualities in students could promote active bystander engagement against homophobic behaviour. Rios-Gonzalez et al. (2023) proposed that “formal and non-formal educational institutions can benefit from implementing training based on bystander intervention, dialogic gatherings with books and articles about

LGBTI+ realities and successful actions, as well as implementing the zero-violence brave club and gay-straight alliances” (p. 10).

Beyond the Basic: Attacking Heteronormative Conceptions of Gender

Policies may temporarily curb behaviours, but they cannot change thoughts. Scholars also note that efforts to reduce violent behavior must go beyond addressing general individual risks and protective factors; it is vital that these efforts address the ways that violence is rooted in systems of identity-based oppression (Edwards, 2023). If there is no change in beliefs, the temporary suspension of behavior is just a cover-up for self-protection, and when the opportunity arises, it is likely to reappear in a more cunning and strong way. Therefore, scholars recognize that simply implementing policies to prevent or punish bullying is not enough. A whole school approach (Callaghan, et al, 2024) should be adopted, to “dismantle regimes of gender and sexuality” (Donovan et al., 2023, p. 3). Short (2017) proposed the concept of cultural change, arguing that the heterosexual culture in schools needs to be changed in order to change the entire school climate.

Foucault’s (1990) notion of sexuality education and its relationship with the state argues that “sexuality education policy can also be read as an explicit form of bio-politics, which entails political or governmental regulation and disciplining of all aspects of life at the level of the body, and at the level of population” (Foucault, 1990, p. 139). In the Western context, scholars have argued that heteronormativity and biopolitical regulation are the maintenance of white supremacy (Ross, 2006; Smith, 2005). In the Eastern context, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of filial piety and the continuation of family bloodlines and regards marriage and childbearing as important responsibilities of individuals (Yao, 2000). Same-sex relationships are often viewed as incompatible with traditional family

values and responsibilities (Coleman & Chou, 2013). As Rich (1980) points out, compulsory heterosexuality is not simply a cultural or religious phenomenon, but is deeply political, aimed at maintaining social order and control, within which educational institutions often serve as platforms for the dissemination of political ideologies, shaping the minds of young people to conform to prevailing political and cultural norms (Apple, 2004). LGBTQ+ students represent a vulnerable population, not because there is anything inherently wrong with their identities, but due to the cis-heteronormative nature of educational systems in the global north and the historical pathologization and criminalization of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations (Drescher, 2015).

Heteronormativity refers to the way everyday interactions, practices, and policies construct heterosexuality as the normal and natural state. Through this often-invisible process, “the discourse of heteronormativity constructs non-heterosexual relationships as abnormal and deviant” (Robinson, 2005, p. 178).

Compulsory Heterosexuality in Sex Education

An example of compulsory heterosexuality can be seen in sex education. In the past century, sex education often pathologized homosexuality. For example, Mississippi mandates that schools teach that “a mutually faithful, monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the only appropriate setting for sexual intercourse” (Mississippi Code § 37-13-171, 2023). South Carolina’s state code on health education prohibits any “discussion of alternate sexual lifestyles from heterosexual relationships including, but not limited to, homosexual relationships except in the context of instruction concerning sexually transmitted diseases” (South Carolina Code § 59-32-30, 2023).

While the pathologizing tendency has lessened over the years, many qualitative studies show that heteronormativity is still reinforced in sex education. The key public story communicated through RSE is “sex is for boys/men, is heterosexual, penetrative and for reproduction” (Donovan et al., 2023, p. 16). “This limited definition of ‘sex’ precludes other forms of sexual behavior in which students (whether or not they are heterosexual) may engage” (McNeill, 2013, p. 830). Donovan et al. (2023) shared a similar view, “This sets the scene for cis heteronormative sex and relationship lessons, and a definition of its purpose that centres heterosexual, cis men’s sexual organs, orgasm, and the consequences of their heterosexuality” (p. 16). Some scholars point out that this is related to the traditional concept of marriage, “The emphasis on ‘marriage,’ which is central to many sexuality education curricula, is another aspect of the heteronormativity of much sexuality education” (McNeill, 2013, p. 830). “The public story (Jamieson, 1998) about biological differences that sustain the rationale for separateness and unequal value between cis heteronormative binaried gender and sexuality, are given pseudo-scientific credibility within these curricula” (Donovan et al., 2023, p. 15).

As a result of the compulsory heterosexual culture in schools, not only non-heterosexual students but also those perceived as non-heterosexual are subjected to bullying. A related concept to heteronormativity is gender expression norms, which are deeply rooted in traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. “The production of dominant constructions of femininity and masculinity in school cultures and rules are the production of dominant white constructions of cis, heteronormative masculinity and femininity” (Donovan et al., 2023, p. 17). Studies have shown that homophobia is a key component of masculinity (Herek & Capitano, 1999). In other words, individuals may use homophobic remarks or

behaviours to assert their masculinity, linking non-conforming masculine behavior to homosexuality.

Research also indicates that school bullying is closely linked to students exhibiting non-conforming gender traits. Boys who are often bullied are not necessarily gay:

it was not because they were gay (at least there is no evidence to suggest that any of them were gay) but because they were different from the other boys—shy, bookish, honor students, artistic, musical, theatrical, nonathletic, “geekish,” or weird (Kimmel & Mahler, 2012, p. 1445).

This indicates that bullying is often rooted in broader societal norms and expectations about gender and sexuality.

Even when addressing the topic of “sexual violence” with students, the perspective may still be predominantly heterosexual. MacAulay et al. (2021) found that schools play a key role in shaping sexual violence victimization and perpetration among sexual and gender minority youth, “Formal sexuality education remains heteronormative and gender-segregated, resulting in incomplete understandings of sexual violence. At the informal level, gendered double standards and peer norms reinforce the second-class sexual citizenship of sexual and gender minority youth” (MacAulay et al., 2021, p. 1). The study suggests that such educational practices contribute to both the victimization and perpetration of sexual violence by promoting inconsistent and limited messages about gender and sexuality.

“Schools are one of the main institutions and spaces that shape and regulate students’ experiences and understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality” (Donovan et al., 2023, p. 14). In this context, a school environment that subtly emphasizes compulsory heterosexuality not only fosters bullying but also serves as a breeding ground for it.

Therefore, scholars argue that combating and changing the compulsory heterosexual culture in schools is essential to fundamentally transforming the school climate. This transformation can counteract gender-based discrimination, objectification, and stereotypes. Moreover, it is a powerful tool in combating homophobia within schools. Queer theorists, such as Pinar (1998) and Talburt and Steinberg (2000), have emphasized the role of queer theory in educational environments. In the queer theoretical framework used in educational practice, sexuality is considered dynamic, fluid, constructed, evolving, and performative (Butler, 1990). They challenge heteronormative discourses, pedagogies, and practices in education. Scholars are exploring methods from policy formulation, curriculum and pedagogy, school space, to teacher training (Biegel & Kuehl, 2010). Another measure of inclusive education has evolved to “provide alternative readings of non-heterosexual relationships that develop an awareness and understanding of the positive experiences and issues of sexual identities that transcend heterosexuality” (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008, p. 847).

Integrating: Curriculum and Pedagogy

The hidden curriculum encompasses the unstated norms, values, and beliefs transmitted through both the formal content and the social relations of school life (Jackson, 1968). It legitimizes the dominant classes’ and cultures’ sub-texts and meanings at the expense of other perspectives (Speirs, 2021). Research also indicates that the hidden curriculum perpetuates gender differences (Francis, 2000). In reinforcing the heteronormative culture in schools, the hidden curriculum plays a significant role. The Fawcett Society (Culhane & Bazeley, 2019) has documented how gender stereotypes are

reproduced in early education through teachers' attitudes, gendered materials, peer interaction, and gender imbalances in staff.

Thorpe (2021) points out that the absence of adequate representation of queer identities and experiences in formal educational spaces and materials has long persisted. This lack of education led to "me becoming a self-taught queer, drawing knowledge from dial-up internet and seeking community" (p. 29).

What to Teach

Some scholars, such as McNeill (2013), argue that "the state's promotion of heteronormativity in education policy and curricula both enacts and legitimates homophobia in schools" (p. 826). Therefore, scholars have emphasized the crucial role of education and curriculum in transforming homophobia and the heteronormative culture of schools (Roberts, 2019, P. 97). To achieve this, it is essential to implement positive depictions of LGBTQ realities to counter negative stereotypes and homophobic depictions. This effort must begin in early grades and span all courses. Additionally, the curriculum should examine the social construction of sexuality and gender to challenge cultural hierarchies rather than sustain a normative order. Finally, classroom pedagogy should align with shared values and respect for differences (Biegel & Kuehl, 2010; Roberts, 2019).

In schools where students report the use of an inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ2S+ students experience a safer school environment, less absenteeism, a stronger connection to their schools, and greater acceptance from their peers (GLSEN, 2011). Thorpe (2021) points out that the absence of adequate representation of queer identities and experiences in formal educational spaces and materials has long persisted. Thus, textbooks should present the LGBTQ+ topics, characters and imagery, "act as mirrors by providing queer students with

reflections of their own experiences and identities, affirming their existence within the fabric of society” (Luosujärvi, 2024, p. 60-61).

The SOGI 123 initiative, BCTF both provides grade-appropriate inclusive lesson plans and activity plans that teachers can tailor to their classroom needs, such as *Beauty is Skin Deep; That's so gay is so yesterday* etc. Lessons which explicitly educate students in school about empathy, and relationships and increase their awareness about the impact that their own emotions can have on others may be useful in fostering a culture of inclusion (Glazzard, 2024).

How to Teach

Some scholars argue that merely choosing the “right” texts is not equivalent to engaging in inclusive practice. “Simply adding materials about ‘the other’ does not challenge our pedagogy or conceptual framework in meaningful ways; the additive approach of inclusivity or celebration of difference tends to leave dominant cultural assumptions and their complex relationships to power unexamined” (Winans, 2006, p. 104). Queer pedagogy and critical pedagogy seek to decentralize dominant power discourses, making marginalized voices and experiences visible (Britzman, 1995). These frameworks are often employed by educators who adhere to principles that “actions and knowledge must be directed at eliminating pain, oppression, and inequality, and at promoting justice and freedom” (McLaren, 2009, p. 74). Page (2016) believes this can include “enacting a loving community, centering student voice, and using critical literacy practices” (p. 123).

The creation of inclusive classrooms, or gender-neutral and gender-expansive classrooms, often begins with changing how students are addressed without restating stereotypical gender roles, “I stopped addressing the students as ‘boys and girls.’ Instead, I

called them ‘class,’ ‘scholars,’ ‘second graders,’ ‘friends,’ and so forth” (Chappell et al., 2018, p. 22). Some educators adopt a critical pedagogy framework, emphasizing the role of co-contextualization and sharing their power in co-creating learning experience. This method is rooted in Freire’s concept of banking model of education, where those in power (such as teachers) transmit information that reinforces dominant cultural worldviews. (Barnes, 2022).

One in-service teacher noted, “As I read books to the children, we discussed the stereotypes that were present in the books” (Chappell et al., 2018, p. 22). This approach guides students in discussing the inclusivity of LGBTQ curriculum content, as well as issues related to racism and privilege. Scholars have documented cases like Ms. Lanza, a literature teacher who used texts such as “A Study in Scarlet” to discuss prejudice and power abuse and led discussions on censorship by exploring historical and contemporary examples of book burnings (Page, 2016).

Dialogue is a key element emphasized by critical educators. Hooks (2003) asserted that “conversation is the central location of pedagogy for the democratic educator” (p. 44). Inclusive and critical pedagogy is not merely a collection of “correct” teaching strategies or practices, nor is there a single exemplary model or set of steps for implementing critical pedagogy. Rather, it aims to provide a means of concretizing abstract concepts and spurring reflection on individual practice as educators seek ways to “do” critical pedagogy within their own contexts and positionalities (Page, 2016, p. 123).

LGBTQ+ Safe Spaces and Support Service

“Identification of safe spaces (e.g., a counselor’s office, designated classroom, student organization) where LGBTQ youth can receive support from administrators, teachers, or other school staff” (Shattuck et al., 2022, p. 811). One method for enhancing

environmental inclusivity under the UD framework involves modifying “recreation facilities” (Couillard and Higbee, 2018, p. 6). Scholars have examined binary gender-marked spaces within campus environments, such as sex-specified restrooms, locker rooms, and living facilities like residence halls. They argue, “The same efforts to accommodate people with disabilities could be designed to be gender- and sex-inclusive as well” (Couillard and Higbee, 2018, p. 7). This can be achieved through the additional creation of all-gender or gender-inclusive restrooms and locker rooms, which “provides them an opportunity to use a restroom not associated with their sex assigned at birth” (Couillard and Higbee, 2018, p. 6).

GSA School Club

A gay-straight alliance (GSA) is a student club where all students can go for social activities and emotional support, but that is especially important for LGBTQ2S+ students, their straight allies, and students with LGBT parents and family members (Dantley et al., 2009, p. 26).

Research has shown that GSAs can contribute meaningfully to creating a more inclusive and safer learning environment for all students (Day et al., 2019a; 2019b; Peter et al., 2021). Some scholars have pointed out the conditional effectiveness of GSAs, Saewyc et al. (2014) found that “LGB students had lower odds of past year discrimination, suicidal thoughts and attempts, mostly when policies and GSAs had been in place for 3+ years” (p. 89). GSAs have also shown improvements in academic performance and a decrease in fear-based absenteeism (Seelman et al., 2012). Greytak et al. (2013) evaluated the effects of four resources: GSAs and comprehensive anti-bullying/anti-harassment policies that include specific protections for LGBTI+ students had the strongest effects on trans youth. In another study, Li and colleagues (2019) found that the length of time since a GSA had been

established at a school was linearly related to increased school-level perceived safety among LGB students.

Teacher Training Programs

Studies have confirmed the importance of teacher professional development (PD) and training in achieving SOGI-inclusive school environments (James, 2019). Educators are key informants who understand the dynamics within schools (Hull, 2017). Even brief SOGI-inclusive training sessions can shift teacher attitudes, leading to improved school climates as reported by students (Day et al., 2019). Findings indicated that SOGI inclusion relies less on formal curriculum than on the responsiveness of educators—under the influence of progressive policy changes—to engage in informal, identity-inclusive conversations and integrate these into curriculum content (James, 2019). Therefore, cultivating teacher responsiveness in professional training has become a focal point.

Research indicates that before 2008, relevant teacher training was insufficient. Schneider and Dimito (2008) found that 82% of surveyed participants reported they had "little to no exposure to LGBT issues during their teacher training" (p. 62). A survey by GLSEN & Harris Interactive (2008) revealed that only "4% of principals reported their schools provided training on LGBT issues for staff," with 18% of elementary school principals identifying transgender issues as "one of the top areas where staff need support and training" (p. 69). Furthermore, 58% of straight students surveyed expressed frustration witnessing teachers' inaction against homophobic comments and bullying (Egale, 2011). Some teachers not only ignored students' pleas for help but also blamed the victimized students for their harassment (Kosciw, et al., 2008; Sausa, 2005). In some cases, teachers ridiculed transgender students by using their birth names and pressuring them to conform to

their assigned genders at birth (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2006; McGuire et al., 2010; Sausa, 2005).

In the past decade, the situation has significantly improved. Increasing research has focused on providing professional development training for school staff on SOGI issues. However, the “Every Teacher Project” found that many teachers, although recognizing the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive education, felt unprepared to implement it due to a lack of knowledge (Taylor et al., 2016b). In this study, 64% of Bachelor of Education degree holders believed their program did not prepare them to handle gender diversity issues, and 59% felt unprepared to address sexual diversity issues. Among participants with graduate-level education, only 22% had taken courses that included LGBTQ content.

Without proper training regarding SOGI topics, many educators and school staff have been found to perpetuate discriminatory actions and “ineffective or biased responses” (Palmer & Greytak, 2017). A lack of response communicates a message of approval of harassment of LGBT youth (Case & Amand, 2014). Consequently, teacher professional development training has been emphasized, with a focus on creating adult allies in K–12 settings, including teachers, counsellors, and administrators (Case & Amand, 2014). By integrating teacher PD that must interrogate homophobia and the naturalization of heterosexuality (Swartz, 2003) to prevent health and educational disparities among LGBTQ2S+ youth and improve harassment and bullying issues faced by them.

Teacher development can take many forms, including self-selected workshops, courses, degrees, and mandatory in-service training provided by school boards. For example, GLSEN holds independent workshops at local universities that engage teachers, counselors, administrators, and pre-service educators. Requests for customized workshops have led

GLSEN to hold training courses in elementary, middle, and high schools. Some workshops are also offered to counsellors or pre-service teachers, such as Teach for America trainees, during PD days. In addition to pre-service training and professional development at the staff or district level, many educators also choose independent study as a route to professional growth. GLSEN provides chapter-based PD programs like the Intentional Inclusion Professional Development Series and the Safe Space Kit (GLSEN, n.d.). Other notable programs include the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools Program (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, n.d.) and the Trevor Ally Training (The Trevor Project, n.d.), which are designed to help educators support LGBTQ2S+ students and provide appropriate interventions. The Teacher Education For All (TEFA) project organized a speaker series, in-class lectures for teacher candidates to increase awareness of SOGI-related issues and more broadly promote models and methods of inclusive education (James, 2019).

Hostility and Avoidance Faced in Teacher's Practice

Policies and curricula, as objective entities, rely heavily on the active engagement and interpretation by teachers for their effective implementation. However, the advancement of these initiatives among teachers is not always smooth. A national survey by Tayler et al. (2015) indicated that although participants continued to feel comfortable discussing LGBTQ issues with students, this comfort level was lower compared to previously reported levels of support for LGBTQ-inclusive education, beliefs that LGBTQ student safety and respect were their responsibility, and views that LGBTQ rights were human rights. In other words, some teachers who support LGBTQ inclusion feel uncomfortable in actual practice, despite their expressed support in spirit. Teachers are the least likely group to feel comfortable (72%) compared to guidance counsellors (92%), administrators, and other non-teaching staff (76%).

limited View of Sexuality

Many believe that sexuality is an issue for parents, not schools, and thus see no need to learn about LGBTQ issues (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008). Sexuality is often narrowly defined as physical sexual behavior rather than an integral part of an individual's identity that impacts children's daily lives. This limited view is a significant reason why pre-service teachers hesitate to teach about SOGI. Robinson and Ferfolja (2010) found that pre-service teachers in New South Wales, Australia, often do not prioritize equality and social justice issues in their learning, noting that "pre-service teachers often do not see equality (and social justice issues more generally) as a priority in their learning" (p. 125). Furthermore, the younger the children pre-service teachers were working with, the less importance they placed on these issues. This suggests that sexuality is perceived as an "adults only" issue, with young children deemed asexual, innocent, and needing protection from such matters (Kitzinger, 1990).

Participants who were Pre-K to Grade 6 teachers were less likely to feel comfortable discussing LGBTQ issues with their students, than those who taught Grades 7 to 12, which may suggest that some early- and middle-years teachers who support LGBTQ-inclusive education saw it as a senior years' responsibility. (Tayler et al., 2015, p. 89)

Educators' views on the relevance of LGBTQ content in various subject areas also exhibit differences.

Most commonly, educators reported that LGBTQ content was relevant to "health/family studies/human ecology" (86%), followed by "social studies (women's studies/civics)" (79%), "English/language arts" (78%), "social justice/law" (78%), "history" (63%), "religion" (59%), "visual and performing arts/music" (57%),

French language arts (53%), “science” (46%), physical education (46%), and finally math (22%). (Tayler et al., 2015, p. 91)

This difference in educators’ perceptions may indicate that teachers in different subjects do not recognize the equal importance of integrating LGBTQ content into their curricula. It highlights the potential barriers faced in the implementation of LGBTQ content in various subject fields.

Concerns About Career Risks

Several years ago, some pre-service teachers openly resist incorporating anti-homophobia and anti-heteronormativity education into teacher education programs, while others are uncomfortable addressing LGBTQ issues, perceiving them as controversial topics that may result in repercussions from parents, administrators, and the community (Dimito & Schneider, 2008). Concerns about career risks have always play a significant role. Some teachers perceive addressing such “difficult issues” as involving personal and pedagogical risks they are unwilling to take in an already demanding and stressful working environment (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2010). These professional risks include being viewed as pedophiles, particularly male pre-service teachers, and facing personal harassment and intimidation (Berrill & Martino, 2002; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001). Additionally, there is fear of job loss, especially among rural teachers or those from smaller schools and communities. Barbara Smith (1999a) notes that in Texas, “many public and private school educators can be fired for being gay, trans, or supporting a gay or gender-nonconforming student” (p. 67). Teaching such content may upset many parents in their communities, and the risks of damaged reputations and job loss are not deemed worthwhile (Page, 2017). Consequently, these concerns lead pre-service teachers to avoid addressing these issues.

Tayler et al. (2015) further clarified this point:

Almost a quarter (23%) gave fear-based reasons from outside their school environment. These included: “parents would be opposed” (16%), “I am concerned about legal implications” (8%), and/or “religious groups would be opposed” (6%). Some educators (14%) gave fear-based reasons stemming from within their school environments, such as “my school administration would be opposed” (6%), “my school trustees are opposed” (4%), “my colleagues would be opposed” (4%), “I don’t have a permanent contract” (4%), and/or “I might be turned down for a promotion” (2%). (Tayler et al., 2015, p. 100).

Educator’s Religious Convictions

Religious beliefs are another significant factor. During a workshop, several participants disclosed personal discomfort due to religious convictions, which was acknowledged and respected in the training session (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012). One case study involved a religious teacher who felt uncomfortable meeting the lesbian parents of a student. “Those who currently identified as Catholic were less likely to feel comfortable discussing LGBTQ issues with their students (62%) than those who were non-Catholic (77%).” (Tayler et al., 2015, p. 89). Interestingly, they believe this is primarily constrained by religious beliefs and the school environment, leading to insufficient practical actions. This shows a clear divide between the recognition of the need for inclusion and the actual implementation of inclusive practices due to the influence of religious convictions and institutional limitations.

Kitchen and Bellini (2012) also noted that in Ontario, Catholic schools operate parallel to the public education system, with about one-third of students attending Catholic

schools. These schools have a constitutional right to inculcate religious values through the curriculum. However, Catholic educators are obliged under Bill 157 to address gender-based violence promptly and may be required to permit students to form Gay-Straight Alliances. Despite this, research shows that some Catholic pre-service teachers seek ethical knowledge to navigate conflicting values.

Other Factors

Among in-service teachers, factors such as age and region have also influenced their comfort, awareness, and implementation of LGBT curriculum materials. Research indicates that teachers in larger communities (more than 25,000 residents) and younger teachers are more likely to feel comfortable integrating LGBT literature into their curriculum. However, they do not have a significantly higher level of implementation and are less aware of queer literature and resources than other teachers (Page, 2017).

Pre-service Teacher Training

Effective pre-service teacher training workshops focus on several key micro-objectives. Firstly, they aim to promote an understanding of the latest terminology related to LGBTQ+ issues. “This knowledge will aid them in expressing their support for all students to the school community—regardless of the biases of the community in which the school is located” (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 210). Secondly, these workshops educate teachers on the purpose and responsibilities of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), “GSAs can break the emotional and physical isolation for LGBT teens, while also building a culture of greater acceptance” (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012, p. 221). Third, the workshop familiarized pre-service teachers with policies and approaches used by their future schools and districts, including managing inappropriate behavior and understanding student service supports. Finally, they

examined strategies and practical advice for educators and school staff working with LGBTQ2S+ students, providing actionable insights into becoming support staff. The two-hour “Sexual Diversity in Secondary Schools” workshop held by Kitchen & Bellini (2012) was presented in a Bachelor of education program, suggested workshop “should build basic knowledge, examine implications for safety and school climate, and consider how they as teachers can address these issues in both modest and significant ways in the classroom and in the school” (p. 222).

In-service Teacher Training

Both pre-service and in-service training aim to equip teachers with the fundamental skills and knowledge necessary to address SOGI issues and understand the significance of related educational theories and practices. However, in-service teacher training programs focus on additional aspects. For instance, the Gender Infinity’s Practitioner training invites mental health professionals such as case managers, social workers, teachers, therapists, and directors of university LGBT resource centers who work with at-risk youth in schools (Case & Amand, 2014).

The goal of this training is to prepare these professionals to fulfill critical roles in supporting gender-nonconforming children, families, and schools in managing their adjustment within school systems, collaborating with medical professionals, navigating legal needs such as name changes, engaging with religious and spiritual communities, and providing familial support (Case & Amand, 2014, p. 67).

In 2016-2017, the BC SOGI Educator Network was launched as a pilot by the ARC Foundation and nine BC school districts, has now expanded to over 60 districts, including independent and First Nation schools. This network allows educators to collaborate, share

resources, design programs, and address challenges across different educational settings. The network appoints and develops SOGI District Directors, whose responsibilities include raising awareness in their districts, developing district-wide initiatives, and recruiting school SOGI leads (SOGI 123, n.d.). These District Leads also attend regular network meetings. According to BC SOGI Education Lead Matt Carruthers (2018), “Our SOGI District Leads wear many hats and hold a variety of titles: assistant superintendent, school counsellor, director of instruction, classroom teacher, district coordinator, vice-principal, and principal.” (“A Personal Journey”, para. 5). SOGI School Leads are responsible for developing SOGI-inclusive practices and initiatives at the school level.

Additionally, the UBC provides a three-evening online institute on SOGI Inclusive Education and Leadership in February 2024. This institute aims to support educators as they work to disrupt the binary in gender and sexuality education by building strategies to work through the discomfort of un/learning. Key topics covered include intersectionality, anti-oppressive strategies, and supporting Two Spirit, trans, and non-binary students.

In addition, providing Trans-affirming religious resources is also essential. Some parents of transgender children struggle with conflicts between their spiritual beliefs and their child’s gender identity. These parents seek inclusive places of worship that respect differences (Case & Amand, 2014). Training can guide educators to locate trans-positive worship places in their local area and offer professional development for clergy and other religious leaders (Case & Amand, 2014).

Current Issues with PD

Absence of Sustained PD around SOGI

The invisible heteronormative curriculum refers to course content and delivery, staff and student attitudes and beliefs, and the lack of visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and trans-sexual (LGBTQ2S+) people, which creates an unsupportive and non-inclusive environment for queer students and staff members (Carpenter & Lee, 2010).

Findings from a study including online surveys, focus groups, interviews and an overview of program content suggest that there was a hidden curriculum of heteronormativity in teacher education at a New Zealand faculty of education (Carpenter & Lee, 2010).

Haug (2017) also points out that to fully understand the practices of inclusion, it is imperative to consider the role of coherence. SOGI-related PD training often lacks the continuity and consistency in terms of educational program structure, training duration, and spatial coherence. This inconsistency further builds some blockers to build actual inclusive educational environments, it also highlights the need for a more continuous approach to SOGI professional development.

Absence of SOGI Topics in Educational Programs

In a study of teachers and school administrators' comfort addressing LGBT issues in Ontario, 82% of survey participants stated that they had "received little or no exposure to LGBT issues while training to be a teacher" (Schneider & Dimito, 2008, p. 62). This indicates a significant gap in initial teacher education regarding LGBTQ inclusivity. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2015) found that when educators were asked whether their B.Ed. program prepared them to address issues of sexual diversity in schools:

59% reported that it did not. Over a quarter of educators (26%) indicated they were prepared but would have liked further instruction, 8% felt they were adequately

prepared, and only 7% believed they were very well prepared. (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 136).

Furthermore, when it comes to educators about their preparation for addressing issues of gender diversity in schools:

64% of participants felt that they were not prepared, followed by 20% who felt prepared but would have liked more, 2% who were adequately prepared, and only 4% who felt very well prepared (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 136).

This highlights a critical shortfall in teacher education programs concerning SOGI-related topics.

In the survey, nearly two-thirds of educators reported that their B.Ed. degree did not include training on gender and sexual diversity education. The remaining respondents indicated that related teaching materials primarily focused on “homophobia in schools” and issues faced by LGBTQ2S+ students. Participants also reported that during their practicum or student teaching, they did not receive guidance on addressing LGBTQ issues in the classroom. Some were even advised by their supervisors to avoid such topics, until they secured a permanent contract (Taylor et al., 2015). Greytak et al. (2013) also noted that many teachers feel inadequately prepared to support LGBTQ2S+ students due to insufficient training during their initial teacher education.

For graduate courses, educators were more likely to encounter various LGBTQ content areas compared to their B.Ed. programs. This may be due to recent courses being more inclusive of LGBTQ content and the perception that LGBTQ content is still viewed as a specialist area not essential to an already crowded B.Ed. curriculum (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 139).

Inadequate Length and Frequency of PD Training

Some studies indicate a lack of sustained professional development regarding SOGI. Schools are highly heterosexual organizations, and such interpersonal discrimination serves to regulate and police sexual and gendered subjectivities (Ferfolja, 2013). Only continuous PD training can effectively counter this “institutional silence” and the invisible heteronormative curriculum. Thus, training should be provided to all school personnel in an initial and ongoing manner (Brill & Pepper, 2008).

Current PD training programs are often short in duration and infrequent. In-person sessions typically last 1-2 days, online video modules vary from 5 to 90 minutes. “On average, workshops or training had been most recently offered within the past 2 years (average 1.8 years, median =1 year)” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 142).

An evaluation of the “Respect For All” training program, which assessed participants before the training (T1), six weeks post-training (T2), and six months post-training (T3), revealed a decline in participants’ comfort levels in intervening when hearing anti-LGBTQ remarks over time. This decline might result from participants realizing they were less equipped to handle real-life situations than they initially thought.

Training has certain short-term effects on enhancing participants’ empathy and awareness of intervention, but the long-term effects may require further research and support measures to consolidate (Greytak & Kosciw, 2010). Recent research by Loverno et al. (2022) also indicates that LGBTQ2S+ students are at lower risk of victimization when they attend schools with early and repeated SOGI training support.

Inconsistencies in SOGI Training Across Regions

While 58% of respondents reported that their school or school district had not offered any workshops or training on LGBTQ education, only 9% indicated that their school or school district had provided a mandatory workshop or training that they were required to attend (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 140).

Schools in remote areas and smaller schools are relatively lacking in SOGI teacher training resources. Many educators in Catholic schools state that the main reason they do not implement LGBTQ-inclusive education is due to insufficient training, rather than their religious beliefs (Taylor et al., 2015). When the number of invitations for in-school training is limited, LGBTQ educators are more likely to attend school or district training compared to non-LGBTQ educators. However, SOGI should be a topic for all teachers. On the other hand, teachers find it difficult to be regularly replaced by substitute teachers; in-service PD is encouraged only during pedagogical days, which greatly reduces opportunities for attendance at external or geographically distant events (Fovet, 2022).

Effectiveness of PD Techniques and Formats

Promoting Terminology Familiarization and Language Sensitivity

James (2019) stated that “Ingrained language use makes creating safe educational spaces for gender non-binary youth more difficult” (p. 974). Things that are unfamiliar and cannot be described in terms are often regarded as out of common sense and grotesque, and language expands people’s conceptual world. Promoting terminology familiarization and language sensitivity is one example of an integrated method, where teachers are encouraged to use gender-neutral language and respectful terms when addressing students and discussing SOGI topics.

For educators, this means that without appropriate terminology related to LGBTQ issues, their ability to fully support and understand LGBTQ2S+ students is limited. Awareness of terminology, sensitivity to bullying language, and learning inclusive language help break down barriers and foster an atmosphere of support and inclusion. Terminology can be introduced in a variety of ways in professional development. Traditional lectures are a direct method of introducing terminology. Some SOGI-related websites also provide online materials to expand the vocabulary of teacher candidates, such as the *Queer Glossary: A to Q Terminology* by Qmunity and the *2SLGBTQI Terms and Definitions* by Egale Canada. Smith and Payne (2016) found that teachers reported the information on terminology as the most helpful component of their training. However, Case and Meier (2014) discovered that using active learning and interactive techniques engages trainees more effectively than dry lectures. For example, asking participants to share their understanding of terms before providing definitions or reflecting on where they first learned these terms can be beneficial.

Inclusive language promotes a sense of belonging among all students, especially those from marginalized groups. Some scholars have begun preliminary explorations into self-guided education for teachers. For instance, “using inclusive language and gender-neutral terms is a way to break the assumption of cis-heteronormativity” (Callaghan et al., 2024, p. 7). Referring to a student’s “family” or “parents” instead of “mom and dad” includes students who may have single, LGBTQ2S+ parents, or alternate guardians (SOGI 123, n.d.).

Encourage Deep Personal Reflection

As mentioned earlier, religious backgrounds can be a significant factor that prevents teacher candidates from feeling comfortable supporting LGBTQ2S+ students. Balancing religious values with legal obligations as educators is crucial. For instance, Catholic

educators are reminded that homophobia and bullying are inconsistent with the Catholic commitment to respect and love (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012). They suggest that Catholic teachers can safely resist homophobia without challenging the Church's official stance on homosexuality. Additionally, Ontario's Bill 13 mandates that all public and Catholic funded schools must allow the establishment of Gay-Straight Alliances, reinforcing the role of pre-service teachers in supporting all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012). Case and Amand (2014) also pointed out that “the purpose of these sessions is to promote school environments that treat all students with dignity and respect, not to change participants’ value systems. Trainers can respond in an affirming manner that acknowledges a belief system, reminds participants that a variety of belief systems exist, and returns the conversation to the common ground of safe schools” (p. 13).

Even for teacher candidates without strong religious backgrounds, it is essential to understand that schools are generally heteronormative settings that reinforce the notion that there are only two genders (male and female) and that students are expected to be heterosexual (Bower & Klecka, 2009; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Swartz, 2003). Gunio (2021) found that the hidden curriculum involved the sharing of “the norms, values, and belief systems which in turn shapes students’ character development” (p. 195). As these ideas may be internalized by teacher candidates who grew up in societies that did not present alternatives, fostering self-reflection is a crucial step in professional training. Rands (2009) posits that most teacher educators have themselves experienced schooling that is gender stereotyped, gender blind, gender sensitive, or some combination of these (p. 427). Rands (2009) suggests that addressing these issues requires people to confront their “own subconscious desires for learning only certain things and resistances to learning other things”

(Kumashiro, p. xxvi). This can be facilitated by reading books such as Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors* (1996) and *Trans Liberation* (1998), and Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* (1994), which encourage reflection on one's understanding of gender.

Teacher candidates can also exchange letters with their professors to provide feedback on their learning experiences (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012), and engaging in readings, class discussions, and writing tasks to challenge internalized prejudices, heterosexism, and homophobia (Swartz, 2003).

Case Study and Stories Telling Approach

According to Kitchen and Bellini (2012), stories of practice provide informative and practical guidance for pre-service teachers. In their workshops, Kitchen and Bellini (2012) shared their experiences of coming out and the homophobic challenges faced by their families to teacher candidates, motivated them to support LGBTQ youth. These personal connections were highly appreciated by teacher candidates, as evidenced by comments such as, "Appreciated stories from first-hand point of view" (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012, p. 453). Such feedback underscores the power of storytelling in making academic content more relatable and engaging. One candidate remarked, "I respond best to storytelling. I learn better and remain interested" (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012, p. 218).

In addition to trainers' personal stories as members of the LGBTQ community or as educators, literary stories may also be considered. Swartz (2003) used children's books and movies, and even a combination of critical essays and personal essays to help students think about social justice issues, can also be used to help teacher candidates make personal connections to students who experience prejudice or receive unjust treatment in schools. Swartz (2003) found the children's literature classroom to be a place where discussion of

these issues can reach prospective elementary teachers. By examining how language and media can reinforce heteronormativity and other societal norms, educators can better understand and challenge these constructs. Swartz (2003) started with familiar themes such as friendship and family before introducing works that dealt with race, ethnicity, and sexuality, works by Lorde (1998) and Barbara Smith (1998b) were used to facilitate these discussions.

Interactive Techniques for Handling Real-Life Situations

Listing both typical and atypical questions along with potential responses in teacher professional development can significantly help educators feel more confident when facing real-life situations. This is particularly beneficial for teachers at the beginning of their careers or those newly trained. Case and Amand (2014) discuss a professional workshop that includes a section titled “Common Questions Asked About Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Children With Possible Responses.” This section addresses misconceptions with questions like “Are they just seeking attention?” and “Is this really a mental disorder?” It also provides guidance on practical issues such as transgender students’ use of public restrooms.

Following the identification of common and atypical questions, role-playing exercises can further enhance the practical skills of educators. These exercises allow teachers to simulate real-world scenarios and practice their responses in a controlled environment. Role-playing helps in building confidence and ensuring that educators are well-prepared to handle sensitive situations involving transgender and gender-nonconforming students. For example, Case and Meier (2014) found that active learning and interactive techniques engage trainees more effectively than traditional lectures. For example, when teaching trans-supportive ally

behavior, specific scenarios and various intervention strategies can be used to demonstrate practical applications.

For example, Case and Amand (2014) implemented ally practice and role-playing activities in small groups of three to four participants. One scenario, for instance, involved overhearing trans-negative comments or verbal harassment based on gender nonconformity (Case & Amand, 2014, p. 71). The training included possible responses tailored to different contexts, such as whether the school has anti-bullying policies regarding gender identity.

Garcia and Slesaransky-Poe (2010) indicated that teaching catchphrases and allowing participants to practice using them in role-playing situations was more effective than merely discussing gender bullying through literature.

Shane (2020) dedicates a chapter to outlining 16 scenarios that occur, have occurred, and are occurring in K-12 schools across America. These scenarios include situations such as a student unexpectedly revealing to a teacher that they are transgender and requesting confidentiality; a same-sex couple being nominated as prom king and prom queen at the annual dance; and the discovery that the textbook used for health class and the accompanying lesson plans only include cisgender bodies and heterosexual relationships. Following each scenario, Shane provides thought-provoking questions and guidance for handling these situations appropriately.

Universal Design for LGBTQ2S+ students

In university programs, scholars have already proposed incorporating UDL principles to meet the needs of LGBTQ2S+ students. Miller and Downey (2020) explored the experiences of five queer students with disabilities in STEM fields at a predominantly white research university, “Findings reveal that participants encountered male-centered,

heteronormative STEM spaces, physical and social inaccessibility on campus, a lack of intersectional resources, and marginalization in and out of the classroom (p. 169). Greater attention to intersectionality is needed in STEM, advocating for “creating greater accessibility through the use of universal design” (Miller & Downey, 2020, p. 179). Couillard and Higbee (2018) recommended expanding the notions of Universal Design (UD) and Universal Instructional Design (UID) within college and university by safe zone trainings, to beneficial LGBTQ+ population.

The Benefits of Online PD

E-learning and the massive use of digital tools following the pandemic, therefore, represents a new challenge to take into consideration when developing strategies for the education system (Bertelli & Viggiani, 2021). The internet has brought significant benefits for teachers seeking professional development training on SOGI. LGBTQ2S+ resource websites such as *SOGI 123*, *Pflag Canada*, *Eagle Canada*, *Friends of Ruby*, *Kind Space* and *The 519* keep teachers up to date with the latest research and instructional materials.

One notable resource for educators is the guide *When Students Come Out to You*, created by Alberta educators, which includes comprehensive advice and a quick reference guide for educators to use as needed. In addition, several websites offer online workshops, which usually cost less than a hundred dollars per person. For instance, the 519 provides a 2-hour monthly public workshop titled *Fostering Queer and Trans-Inclusive Environments at Work and Home*, which includes sessions on LGBTQ history and terminology.

Theoretical Framework

To better serve and achieve the purpose and objectives of this study, I used critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework and UDL as a complimentary framework to explain the necessity of SOGI-inclusive education and to help teachers as transformative intellectuals confront parental bias and resistance.

Critical Pedagogy Theory

Critical pedagogy, introduced by Paulo Freire (2000) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, its core is to achieve critical consciousness (conscientização) to challenge the oppressive reality. González and Bernet (2024) describe Critical Pedagogy has focused on “the direction of critical thinking, questioning inequality and power relations in today’s society and understanding education as a form of social transformation” (p. 1). As Giroux (1983) pointed out, we are provided with little understanding of how the hidden curriculum in schools works in a subtly discriminating way to discredit the dreams, experiences, and knowledge associated with students from specific class, racial, and gender groupings.

Discrimination and bias against SOGI education can occur both directly and indirectly. Direct bias often stems from long-standing social and cultural norms that view gender and sexual orientation as fixed and binary. Indirect discrimination and prejudice do not directly deny diverse sexual orientations and gender identities but express resistance to SOGI education from other “subtle” angles, often under the guise of understanding and respecting the LGBTQ community. For example, concerns that SOGI education might introduce inappropriate, adult content to children, or the belief that SOGI education might “brainwash” children, changing their “natural” values and perceptions. Some fear that SOGI education will subject children to more social discrimination and challenges. Discriminators

sometimes do not even realize their own biases or are ashamed to admit their fear of changing the status quo, thus cloaking it under the lofty name of “parental rights.” These views often challenge the role of teachers by questioning their professional boundaries. A common perspective among SOGI opponents is that schools should focus on traditional subjects like math and chemistry rather than sexuality. When some jurisdictions attempt to mix social justice with math, opponents argue that “depriving people of a proper mathematics education really is oppressive” (The Fraser Institute, 2022).

Critical pedagogy theory, however, breaks away from the traditional notion of teachers merely as technicians and structured educators. Giroux & McLaren (1986) argue that “Our central concern is in developing a view of teacher education that defines teachers as transformative intellectuals and schooling as part of an ongoing struggle for democracy” (p. 216). They further emphasize that teachers should engage in intellectual and pedagogical practices that directly address the political sphere, arguing that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. It provides a theoretical foundation for viewing students as critical agents, questioning the production and distribution of knowledge, and utilizing education for liberation, rather than merely defining teachers’ work in technical or instrumental terms (Giroux, 2018). Giroux (2018) stated understanding the role of teachers as intellectuals begins with recognizing that schools operate as economic, cultural, and social institutions closely tied to systems of power and control. Thus, the practice of conscientização, as a practice of freedom, becomes crucial. Freire (2000) explains that the awakening of critical consciousness allows individuals to articulate their dissatisfaction with societal conditions, as these discontents are major components of an oppressive situation. In order to address resistance to SOGI-inclusive education, teachers

need to identify the social and cultural factors behind parental resistance and engage in critical thinking and dialogue.

Those who fear freedom often disguise themselves as defenders of freedom. As Freire (2000) noted,

they give their doubts and misgivings an air of profound sobriety, as befitting custodians of freedom. But they confuse freedom with the maintenance of the status quo; so that if conscientização threatens to place that status quo in question, it thereby seems to constitute a threat to freedom itself (p. 36).

In order to preserve their so-called “freedoms,” they can become extremely aggressive, as seen during a protest against SOGI education and resources in public schools in downtown Kelowna on September 20. Counterprotesters faced verbal harassment and were labeled “groomers,” while speakers accused those who provide gender-affirming care of being “child abusers” (Gelineau, 2023). This opposing force sometimes forces policy changes, such as after the 1 Million March 4 Kid demonstrations, Manitoba and Ontario have proposed or adopted laws and policies predicated on the belief that trans youth should not be allowed to change the names and pronouns they use at school without parental consent. Ashley (2024) argued that the conceptual ambiguity of parental rights, which can refer to parental authority and parental entitlement alike, creates a risk of slippage or shifting objectives. In her paper, she criticized the recent blanket veto and disclosure laws for lacking rationality or being based on principles incompatible with the pursuit of a free democracy. This proves that dialogue between teachers and parents is urgently needed.

Critical consciousness also aids teachers in self-reflection. According to the literature, prejudice against SOGI exists not only among some parents but even among some teachers.

Many believe that sexuality is an issue for parents, not schools, or that the importance of SOGI education differs significantly across different subjects (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Taylor et al., 2015). For example, a religious teacher who felt uncomfortable meeting the lesbian parents of a student (Taylor et al., 2015). However, a critical teacher “always seeks out the ties which link one point to another and one problem to another” (Freire, 2000, p. 74). As Giroux (2016) emphasizes, teachers should be viewed as “public intellectuals.” He advocates that teachers should go beyond the confines of traditional classrooms, participate in social and political debates, critique unjust social structures, promote social change, and speak out for social justice.

Universal Design for Learning

The second supporting theory used in this study is UDL, serving as the practical strategic framework for the study. The core concept of UDL is to ensure that all students have equal learning opportunities through diversified educational approaches and flexible instructional design. Admittedly, when discussing UDL, many people may initially have a perspective on UDL that is disability specific, thereby questioning its applicability to SOGI education. However, a study by Fovet (2019) demonstrates that the systematic use of UDL in an International MEd in a Faculty of Education addressed some of the frictions between traditional teaching culture and international graduate students’ expectations through in-depth use of the digital learning environment, rethinking assignment directions, and the use and exploration of e-portfolios. The study proves that in the current era, UDL implementation no longer addresses issues related to impairment, but rather in more global terms of pedagogical shift towards student-centered learning (Fovet, 2019). Therefore, UDL actually has a broad applicability in this area of pedagogy.

SOGI education currently faces the threat of stigmatization and prejudice, which has gradually evolved into a contentious issue. The reasons I chose UDL as a complementary theoretical framework are as follows: First, I believe that the core concept of UDL is highly consistent with the goals of SOGI-inclusive education. UDL is about instructional improvement. Through what needs to be changed in attitudes, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and school organization, ensure that barriers are identified and removed (Bertelli & Viggiani, 2021). Since SOGI education itself is also an inclusive practice aimed at respecting and supporting students of all genders and sexual orientations, it seeks to eliminate the barriers posed by heteronormativity in attitudes, curriculum, and the school environment. The UDL framework suggests the need to support all students, focusing LGBTQ support under the need to support diverse students (Leung, 2022, p. 78).

Some agile scholars have already pointed out that the current socio-political environment may present obstacles to implementing inclusive policies supporting the LGBTQ community. “One possible avenue to provide LGBTQ support can be under the guise of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)” (Leung, 2022, p. 78). From the perspective of teacher professional safety, “the presence of inclusive policies may considerably make teachers feel comfortable as they have reasons for including LGBTQ-related SHE topics...” (Leung, 2022, p. 209). Couillard and Higbee (2018), in their effort to expand the scope of applications of Universal Design (UD) and Universal Instructional Design (UID), explore how these principles can be applied to LGBTQ+ students. They suggest, “There are many parallels that can be drawn between students who are excluded because of their disability and students who are marginalized on the basis of nonconforming gender identity or sexual orientation” (Couillard & Higbee, 2018, p. 1). Therefore, the concept of inclusive education,

along with the complementary UDL framework, provides a solid foundation for teachers to incorporate support for LGBTQ2S+ students into their curriculum content without fear of resistance from parents or the community.

In terms of teaching methods, one of the reasons for external resistance to SOGI education is that some parents may worry that SOGI education will introduce LGBTQ+ topics into the public sphere under the guise of “political correctness,” thereby subjecting LGBTQ children to more challenges and harm. The flexibility inherent in UDL, as argued by Rose (2020), “with the flexibility inherent in such assessments, flexibility in representation, expression, and engagement” (p. 49), can help teachers better address these challenges and mitigate potential risks when teaching SOGI content in a balanced and sensitively way. Rose pointed out that “Many assessments appear to have been designed under the assumption that learners are relatively homogeneous, and that the expected outcomes for all students are relatively the same” (Rose, 2000, p. 48). However, this assumption may prove inadequate when addressing content involving complex social issues, such as SOGI-inclusive education. Teaching SOGI content requires more flexible approaches to address the diversity of students in terms of culture, background, and cognitive style. Even within the LGBTQ community, it is difficult to generalize the life experiences or cognitive styles of individuals from different letters with specific labels or statements. “...the tenets of UDL can similarly provide the administrative backing to conceptualize LGBTQ support as a form of providing more authentically representative content and making meaningful connections with LGBTQ2S+ students in order to increase academic engagement” (Leung, 2022, p. 209).

In the context of today’s politically polarized environment, adopting an integrated, naturally embedded approach that blurs the lines between SOGI education and conventional

subjects, such as mathematics, physics, and literature, could reduce hostility, garner support from moderates, and lower teachers' professional risks.

Methodology

Research Design

In this chapter, I outline the methodology used in this study in terms of research design, data collection, data analysis and so on.

This study adopted a qualitative research design to provide an in-depth exploration of the complex and context-specific experiences of teachers navigating SOGI-inclusive education. Qualitative methods often yielded a “deeper understanding of social phenomena” compared to quantitative approaches (Silverman, 2008, p. 89). Parental resistance may vary significantly depending on geographical, cultural, or community factors, and each school’s inclusive policy framework and teacher responses are shaped by individual pedagogical principles. These are highly personal and context-specific elements. A qualitative approach was well-suited to investigate the complexity of parental resistance, and the stigmatization associated with SOGI education, capture the detailed narratives of how teachers experience, process, and respond to these challenges in their educational settings.

Narrative Inquiry

This research employed narrative inquiry, a qualitative approach that centered on the stories individuals shared about their lived experiences and how they made sense of them in specific social and cultural contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). “One theory in educational research holds that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative inquiry provides space for an in-depth exploration of the personal experiences and emotional responses (such as frustration, fear, or empathy) of teachers when confronted with parental resistance. As Johnson-Bailey (2003) highlights, “stories consistently portray the element of individual

knowing and awareness, making them ideal as bridges across personal barriers and political alliances” (p. 126). Secondly, narrative inquiry serves as a powerful tool to give voice to marginalized experiences. Pro-SOGI Teachers often find themselves isolated in the broader educational discourse at odds with parental opposition. Bailey (2003) notes that “no other technique or formula has been more appropriate than narratives as a way of letting the ‘Other’ speak” (p. 145). Narrative inquiry can examine the systemic inequity by making that marginalized voice visible. Lastly, narrative inquiry emphasizes the outcomes and the process by which teachers refine and adjust their strategies over time. It can help participants to reflect on how their strategies have evolved in response to specific challenges. “By listening to participant stories of their experience of teaching and learning, we hope to write narratives of what it means to educate and be educated” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 12).

Data Collection Methods

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, which consisted of “a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewees” (DiCioo-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). This approach allowed for both structured and flexible exploration of teachers’ experiences with parental resistance to SOGI-inclusive education. Open-ended questions designed to cover the following topics:

Teachers’ experiences with parental resistance and external pressure

Strategies attempted for navigating resistance.

Strategies for incorporating SOGI topics in teaching and creating a safe and inclusive school environment.

The interview questions were provided in the Appendix 1.

The design of the interview questions beginning with participants' teaching backgrounds, progressing to their specific practices in incorporating SOGI topics, their experiences with external resistance, reflections on available SOGI resources and support, and concluding with their perspectives on the future and advice for new teachers. This sequence ensured that the questions aligned with the study's objectives while remaining broad enough to allow participants to share their experiences naturally. The open-ended nature of the questions minimized the risk of leading responses, provided a flexible framework for capturing rich, detailed narratives while ensuring relevance to the research focus.

The interviews for this study were conducted online using the secure video conferencing platform, Zoom. My TRU-licensed Zoom account was used to ensure that all sessions were hosted within TRU's secure system. The interviews lasted between 60 and 75 minutes. These semi-structured interviews were a one-time session, with no additional follow-up required, a minimum time commitment of 60 minutes. This duration aligned with the standard for semi-structured interviews, "Most commonly they are only conducted once for an individual or group and take between 30 minutes to several hours to complete" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315).

Recruitment of Participants

The initial recruitment plan was a combination of convenience and snowball sampling to secure 6 participants currently working in BC's K-12 system. Convenience sampling defines a process of data collection from population that is close at hand and easily accessible to researcher (Rahi, 2017). I approached professors and instructor in the School of Education at Thompson Rivers University to ask if they could recommend candidates who

met the criteria. These participants then refer others who also meet the criteria, “capturing an increasing chain of participants” (Parker et al., 2019, p. 3). Given the need to recruit sufficient participants within a limited timeframe, purposive sampling was also employed to reach the necessary number of participants by posting recruitment posts in targeted Facebook groups, including LGBTQ+ educator groups and BC teacher networks. The main goal of purposive sampling is to select people with specific characteristics that are most relevant to answering your research questions (Rai & Thapa, 2015). To account for potential participant attrition, a slightly larger pool of potential participants (e.g., 10-15) to ensure the target of six participants was met. The final number of participants increased to 8 due to a higher-than-expected interest among eligible candidates.

The study recruited teachers from the K-12 system in BC with the following specific characteristics:

- (i) Current teachers in BC’s K-12 system.
- (ii) Experience with SOGI-inclusive education, either through directly teaching SOGI-related content in the classroom or having undergone relevant SOGI-related training.
- (iii) Experience with managing or responding to parental resistance to SOGI-inclusive content.

The recruitment process commenced by identifying teachers known to the research team and those who met the specified recruitment criteria and expressed interest in the study. An introductory email was sent to potential participants, providing an overview of the study’s purpose, their anticipated role, and the expectations for their participation. Participants who met the criteria and responded positively were selected.

Procedure for Interviews

The interviews were all conducted via the electronic conferencing platform, Zoom. I used my TRU-licensed Zoom account to create and host interviews within TRU's secure system. When recording the interviews, I ensured that the files were stored locally, i.e., on my password-protected personal laptop, rather than on the cloud, to prevent data leakage.

At the beginning of the interviews, I introduced myself and provided a land acknowledgment. I explained the purpose of the inquiry, reiterated the informed consent of the study, and reminded participants of their right to withdraw or refuse to answer any questions they did not wish to answer. After some small talk and warm-up questions, the formal research questions began. All interviews lasted between 60 to 75 minutes.

After obtaining consent for recording, I began recording the session. The transcripts were permanently deleted immediately after they were completed. The transcripts were stored on my password-protected personal laptop, and the files themselves were also password-protected. At the end of the interview, we had some light chit-chat. Some participants took the initiative to ask if I needed other participants and offered to help. I expressed my gratitude and told them I looked forward to working with them in the long term.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study utilized a six step framework of thematic analysis. "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). With an inductive approach, themes emerge naturally from the data, minimizing the influence of preconceptions and ensuring that the findings were deeply grounded in the participants' narratives.

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data

“It is vital that you immerse yourself in the data to the extent that you are familiar with the depth and breadth of the content” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). All interview transcripts were thoroughly reviewed and repeated reading (Braun & Clarke, 2006) ensured deep familiarity with the content. During this phase, I used highlighter to highlight the key sentences, initial notes were taken and potential ideas for coding were marked to prepare for the structured coding process. Since the data were verbal, they were transcribed into a written form to create an “orthographic transcript” to provide a verbatim account of all verbal data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 17).

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

Following familiarization, the next step involves the systematic coding of the data. In this study, the primary method of data analysis was inductive coding. As described by Braun and Clarke (2006), inductive coding is a “bottom-up” approach (p. 12) used to identify emerging themes that naturally emerged from participants’ experiences. Inductive coding helped identify emerging themes that reflected participants’ perspectives and provided insight into the contextual complexity of their experiences. However, the frequency of a theme within a dataset does not guarantee its significance (Nowell et al., 2017). I designed an interview structure that covered my research objectives and encouraged participants to share their perspectives freely and in depth. The relevance of the themes to the research questions and the depth of participants’ reflections were considered throughout the analysis.

While the focus was predominantly on inductive coding, a small degree of deductive coding, or the “top-down” approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12), was applied during the later stages of analysis. Deductive coding referenced specific theoretical concepts from UDL and Critical Pedagogy, particularly when linking emergent themes to the study’s theoretical

frameworks. For instance, codes related to “inclusive curriculum design” or “transformative intellectualism” were informed by prior literature but were applied only after inductive themes had been fully explored.

This combined approach—grounded primarily in inductive coding—ensured that the findings were both data-driven and theoretically informed. By allowing themes to emerge organically while selectively drawing on existing frameworks, the analysis balanced the richness of participants’ narratives with the alignment of findings to broader theoretical insights, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). This methodological flexibility provided a robust foundation for addressing the research questions and interpreting the data within its specific socio-educational context.

Step 3: Searching for Themes

“The goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes” (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3363). After generating the initial codes, thematic analysis focused on identifying patterns and relationships across the data, moving from descriptive to analytical approaches. As Maguire and Delahunt (2017) explained, this involved not only describing what was said but also interpreting and explaining the underlying meaning. During this phase, tools such as tables, mind maps have helped me organize codes into theme piles (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 4: Reviewing and Refining Themes

After the initial themes were identified, I thoroughly reviewed and refined them. Throughout this process, I decided which themes had richful supporting data, and whether to merge, modify, or discard those that lacked coherence. I make sure the goal is to make the themes “cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 20).

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

After reviewing, each theme was clearly defined and named. I wrote detailed descriptions and put compatible narratives of each theme, specifying its scope and focus. The goal is “identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about, and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92).

Step 6: Writing the Narrative

At the final step in the thematic analysis process, I wrote up the themes and constructing a narrative that linked the themes back to the research questions and theoretical frameworks. This stage required not only describing the themes but also interpreting their underlying meanings, particularly at a latent level (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) where “thematic analysis goes beyond the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13).

Ethical Considerations

The participants are K-12 teachers in BC, they were fully capable of providing informed consent on their own behalf and were not considered a vulnerable group. No consent from an authorized third party needed. As professionals in the education sector, they possessed the cognitive and communicative skills necessary to understand the research process, including its risks, benefits, and their rights as participants, such as the right to withdraw at any point during the study.

Risks and Benefits

“Because it seeks to understand something not yet revealed, research often entails risks to participants and others” (Panel on Research Ethics, 2022, para. 4). The potential risks associated with participation in this study were minimal but included the possibility of

discomfort when discussing challenges related to parental resistance: (1) they may have experienced feelings of uncertainty or inadequacy when reflecting on these complex issues; (2) they may have perceived a gap in their skills or confidence in addressing parental resistance; (3) sharing their strategies and reflections could have raised concerns about how this information might be perceived within their professional workplaces. In the event that participants experienced discomfort, I offered them the opportunity to pause the interview, skip specific questions, or withdraw without any negative repercussions.

There was no inherent power imbalance between me and my participants. I, a graduate student at Thompson Rivers University, had no direct authority or influence over the participants' professional roles, performance evaluations, or job security.

Despite these minimal risks, the benefits of participation were notable. Participants can gain a deeper understanding of strategies for SOGI-inclusive education, which could benefit both teachers and students in the future. They can reflect on their past experiences and provide new insights into their teaching practices. Moreover, the study offered opportunities for networking and the sharing of best practices related to SOGI-inclusive education.

Informed Consent

According to the Panel on Research Ethics (2022), "The voluntariness of consent is important because it respects human dignity and means that individuals have chosen to participate in research according to their own values, preferences and wishes" (p. 32). As part of the recruitment process, potential participants received an Informed Consent Form via email. This form thoroughly explained all aspects of participation, including the voluntary nature of the study, confidentiality protocols, and the participants' right to withdraw at any

time before the data was anonymized and the analysis and coding process began. Ongoing consent was maintained throughout the study. At the start of each interview, I reviewed the key points of the consent form and reminded participants of their rights, including the confidentiality and privacy measures in place. Should a participant have chosen to withdraw, their data would have been excluded from the final research report.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All interview recordings and transcripts were anonymized. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, and identifying details, such as names, school names, or locations, were removed during transcription.

Ethical Approval

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) of Thompson Rivers University.

Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings of this research. The data were generated through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using a thematic analysis process inspired by a critical pedagogy framework. While the analysis emphasizes thematic rigor, I have drawn inspiration from storytelling methodologies to bring the findings to life and contextualize the participants' experiences. Each participant shared their personal journey with SOGI education, the resistance and challenges they encountered and addressed, their successful practices within classrooms, advice for teacher candidates and new teachers, and their perspectives on the future of SOGI education and personal commitments. I describe the themes and key findings that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data. A copy of the bank of interview questions from which I extracted pertinent prompts is included in the appendix.

Below, I provide a brief introduction to the eight participants, highlighting both shared experiences and individual characteristics. Following this, I present the major themes identified during my immersion in the data, with each section dedicated to discussing the corresponding key findings.

Participant Profiles

In this section, I will provide an overview of the participants, focusing on key information essential for presenting the research findings. This includes the grades and subjects they teach, along with brief impressions of their personalities and professional demeanor, where relevant. Careful attention is given to safeguarding participants' confidentiality to prevent any risk of identification. To this end, I will not disclose their names, specific schools, or districts where they work.

To ensure confidentiality, I will limit detailed descriptions of their personal identities or specific activities outside their teaching roles. However, I do wish to acknowledge that many participants hold significant positions such as SOGI leads, members of the BCTF or other local and provincial teacher unions, and leaders of groups such as GSAs or other inclusivity-focused school organizations. Some also take on administrative roles aimed at advancing equity and inclusive education. Their active involvement in promoting inclusivity within their school communities provides a reliable and nuanced perspective on the progress and challenges of fostering inclusive practices in their respective contexts.

“Phoenix”

Phoenix has several years of teaching experience as a Grade 5–6 elementary school teacher. Their involvement as an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community has been more or less lifelong. They described having had “very, very close friends and chosen family in that community” since high school. Exuding a strong and confident demeanor, Phoenix is unafraid to confront their colleagues who refused to use a student’s pronouns and encourages school administrators to take decisive action against such behavior: “I told them, ‘this isn’t just someone being a jerk—this is a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the BC Human Rights Code,’ and I printed out those codes and circled the relevant parts.” They emphasized the importance of allyship:

During all the anti-trans and anti-SOGI stuff over the past few years, I really feel like allies need to step up and take this one. We don’t need to put a wall of trans people in front of the bullets, we need to stand in and say, “I’ll take this one.” That’s what I tell my trans friends—I’ll take this one. I’m going to take this one. You don’t need to. I’ll go talk to the reporter about SOGI—You don’t need to be the one educating. Just like

we'd say to an Indigenous person, "You don't need to educate me about residential school trauma. I can go and learn that myself."

"Willow"

Willow is a Grade 2-3 teacher working in an elementary school. They present as calm and gentle. They present as calm and gentle and described themselves as: "I was a very shy, nerdy little kid, and I wanted to make a safe space that I would have loved to have had."

Compared to the other participants, Willow appears to work in a particularly supportive environment, where both administrators and colleagues back their teaching practices. They adopt a "gentle and strategic" approach to addressing SOGI, they initiated a Rainbow Club at their school, even overcoming restrictions during COVID-19 to provide a social and identity-affirming space for students. Despite its modest beginnings, their persistence, collaboration with colleagues, and iterative improvements transformed the club into a significant organization fostering student awareness and belonging. The Rainbow Club has yet to face parental backlash and remains a popular initiative among students, showcasing the potential of small, consistent efforts to yield enduring impacts.

"Theo"

Theo is a Grade 8 French immersion and social studies teacher, perceived as calm and grounded. They successfully introduce SOGI topics in their social justice class through a storytelling approach, emphasizing that SOGI education should not devolve into "tick-box exercises" or one-off events. Instead, they view it as "a natural part of what we talk about and part of their education." They also demonstrate practical strategies for managing parental resistance effectively.

"Atlas"

Atlas teaches Grade 8 and 9 Social Studies, a Genocide Studies 12 course, and occasionally teaches Social Justice 12. They shared their personal connection to SOGI: “SOGI was not something new to me. I actually grew up with a queer mother, and I did a lot of my own learning and research.” When discussing how backlash influences their approach, they emphasized the capacity for children to unlearn negativity: “I don't believe that we're born with hate. I don't believe that we're born with racism, homophobia, transphobia, and all those different aspects. And so if kids can learn the negativity, then kids can learn the positivity.”

“Beacon”

Beacon teaches Social Justice and Indigenous Studies and is described as an energetic, humorous, and resolute individual. They described themselves as having “thick skin and (being) courageous,” explaining:

One thing I have that makes it a lot easier and allows me to do the things I do is that I have incredibly thick skin. I don't get shaken very easily. And I'm also very courageous, and that's part of having thick skin.

Highly active in political advocacy, Beacon views the inclusion of progressive voices in school boards, unions, and local governments as critical for advancing SOGI education. Their dual perspective—local school practices and provincial policy trends—enables them to offer unique insights in both education and union work. During the interview, I jokingly referred to Beacon as a “mediator,” a label they received with laughter. This designation reflects their ability to engage in meaningful dialogue even with staunch opponents. They described their approach to engaging with anti-SOGI groups as firm yet conciliatory, such as

inviting critics for coffee to foster understanding: “Listen, I’m asking you to have a coffee so I can listen to you and I can have a conversation.”

“Fortress”

Fortress teaches Social Justice 12, Indigenous Studies 12, and Social Studies 9. They project a strong and formidable demeanor, which they have described themselves as possessing: “I’m told I’m intimidating. I’m told that people are scared of me.” They have endured significant challenges, including personal information exposure and online attacks by anti-SOGI groups. However, these experiences only strengthened their resolve:

I’m going to keep doing what I do because I truly believe that having a strong ally in a high school is lifesaving. It’s lifesaving to have someone advocating for vulnerable youth. It’s lifesaving for vulnerable youth to know who they can go to and talk to about whatever they need.

“Snow”

Snow is a Grade 4 homeroom teacher working at a private school. They identifies as queer and describes themselves as being “very much a part of the queer community.” They are a fourth-grade teacher actively incorporating SOGI-related content into their classroom practices. They stated:

So just my hope is that there's a better understanding of what SOGI is. Because I think with more understanding, there's going to be less resistance... queer kids still have the highest levels of depression and suicide across like all of North America. And so, to me, like it’s in the numbers that I think a safer, more inclusive education system makes queer kids feel safer, and less of them will die.

“Maple”

Maple is an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher who works with many students from immigrant backgrounds. Although their students are not within the K-12 setting, most of his students are already parents, and their children also go to school in the same school district. They have tried to integrate SOGI content into the classroom and encountered some resistance from their students (the children's parents). They reached out enthusiastically to participate in the study. When working with a classroom predominantly composed of students from immigrant backgrounds, Maple encountered unique challenges. They reflected:

As far as anyone in the classroom knows, I'm the typical, educated, middle-class, straight, white Canadian dude. And, you know, am I here to impose our—or my—Canadian values on people, right? In that moment, am I seen as being colonial, as colonizing, and not respecting other perspectives as well? But even with that said, I know for a fact that in the last year, I've had five queer students.

Themes Identified in the Study

In the following sections, I present the seven emerging themes that capture the key findings of this research. These findings address the challenges, strategies, and broader implications of SOGI education. In the subsequent paragraphs, I discuss how these findings address my research question and contribute to a deeper understanding of SOGI practices in educational settings.

The themes identified in the study listed as followed (Table 1), and I will explain them one by one in the following sessions.

Table 1

Identified Themes in the Study

Theme No.	Identified Themes
1	Teachers' Understanding of SOGI-Inclusive Education
2	Successful Practices in Teaching
3	Successful Practices in the Wider School Environments
4	External Pressures and Harassment Faced by Teachers
5	Teachers' Perspectives on the Future of SOGI Education
6	Leadership and Peer Support in SOGI Implementation
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Teachers' Understanding of SOGI-Inclusive Education

We have encountered a variety of perspectives regarding SOGI-inclusive education. One of the most common misconceptions is the belief that SOGI is a formal subject, comparable to mathematics or literature. This misunderstanding has led some to argue that SOGI, as a standalone subject, might overshadow traditional academic disciplines such as mathematics and science, potentially hindering students' intellectual development. However, this view misrepresents the nature of SOGI-inclusive education, which is not a separate curriculum but rather an educational framework or resource aimed at fostering inclusivity and respect for diversity across all subjects.

Given these differing opinions, I was particularly interested in understanding how the teacher participants in this study define SOGI-inclusive education. To explore this, I posed the following sample question to participants:

Some people view SOGI as a formal subject like math or literature, while others see it as a resource that supports inclusive education. How do you define SOGI, and how does it influence your approach to curriculum development and planning?

The participating teachers demonstrated a consensus: SOGI is not a stand-alone curriculum but a resource, a mindset, or a way to talk about things, its purpose is to foster an inclusive and safe environment.

Two teachers working in elementary school settings highlighted this perspective. For instance, Phoenix stated:

I've answered this question so many times, and it gets asked all the time—how often does SOGI come up in your daily teaching? And the truth is, almost never. SOGI is not a subject we teach after math. It's not like that. I make jokes sometimes, it's not "Free Puberty Blocker Friday." ...SOGI isn't even a curriculum—it's a resource. A resource that everyone has the choice to use or not.

Similarly, Willow added, "I see it less as a curriculum or resource and more as a way of just talking about things—just making sure we're being inclusive in our language... the representation and how to frame those quick conversations." Both highlighted the inclusive framework is about "everyone is welcome"(Phoenix), and "it's more about the bigger picture rather than specifically having a lesson on the topic"(Willow). Other teachers echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the embedded nature of SOGI. For example, Theo shared: "I think for me, the biggest impact or way that I include it is by being more aware of who I'm talking about and how I'm talking about people." Furthermore, Fortress remarked:

Well, there's no prescribed curriculum for SOGI. The way I explain it is that SOGI is more like a mindset. It's similar to multiculturalism, where we have a duty to reflect the community in which we teach... It's not a curriculum—it's something that's woven through the existing curriculum. So, it's not even like there are resources to

help you do it, but it's not necessary to have a standalone, like, "Okay, today is the SOGI lesson."

Finally, Snow concluded: "To me, that's what SOGI education is in elementary. It's not about teaching them to be gay. It's about accepting everyone for who they are."

Participants emphasized that SOGI should be integrated into the existing curriculum as an ongoing process, rather than treated as a "tick-box" exercise (Theo). For instance, Atlas explained their efforts to normalize SOGI-related discussions in everyday lessons:

I try to bring it into the daily lessons as much as possible to normalize it—so it's not taboo—and to make sure students are not afraid to ask questions, but also to ensure they're not...uncomfortable that the topic has come up, because that can be a piece of it.

To illustrate this, they shared an example from a genocide studies lesson where they emphasized that genocide is not solely a historical issue, but continues to have contemporary implications:

I have the students compare gay persecution during the Holocaust to gay persecution in Chechnya, Russia, and look at the similarities and differences in how it's kind of rolled out—what the laws are, and what the pieces of persecution have been.

Challenges in SOGI Implementation Across Contexts

Building on an understanding of how teachers define SOGI-inclusive education—not as a standalone curriculum, but as a resource or mindset aimed at fostering an inclusive school environment and teaching students to accept everyone for who they are—it is important to consider how these definitions are applied across different educational contexts. Elementary and secondary school students exhibit significant differences in cognitive,

emotional, and social development, which suggests that SOGI-inclusive education may present unique challenges across different school levels. To better understand the specific challenges participants face at various educational stages and to provide readers with more informed strategies for support, I asked participants the following question:

What are the unique challenges and differences in implementing SOGI in elementary versus secondary schools?

The participants identified unique challenges associated with implementing SOGI in elementary and secondary school contexts. Teachers noted that implementing SOGI in elementary schools tends to be more challenging. For example, Atlas explained:

At the secondary level, it's easier to incorporate SOGI because there's less pushback from parents. There's less polarization in the media. The media continually puts out false reports about what's being taught in elementary, such as, teachers performing reassignment surgeries, teachers encouraging kids to ask for those, and various things like that, which is not happening at the elementary level.

Similarly, Snow stated:

I think a big challenge with elementary school is there's just so much misinformation about what SOGI is, and parents and even teachers think that SOGI in elementary school is like forcing kids to be gay and encouraging them to use different pronouns, which is just so not what it is. If your friend has two dads, accepting them and including everyone.

This is similar to what as Fortress stated: "It's about teaching children that diversity exists. It's teaching children about tolerating people different from you, and you cannot teach tolerance if you are not taught opposing worldviews from your own."

At the elementary level, most conversations focus on diverse family structures, as Atlas pointed out: “What does a family look like? What does your family look like? And branching out from the traditional husband and wife into various aspects of what a family looks like.” Additionally, some content arises in Physical and Health Education curriculum, as highlighted by Phoenix: “So, in the sexual health curriculum, when we teach about anatomy, relationships, and those kinds of things.” Atlas added, “They’re also looking at consent in the sense of what if you don’t want to give a hug? What if you don’t want to hold someone’s hand, right?” This concept of consent is often taught using age-appropriate analogies. For example, Maple explained: “It was taught in a very developmentally age-appropriate way. It used the metaphor of offering someone tea. You offer someone tea—you don’t pour it down their throat while they’re sleeping,”

In secondary schools, discussions tend to be deeper in scope and more complex. According to Atlas, “conversations are a bit deeper. What does it mean to be queer? In what ways can different people be queer? How are people being persecuted for being queer?” Despite the increased depth, SOGI is still not treated as an independent curriculum. As Snow observed, “It connects so much to like social studies curriculum in BC. It connects to our core competencies.” For example, Atlas shared that she sometimes includes standalone lesson plans:

For example, when talking about the creation of Canada in grade 9 or discussing Canada’s genocide in grade 12, I’ll look at the two-spirit identity and how that factors into Indigenous cultures. That becomes a standalone piece because it is culturally ingrained.

Fortress identified a significant challenge at the secondary school level: addressing the bigoted worldviews students often develop through social media. As Fortress explained:

The challenges we face at the secondary school level are that by the time kids are 12, 13, or 14 years old, they have already formed their worldview. If kids are going to be homophobic or transphobic, this is usually established around the middle school age. Students are also seeking out like-minded peers who validate their worldview.

Additionally, they are now on social media and streaming apps, where they access influencers who pipeline them into a bigoted, right-wing worldview. It becomes very difficult to get them off that pipeline because they are in an echo chamber that continuously affirms these right-wing beliefs. This would be my biggest challenge. In here, it is the algorithm that they're being fed.

Key Finding #1

The key finding can be summarized in this fashion: Teachers believe that SOGI is not a standalone curriculum but rather a resource, a mindset, or a way of talking about things to create an inclusive and safe environment. SOGI topics can be incorporated into existing curricula, such as sexual health and social justice. Additionally, SOGI can enter daily discussions in subjects like mathematics and science, helping to normalize and sustain conversations over time.

This finding demonstrates that these teachers have a clear understanding of the boundaries and principles of SOGI education, as well as its suitability for different school settings and age groups. It contrasts sharply with certain anti-SOGI statements, such as the claim that “SOGI celebrates alternative lifestyles that may conflict with family values” (Black Press Media Staff, 2018). Teachers’ statements show that the core of SOGI, which

emphasizes diverse family structures, is about embracing inclusivity rather than conflicting with traditional family values. This finding also directly disproves false narratives presented in some media outlets regarding a so-called “SOGI curriculum.” For example, reports claiming that “Masturbation remains an optional teacher prompt in Grade 6, and anal sex continues to be first mentioned in Grade 7” (The Canadian Press, 2019), or stating that “the true aim of SOGI curriculum is not to encourage respect but to inculcate a particular ideology regarding sex and gender” (Jones & Kao, 2019, p. 6), are clearly contradicted by teachers’ accounts. Teachers clarify that SOGI is about normalizing the idea that these are people who are part of our society (Willow). Teachers view SOGI as a way of addressing topics to ensure representation in the existing curriculum and the school environment in general. This perspective aligns with existing literature, which highlights that SOGI-teachable moments often arise during “off-script” interactions, which means “SOGI inclusion relies less on formal curriculum than the responsiveness of educators—under sway of progressive policy changes—to have informal, identity-inclusive conversations and to forge connections to curriculum content.” (James, 2019, p. 957)

Evidence suggests that avoiding SOGI topics is unproductive. Many secondary school students already have underlying questions about these subjects. For instance, Atlas shared that students have asked her about “a wide range of topics: hormone replacement therapy, changes in the body, gender-affirming surgery, and gender expression.” Teachers also emphasized that social media and the internet often expose students to misinformation, and that schools should play a crucial role in addressing and clarifying these inaccuracies. As Fortress explained:

It's been proven again and again that in order to prevent children from being preyed on, to ensure they have healthy relationships, to teach about consent, and to teach kids not to become sexual abusers, we have to teach sex education...Because they're not getting that knowledge at home, and if we don't teach it, they're getting it from pornography.

Moreover, the portrayal of sexual exploitation and misogyny in pornography shows the positive impact of SOGI education in helping students establish healthy relationships. Teachers highlighted the necessity of providing accurate, age-appropriate education in schools to counter the harmful narratives students may encounter elsewhere.

Successful Practices in Teaching

One of the primary objectives of this study is to explore effective strategies that teachers employ to address SOGI-related issues. The classroom serves as a key space for implementing SOGI practices, and this section will examine how the teacher participants integrate SOGI topics into their teaching practices. To gain insights into this, I posed the following questions to participants:

How do you incorporate SOGI topics into your teaching?

What kinds of assignments do students typically engage in for these topics?

Based on the participants' responses, the summary is as follows:

De-gendering the Curriculum

In Phoenix's sexual health education class, they collaborated with colleagues to develop a curriculum and intentionally de-gendered it. She stated:

When we talk about conception, we don't frame it in heteronormative ways. We talk about sperm and egg because, scientifically, that's what it is. But we also include

other ways that conception can occur—like in a lab setting—and explain that it doesn't necessarily require a man and a woman.

By focusing on scientific facts, such as sperm and egg, and supplementing with examples of non-traditional methods like in-vitro lab settings, they aimed to help students develop an understanding of scientific concepts while avoiding the constraints of heteronormative assumptions. Moreover, they emphasized: “We mention that in a gay male couple, the person carrying the pregnancy may not necessarily be the parent. We highlight that there are many ways to have a family.” This inclusive approach to family structures facilitates students’ understanding of diversity.

In addressing misconceptions, Phoenix noted:

“[For trans or non-binary people,] not everyone is having surgeries, which is a stereotype. I explained that for trans or non-binary people, it’s a deeply personal journey. Social transitioning, medical transitioning, and surgical transitioning are all very different, and these are serious decisions made over time with medical professionals.”

When responding to students’ inquiries, they ensure that their answers are “age appropriate.” For example, when a student asked during a sexual health lesson, “Can you explain what an intersex person is?” the replied, “There are different ways to describe it, but generally, an intersex person might have a combination of both male and female organs or body parts. It happens naturally.”

Prior to lessons, maintaining transparent communication with parents and emphasizing the scientific nature of the inclusive curriculum is another effective way to reduce external resistance, according to the participants. As Phoenix explained,

Before I teach the sexual health unit, I always send an email home. Over the next two weeks, we'll be covering the sexual health curriculum. The information and PowerPoint I'll be using were developed with a registered nurse who was hired by the school district to do this work, we developed it together. The information is rooted in science. The focus is on biology, helping students understand their bodies and the bodies of the other 50% of the people we share this world with.

De-gendering Practices and the Importance of Pronouns

Avoiding unnecessary gendering in classroom and activities was highlighted as an important step toward inclusivity. Phoenix advised against “saying things like, ‘Boys on this side, girls on that side,’ or referring to students as ‘boys and girls.’”

Beacon emphasized the importance of asking students their pronouns:

That's a really easy entry point for most of those middle-ground teachers—just ask kids their pronouns. At the beginning of the year, I just ask kids what pronouns they use—on a form. It says, ‘What's your name? What pronouns do you use? What's one thing you're really looking forward to this year?’ And it's a really easy way of getting that information in a safe, anonymous way.

Theo, as a French teacher, shared their approach to normalizing SOGI-inclusive practices in French teaching, emphasizing the integration of gender-neutral pronouns as part of everyday language instruction. They noted the introduction of new gender-neutral pronouns in French and described their efforts to incorporate these into regular teaching examples:

I think the more we can bring voices in all the time. So even on the simplest level, I teach French immersion, so if I'm putting up an example of a verb, including gender-

neutral pronouns, just as a given always. I've been normalizing it instead of just using "il" and "elle" as examples—just thrown in as an everyday practice.

They further explained how this method supports their goal of embedding SOGI into the classroom culture:

For example, we were just writing in role to make SOGI part of the everyday, We asked, "Okay, decide what pronouns your character is using so you know how to write from their perspective. Is your character using il, elle, iel, ila, elah, or yell? What pronouns are they using?" Not a separate "Let's talk about it, have an event, and then let's forget about it again."

Taking Advantage of SOGI-Recommended Books

Participants highlighted that SOGI-recommended books serve as a powerful tool for navigating SOGI topics in classes, especially on selecting materials that broadly reflect the diversity of people in the community. As Theo described, they have been trying to add more novels that represent diverse people and backgrounds: "So not in an overtly teaching-a-lesson way, but by including those narratives, faces, and stories into everything that I do." For SOGI topics specifically, they mentioned that they primarily look for picture books and novels featuring characters who are not cisgender. Willow identified the effective approach involving the use of SOGI-recommended books or teaching materials that represent SOGI individuals in elementary context: "I have books that talk about different holidays, and I have books that talk about different family structures... It's about making sure that the books I have in my room are showing a bigger slice of society." They shared several experiences of using books as educational tools to foster openness and inclusivity among students. For instance, they described how they introduced *Prince and Knight*, a book about a prince who

is rescued by a knight and ultimately marries him. They recounted a Grade 2 student's reaction:

One of my grade twos at the time came up to me, and she was looking at this book and was like, "But they got married? They're boys, you know?" I said, "Yes. They wanted to marry each other." And she kind of went, "Oh, okay," and just walked off. Like, the kids honestly do not care.

Another example involved using *What Are Your Words?* to explain pronouns. When a student questioned, "What on earth are you talking about? Like, they/them? That's kind of weird because isn't that supposed to mean more than one person?" They responded:

At the end of the day, we might not fully understand because we don't know what it means for that person to want to use those pronouns. But what it comes down to is, this person is asking us to call them a certain way. And when someone asks that of us, it's respectful to follow that—you wouldn't go up to someone and just call them the wrong name. That's rude.

The student accepted this explanation, replying, "Huh, okay. That's how it works. Cool."

Willow also shared an incident in their district involving a kindergarten boy who liked long hair and painted nails but was repeatedly called a girl by another boy. Despite corrections, the behavior persisted. After discovering that the parents were unsupportive of addressing gender stereotypes, Willow provided a colleague with the book *Mary Wears What She Wants*, as an educational resource to guide students in understanding gender stereotypes, she explained the outcome: "The teacher used that as an example, and all the kids in the room kind of went, 'Huh, that was really silly of them to say she can't wear pants.'"

Moreover, Willow highlighted their preference for addressing broader cultural and social themes rather than focusing narrowly on specific groups. They cited their use of 40,000 Beads, a book about a two-spirited Indigenous child, as an example:

I often read it when we're talking about cultural celebrations. It's about a non-binary Indigenous child—or a two-spirited Indigenous child, I should say—who wants to participate in powwows but doesn't want to wear feminine regalia. And I don't read it to be like, "Hey, look, here's a two-spirited person." I read it to be like, "Hey, look at this beautiful cultural celebration that this group of people has." And then I'll pick another cultural celebration book, like one about Diwali and the lighting of the Diya and things like that.

Willow owned a big tub of bookshelf in their classroom, to served and resources with students and colleagues: "It's a collection covering a number of different topics. And again, my tub isn't even all SOGI-related—it's just basically resources to make things more inclusive or resources to tackle difficult conversations."

Additionally, apart from books and literary works, participants mentioned that music and art seemed to also play a role in incorporating SOGI topics. Phoenix stated,

Getting to things through music programs is super important. I think when we talk about teacher candidates or generations, you can't have better representation than someone like Chapel Roan or someone like that who's just so visibly open and unapologetic—it pushes boundaries.

Maple mentioned that in their English language class, they use songs as a tool to unpack SOGI topic while learning some vocabulary:

I'm not going to use something too explicit, but something like Bruce Cockburn's *Lovers in a Dangerous Time*. It has a great line about love in difficult circumstances: When you're lovers in a dangerous time, sometimes you're made to feel that your love is a crime. And depending on the class, you can unpack it a little, or just let it roll. It's a nice way to learn some vocabulary and enjoy the moment.

Storytelling and Aligning Stories with Theories

Theo employed storytelling as a way to create a space for students to critically reflect on and understand complex issues without making the discussions overly personal. Students could engage in critical discussions through the perspectives of fictional characters. Additionally, creating their own stories served as a means for emotional expression and deepened their understanding of social issues. As Theo explained:

I do a lot through picture books and literature, especially picture books, so that we can discuss a fictional character's experience. This helps to slightly distance the conversation from being personal, allowing us to examine it from a third-party perspective through the character's experience.

This approach bore similarities to that of Willow but extended this approach further by encouraging older students to craft their own stories. As Theo elaborated, "Taking the storytelling model further, once they've read quite a few stories, they decide what type of story they want to try to tell, with the idea that stories can help bring awareness to people." The stories created could also reflect the students' own life experiences, integrating personal or familial realities into the learning process. This approach enhanced authenticity and emotional engagement. Theo provided an example:

I've also done assignments where they've written a short story, picking one of these issues and centering their story around it... One of my students created an entire poster... during the time they were coming out as trans, and they said that the process of doing that research and finding amazing role models was really helpful to them. Furthermore, Theo emphasized that this method increased student engagement more effectively than scripted lessons:

Gimmicky little lessons aren't going to change their minds. They're more likely to think, "Oh yeah, here we go again, talking about this, blah, blah." But when it's a real person's story with genuine human emotion, they might think, "Oh, actually, that would feel terrible" or "That experience resonates with me." I just find storytelling so much more genuine than scripted lessons or activities.

Atlas also shared an anecdote about facilitating a discussion with their ninth-grade students. In a spontaneous exercise on debating effectively within a minute, the teacher posed the question "What is the meaning of life?" and used their own experiences to illustrate a response, including "my volunteer work, my master's program, and everything that had brought me joy. One of those pieces was the course I had developed on queer-inclusive sexual health education." This unexpectedly led to a 70-minute class discussion on queer sexual health, general sexual health, and trans inclusivity. The participant described the session as "a really fantastic experience," where "the students were asking very blunt questions, and it wasn't out of malice, but out of pure curiosity." A trans student in the class contributed to the conversation by assisting in answering some questions, enriching the discussion.

Guest Speakers

Several participants highlighted the effectiveness of inviting guest speakers to the classroom. Atlas reflected on their experience teaching social justice for the first time:

About a third of the course was made up of presentations from community members.

That really helped to bring those conversations into the classroom... ASK Wellness came in to talk about sex education and looked at queer sex education, inclusive sex education as well. When we talk about people experiencing homelessness, a high percentage of those are also part of the queer community. And so, bringing in those community aspects is also helping to effect that change.

Beacon also shared their experience with guest speakers:

We have a guest speaker come in and talk about how they navigate that. And then they make those connections between the theory and how it plays out in real life. And this way, like, I'm showing multiple varieties, so they're really having to exercise their critical thinking skills.

Beacon referenced a powerful case study from their teaching of the BC First Peoples course, which predominantly comprised Indigenous students. Through discussions on colonialism, residential schools, and inter-generational trauma, students began connecting historical policies to their own family and community experiences. For example, after watching a video of a residential school survivor discussing the challenges of expressing affection due to childhood abuse, students reflected on similar patterns in their families. This allowed them to contextualize their personal experiences within broader historical and systemic frameworks: "Students gradually connected the historical impacts of colonial policies with what they noticed in their families and communities, even if they couldn't

articulate it before.” This integration of personal, historical, and systemic perspectives enabled students to critically engage with their own contexts while building empathy and understanding of broader social issues.

Key Finding #2

Key finding Willow can be formulated in this way: Lived experience is a powerful tool for incorporating SOGI content into the classroom and developing understanding. Whether through storytelling with picture books, inviting guest speakers, or encouraging students to create their own narratives, the methods employed by the participants share a common and central feature: the lived experiences of minority groups. These approaches enhance authenticity, empathy, and critical thinking within the classroom. This strategy aligns with a decolonial perspective by amplifying marginalized voices and challenging dominant narratives. Furthermore, these methods can help demystify and de-stigmatize mainstream discourse surrounding marginalized groups. Fear often arises from a lack of understanding. Whether by allowing queer educators to "bridge the gap" with others or by introducing representatives of the LGBTQ+ community, these efforts facilitate greater acceptance. As Phoenix shared, drawing from their personal experience:

I often find that a personal connection—like actually knowing someone—can be incredibly helpful, right? Whether it’s a student or an adult, it makes a big difference. For example, a lot of people don’t really understand Ivan’s situation until they meet Ivan. Then they’re like, ‘Oh, here’s just a really smart, funny, and intelligent person who doesn’t want to be put into a box. They don’t want to fit into this box or that box—they just are who they are.’ And they’re very comfortable with that.

Similarly, Beacon reflected on their experiences engaging in dialogue with anti-SOGI individuals, highlighting how even entrenched adversaries can evolve into allies over time:

It was always really interesting because when I talked to them, they would frame it like, ‘It’s those people over there who are the groomers.’ And I’d respond, ‘Well, I’m a queer teacher. Do you think I’m a groomer?’ And they’d say, ‘Oh, no, not you.’ And I’d be like, ‘Oh, okay. So it’s everyone you don’t know, right? Once you meet them, get to know them, and realize they’re not these evil monsters, they’re fine.’ I noticed that the more I chatted with them, the less they could hold on to these stereotypes.

This evidence underscores that both in classroom practices and broader de-stigmatization initiatives, presenting authentic individuals and their real-life experiences is always beneficial. This finding aligns with the key tenets of critical pedagogy, which highlight that dialogue and problem-posing allow the oppressed to critically understand their circumstances (Freire, 2000). As part of this dialogue, storytelling enables the oppressed to articulate personal experiences while situating these experiences within a context of critical analysis. Sharing lived experiences helps dismantle feelings of isolation, foster collective awareness, and reveal the systemic roots of oppression, according to the participants. As Beacon noted:

And it just kind of helps them realize that one, they’re not alone, right? These are issues that impact communities around the country. But also helps them contextualize it a little bit. To know why it’s happening and to have a reason besides just, “I’m dropping the ball somewhere. I’m failing,” or “My family’s just fucked up,” or, like, whatever the case is.

Hooks (2003) asserted that “conversation is the central location of pedagogy for the democratic educator” (p. 44), emphasized that storytelling allows marginalized groups to reclaim their narrative authority and use it as a tool to challenge oppressive systems (hooks, 1994). This reinforces that incorporating lived experiences into classroom teaching not only enhances student learning but also serves as a transformative mechanism for broader social change. Through such practices, teachers actively resist “the status of specialized technicians within the school bureaucracy,” as Giroux (2018) described, and instead position themselves as “men and women with special dedication to the values of the intellect and enhancement of the critical powers of the young” (p. 184). This finding builds on insights from the literature review and highlights a gap in existing bystander programs, Coker et al. (2020), shows that programs like Green Dot have reduced sexual violence among heterosexual youth but are less effective for sexual minority youth. Studies also suggest that biases or attitudes toward certain groups can stop bystanders from stepping in (António et al., 2020; Edwards, 2023). Within Theo’s words, as a scripted activity, “it lack of real person’s story with genuine human emotion”(Theo), therefore storytelling so much “more genuine than scripted lessons or activities”(Theo).

Successful Practices in the Wider School Environments

The school environment is another critical space for implementing SOGI practices. The practices detailed below show how teachers contribute to creating a safe and inclusive campus environment beyond the classroom.

Rainbow Displays as Symbols of Safety

Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of rainbow displays, such as safety stickers and pride flags, in creating an inclusive and secure atmosphere. During the

interviews, respondents frequently mentioned the presence of rainbow displays in their classrooms, whether through safety stickers on doors or pride flags on walls.

Phoenix shared:

In the elementary environment, for instance, it's as simple as having a flag on my door and a sign that says, 'You're safe with me,' with the rainbow flag on top and the trans flag on the bottom." Such displays demonstrate the teacher's commitment to fostering a safe space for students and send a clear message to others: "That means homophobic language, transphobic language, or any other harmful conversations are not tolerated."

When Phoenix faced colleagues who refused to use a student's chosen name and pronouns, they distributed "You Are Safe With Me" signs to other staff members:

I printed a whole bunch of "You Are Safe With Me" signs, and I went around to every other staff member and asked, "Do you want to put this outside your room?"

And everyone except those three teachers has one outside their room. And there you go—it becomes clear where you're safe and where you're not.

Fortress described their classroom walls as adorned with eight or nine pride flags: Everyone comes into my room and they're like, "Wow, this is the prettiest room in the school." Some students are like, "You know, your room has something for everyone." And it's true—I don't just have pride flags. I've got Black Lives Matter posters, red dresses for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and lots of other things.

These visual displays align with their belief that "students must see your classroom as a safe space, and you as a safe person to talk to."

However, Beacon expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of safety stickers if they are not backed by meaningful action:

I'm much more cautious about who I give them to now. There are some teachers in my building that I do not want to have that sticker on their window. Because they don't set up the culture to keep those kids safe, that sticker becomes kind of meaningless to kids that actually do want those safer places.

They emphasized:

We also have to talk about what does it mean to have that sticker on your door? And I'd say it nicer than this: Are you actually going to create a safe place for kids? Are you going to do the work? Are you going to call out homophobia? Are you going to call out transphobia? Are you going to have a curriculum that represents kids? Because it's not just enough to have a rainbow sticker on your door.

At the same time, Beacon acknowledged that safety stickers can serve as a starting point for “middle-ground teachers” or those unsure how to begin fostering inclusivity:

Most of those middle-ground teachers will want to do that. And that's a really good place to start having those conversations.” The stickers can spark dialogues about creating a safe space, such as asking students, “What's your name? What pronouns do you use?”

A Popular Rainbow Club

Willow shared that their Rainbow Club has been active for several years. Despite organizing LGBTQ+-related activities during Pride Month, they have not encountered any significant pushback. The club's initial framing as a space for “inclusion for all” has reduced potential opposition. By avoiding labeling the club as exclusively targeting a specific group

(e.g., GSA, which primarily focuses on LGBTQ2S+ students), the club has become more universal and less likely to be perceived as controversial by parents or staff. As Willow explained, “From the very beginning, I’ve framed it as, ‘This is about making everyone feel safe and comfortable here.’ It’s really hard for someone to push back on, ‘We want everyone to feel safe and comfortable here.’”

Strategic Sensitivity to Potential Resistance

Willow demonstrated an awareness of certain symbols, such as pride flags, which might provoke misunderstanding or resistance from some parents. To mitigate this, they opted for more general rainbow stickers, avoiding negative reactions from parents. As they noted: “I do specifically not give out flag stickers—I give out rainbow stickers. And that’s something I gave a lot of thought to.” Reflecting on a particularly extreme parental reaction, Willow shared:

We had that parent comparing the pansexual flag to a Nazi flag, and I can’t even begin to understand that leap of logic.” In light of such responses, they made a strategic decision: “That one was a really hard decision for me. Again, I would rather give out pride flags, but that is a conscious choice I ended up making. I would hate for some five-year-old to go home with a rainbow flag sticker and have a parent just lose it—asking, ‘How did you get that gay flag?’

Broadening Inclusivity Beyond LGBTQ+ Communities

The club has extended its focus to celebrate and include students from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Events such as Diwali parties and Pink Shirt Day design activities have allowed the club to foster inclusivity for all students, not just those identifying as LGBTQ+. In a poster design activity, students were encouraged to choose their own

themes, and many spontaneously chose to support the LGBTQ+ community. “The number of kids who intentionally choose to put rainbows and highlight the LGBTQ community on their posters is actually a lot,” Willow observed.

Similarly, when Phoenix was talking about her effective strategy, she also mentioned, “For me, it’s not super explicit. It’s an ‘everyone is welcome’ kind of thing. It’s not just people in the queer community; it’s students of color, parents of color, and people of all ages.”

Student-Driven Initiatives

Willow expressed pride in the fact that several club activities were entirely initiated by students.

We did a brainstorming session about things they’d like to do to show others how to include others in the school. And they were like, “You know what? We can make our own pink shirts. We can put our own welcoming phrases on these shirts.” And then the next year, when we had the Pink Shirt Day assembly, it was like, “Oh, hey, maybe we could also put on a little skit for this as well and show off our pink shirts.”

One particularly impactful initiative was the Pink Shirt Day skit, in which typically shy students also participated. Notably, in the skit, the role of the boy was played by a girl. As Willow recalled, “No parents have had any issue with a girl playing a boy in the skit. She’s just like, ‘You know, I’m a boy. I like pink. Who cares? Leave me alone.’” This exemplifies how the Rainbow Club has created a supportive space that empowers students to express themselves authentically while fostering a broader culture of acceptance.

External Pressures and Harassment Faced by Teachers

Another key focus of this study is to explore the manifestations of external pressures that teachers face in the context of SOGI-inclusive education. When this study was initially

conceptualized, it was assumed that the primary source of resistance would mainly come from parents, often taking the form of complaints made to schools about teachers. To explore this issue further, I asked participants the following question:

Can you describe an instance where you faced parental resistance to SOGI content in your classroom, and how did you initially respond to the situation?

However, during the interviews, participants' responses to this question and their elaborations on related topics revealed that external pressures did not solely originate from parents. In fact, many highlighted that parental resistance is actually not happened that often as people would think it was. Meanwhile, resistance also stemmed from colleagues and the broader school community. Moreover, the manifestations of this resistance were often not limited to individual parents confronting teachers directly or lodging complaints with principals. Rather, they frequently took the form of broader protests or harassment within the school environment.

The Diversity within Resistance Groups

According to the data, these resistant parents appear to come from conservative religious backgrounds (e.g., Catholic or Muslim groups) or have been misled by misinformation, as Willow described, "leading by the straight-up ignorance of what SOGI is." Many noted that, in most cases, such resistance was something they witnessed happening to their colleagues rather than experiencing it directly themselves. And it also rarely come to a direct, way by coming to the teacher's office to questions teachers. As Phoenix described, "they tend to do things at the board level." Though this minor but not explosive situation it still exist, for example, some parents notified teachers on parent-teacher conference at the start of the year that they would pull their child out of class when the day that they believed

teachers were going to talk about SOGI by saying, “I know you’re forced to teach SOGI”(Willow). There was another parent who “correct” a student’s learning lesson about meeting with Mx. So and So, by stating “Mx. is not real” on the year-end student- teacher conference (Willow). Willow also shared an instance of parental opposition in their district during the kindergarten meet-and-greet, the parent was complaining about one teacher hanging pansexual flag in her window by saying: “Well, if you’re allowed to hang that, we should be allowed to hang the Nazi flag at school.” Maple described his experience when teaching English as second language with students who are immigrants as well as parents:

There are also some older Korean folks who are very, very Catholic. And they have the same sort of feeling of, “I guess this is acceptable in Canadian society, but our interpretation of the Bible says this is wrong, this is a sin.”

Participants also shared their experiences of witnessing resistance from within the teaching community, whether during teacher training sessions or in their daily work within the school environment. Phoenix described that they had encounter one or two teachers are openly homophobic or transphobic, hiding behind religious reasons, they witnessed a teacher refusing to use a transgender student’s chosen name and pronouns, it ended up escalated into a public argument with the student's parent during parent-teacher interviews. When Phoenix provided professional development around de-gendering language or presenting some SOGI-related content to their colleges, they stated:

I had a teacher openly praying during my session—a teacher I had worked with for a very long time. Or someone will just get up and walk out, stare at their phone, or do something openly dismissive. Some won’t even come to the meeting if they know that’s the topic being covered. And that’s hard to walk around a building when you

know those people have those attitudes. It's hard to place students in that class. It's hard when we have staff members who are part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Phoenix expressed, "It really, really does make it hard when teachers don't respect that." Willow shared their experience of witnessing teachers taking down a rainbow flag that had been posted in the staff room and promptly erasing a TOC's name after the TOC wrote their name as Mx. So-and-So on the TOC board. They also mentioned that their TOC friend, who uses they/them pronouns, has a list of safe schools where someone who is non-binary would feel comfortable teaching. This further illustrates that some pressure comes from within the teaching community.

Participants also pointed out that some pushback from teachers was not because they opposed SOGI, but because they did not know how to implement it in their classes or were afraid of making mistakes. As Atlas highlighted:

I think the biggest pushback I get from teachers in my school is simply, "I don't know. I'm not knowledgeable. How do I bring that conversation into my classroom? I don't want to say something wrong. I don't want to offend anyone."

Although many participants felt that SOGI resources, particularly online resources, were already sufficient, teachers' hesitation to implement SOGI may stem from other reasons. These include perceptions that administrative support is lacking, concerns about professional risks, or viewing SOGI as an optional initiative rather than part of their professional responsibilities. Not knowing where to start might simply be a pretext.

The Diverse Form of Resistance

One form of resistance involved the direct questioning of SOGI initiatives leading by misinformation. As Phoenix described, teachers faced accusations and baseless inquiries

about hiding “SOGI books that sexualize children” or providing “puberty blockers to students without parental knowledge.” Phoenix reflected: “It’s an attempt to create an extreme situation. Where people are being reactive or whatever. It’s so beyond my understanding why anybody cares about that—because we aren’t sexualizing it. They are.” Willow noted that some parents had shared rumors particularly during protests early in the school year, “the parent who talked to me was hearing all these rumors. There were people claiming that we were teaching seven-year-olds about anal sex.”

Another form of resistance can be referred to as “sticking their heads in the sand” (Willow). It means to avoid, or try to avoid, a particular situation by pretending that it does not exist. As Willow explained:

I feel like educators have been pretty open about what SOGI is, and yet there are people who just seem to be sticking their heads in the sand and going, “La la la la, I don’t want to hear it.

Phoenix also described a similar scenario:

The other part that people don’t want to talk about, is suicide rates. I had a student who was on the SOGI panel with me. It was a rough experience for them, but they spoke so eloquently about their journey. They said, “You can have a trans child, or you can have a dead child.” And people were like, “Oh my God, that’s so dramatic.” Thankfully, the Family Resource Center counselor followed up with some solid statistics about suicide rates. People don’t realize that this kind of resistance can be incredibly unhealthy and damaging for individuals.

In addition to being directly questioned, queer teachers also faced dehumanizing language and threats. Beacon described common homophobic rhetoric, stating, “A lot of the

stereotypes around groomers, pedophiles, and all the typical homophobic rhetoric you'd expect to hear." Threatening communications were also received, as Fortress recounted: Somebody actually physically mailed a threat. Well, it's not really a threat; it's more like, "You're going to go to hell for this type of stuff." Others, including Beacon, experienced verbal harassment rooted in religious beliefs: "This is someone who thinks that being gay is a sin, and he'll blatantly tell me that. He's like, you're going to go to hell." Beacon also disclosed that in Vanderhoof, several teachers received threatening letters at the mall and are currently under RCMP investigation. (Paul, 2024)

Teachers noted that opponents can also express their resistance collectively, either within the broader community to public protest or through targeted actions online. Participants mentioned that local school board has had to do online school board meetings for a while because of being infiltrated and hijacked by the anti-SOGI movement (Phoenix). Beacon further described the scene more vividly,

For about five months, it was this huge show of force—they were at every board meeting, had speakers lined up, and were really strategic... We even had room clears a couple of times because of outbursts from them, where the entire board meeting had to be cleared because someone started yelling from the back of the room.

Beyond hijacking school board meeting, public targeting further escalated pressures towards teachers themselves. Beacon shared an experience during a counter-protest where she was attacked in a public speech: "They was on the mic, talking and saying all these things. Then he started talking about me—how I'm this evil person destroying children." Similarly, Fortress recounted the public exposure of her private information on social media:

They post my picture, my name, and the school I work at on Twitter... and said that I'm a groomer. And I'm not the only teacher in my school district that this has happened to. I don't even know who these people are... They have a whole list of teachers, and all those Twitters—they just went through LinkedIn.

This led them to withdraw from social media: “And if I do have social media, I'm not myself. I'm a white man on social media.” The harassment extended to physical spaces.

Fortress described an instance of stalking:

A good teacher in the district—they took pictures of her. They took pictures of her classroom, like the outside windows, and put it on Twitter. So they're stalking us.

They actually went to a school event, not just online, and found out which classroom was hers.

Table 2

Forms of Resistance to SOGI Education

Source	Forms of Resistance	Examples from Data
Parents	Verbal Resistance	Complaints about flags (e.g., pansexual flag likened to Nazi flag); stating “Mx. is not real.”
	Withdraw children from activity or lessons	Request their children be excluded from specific lessons or activities.
	Passive Resistance	Dismissive actions during PD sessions (openly praying, walking out, ignoring the session by using their phones, or avoiding meetings);
	Active Hostility	Refusing to use students' chosen pronouns; taking down a rainbow flag in the staff room or erasing a TOC's non-binary title (“Mx.”) from the board.
Teachers/ Colleagues		

Community Resistance	Public Demonstrations	Anti-SOGI protests; hijacking school board meetings.
	Targeted Harassment	Stalking, doxing teachers, exposing personal information online, labeling them as “groomers”; Having public hate speeches, accusations like “destroying children”; Mailing threatening letters.
	Engaging in Political Campaigns	Anti-SOGI groups collaborating with political parties (e.g., BC Conservatives) to seek for a political change

Note. This table categorizes resistance encountered in the context of SOGI education into three main sources: parents, teachers/colleagues, and the broader community. Examples are based on participant data.

Key Finding #3

The third key finding in this study can be formulated in the following way: External pressures and harassment faced by teachers not only originate from parents but are also significantly driven by colleagues and the broader community. These forms of harassment manifest in various ways, including verbal abuse, online exposure, and physical stalking. However, rather than deterring these educators, such challenges have only strengthened their resolve to continue their SOGI-inclusive practices.

Giroux (2018) suggested that taking on the role of transformative intellectuals is “a struggle worth waging.” From the personal experiences shared by my participants, I have witnessed the significant effort they have already devoted to this waging. I believe that a teacher who weighs their actions, defines their role strictly within the boundaries of instructions, and avoids engaging with contentious topics is unlikely to have the opportunity to fully commit to this struggle.

When asked, “In what way have parental concerns influenced your approach to teaching socially inclusive content?” teachers affirmed their commitment to inclusion. As Atlas explained: “It influences me in the way that it proves I’m doing the right thing. I feel that as long as there’s parental concern, then I need to keep moving forward with having inclusive content in my classroom.” Similarly, Fortress expressed:

I don’t get it from the parent community—I get it from the broader community. And all that does is tell me that I have to work harder to protect LGBTQ2S+ students.

Like, all it does is affirm and validate the work that I do. Because if they are willing to go after a heterosexual, cisgender adult, what are they going to do to those kids?

So, I have no problem sticking my neck out there. I have no problem being the lightning rod because it takes attention away from those kids.

Such an attitude resonates with Giroux’s (2018) perspective, which emphasizes the responsibility of educators to cultivate an environment where students are equipped with the knowledge and courage to challenge despair and actively pursue practical expressions of hope.

Teachers’ Perspectives on the Future of SOGI Education

To explore the perspectives of these educators actively engaged in SOGI-inclusive practices regarding the future of SOGI, I asked them the following question:

How do you see the future of SOGI and your future engagement with that evolution?

Concerns Over Future Conservative Governance

Building on their responses, I engaged in further discussions to gain deeper insights. Participants used words like “optimism” (Phoenix, Maple), “cautiously optimistic” (Beacon), “concerned” (Willow), “still really worried” (Theo), “tenuous” (Atlas), “nerve-wracking and incredibly anxious” (Beacon), “fearful” (Fortress), “relieved” (Snow), and “a lot more

positive” (Maple). The interviewees unanimously expressed that the future of SOGI is “at the whim of the government” (Atlas), they indicated that the current support for SOGI education under the leadership of the NDP government provides a sense of stability. They expressed confidence that this government would not suppress SOGI education or spread misinformation. As a result, they believe that the short-term development of SOGI education is built on a relatively stable foundation, which alleviates some of their concerns: “The NDP government will continue to do the work. They won’t suppress it, and they will not spread misinformation.” (Phoenix). This is echoed by others: “I was concerned about the last election and what could have happened. I think if it had gone differently, I’d be even more concerned right now.” (Theo) “I feel a little more at ease now, but during the BC provincial election, I felt sick in my stomach.” (Maple)

Snow noted:

If you had asked me this a month ago, I would have been, I would have said, I’m scared shitless because I was really, really convinced the conservatives were going to win. That was, I think, the first time since I’ve been like a working professional that I felt that the election could really impact my work. So, I feel relieved, but obviously it was also scary to see the high percentage of conservative voters which means that there’s still so much resistance.

Despite their temporary optimism, the participants were acutely aware that this sense of security is transient. They expressed significant concerns regarding the potential impact of future national elections, particularly the risk of a government shift to the Conservative Party, which could have adverse implications for SOGI education. Theo emphasized the importance of remaining vigilant: “But I’m still really worried about what’s happening politically and the

pushback against SOGI. I think we definitely have to stay vigilant right now.” Atlas referenced the restrictive policies enacted in Alberta, highlighting the ethical dilemmas such policies create for educators:

The rhetoric they’ve been putting forward and the things the Conservative Party in BC wants to do are concerning. For example, in Alberta, teachers were required to inform parents if their child joined the GSA. I wouldn’t do that because most of my students aren’t out. So, I’d be fired for not following government protocol.

Beacon, who is actively involved in election advocacy, voiced deep concerns about the long-term implications of a Conservative Party victory:

The NDP can’t be in power forever, right? So, one day, the BC Conservatives will probably win an election. And that’s really scary because I know the people behind the BC Conservatives. And they’re the people in my community—the ones who show up to board meetings, the ones who call me a groomer, or the ones who threaten to have me arrested, and all this other stuff.

Highlighting the rapid rise of the BC Conservatives, Beacon expressed cautious hope: The fact that BC Conservatives went from zero seats to 44 seats—that’s history-making. I still have hope that most British Columbians, or at least the 45%-ish that voted for the BC Conservatives, aren’t actually anti-SOGI. I think it was just a side issue that their base wanted, and they latched onto it to kind of get that base motivated. So, fingers crossed that they’ll eventually kind of let it go. I was hoping they would let it go after the election, but the shadow ministry of parental rights kind of tells me that they didn’t.

Similarly, Willow expressed confidence in the institutional support her school and district offer but acknowledged the uncertainties posed by future elections: “We’re lucky that the NDP stayed in power, but who’s to say what will happen at the next election? If the Conservative Party wins the next one, maybe they’ll throw out SOGI.” Fortress highlighted the broader risks associated with political shifts, focusing on the amplification of hate rather than the removal of SOGI content:

The federal government doesn’t have any say provincially when it comes to SOGI, so that’s going to continue. What I’m more afraid of is the emboldening of bigotry when you have a bigot in power... I’m not really fearful about SOGI content being removed because that’s a provincial jurisdiction. I’m fearful of the emboldening of hate.

It seems that teachers are well-aware of the political dynamics behind SOGI-inclusive education, especially the rise of the “parental rights movement.” (Beacon) As Theo reminded:

In the last school board election here, there was quite a large group running together who talked a lot about “family values” and “appropriate literature in the classroom” in their panels and platforms. If we’re not watching these things and paying attention, these groups are going to gain places of power.

Beacon added,

I noticed that the BC Conservatives announced their shadow cabinet today, and they created a new ministry called the Ministry of Parental Rights. I found that really interesting because “parental rights” has always been kind of a dog whistle for anti-SOGI stuff...It really tells us what they would have done if they had been elected—

and what they might do when they eventually get elected. That's really nerve-wracking and makes me incredibly anxious.

Influence of U.S. Rhetoric on Canadian Politics

The participants noted the spill-over effect of anti-Trans rhetoric from the United States and its potential to shape Canadian political and social climates: "The anti-trans rhetoric coming out of the US and everything that's happening is trickling over. I have friends who are afraid," explains Phoenix, Willow states: "Especially with the rhetoric coming out of the States and how that can influence our political climate, I am personally concerned."

Atlas elaborated on the tangible impact of these influences on Canadian provinces:

We can say, "Oh, that's happening in the States. Oh, yeah, Trump was elected, but that's in the States, not a big deal that we're here in Canada where we're safe." But no, what happens in the US comes up to Canada, and we can see that in Saskatchewan. We can see that in New Brunswick. We can see that in Alberta. We can see where all the human rights are being denied in those provinces and how that is affecting us here in Canada. Yes, that's one of my worries.

Fortress shared a personal experience illustrating how U.S. political events directly influenced her local environment: "The day after Donald Trump was elected, students targeted me here at school. And that was a president being elected in another country, yet it affected the atmosphere here." This shows that the participants' concerns are not unfounded.

Hope for Long-Term Resilience of SOGI Education

Despite these challenges, the participants expressed confidence in the long-term resilience of SOGI education. They believe that its foundational principles of inclusivity and diversity

ensure its permanence: “It’s not going away. You can try to make it go away, but it’s not going away” (Phoenix). Just like the existence of LGBTQ2S+ people will never be diminished, “There’s never anything that’s the end of us. There are always going to be people. There are always going to be gay people. There are always going to be trans people” (Beacon). Beacon pointed to historical examples to emphasize the enduring progress of social justice movements:

Sometimes, we don’t win... There’s going to be a lot of bumps and hiccups. Anita Bryant won that referendum; they passed really homophobic laws. But we kept fighting and we overturned them, and we progress... I go back to that, we keep—I think ultimately, we win battles. They win battles. We win wars, right? We win time and time again.

The participants emphasized that diversity in SOGI is an inherent part of human nature. This understanding underscores the legitimacy and permanence of SOGI education. Regardless of the challenges posed by anti-SOGI efforts, participants firmly believe that these initiatives are fundamentally misaligned with the reality of human diversity. As Phoenix succinctly stated: “It’s really a losing battle on their part.”

Key Finding #4

The fourth Key Finding can be summarized as follows: participants expressed significant concerns about the impact of political climate changes on the future of SOGI education. They noted that the progress of SOGI education is influenced not only by local politics but also by international discourse and actions that stigmatize or fear diversity in gender and sexual orientation. Despite these challenges, the participants emphasized their unwavering commitment to advancing SOGI education.

In the current political environment, some teachers choose to exercise caution when publicly expressing support for SOGI education due to concerns about professional security or personal privacy. As Willow explained: “I just think a lot of people are concerned about putting themselves out there in that kind of public position, especially with this political climate being in limbo. People don’t want to be targets.” Nonetheless, many participants demonstrated a firm resolve to continue their advocacy efforts. For instance, Willow reaffirmed their commitment: “I’m going to keep fighting for Rainbow Club.” Similarly, Theo highlighted the challenges faced in provinces with restrictive policies and the ethical dilemmas they might encounter:

I don’t know what I would do if I were in a province like Saskatchewan right now, where you’re required to inform parents or kids aren’t allowed to change their name or pronouns without parental permission. I just wouldn’t do that... I think I just get in trouble all the time.

Atlas articulated a steadfast commitment to aligning their practice with human rights principles:

My future engagement with that evolution is going to be sticking to the BC Human Rights Code, paragraph or clause 8, subsection 2, which talks about that no service or facility shall be denied to a person based on race, sex, gender, and all these different aspects. And I see education as a service, and so it cannot be denied to someone based on their gender identity or sexual orientation. And therefore, nor should the education itself be exclusive.

When reflecting on the broader implications of potential setbacks, participants emphasized the emotional toll and ethical implications of witnessing regressions in SOGI

education: “It’s disheartening to think of all the teachers who’ve witnessed the whole transformation, all the efforts that have been made, if there’s a backlash, it would be very hurtful to see all the kids suffer again” (Atlas).

Overall, while participants acknowledged the volatility of the political environment and the associated challenges, they remained resolute in their advocacy for inclusive and equitable education.

Leadership and Peer Support in SOGI Implementation

In interviews with participants, the responses highlighted the significance of school leadership in shaping the implementation of SOGI practices. Based on the collected data, I will primarily discuss the leadership support for SOGI through two key lenses: administrative leadership and union leadership.

Administration’s Role in Supporting SOGI Practices

Participants consistently emphasized that administrative plays an important role in fostering individual development in SOGI-inclusive teaching practices. For example, “Leadership is super important. Leadership through school boards, leadership through superintendents,” (Phoenix) While participants themselves expressed unwavering commitment and enthusiasm for SOGI, asserting that external support does not determine their ability to practice SOGI, they underscored the importance of this factor in influencing the attitudes of “middle ground” teachers who may feel uncertain or hesitant. The lack of administrative support was described as fostering a culture of fear among less confident or less experienced teachers, as Beacon noted:

For those teachers who are in the middle, who are nervous, they’re not getting the support from admin. And so that makes them feel more nervous—that if they do it

and that parent complains, then they're not going to get the support they want and need.

Lack of administrative support also hinders collective work on SOGI because some teachers might see it as an optional initiative instead of their professional responsibility: "Because right now, it's some really, really dedicated, good-hearted people doing good work, but it needs to be more of a collective effort. And also, probably some teachers might see this as the actual work." (Phoenix)

Nonetheless, participants unanimously recognized the positive influence of leadership and peer support in advancing SOGI practices. They also suggested that leadership attitudes are often shaped by the broader local cultural context. As Beacon observed:

It also depends on local to local. Like our BCTF leadership has been quite strong. But my local has been quite strong because we had a president who was just very confident and strong in his position on this. Other locals aren't, right? And so it really depends on what your own local culture is like.

The level of support each participant received from their school districts varied. Teachers who were steadfast in implementing SOGI practices appeared to receive more support from administrators. As Atlas noted: "There have been parent complaints that have been brought to my principal, and he's had conversations with me. And whenever I explained my side of the situation, he's like, 'Yeah, okay, not a problem. I'll take care of it'."

Similarly, Willow stated that the successful development of the Rainbow Club was inseparable from the support of school administrators:

I was very lucky to end up at a school where the principal was like, "Cool, that sounds like a great idea. Let's do it." They are being such an awesome admin,

honestly—super supportive. And like all those projects I mentioned, where I have to go buy stuff like shirts and whatnot, they are helping fund that.

However, participants acknowledged that not every school administrator in BC is equally supportive on SOGI issues. This sentiment is reflected in their expressions of feeling fortunate for their current supportive environments. Many participants indicated that they had previously worked in schools where the administration was less supportive, which hindered their SOGI practices. As Atlas shared:

Right now, I have very supportive administration. In the past, I have not. And I'm not going to give specifics on the people, genders, or areas. I don't want to go into that depth. I will just say that... There have been admins who have not been morally aligned with my standpoint and my viewpoints in the classroom.

Challenges in Administrative Leadership

While some participants did not deny the critical importance of administrative support, they also pointed out issues associated with administrators. Theo stated that although administrative support is significant, peer support seems to have greater longevity: “Admin support is important too, but administrators come and go—they're usually only there for a few years before being replaced. However, if you're teaching, you're often with the same colleagues for much longer.”

Some participants criticized administrators for their tendency to appease both sides during conflicts, particularly in situations where parents push back against SOGI education or other social justice topics. Theo observed: “Because sometimes administration doesn't want to deal with bullying situations—they just want it to go away.”

Similarly, Beacon noted:

They'll treat any kind of oppressive behavior, whether it be racist, sexist, homophobic, or whatever, as just being mean. They'll issue consequences for being mean but not address or teach or help kids navigate the prejudice and the stereotypes that led to that homophobia or whatever oppression or bias led to that behavior.

Snow stated:

I would say like 75% of my admin are like super, super on board, which is amazing. They still sometimes have to kind of rein me in because I'm like, but we need to do this, this, and this, and this. And they're like, actually, let's just like take it one step at a time because they're looking at it from more like a way wider lens of like parents and et cetera.

Phoenix provided an example to illustrate the administrative challenges in implementing SOGI-related initiatives just as Snow described:

A simple example is if your school wants rainbow steps or a crosswalk or whatever, there's this long application process you have to go through to get it done—to get the paint, get it approved, and all the rest of it, just to get the money or whatever... but why are we doing this as one-offs? Why don't we have something like a standard application or whatever? This is all happening on the ground with teachers. That's where this work happens. It's not happening at the administrative level—not really.

This assertion from Phoenix can actually be supported by the collected data. When asked Willow whether Rainbow Club was initially their idea to establish the Rainbow Leadership Club, they confirmed that it was, although their admin was very supportive. However, many participants indicated that activities or practices of this kind are often initiated voluntarily by teachers.

Beacon analyzed why some administrators display ambiguous attitudes towards SOGI issues. They emphasized that many administrators lack the necessary background, as social justice issues were not a prominent focus during their careers: “Admin tend to be people who are later in their career and haven’t really had to navigate this in their career. Social justice issues are not something that a lot of older teachers have ever really thought about.”

Furthermore, Beacon pointed out that administrators are often more vulnerable to external pressures because they lack the union-like collective agreements and protections available to teachers: “Admin don’t always have the same protections as teachers do. Like, we have a really strong union... But generally, [the union has] been really concrete: we support SOGI, we support queer teachers, we want safe classrooms for schools.”

However, they also acknowledged the positive role played by senior management and trustees in fostering an equitable environment: “Senior management, I’ve found in our district, tends to be pretty good. Like, they have a good kind of lens. They are very mindful of equity and how oppression works in systems, for the most part.”

Union Leadership’s Role in SOGI Advocacy

Many participants indicated that the union is currently robust in its support for SOGI inclusion. Phoenix emphasized that when discussing SOGI and leadership, the primary leadership role comes from the union: “So, when we talk about leadership, it’s the union that’s showing the leadership, right? It’s the teachers’ union that’s doing the leadership—it’s not coming from the administrative end of things as much.”

Atlas elaborated on this perspective:

A slogan came out a few years ago when we were contemplating strike action because a lot of people were saying, “Oh, the [union] is trying to do this,” or “The BCTF is trying to do that.” And we, as teachers, were like, “Well, we are the BCTF, right? Without us, there would be no BCTF.” And so, the union is the teachers, and that’s where the leadership should come from—teachers, for the teachers.

Participants also highlighted the significant role and strong stance of the BCTF in promoting inclusive education. Beacon remarked: “I think the union has responded really well to SOGI right now. Because it’s relatively safe for them to do that right now.” Phoenix further noted: “The BCTF is really, really active in terms of creating equity, not just for students but also for members who identify with that community.”

Theo emphasized the critical role unions play in supporting teachers seeking justice: Especially in BC, if it’s part of the job we’re supposed to be doing and it’s in the curriculum—which all these topics are—then our union is very strong in backing that up... I think they’re most supportive when things are really high and charged.

Similarly, Atlas acknowledged the union’s role in mediating contentious situations: In extreme cases, if parents are upset and want the teacher to be investigated because they feel that the conversations or materials aren’t appropriate, the union can step in and be like, “Okay, hold up,” and mediate that a little bit as well.

In addition to direct advocacy, participants highlighted another significant function of the union: creating platforms for those with lived experiences to share their perspectives and contribute to resource development. Theo explained:

I think another way the union can provide support is by creating opportunities for people with lived experience to share their stories, become part of committees, and

help develop resources to share with teachers, right? The union can provide different avenues for people to support one another.

Beacon highlights that unions, unlike school management, are not required to balance the demands of multiple stakeholders, enabling them to adopt firmer, values-based stances:

Management's always going to be in a weird space where they're management, right? They're trying to make everybody happy. The union doesn't have that. The fact that like they don't have to please everybody, that they're allowed to kind of stand by their values in a much stronger way and that like they represent teachers.

Challenges in Union Advocacy

While unions were acknowledged for their strong stance on SOGI inclusion, Beacon expresses concern regarding the sustainability of union support for SOGI, particularly if societal attitudes or union leadership were to become less progressive: "If this isn't something that's like popular for them to do, are they still going to do it? And the answer is maybe, maybe not, right?" They highlight the contingency of advocacy on political trends and the electoral dynamics within unions, which can shift leadership priorities: "Union leadership is always elected, right? And so it really bends and moves to like the will of whoever's in that room who's doing the electing."

Additionally, they note a tendency within unions to take a neutral or noncommittal stance on controversial issues:

We have a big kind of internal thing happening in our union around like Palestine and Israel. And the union has been very, like, really trying to walk the middle of the road on that issue. And I see them do that. So, when it's not a popular thing, you're really careful about not taking a position.

Key Finding #5

The fifth key finding can summarize as follows: Administrative support was found to be a pivotal factor in encouraging teachers, particularly those hesitant to implement SOGI-related initiatives. However, challenges such as administrators' tendency to appease conflicting parties or a lack of social justice training were seen as barriers. Conversely, unions like the BCTF were recognized for their robust and values-based advocacy for SOGI inclusion, providing critical backing to teachers during contentious situations. Nevertheless, concerns about the sustainability of union support in changing political climates and their occasional neutrality on divisive issues underline the need for consistent and proactive leadership at all levels.

Teacher's Suggestions for Teacher Candidates and New Teachers

In addition to strategies for classroom and school-wide practices, I sought to understand what general advice participants might have for teacher candidates and new educators regarding navigating external pressures or implementing SOGI-inclusive practices. To explore this, I posed the following questions:

What kinds of advice would you give to teacher candidates wanting to become an agent of change within the school community?

Where do you seek support when you feel burned out?

The participants' responses are summarized as follows:

Practice is Key to Learning How to Teach

Participants emphasized the importance of practice in becoming a skilled educator. Phoenix noted: "The way you really learn to be a teacher is by teaching. That's how you do it. The university's not going to teach you everything—you've got to get out there." They

further highlighted that the current societal and school environments are more inclusive than in the past, and it provides a better foundation for teacher candidates and new teachers:

“They’re living in a world that is much more accepting, where there are more role models and more representation of people in that community. And that’s reflected in our schools, our students, and our staff.” Leveraging this inclusivity, they advised new teachers to broaden their perspectives and cultivate inclusivity by engaging with students from diverse backgrounds: “Not just inclusion of that, but also of students with special needs, students of color—all of those things. It’s such a kaleidoscope in a classroom.”

Similarly, Willow encouraged teachers to start small and emphasized the importance of persistence, even in the face of challenges: “If it’s something you think is important, it’s something worth fighting for. Don’t be afraid to start small.” They shared an example of their initiative during the COVID-19 restrictions to create a new club, showing that even under seemingly insurmountable conditions, it is possible to find ways to achieve goals.

Participants noted that sustained efforts can eventually create lasting impact, making initiatives resilient to external changes once they are well-established.

Commitment to Values and Continuous Reflection

Several participants stressed the importance of standing firm in one’s beliefs and continually reflecting on practice. Theo stated: “Stand behind what you believe in, know your stuff, and keep reflecting on it.” Similarly, Fortress encouraged bravery and resilience: “Be great. Be brave. It’s not always going to be easy, so just be brave. Do what feels right, because it usually is.” Theo also cautioned against expecting immediate change in teaching philosophy or practice, emphasizing that integrating new knowledge and ideas takes time: “Be kind to yourself—allow yourself the time to learn, grow, and gradually integrate these

things into your teaching. But don't expect it to happen overnight after just one Pro-D session or one amazing resource." They highlighted that SOGI practices in a school district should not be limited to isolated events but rather integrated as a natural and ongoing part of education: "Make sure it's not an event but a natural part of what we talk about and part of their education."

Self-Compassion and Embracing Mistakes

Many participants underscored the importance of self-compassion, particularly as mistakes are inevitable during professional growth. Respondents also emphasized that teachers should not let the fear of making mistakes deter them from trying: "When you mess up, here's how you can navigate that. Like, don't make a big show of it. Just be like, 'I'm sorry,' correct, and move on." (Beacon) Theo emphasized: "Be kind to yourself. It's okay that you don't know everything or how to teach it properly, and you're going to make mistakes." They shared a personal example:

I actually did that yesterday. And I know this student's pronouns—I've worked with them for three years. But I also sometimes call students by the wrong name, like a name from five years ago. So, I think now, at the beginning of the year, when we're first sharing pronouns and introducing ourselves...I just say to them, "I apologize in advance if I get your pronouns wrong or if I call you the wrong name. I'm sorry."

Phoenix shared their own experiences, stating, "It really just takes practice, and eventually, it's no big deal. I still mess up, though—I mess up in front of students all the time." They offered an example of accidentally misgendering a student:

I have a non-binary student, and I accidentally said “she” instead of “they.” I immediately corrected myself, saying, “Oh, I’m so sorry. I meant ‘they,’ and they responded, ‘No, it’s fine.’ As long as you acknowledge it, it’s okay.

Beacon affirmed that students are generally forgiving as long as teachers demonstrate genuine effort:

I’ve never heard a kid say, like, “I’m really mad that this one teacher accidentally slipped up once and called me the wrong pronoun. How dare they?” What you do hear, though, is kids who know that the teachers aren’t trying. Or the teachers just ignore it. Or the teachers don’t ask and they assume... Kids are humans, and they understand that you make mistakes.

Beacon identified perfectionism as a barrier for teachers in attempting and achieving progress:

I think that teachers are kind of our own worst enemy sometimes because we scare the bejesus out of ourselves and don’t... We’re also often sometimes perfectionists, and if we can’t do it perfectly, then we don’t do it at all.

Engage in Broader Social and Political Movements

As noted in the previous section, political factors significantly influence teachers’ perspectives on the future of SOGI education. Beacon emphasized the importance of engaging in systemic change through policy advocacy and union activities. They described this broader engagement as a means to complement classroom teaching while fostering a sense of agency and fulfillment: “My bucket filled by doing that other stuff that influences policy, that is bigger picture. And that’s how I feel like a bit more powerful than just what’s

happening in my classroom.” Their involvement extended to participating in election campaigns, as a strategy for fostering change beyond their immediate environment:

This election, I was like in the office, knocking on doors, making phone calls, because it gave me a sense of I have a small but real role to advance good policy and safe schools as a larger picture.

Additionally, they described persistent communication with policymakers as a critical part of their advocacy: “I’m constantly talking to our conservative MLAs, like constantly emailing them, constantly bugging them. I texted one of them earlier today. I’m just constantly in their face because it makes me feel like I can influence folks.” Theo emphasized the voting rights by states, “We need to make sure we’re getting out and voting, and that we know who’s in charge of these decisions.”

Key Finding #6

The sixth key finding in this study can be formulated in the following way:

Participants suggested that teacher candidates and novice teachers remain steadfast in their beliefs and actively engage in broader social and political movements.

They emphasized that practical experience is indispensable for mastering the art of teaching and transforming pedagogical mindsets. Moreover, the inclusive attitudes of younger generations and the increasingly welcoming societal and school environments provide fertile ground for fostering these practices. However, participants also cautioned that the sustainable integration of SOGI education into teaching practices requires persistence, continuous reflection, and a recognition that immediate transformation is unlikely. Teachers were encouraged to embrace imperfections and view mistakes as an inevitable part of professional growth. Additionally, systemic advocacy, such as participation in policy-making

and union activities, was identified as a critical avenue for supplementing classroom efforts and fostering a sense of agency. Nevertheless, such engagement demands significant dedication and resilience to navigate the challenges posed by political opposition.

Specific Approaches to Handling External Resistance

Calm Firmness

Willow highlighted the importance of being open about educational goals while being firm and respectful when shutting down misinformation or stigmatizing rhetoric:

I think continuing to be open about what we're actually doing and then being firm and polite—for lack of a better word—about shutting it down is important. A parent very soon after that reached out to the district to complain about one of my colleagues who has a pansexual pride flag hanging in her window. And he apparently said, “Well, if you're allowed to hang that, we should be allowed to hang the Nazi flag at school.” And my district—and this is why I love working here—was basically like, “Hey, one of those flags represents hate, and the other represents inclusion and support for others. So, they are not the same thing.”

Similarly, Beacon suggested handling hostile comments with calm firmness:

I've had people say the most horrendous, like horrendous things to me. And you just kind of have to be like, okay. Yeah, okay, that's interesting, right? You don't agree with them, you don't condone it, you don't just smile and nod, but you say, “I disagree,” and move on.

Theo stressed the importance of not internalizing or personalizing the resistance, recalling supportive advice they received early in their career:

It's about learning strategies to not internalize the pushback or take it personally when parents are pushing back... When I was a brand-new teacher, I had some older colleagues who were great. They were probably about the age I am now, and they would say things like, "Oh, don't let that get to you."

Emphasizing Mutual Respect with Open Attitude

Another effective strategy involves emphasizing mutual respect. As Willow explained:

I've found that in the few situations I've specifically had to deal with, being matter-of-fact works best. Like I said, acknowledging that you don't have to agree, but you need to be respectful. You can have your own beliefs, you can make your own choices, but that doesn't mean you can insult someone for thinking differently than you.

Atlas pointed out that the important of avoiding shutting dialogue down, they reminded as a teacher, striving for inclusivity is always a priority, but there are moments when a student or community member says something unexpected that can sometimes lead to a sense of defensiveness: "less effective strategies or tactics would be to shut that person down and say, "Well, you're wrong." stating that doesn't help the conversation, doesn't help keep that dialogue going."

Evidence-based Approaches

Theo emphasized the importance of using academic research to establish credibility and support their work. They shared their strategy for addressing insincere parental pushback:

Something I've learned from other instances of parental pushback is to send them three academic journal articles. On the topic, I say, "You know what, your questions are great. Here are three peer-reviewed articles on the current research in this area. I'd love to discuss it further with you after you've had a chance to read them, just so we're on the same page." No one ever wants to talk to me after I send that email—they back off immediately.

They also noted that this approach is particularly effective when dealing with parents who present themselves as professionals:

It's those parents that I send that type of response to. I wouldn't send that kind of answer to someone who is genuinely inquiring. But if the tone is like, "I know better," I want to clarify that it very much depends on the parent.

In addition, Atlas emphasized using curricular frameworks to communicate with resistant parents:

I talk to them about the curricular competencies. I explain where this is coming from, that it's not just a personal agenda—although it is a personal agenda, it's one backed up by the BC curriculum. We have those conversations about why this is important. They don't walk away happy, but I know that I will be supported because I have that government document backing me up.

Key Finding #7

The seventh key finding can summarize as follows: Building support networks is a vital element in the successful implementation of SOGI education. These networks can take various forms, including utilizing academic literature as theoretical backing, leveraging

educational policies to support curriculum planning, fostering peer support, and extending connections beyond the classroom.

A recurring theme in the interviews was the importance of developing robust support networks as an essential component of successful SOGI practice. Teachers emphasized that these networks are critical in navigating challenges, fostering resilience, and sustaining long-term commitment to inclusive education.

Beacon noted that even confident SOGI educators face ongoing challenges, including student resistance:

Developing that strong network is really important. I don't mean just within men, but with other teachers. Most, a lot of my friends are very confident teaching SOGI stuff. But there's still pushback. There are still kids that will try your patience. There are still kids that push boundaries. I have a friend who's non-binary, who's misgendered like every day that they're at work—it's just constant.

The support of colleagues helps to alleviate these challenges: "Being able to bounce ideas off of each other and even just sometimes complaining to each other is really, it makes you feel like you're not alone" (Beacon). Phoenix highlighted another form of mutual support among teachers that allows teachers to leverage each other's strengths and comfort levels: "I've gone into other teachers' classes and taught the sexual health stuff because they didn't feel comfortable with it. We just switched."

Theo offered a practical recommendation for seeking peer input:

Seek out colleagues to talk things through with. Don't sit alone with it. Don't respond to an email on your own—have a colleague look it over, especially if it's an emotional response. That advice applies to all teachers in all situations.

Furthermore, Beacon recommended expanding support networks beyond the educational context to include advocacy groups and unions: “I would also recommend finding support networks outside of education. Whether that be, like, queer community groups, whether that be, like, the union is technically still education, but it’s not the classroom.”

Similarly, Fortress highlighted the importance of thorough preparation and institutional support, citing an example of taking students to a Pride Parade: “I made sure my union rep was there. I had my MLA, my MP—I made sure I covered my bases. I ensured I had approval from the board office, admin support, and even the PAC walked with us.”

Outcomes

In this chapter, I conceptualize key findings from the existing literature and develop three strategies for teachers: pedagogical, systemic, and leadership-oriented, each of which offers unique, yet interrelated approaches to advancing SOGI-inclusive education. I also critically reflect on my own experiences during the research process. Finally, I offer targeted recommendations for teachers, administrators, policymakers, and future research directions for the future development of SOGI.

Contextualizing the Findings in Broader Literature

In this section, I showed how my findings support, extend, or question what is already known in the field by placing them in a broader academic context and relating them to existing research. This approach helps to highlight the contribution of this study and its relevance to ongoing discussions on SOGI inclusive education and related topics.

Pedagogical Strategy: Connecting Curricula to Lived Experiences for Authentic Engagement

Drawing from the findings of this study, teachers emphasized that SOGI is not a standalone curriculum but rather a resource, a mindset or a way of talking about things for fostering inclusion in schools. Thus, SOGI should be integrated into the existing curriculum as an ongoing process rather than treated as an “one-time event” (Theo). In order to bring SOGI content into the classroom and create a resilient connection to daily life, teachers highlight the importance of introducing lived experiences or personal stories through storybooks, documentaries, and music that include minority narratives, inviting guest speakers to class, or encouraging students to create their own stories to help them reflect on their lived experiences and connect back to theories. These methods bring diverse voices into

a classroom, especially in a structure predominantly dominated by one majority group (for example, cisgender or white), and also provide students with a platform to share their voices and encourage them to think critically about the power structures present in society.

This finding aligns closely with the principles of critical pedagogy, which emphasize the importance of connecting educational content to students' lived experiences as a means of fostering critical consciousness. The relationship between knowledge and students' experiences has long been a central concern of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy critiques what Cruik (1983) terms "positive knowledge," rooted in empirical or traditional frameworks, which often fails to meaningfully engage students. In response to student disengagement and resistance, educators often shift their focus from teaching positive knowledge to maintaining order and control. Giroux (2018) contends that in such pedagogical practices, the uniqueness of students' voices and life histories is ignored and erased under the guise of efficiency-driven ideologies that prioritize measurement, management, and control. Giroux (2018) further emphasizes that this approach struggles to engage students effectively, particularly because such knowledge often lacks relevance to their everyday experiences.

This study demonstrates that BC teachers' exploration of strategies to value students' lived experiences aligns with the principles of critical pedagogy. For example, Theo's storytelling method emerges as an effective approach to bridging knowledge with students' everyday experiences. They observed that in their social justice class, when students were given the option to read storybooks reflecting their own life experiences and encouraged to make connections with them, their genuine emotions were triggered. Moreover, having students create a story based on their feelings proved to capture their attention more

effectively than writing a reflection or a report. I believe the fundamental reason why this approach is more effective is that it creates a platform for “dialogue,” offering students a means to connect with and express their life experiences. As Freire (2000) asserted: “Dialogue is the essence of revolutionary action’ (p. 135, Footnote 10). Conservative educational theory acknowledges the existence of racial, gender, and other forms of conflict between different groups. However, Giroux (2018) critiques this perspective for promoting a notion of national unity based on fictive harmony, which disregards the concept of culture as a terrain of struggle. In other words, conservative educational theory denies students a genuine platform for dialogue by ignoring or suppressing anything perceived as challenging the so-called common interests and ideals that define the nation. Under such conditions, harmony is achieved at the expense of oppressing minority voices. This connects to another key focus of critical pedagogy: the relationship between knowledge and power. As Gabel (2002) states, “The early stance of critical pedagogy is that liberation is freedom from coercion, or power relations, and that it demarginalizes groups who traditionally have been marginalized” (p. 192). Giroux (1983) asserting that “schools are social sites characterized by overt and hidden curricula, tracking, dominant and subordinate culture, and competing class ideologies” (p. 260). Since the turn of the 21st century, Biesta (2006) critiques the humanist tradition in education for prioritizing socialization at the expense of subjectification, arguing that it imposes predefined norms of humanity, reducing individuals to mere “instances” of an already established essence, thereby neglecting the uniqueness of each person (p. 355–358).

Educators, therefore, must not only reflect on schools as sites of power, but also guide students in analyzing how complex historical, cultural, and political contexts shape the meanings attributed to their lived experiences. Giroux (1988) emphasizes the need to view

schools as socially constructed sites of contestation that actively shape and produce lived experiences, challenging both visible and hidden mechanisms of power. This perspective is also reflected in my findings. I discovered that senior teachers, such as those teaching social justice in grades 10–12, take students a step beyond personal reflection on their own experiences by combining these reflections with theoretical frameworks to analyze the complex power dynamics underlying social contexts. For instance, Theo encouraged students to examine systemic and structural prejudice, explore what drives discrimination, identify different types of discrimination, and distinguish systemic discrimination from interpersonal discrimination. They prompted students to reflect on seemingly small, everyday issues closely related to their lives, such as why restrooms were segregated during certain historical periods. They also encouraged them to consider why, even though more gender-neutral restrooms have appeared on campuses, they are often combined with accessible restrooms or located in inconvenient, hard-to-reach areas of buildings. Similarly, when exploring the topic of misogyny, Beacon encouraged his students to share their own or others' lived experiences. For example, several teenage girls expressed that they had experienced street harassment. These discussions demonstrate how critical pedagogy can serve as a theoretical foundation for SOGI-inclusive education and how its principles are being practically applied. Although many of my participants were unfamiliar with the term “transformative intellectual” (Giroux, 2016), they have naturally and spontaneously aligned with its principles by treating students as critical agents, making knowledge problematic, utilizing critical and affirming dialogue, and advocating for the struggle toward a qualitatively better world for all people.

In addition, I would like to highlight the potential of UDL as an effective tool for connecting students' lived experiences to their learning. Even when employing strategies

aimed at integrating students' life experiences, the creativity and ingenuity of teaching design remain critical. Essays or reports with assigning topics may fail to engage all students because they risk disconnecting from learners' real-life experiences and neglecting their actual needs. UDL recognizes the need to create opportunities for the inclusion of diverse learners by providing curricula and instructional activities that allow for multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement (King-Sears, 2008). For example, Theo employed a “pizza menu” approach in their social justice class, students could select a social justice issue they cared about, much like choosing their preferred pizza toppings. They then provided a variety of content options—such as research, fictional characters, poems, songs, and quotes—that reflected the chosen themes, allowing students to actively explore and synthesize the material. This approach exemplifies the UDL principle of multiple means of engagement, emphasizing intrinsic motivation and encouraging students to participate more actively in the learning process.

Systemic Strategy: Advocating for Sociopolitical Change to Support SOGI Practices

In addition to pedagogical strategies, a focus on changing broader social and political structures to support SOGI practices represents a forward-thinking perspective.

Within the findings of this study, it became evident that in addressing SOGI-related issues, avoiding the political sphere is neither feasible nor necessary. Therefore, teachers should seize the political dimensions of their work and actively claim their voice within these contested spaces. The problem is, teachers might feel threatened by the “radical” nature of critical pedagogy, “It’s a very political landscape. It’s something that can be really daunting for teachers” (Fovet, 2022, 32:28). When Butler (2017) talked about demonstrations that oppose police brutality against black men and women in the United States, she said, “I see

how often those demonstrations are called “riots” or “unrest” and how quickly they can be shut down for reasons of ‘security’” (p. 4). This proves that when faced with socialist issues, the power institutions that have lost the democratic spirit want people to remain quiet, so people should not avoid the political arena themselves, and SOGI issues are no exception. Resistance to connecting education with politics is frequently echoed in the rhetoric of anti-SOGI and anti-LGBTQ rights activists. For instance, under the guise of “family values,” assertions like “Parents should have the final say in what their children are taught, not schools or the government” (Dobson, 2004) frame schools as politically tainted spaces that threaten the innocence of children, while family values are portrayed as sanctuaries of purity and virtue.

In reality, denying the political nature and socializing function of education risks transforming schools into instruments of oppression. Giroux (2018) has long argued:

Right-wing religious groups are currently trying to institute school prayer, remove certain books from school libraries, and include certain forms of religious teachings in the science curricula. Of course, different demands are made by feminists, ecologists, minorities, and other interest groups who believe that schools should teach women's studies, courses on the environment, or Black history. In short, schools are not neutral sites, and teachers cannot assume the posture of being neutral either (p. 186).

The tensions between conservative advocacy for traditional subject learning and family values, and progressive support for social justice curricula featuring queer and feminist content, underscore that “schools are contested spheres that embody and express a struggle over what forms of authority, types of knowledge, forms of moral regulation, and

versions of the past and future should be legitimated and transmitted to students” (Giroux, 2018, p. 186). This reality is further validated by contemporary political developments. For example, the leader of the BC Conservative Party utilized anti-SOGI rhetoric as a “political advantage in picking on kids and families and teachers and schools who are just trying to do their best for kids who are at risk of suicide” (Eby, 2023). This also underscores the inescapable political nature of the SOGI discourse.

Ironically, based on the lived experiences of participants in this study, anti-SOGI groups appear to perceive queer flags as inherently more political than stickers, actively resisting their display. If Todd Parr’s *The Family Book*, which depicts diverse family structures, is criticized as being politically charged and accused of sexualizing children, it raises a critical question: why are heterosexual narratives, such as *Snow White*, which have been traditionally read to children, considered apolitical and emblematic of “innocence”? The assertion that “childhood innocence” must be preserved assumes a universal, apolitical standard of appropriateness for children. However, this standard is deeply shaped by dominant ideologies. Stories like *Snow White* and *Cinderella* are not neutral; they perpetuate heteronormative ideals, rigid gender roles, and narrow definitions of family structures. These stories are hailed as “classic” and “innocent”, they normalise particular worldviews while excluding others. In contrast, books like *The Book of the Family* that simply depict diverse family structures are labelled “political”, a clear double standard was exposed.

Pro-SOGI teachers have learned that the trajectory of SOGI is intrinsically tied to the broader political climate. They actively engage in broader community activities and advocate for change through union involvement, trustee elections, and provincial government campaigns.

As Butler (2017) states:

So, in the moment when we might want to retreat and find consolation among the like-minded, we need to reach out more effectively to persuade people that constitutional democracy and a common commitment to equality and freedom are goods worth fighting for and that cohabitation implies an affirmation of our ethnic and racial diversity as well as our religious diversity (p. 3–4).

Recognizing the Crucial Role of “Middle-Ground Teachers”

Initially, this research set out to explore strategies for addressing parental resistance to SOGI-inclusive education, based on the assumption that parents were the primary source of opposition. It was presumed that the teaching community had largely reached a consensus on SOGI practices. Surprisingly, the findings reveal that teachers, too, can be sources of resistance within the teaching community. Teachers who consistently practice SOGI-inclusive education, resiliently navigating systemic limitations and institutional resistance, are not in the majority. Many teachers occupy an undecided “middle ground,” while a minority remain actively resistant. Pro-SOGI teachers often transcend the limitations of school systems and leadership. They confidently use SOGI-friendly resources and books, some even design innovative ways to integrate SOGI topics, and many of them mention that they have never used SOGI 123 or BCTF’s pre-defined online course plans because they have created their own path. Contrary to initial assumptions, these pioneer teachers are not exclusively queer teachers, and some are staunch allies. The study found that pioneer teachers expressed a strong desire to get centrist teachers “on board” on SOGI issues. However, this is not always achieved because various factors affect the decision-making process of middle-ground teachers. I boldly hypothesize that in a school environment

characterized by weak leadership on SOGI issues, the interplay between two psychological concepts— the “Abilene Paradox” (Harvey, 1988) and “groupthink” (Janis, 1972)—plays a significant role in shaping this specific context.

Abilene Paradox refers to “Organizations frequently take actions in contradiction to what they really want to do and therefore defeat the very purposes they are trying to achieve” (Harvey, 1988, p. 2). Middle-ground teachers may believe that they will encounter resistance from within or without and thus choose collective silence. Harvey (1988) points out that:

The fear of taking risks that may result in our separation from others is at the core of the paradox. We frequently fail to take action in an organizational setting because we fear that the actions we take may result in our separation from others, or, in the language of Mr. Porter, we are afraid of being tabbed as ‘disloyal’ or are afraid of being ostracized as “non-team players” (p. 6).

This is consistent with the phenomenon of groupthink (Weaving & Gelfand, 2024), which describes minority groups experiencing greater stress, more stringent surveillance, and harsher punishment for deviance because they are viewed as a threat to majority group members, defined as “the feeling of being surveilled, judged harshly, and fearing excessive punishment for wrongdoing” (p. 5). The middle ground teachers may hesitate to introduce SOGI content in the classroom or advocate for related policies, even when they personally support the legitimacy of SOGI-inclusive education. This reluctance often stems from a fear of organizational isolation or external threats. This fear is not unfounded, as history is filled with countless cases of individuals being punished for questioning the status quo: Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life in prison for being seen as a disruptive force; Margaret Sanger was arrested multiple times for championing birth control. Although these figures and their

causes ultimately gained immense social acceptance and progression, it came at great personal cost.

Within this study, my participants shared experiences of targeted harassment, and, in some cases, resignations by pioneer teachers unable to tolerate administrators' inaction toward homophobic remarks by colleagues. In the context of the Abilene Paradox, Kim explains that individuals avoid expressing their genuine desires or opinions—especially those requiring accountability—in order to escape responsibility. Instead, they conform to a misconceived collective reality, partly to avoid such risks.

Groupthink “occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment. Groups affected by groupthink ignore alternatives and tend to take irrational actions that dehumanize other groups” (Janis, 1972, p. 9). Within the context of SOGI education, LGBTQ2S+ students, queer educators, and teachers advocating for SOGI practices constitute minority groups. I believe that when middle-ground teachers lack the courage to advocate for change, groupthink provides individuals with a sense of comfort, leading them to rationalize that the current decisions are acceptable or not too bad. As Mannion and Thompson (2014) state: “Individuals feel that because the group is making the decision, they are not individually responsible for the decision or its outcomes” (p. 609). Kim (2001) noted that during decision-making, individuals involved in groupthink are often described as experiencing “a state of ‘high energy’ (active attitude, group euphoria, high cohesiveness, and esprit de corps)” (p. 184). This heightened sense of efficiency leads them to filter out challenging or threatening information to maintain what they perceive as stability (Mannion & Thompson, 2014). A related example from this study is the widespread mention of rainbow displays and safety

stickers on classroom doors or administrative offices, which have become common symbols in schools. While these symbols give the outward impression of a safe space, Beacon questioned whether safe space stickers are just a performance. They observed that many teachers put up the stickers, yet they often stop there and do not go further to integrate SOGI topic into the curriculum or teaching.

However, Mannion and Thompson (2014) also noted the illusion of unanimity in groupthink, where “silence is interpreted as consent; consequently, the group believes that a ‘unanimous’ decision has been made” (p. 608). Unquestioning adherence to the group’s inherent morality, even when it simply serves as a mechanism to avoid accountability. Silence, however, equates to complicity. Thus, the “silent majority” (Noelle-Neumann, 1993) is far from harmless; instead, it creates fertile ground for the perpetuation of oppression and injustice. Middle-ground teachers must recognize that oppression knows no boundaries. Social injustices do not exist solely within specific groups—they inevitably affect the silent majority as well. The harm caused by heteronormativity and cisnormativity is not limited to LGBTQ+ students. Examples illustrate that even heterosexual boys with effeminate appearances are bullied for being perceived as gay (Kimmel & Mahler, 2012; Rosen & Nofziger, 2019).

Therefore, I argue that when a school’s inclusive environment is lacking, the intertwining of the Abilene Paradox and groupthink creates a negative cycle that hinders the implementation of SOGI-inclusive practices. The presence of pioneer teachers can counteract the influence of groupthink and the Abilene Paradox by openly expressing their attitudes and positions. However, school leaders also bear the responsibility of initiating transformational leadership to break this cycle and foster a more supportive environment for SOGI practices.

Leadership Strategy: Transformational Leadership as a Catalyst for Inclusive Education

The conclusion of the last section highlights that campus leadership plays a crucial role in preventing the interplay of the “Abilene Paradox” (Harvey, 1988) and “groupthink” (Janis, 1972) from creating a negative cycle within schools, which could hinder middle-ground teachers from actively engaging in SOGI practices. Another finding of this study is that teachers consistently expressed a strong desire for school leadership to take on a more active role. In contrast, most teachers held a more favorable view of union leadership regarding SOGI-related issues. Findings reveal a dynamic triangular relationship observed by teachers in SOGI campus practices. In a positive cycle, school leadership actively organizing PD on LGBTQ-specific topics can equip educators and other school personnel with the necessary tools to support and protect LGBTQ and all students (Beck & Wikoff, 2020; McQuillan et al., 2023; Russell et al., 2021), middle-ground teachers feel more confident and comfortable beginning SOGI practices.

Conversely, in a negative circle, when administrators’ attitudes toward SOGI are ambiguous, middle-ground teachers are less likely to support or engage in SOGI practices. Concerns about professional risks may cause hesitation, ultimately undermining the safety and inclusivity of the school environment. Some school leaders resisted LGBTQ professional development, citing reasons such as weak relevance to campus needs, fear of community backlash, or lack of school board approval (Payne & Smith, 2018).

Research highlights the critical impact of transformational leadership on inclusive practices and the implementation of equitable strategies (Carrington et al., 2024; Askew, 2024; Fetman & DeMartino, 2024; Kilag et al., 2024), it can play a pivotal role in shifting from a negative triangular relationship to a positive one. As Bass & Avolio (1994) stated, the

key characteristics of transformational leadership include inspiring vision, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence, “Intellectually stimulating leaders are willing and able to show their employees new ways of looking at old problems, to teach them to see difficulties as problems to be solved, and to emphasize rational solutions” (p. 21). By contrast, transactional leadership, characterized by a “give and take” relationship, relies on incentivizing performance through recognition, pay increases, or advancement for successful employees while penalizing underperformance. “Such a manager espouses the popular adage, “If it isn't broken, don't fix it.” (Bass, 1990). Transformational leadership resembles stronger belief in changing the status quo, “This belief, their belief in their own ability to enact change, is essential to recognize and understand their capabilities in paving the way for more inclusive and equitable practices” (Carrington et al., 2024, p. 8).

Lessons Learned

My unique positionality as an international student who came to Canada for the second year to start this research fully grounded in the Canadian context, this journey also provided me with an opportunity to reflect on methodological practice, the importance of adaptability in interviews, and the challenges of dealing with cultural and linguistic differences. The following reflections are key takeaways and areas for growth, both for myself and for future cross-culture researchers.

Reflecting on Interview Dynamics

This is my second year living in Canada as a non-native speaker. I was concerned about my ability to handle subtle cultural and language differences. In the early stages of data collection, I often showed hesitation and restraint in my interactions with my participants. My nervousness about being seen as an "outsider" who is not familiar with the Canadian

context sometimes prevented me from responding naturally or asking more in-depth follow-up questions when they shared detailed narratives in response to specific questions. This in turn may have limited me from obtaining more constructive data in the initial 1-2 interviews.

As more interviews came along, I interviewed participants with a variety of personalities. At the beginning of Beacon's interview, they initially asked me questions like, "Why did you choose this research topic?" and "How long have you been working on this research?" By answering their questions, I surprisingly found it helped me feel at ease. I explained that although I came from a different cultural background, I had a deep passion for developing SOGI inclusive education in the BC context. Once I relaxed, we naturally created a more comfortable and conversational atmosphere. This aligns with Rubin and Rubin's (2012) emphasis on interactive interviewing as a means to build trust and ensure data accuracy. During that interview, we shared moments of genuine laughter, and I proposed building rapport and maintaining long-term contact, as I think building networks with these active pro-SOGI teacher will benefit my future research endeavors.

After the interview with Beacon, I clearly felt a shift in my approach and mindset. At the beginning of the interview, I would personalize the introduction and emphasize the superiority of their insights. I would start by saying, "Don't be nervous; Although I have questions prepared, we can do it flexible. Feel free to share what is most important to you and what are you most want to tell me!" After such a starting point, the interaction feel less like a rigid, formal data collection process, but more like a natural conversation between friends. I would also affirm the narratives of participant by saying, "I believe your insights will bring indispensable value to this study." I found that these subtle adjustments can greatly helped build trust and made participants sharing their authentic perspectives.

In my first interview, despite using a semi-structured format, I initially tried to follow the predetermined order of my questions list; I weirdly believed the order I designed reflected the logical progression of the research. However, it didn't take me long to realise that participants would often naturally jump to other questions that were supposed to be asked later, especially when they felt more relaxed and comfortable. In these cases, I did not interrupt them but let go of this natural rhythm and asked the missed questions when the appropriate time came in. This experience taught me to be thoroughly familiar with the predetermined questions and sequence to maintain a participant-centred flow while still covering all the expected topics in a timely manner; it can bring more sense of control, just like remembering every piece of the puzzle and putting them in places without a model picture.

Enhancing Flexibility and Authenticity in Cross-Culture Contexts

For other researchers conducting interviews in a similar cross-cultural context, I offer suggestions as follows: qualitative interview is about trust. If cultural and language differences do exist, openly and confidently acknowledging them can help build trust and project sincerity with the participants. Actively listening to participants and paraphrasing what you hear to validate their perspectives can prove your sincerity in accurately capturing their authentic narrative. It will be hard to make the first step physiologically but trust that participants will be patient and understanding, as they will also respect and admire your passion.

Having a logically coherent list of questions is essential, however, researchers should be open to deviating from the predetermined order when participants naturally respond to later questions. I use highlighters to cross off questions that have been addressed and to note

new, valuable follow-up points raised by participants to ensure that these insights do not go unnoticed.

By leveraging these insights, I hope to contribute to practices for conducting inclusive and culturally responsive qualitative interviews in diverse settings.

Reflecting on Negotiating Political Realities within Qualitative Interviewing

When I introduced my research, which focused on exploring strategies to address parental resistance to SOGI-inclusive education in British Columbia's K-12 system, many participants expressed strong enthusiasm for engagement despite not knowing each other beforehand and only meeting on the internet through this research. I interpreted their enthusiasm for active engagement as a natural extension of their commitment to social justice causes. At the outset of this research, I did not anticipate that so much politically charged data would play such a prominent role in my interviews and findings. Many of my participants volunteered to raise topics related to the impact of British Columbia's political climate on SOGI education, questioned the campaign rhetoric of British Columbia Conservative candidates, and even, at the outset of the interviews, initiated discussions through the political context of SOGI-inclusive education. In addition to their roles as educators, many participants were active in provincial elections, the operation and election of teacher unions, and efforts to influence local trustee elections, demonstrating that their engagement was not limited to the classroom but extended to the broader sociopolitical sphere.

As previously mentioned, parental resistance is not simply a phenomenon or a result of religious conflict; it has become a politicized issue. Participants' narratives suggest that political actors and organizations are deeply embedded in this resistance. Some participants

became visibly emotional when discussing politics, and all expressed concerns about the potential impact of political change on their job security, but all also said they would not comply with directives that conflicted with their core beliefs and jeopardized student safety. These findings suggest that political forces have become an integral part of the teaching profession and cannot be ignored.

Initially, I hesitated to present these politically charged and regionally grounded findings so prominently. My cultural background is in China, a one-party state with a very different political structure than Canada. In my home country, the possibility of teachers who criticize the political atmosphere while participating in academic research is extremely small. This difference intrigued me, but also made me hesitate for a moment. It may sound funny, but I actually had this thought: Will I get in trouble for this? Will I definitely get in trouble? It's a bit crazy to publicly express my views on the government. Ultimately, I decided that one of the basic principles of academic research is to present data relevant to the research topic truthfully. These findings reflect the authentic lived experience and inner voices of teachers and deserve to be recognized and documented. Both theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence underscore a consistent message: education is inherently political, teachers play a role in shaping ideological consciousness, and teaching should be a critical and reflective process.

In addition, I conducted this research during a politically significant period—the latter half of 2024, coinciding with the BC provincial election on October 19, 2024, and preceding the anticipated 2025 federal election.

Therefore, it is crucial to include political topics in strategic discussions. Presenting politically charged findings in disciplinary research should be encouraged, as examining power systems is not about becoming a manipulator of the system, but about social justice.

Ensuring Confidentiality While Presenting Honest Data

Coming from a one-party state, I was somewhat hesitant to record politically sensitive findings. This experience helped me reflect on how my cultural background shaped my initial cautious sentiments. At the same time, I also became more aware of the need to carefully protect the confidentiality of my participants and cautiously strike a balance between minimizing the risk of unconsciously leaking identify information and ensuring that the data was accurately presented.

When politically sensitive topics came up in the interviews, I learned that it was key to remain open and calm and not to avoid or reject the direction that participants naturally took. In this study, participants generously shared their views, and I deliberately avoided asking leading questions such as “When it comes to SOGI, what are your views on politics or specific political parties?” Instead, I used open-ended questions such as “How do you see the future of SOGI?”, I wish participants to naturally share what they believed to be the most critical factors affecting the future path of SOGI. My passion for social justice study is burning, but I see remain objective as basic demeanor. I actively listened and showed interest, but I avoided making judgments. When they expressed anger, I expressed my empathy by social fillers, and when they used humor, I laughed with them. As a Chinese who does not have a deep understanding of the Canadian political climate or party dynamics, I remind myself that my role as a researcher comes first. My job is to collect and reflect data truthfully, a responsibility that transcends any personal identity, overcoming any

preconceived assumptions or hesitations that may arise, and the joy of collecting authentic voices is greater than anything else.

Implications

Based on the discussion of findings, I proposed several implications for future research and practical recommendations for school administrators, teachers, and policymakers in this section.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study adds to the growing body of literature on SOGI-inclusive education and identifies several areas for further exploration. Based on its findings, future research could focus on the following themes:

Advocacy and Political Dynamics in SOGI

Given that SOGI education is embedded in a broader political, cultural, and ideological network in an increasingly politically polarized environment, future research should build on this study's initial exploration of the intersection between political climate and SOGI education to further examine how educators and stakeholders can collaborate to influence public opinion, counter misinformation, and build sustainable support through evidence-based advocacy. On the other hand, future research could also investigate how anti-SOGI movements leverage public discourse and influence policy, which would provide valuable insights into the dynamics of the opposition.

Digital Media and Technology in Incorporating SOGI

The implementation of UDL shares significant similarities with the practice of SOGI-inclusive education. As Fovet (2020) noted, "The process of UDL implementation and it must be seen and planned as a long tortuous journey rather than a brief overnight

transformation” (p. 164). Similarly, findings reveal that once practice moves beyond basic measures such as using safe-space stickers and inclusive language, there is no universal roadmap for educators to follow directly; instead, it requires teachers to invest time continuously in exploration and adaptation within different scopes and climate of schools. My study has also revealed that participants have noticed the potential collaboration between the internet, social media, AI, and SOGI-inclusive education. UDL, alongside innovative uses of social media and virtual platforms, has been explored as a tool for advancing critical pedagogy and supporting the emancipation of oppressed and marginalized individuals (Fovet, 2023; Maposte, 2014). Future research could focus on deepening the exploration of inclusive practices within the UDL framework and the integration of technology. It should examine how UDL can act as a binding agent in creating a shared discourse between critical pedagogy and SOGI-inclusive education.

Understanding Parental Perspectives

While this study examined parental resistance through the experience of teachers, future research could benefit from engaging directly with parents to better understand their concerns, misunderstandings, and motivations. On the one hand, the intersection of fields such as counseling psychology can be used to study strategies to promote dialogue between parents and educators, promote mutual understanding, and reduce conflict. On the other hand, as my Findings show, peer review articles have only been found to be particularly effective in dealing with parents with professional jobs (such as doctors, lawyers). Parents who resist SOGI must also come from different occupational, regional and cultural backgrounds. Future research can further explore the commonalities and characteristics of

these parents' resistance to SOGI from different backgrounds, as well as develop the coping measures taken by each category.

Recommendations for practice

In the following section, I will provide recommendations for SOGI practices from the perspectives of administrators, teachers, and policymakers, based on this study's findings regarding the current state of SOGI development in BC.

Administrative Should Act as Advocates in External Conflicts

Administrative support is a critical element of the implementation of SOGI-inclusive education. My study revealed that administrators often play an ambiguate "mediator" role in the conflict between parents and their staff. Administrators may face insecurity cause their lack of union-like protections provided for teachers, their leadership position still requires a decisive commitment to inclusivity. In my findings, teachers express a strong desire for administrators to exhibit a firm stance when it comes to social justice issues in the school settings. They do not wish for such matters to be escalated to the union level of intervention, as this often represents a more fester and escalated resolution. Clear and resolute leadership during conflicts significantly impacts organizational trust and morale (Carrington et al., 2024). I believe that administrators should take the role expected of them in the twenty-first century by transcending transactional leadership and focusing on leading a "shared vision" to advance social justice within the educational field. Such leadership is essential for "challenging the status quo and driving change to reconstruct mindsets and practice for greater equity and inclusion" (Carrington et al., 2024, p. 8). "Teachers report having largely positive emotional experiences of self-initiated change" (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 287), administrators should actively safeguard and support their self-initiated project for inclusive

education. Administrators' actions should take the form of individualized consideration, which has been proven to be a significant factor in creating positive perceptions of school environments when principals demonstrate transformational leadership (Anderson, 2017), it is essential to adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward homophobic or transphobic remarks or behaviours among staff. Turning a blind eye to such behaviours not only undermines inclusivity efforts but also risks demoralizing educators and counsellors dedicated to creating inclusive environments, as demoralization "tending to affect experienced teachers who have already demonstrated their ability to persevere through teaching's political and interpersonal turmoil" (Santoro, 2021, p. 184). Establishing a rapid response team to promptly handle incidents of discrimination or parental resistance to ensure timely interventions. Although Matnuh (2018) pointed out that "teachers often get threats, acts of violence, lawsuits from students and parents, as well as unfair treatment from the law such as providing professional allowances" (p. 350). There are only a few pieces of literature that focus on the legal protection of teachers, let alone on the special anti-SOGI movement context. If needed, counselling or legal advice is provided for teachers who have experienced resistance and harassment by anti-SOGI predators. Apart from these, simplifying funding applications, distributing SOGI resource handbooks, and publicly recognizing teacher efforts can reinforce the importance of these initiatives and motivate further participation from both school staff and students. The point is that by ensuring teachers feel protected and valued, administrators can set the foundation for promoting and maintaining SOGI practices within the school.

Teachers Should Foster Networks While Engaging in Broader Advocacy

This study recommends teachers actively cultivate support networks both within and beyond their school communities while simultaneously engaging in political advocacy to drive systemic change.

One effective approach involves establishing mentoring systems that connect experienced SOGI advocates with less confident teachers. The findings indicate that Pro-SOGI teachers are often deeply passionate about sharing their knowledge and experience with the middle ground teachers. They could collaboratively develop a “SOGI Safety Kit,” which would include resources such as policy guidelines, academic literatures supporting the evidence database of SOGI. This ensures teachers, particularly newer ones, do not face resistance from parents or administration in isolation. Drawing inspiration from Bronfenbrenner (1979):

The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person... I shall argue that such interconnections can be as decisive for development as events taking place within a given setting (p. 3).

He emphasizes the interaction of individuals with multiple layers of environmental systems, all of which collectively influence development. If we conceptualize the journey of teachers in implementing SOGI-inclusive education as a developmental process, it becomes clear that the microsystem, which “consists of the immediate stakeholders that are directly in contact with the individual” (Leung et al., 2022, p. 3) plays a crucial role. In this level, the classroom, peers, and administrators represent the microsystem that directly affects teachers’ capacity to practice SOGI education. Exosystem refers to “consists of stakeholders or

environments, which do not contain the individual, that indirectly influence the individual via their microsystems” (Leung et al., 2022, p. 3). Teachers can expand their networks beyond the classroom, alliances with professionals, such as social workers, particularly those working with queer youth, healthcare professionals, legal experts, and media and public relations workers, serve as an extended exosystem, providing teachers with collaborative efforts among colleagues and interdisciplinary partnerships foster resilience and provide practical strategies for overcoming socio-political barriers.

Though there is less evidence in the educational field to put SOGI into the political context, one research showed that:

progressive policies and community attitudes, as well as greater numbers of safe and supportive community spaces, are associated with lower levels of risk for suicide and self-harm among a population that has disproportionately high risks of such mental health challenges (Saewyc et al., 2020, p. 6-7).

Therefore, teachers should not underestimate or ignore the daunting and daunting political battlefields and be prepared to advocate for voting, union activities, and broader social movements to ensure that the future of SOGI and other inclusive advocacy has a relatively smooth path, otherwise we may be a few years away from a study: "Strategies for teachers to not telling parents about students chosen to pronounce but at the same time keep their jobs." Teachers also need to be mindful of their own self-care, realize that teaching and social justice advocacy are very emotionally draining jobs, and seek support from family, friends, mental health professionals, and even the LGBT community when experiencing burnout, so that their passion for advocating for change can become a resilient generator that never stops.

Policymakers Should Protecting Teachers Targeted by Anti-SOGI Groups

“Problems or constraints faced by teachers in implementing and developing their professional duties are rooted in the lack of legal certainty and/or legal protection given to teachers as professional staff in the field of education” (Harpani, 2018, p. 350). My study revealed the significant risks teachers face in promoting SOGI-inclusive education, and legislation to protect teachers should explicitly penalize hate speech, threats, and harassment against teachers implementing SOGI policies online and offline so that perpetrators are held liable under the law, which acts as a deterrent. School administrators should also be required to develop procedures for such incidents so that when a targeting incident occurs, the emergency response team can assist the targeted teachers quickly and without delay.

Closing Note

This study was completed at the end of 2024, during the period leading up to Canada’s 2025 federal election. At this potentially critical moment for the development or transformation of SOGI-inclusive education, I recalled one participant’s statement of research-based evidence for backup SOGI practices, they remarked, “We’re using them as a weapon, but it’s actually our shield.” I believe that as long as humanity exists, SOGI will never truly diminish. Regardless of the backlash it may face in the future, it will always return in another form, just as humans can never live without water—because water is inherently a part of them.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Canada, TRU, and Dr. Frederic, my supervisor. I have made one of my bucket list items for nearly a decade in China come true—to conduct research for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

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Appendix

Interview Script and Questions

I would like to introduce myself first, my name is Xinyuan Li, or simply, Avery. I'm a graduate student from Thompson River University, the topic of this research is Exploring Strategies for Teachers to Address Parental Resistance to SOGI-Inclusive Education in BC's K-12 System.

I want to remind you that you have the right to withdraw at any time before data analysis began. You do not have to answer any question you do not feel comfortable to answer. This interview will be recorded on Zoom and the recording will only save on my personal password-protected laptop, once transcript has finished, the recording will be deleted permanently. Your name will be replaced with an assigned pseudonym. the school name and school district you work or any other information that may expose your personal identification will be kept confidential and will not be included in the research paper. Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start? Do I have your consent to start recording?

First, I would like to start with some warm-up questions:

1. Could you introduce yourself for a bit and tell me what is your current role?
2. How about your journey with SOGI-how you came across it, what training you undertook?

Now, let's get to the heart of this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the specific strategies teachers use to implement SOGI, particularly when facing external pressures such as parental resistance. While I have some prepared questions, we can keep the

discussion flexible, and you're welcome to share anything you feel is most important or relevant during this interview.

3. Some people view SOGI as a formal subject like math or literature, while others see it as a resource that supports inclusive education. How do you define SOGI, and how does it influence your approach to curriculum development and planning? What are the unique challenges and differences in implementing SOGI in elementary versus secondary schools?

4. How do you address SOGI in your teaching?

5. Can you describe an instance where you faced parental resistance to SOGI content and how did you initially respond to the situation? In what ways have parental concerns influenced your approach to teaching SOGI-inclusive content?

6. What kinds of support (e.g., administrative, peer, or community) have helped you navigate this challenge?

7. How do you feel about SOGI resources? Do you feel there are plenty enough SOGI course plans or subject-specific resources and where do you find those resources?

8. What long-term strategies have you developed to build resilience in addressing parental resistance to SOGI content? How do you ensure these strategies are sustainable over time?

9. What kinds of advice would you give to teacher candidates wanting to become an agent of change within the school community?

10. Are you engaged in any networks? Do you have opportunities to share these (ideas) with colleagues?

11. How do you see the future of SOGI and your future engagement with that evolution?

12. Is there anything we haven't touch on but you want to add on?

It was a pleasure chatting with you today, and your insights will be incredibly valuable for this research. I truly appreciate your contribution to SOGI-inclusive education. Would you like to receive a report once the research is completed? I hope we can stay in touch for a long time!