

Queering Teacher Identity: Filipino LGBTQ+ Teachers' Self-Disclosure of Their Sexual Identity in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary educational discourse, the focus on addressing homophobia and heterosexism has garnered significant attention from various stakeholders. Despite efforts to create inclusive environments, LGBTQ+ educators continue to face marginalization, particularly in self-disclosing their sexual and gender identities within their professional practices. These challenges can take on different forms such as receiving derogatory remarks from students, policing the way they dress and act, prohibiting LGBTQ+ content in their classrooms, and even being labelled as predators or abusers. This paper examined the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers ($n=30$), coming from both the tertiary and basic education in the Philippines, as they navigate the complexities of integrating their identities into their classrooms. Using Communication Privacy Management Theory, the study analyzed narratives and experiences to explore how one discloses identities and the challenges encountered in doing so. For the research method, the study used "pagtatanong-tanong" through a qualitative survey (QS). The findings revealed two overarching strategies of disclosure: a) Explicit disclosure through verbal and nonverbal coming out; and b) Implicit disclosure through classroom activities. Furthermore, challenges in disclosing and enacting these identities were determined. Through these disclosure strategies, the study recognized the multifaceted factors influencing LGBTQ+ teachers' disclosure decisions. These strategies illuminate how individuals navigate discourses surrounding their often-stigmatized identities

within educational settings, fostering an inclusive classroom for them to freely embrace their own authentic identities.

Keywords: Queering Teacher Identity, Self-disclosure, Classroom Discourse, Communication Privacy Management, Pagtatanong-tanong

In recent decades, there has been critical attention among teachers, scholars, policymakers, gender advocates, and professionals in the social welfare sector in further understanding the effects and dynamics of homophobia and heterosexism (e.g., McCormack). Affecting mostly lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and other gender non-conforming (LGBTQ+) individuals, the harmful effects can manifest internally, like having a sense of social invisibility (Pieri 558) and "othering" (Sonnekus and Van Eeden 81), and externally, like violence against LGBTQ+ individuals (Meyer 5). Such documentation and reports have generally focused on eliminating homophobia and heterosexism in different contexts (e.g., universities, schools, workplace, legislation, etc.), and with different groups of people (e.g., students, teachers, professionals, etc.) through different interventions like policy changes to changes of practice.

In both basic and higher education, LGBTQ+ faculty members are still marginalized, experiencing overt homo/transphobia in their professional practices. It can be seen

in their dilemma regarding their self-disclosure or openly identifying as queer and/or trans in their classrooms (Garvey and Rankin 1; Prock et al. 182). In the Philippines, for example, UNESCO revealed that there are still transgressions and violence experienced by school staff and educators on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) in their workplaces (7). Because of the lack of national and local policies that address these issues, LGBTQ+ teachers are still forced to sign contracts that police their gender expressions (Competente, “The need for our schools to be heteronormative”) and are still prone to gender-based violence (Comanda, “LGBTQ teacher murdered in Abra”). Even with the initiatives to create a more inclusive educational environment for LGBTQ+ students and teachers (Mizzi and Star 72), it is still difficult to find allies and support from institutions (DeVita and Anders 63) because of the existing inherent heteronormative ideology that surrounds the teaching practice (e.g., conservative school policies, non-inclusive school materials). In effect, many LGBTQ+ educators are still forced to conceal their own sexual/gender identity, and distance themselves from gender discourses and diversity (Rumens and Ozturk 687). This problem is an effect of heteroprofessionalism that Mizzi explained as “context of fear [that] characterizes the relationship between professionalism and otherness, whereby heteronormative discourses are constructed with the intention to distance and silence human agency” (1605). Reflected in various types of transgressions and microaggressions (Mathies et al. 255; Beagan et al. 197), this othering increases fear for LGBTQ+ individuals regarding their co-workers’ perceptions of their gender and sexuality that only encourage internalized heterosexism within the profession (Mizzi 1602; Mizzi and Star 72). In effect, heteroprofessionalism regulates the self-presentation of many LGBTQ+ teachers to align with the heteronormativity of the practice (Davies and Neustifter 1044). Therefore, teachers are discouraged to self-disclose their own gender/sexual identity and are expected to center their course content to heteronormative perspectives.

Because of heteroprofessionalism in classrooms, self-disclosure has become a complicated issue for LGBTQ+ teachers, specifically from conservative countries like the Philippines, as they navigate their identities in their teaching practices. Fundamentally, self-disclosure is the act of sharing details about oneself that are somewhat risky and unknown to most people (Jourard 2). LGBTQ+ teachers are constantly facing the tension regarding the decision to self-disclose and/or conceal their gender and sexual identity to students, which in turn has become an important and often stigmatized discourse in the educational setting (Russ et al. 311). When teachers are perceived as gay, students commonly would regard them as less credible, consequently affecting their potential to be hired (Russ et al. 319). However, LGBTQ+ teachers who choose not to disclose their sexual identity can potentially hurt their relationship with their students (DiVerniero and Hosek 432) and will only privilege heterosexual teachers who are able to disclose such information (McKenna-Buchanan et al. 282).

As a response to these issues, the current paper aimed to elicit the experiences of Filipino teachers who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community in disclosing and sharing their own sexual identities in their classrooms. With the teachers’ disclosures co-owned by the students in the classroom, this creates the “general expectations of the role of teacher and their social scripts for what constitutes competent, professional teaching” (Schrodt 372). The Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPMT) appropriately frames this careful decision-making to reveal or conceal their sexual orientations, which establishes the LGBTQ+ teachers’ personal and collective privacy boundaries. For transparency, this paper is only a part of a larger study that looked into the experiences of Filipino LGBTQ+ teachers in utilizing queer perspectives in their pedagogical

practices that included their self-disclosure and dialogues with students. With this, this current paper sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the strategies used by LGBTQ+ teachers to disclose their sexual identities in their classrooms? And (2) what are the challenges and issues of LGBTQ+ teachers in disclosing their sexual identities in the classroom?

Teacher Disclosure of Sexual Identity

In recent years, these struggles of teachers in coming to terms with disclosing their sexual identity have decreased as more teachers openly talk about their identities for different purposes such as addressing homophobia (Gregory 60), recognizing gender-based discrimination in educational institutions (Nixon 275), and challenging hegemonic patriarchy (Libretti 156). Teachers, both in the basic and tertiary education, sharing their LGBTQ+ identities enable the cultivation of a safe environment for better student-teacher relationships (Clark 2) and aid students to also disclose their own LGBTQ+ identities (Johnson and LaBelle 156). In effect, disclosure of teachers of their identities provided increased awareness and solidarity among LGBTQ+ students that may foster a more inclusive community not just with LGBTQ+ individuals but also their heterosexual counterparts (Fassett and Nainby 248).

Although there is an increase in research works that examined LGBTQ+ teachers' experiences (e.g., McNinch; Whitlock), there has been a critical attention in understanding how the disclosure process of these LGBTQ+ identities is done inside the classroom. Having both positive and negative consequences, teachers' disclosure of their sexual identities is still a polarizing concept among scholars where some say self-disclosures only reinforce heteronormativity to marginalize people based of their sexuality (Endo et al. 1028) while others say that self-disclosure empowers LGBTQ+ teachers for various reasons. For instance, Nielsen and Alderson found that lesbian and queer women professors disclosing their identities to enact authenticity or being true to oneself can be a strategy of self-affirmation (1093). This fosters a space of honesty and connection with their students. Disclosure was done if the participants think that it is relevant to the subject matter they teach (Nielsen and Alderson 1096). This is seconded by the findings in the study of McKenna-Buchanan et al. where LGBTQ+ teachers disclose their identities by "selecting" particular times to do so (290). Their findings also surfaced that these disclosures can be direct verbal/nonverbal disclosures or indirect messages that subtly indicate one's sexual identity. Similarly, Bennett et al. found how LGBTQ+ teachers can use explicit (e.g., publicly outing oneself to challenge the stigma of homosexuality) or implicit (e.g., combination of 'passing' as straight, and covering one's gayness with gender-neutral terminologies) strategies in disclosure (712). Moreover, the results of Newman et al. surfaced how disclosures can take the form of personal narratives to allow learning opportunities and foster a positive agency environment for students.

In the Philippine context, there have been a few studies that investigated the experiences of teachers and academics who self-identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Wright and Villaflor revealed how teaching abroad provided a sense of achievement and validation to LGBTQ+ teachers that negated common stereotypes (e.g., difficulty to adapt in a more conservative culture, lesser conditions compared to heterosexual coworkers) that were attached to their profession (6). Likewise, Mercado and Quitain revealed that LGBTQ+ teachers, while performing effectively in mobilizing curriculum content and managing a conducive learning environment for students, felt neglected and unsupported in terms of being protected physically, socially, and professionally (2527).

The study also revealed the discrimination of LGBTQ+ individuals in receiving rightful benefits for the work they have done (Mercado and Quitain 2528).

With the increased attention to the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers in the Philippines, the current study aimed to focus on the self-disclosure process of these individuals. With the majority of the studies looking into the lived experiences of these teachers, this study provides a communication perspective in how they negotiate and present their identities inside the classroom by situating disclosures in an instructional communication context. Through this, the study explored the different strategies and ways teachers disclose their SOGIE as a means of boundary coordination and the experienced challenges of teachers that may influence this decision-making.

Theoretical Framework

To analyze the complexities of self-disclosure of LGBTQ+ teachers in the classroom, Petronio's Communication Privacy Management (CPM) was used as a guiding theoretical perspective. Petronio argued that individuals have a sense of ownership with their private information where they try to manage it to avoid potential risk by establishing boundaries (37). For this study, this theory is used to appropriately understand the strategies in managing the tensions of LGBTQ+ teachers' openness/closedness of their public and private lives through the decision-making of disclosure as a means to create privacy boundaries (Hosek and Thompson 330). In CPM, this disclosure process can be explicit (e.g., direct disclosures of information) or implicit (e.g., embedded private information in various interactions) (Helens-Hart 610). It is assumed that the explicit disclosure messages are more likely to be used when there is a perceived acceptable level of risk and perceived positive outcomes in disclosing one's sexuality whereas implicit disclosure happens when opposite conditions are true (Helens-Hart 610). For example, a supportive working environment for LGBTQ+ teachers can elicit more explicit disclosure while less supportive ones produce more implicit strategies.

In self-disclosure, the theory posits a rule-based management system that recognizes how individuals use certain criteria (e.g., context, gender, cultural expectations, risk-benefit ratio) to frame one's disclosure decisions. The intersection of these various criteria dictates the set of rules when to disclose or hide private information (e.g., sexual identities, rank/positions). For LGBTQ+ teachers, these privacy rules disable/enable the disclosure of their own gender and sexual identities in the classroom. Utilizing this theoretical perspective, the study is able to understand how certain disclosure approaches are used in various contexts and conditions. Moreover, this theory helped move beyond the conversation about LGBTQ+ teachers' self-disclosure from focusing on the reasons behind the disclosure to determining what processes and strategies they use in incorporating their own identities in their classrooms.

Research Methods

Research Design

To study the experiences of queer teachers, the present study used a qualitative research methodology to clearly examine how they were able to make sense of their personal and social world through meaning-making of their lived experiences. The researchers employed *pagtatanong-tanong* (asking questions), an indigenous research method, to investigate the disclosure process of queer educators inside the classroom.

Drawn from the Philippine experience and use of a local term, “pagtatanong-tanong” emphasizes how important it is for researchers to utilize culturally appropriate research methods without being exclusionary to a particular culture (Pe-Pua “From decolonizing psychology”, 115). Contrasting this to the Western notions of interviews, this method highlights four (4) main features: (1) its participatory nature, (2) its equal treatment for its informants and researchers (3) its adaptive and suitable conditions and norms for the group of informants, and (4) its integrative trait to other indigenous research methods (Pe-pua, “Pagtatanong-tanong” 147). In line with pagtatanong-tanong, the study employed a qualitative survey (QS) to identify the teachers’ disclosure strategies and the challenges they encountered. The choice of QS is informed and in parallel with recent studies that investigated gender dimensions and gender perspective of language teaching (e.g., Tarrayo). As supplementary data, follow-up email interviews were done to clarify or probe participants’ responses.

Participants

Teachers ($n=30$) were selected from different academic institutions, both private and public, in different areas and regions in the country. The primary criterion for eligibility to participate is that the individual should be a teacher, regardless of grade level and subjects taught, and should be a self-identified member of the LGBTQ+ community. Specifically, the participants must be: (1) 18 years of age or older, (2) of Filipino descent, (3) self-identified members of the LGBTQ+ community, and (4) willing to participate in the study. Table 1 presents the description of the participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to the data collection, the researchers got an ethics certification from the Philippine Social Science Ethics Review Board (PPSC-SSERB). For the recruitment process, the researchers emailed and sent private social media messages to target participants to inquire for their voluntary participation in the study. The said message discussed the rationale of the study, the participant’s roles in the study, and ethical agreements (i.e., consent, rights to withdraw, anonymity) through an informed consent form.

For gathering data, the study made use of QS, through a Google Form, as it can produce a substantial amount of accounts from participants’ subjective experiences and practices (Clarke and Braun 10); and it is considered as more cost- and time-effective (Rea and Parker 12). To answer the research questions, the QS included open-ended questions in English and Filipino that elicited responses from the participants with regard to disclosing their gender/sexual identities in their classrooms, and the ways they facilitate their own identities in their classrooms. The questions in the QS were validated and revised by an external validator who is adept and experienced in conducting qualitative research works (see Appendix A).

For the data analysis, the study followed the procedure suggested by Creswell: (147): (1) organizing the data, (2) reading and memoing the data, (3) describing and sorting data into codes and themes, (4) interpreting the data, and (5) presenting the write-up of the data. To preserve anonymity, participants were asked to provide their preferred pseudonyms to be used in the paper.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Participants

Pseudonym	Pronouns	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	Age	Workplace	Years of Teaching
Blue	he/him	Gay	Cisgender	37	Basic Education	17
Ray	he/him	Gay	Gender Queer	28	Tertiary Education	8
Tony	he/him	Gay	Cisgender	26	Basic Education	4
Seb	he/him	Gay	Gender Queer	38	Basic Education	18
Mond	he/him	Gay	Cisgender	57	Tertiary Education	24
Nicky	he/him	Pansexual	Cisgender	31	Tertiary Education	4
Sony	he/him	Gay	Gender Queer	30	Tertiary Education	8
Jerry	he/him	Gay	Cisgender	25	Basic Education	5
Leni	he/him	Gay	Cisgender	32	Tertiary Education	12
Niz	she/her	Pansexual	Cisgender	29	Basic Education	9
Vince	he/him	Gay	Transgender	36	Basic Education	9
Randy	they/them	Gay	Gender Queer	34	Basic Education	8
Dean	he/him	Gay	Cisgender	35	Tertiary Education	14
Max	he/him	Bisexual	Gender Queer	26	Tertiary Education	6
Khloe	she/her	Pansexual	Cisgender	29	Basic Education	9
Ben	they/them	Pansexual	Cisgender	39	Basic Education	12
Syd	she/her	Lesbian	Cisgender	24	Basic Education	4
Taylor	he/him	Pansexual	Cisgender	22	Basic Education	1
Ruel	he/him	Gay	Cisgender	30	Basic Education	10
Phil	he/him	Gay	Gender Queer	27	Basic Education	6
Polski	they/them	Gay	Gender Queer	27	Basic Education	7
Charo	she/her	Pansexual	Cisgender	30	Tertiary Education	2
Rose	she/her	Gay	Gender Queer	26	Tertiary Education	4
Aldrin	he/him	Gay	Gender Queer	30	Basic Education	9

Dennis	he/him	Gay	Gender Queer	42	Tertiary Education	20
Troy	he/him	Gay	Gender Queer	29	Basic Education	5
Cris	she/her	Bisexual	Cisgender	28	Basic Education	8
Zeus	he/him	Gay	Gender Queer	31	Tertiary Education	10
Mark	he/him	Bisexual	Gender Queer	32	Basic Education	8
Emjhay	he/him	Bisexual	Cisgender	26	Basic Education	6
Jake	he/him	Bisexual	Cisgender	26	Basic Education	6

Ethical Consideration

As part of the data gathering procedure, the participants were asked to accomplish an informed consent form where they were briefed on the study's rationale and the use of the data for derivative works. All participants granted their consent and voluntarily participated in the study with the knowledge of utmost confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, with all the participants identifying as LGBTQ+ individuals, the study ensured the individuals' protection of privacy through anonymizing any information that may reveal their identities and associated organizations.

Researchers' Reflexivity

For our positionality as researchers, we are self-identified LGBTQ+ men who have years of teaching and doing research in our respective institutions. One researcher identifies as gender queer while the other identifies as a cis-gendered gay man. We have also conducted and published works that delved with queer experience and identities. These experiences also enabled a safe and gender-sensitive outlook in examining data towards a more authentic analysis of intimate information about gender realities shared by participants.

Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis, participants shared diverse strategies regarding how they disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the classroom which surfaced how the extent of their openness of such information depends on their choices, workplace environment, and students' perception. As such, it revealed two overarching strategies of disclosure: (1) explicit disclosure through verbal and nonverbal coming out and (2) implicit disclosure through classroom activities. These strategies affirm the various findings on how LGBTQ+ teachers disclose their identities in the classroom where they can be "explicit" or "implicit" in their disclosure decision-making (e.g., Bennett et al. 712). Moreover, challenges in disclosing and enacting these identities were also determined.

Explicit disclosure through verbal and nonverbal coming out

A number of the participants recalled how they routinely choose to come out intentionally in their classrooms, either by verbally sharing their sexual identity with their

students or by adopting a general attitude of openly displaying this identity through their nonverbals. This is in parallel with the findings of McKenna-Buchanan et al. where LGBTQ+ college teachers used a selection strategy in disclosure to purposely come out by “selecting” particular times to do it (290). In this explicit disclosure strategy, participants “come out to others” using appropriate (i.e., suitable for classroom contexts) and verbal language to describe and share their identities with their students (Chirrey 28). Some participants purposely share this information whenever they initiate a conversation that concerns topics that include gender and identity. Zeus, a gender queer teacher, related how he has been open with his sexuality inside his classroom. He shared:

I show my true self, my true voice, and I show what I think is right and professional. They [students] are not very particular about it because they don't mind it probably because when I perform my 'gayness' in class, it's done in a way that they will feel safe, respected, and think that there's still an adult in the classroom that deserves respect.

Moreover, participants discussed how they intentionally come out to their students through their nonverbals. Polski, a gay teacher, explained:

In terms of hair, clothing, and language. I just want to wear what I like, but others see it as odd (high-waisted pants, overly printed clothes, naturally curly hair). I think my students see it as a free expression of who I am. It makes them happy.

It can be observed how the participant-teachers can intentionally disclose their LGBTQ+ identity through the use of material or nonverbal signs (e.g., the way they dress, using overly printed clothes and jewelry, the way they style their hair). These signs are subtle signifiers that discloses one's queerness nonverbally (Medhurst 8). This aligns with CPM's argument that these self-disclosure acts are voluntary and intentional where one intends to deliberately divulge information to others (Greene et al. 409). In effect, the disclosed information becomes co-owned by their students. When asked about what their students think about them, the participants interestingly pointed out the positive reception of their students about them. They mentioned how their students accept and respect them regardless of their sexual identity. Sony, a gay teacher, shared this when he said:

Because of the acceptance of myself, I am happier with the way I teach and present more realistic concepts. Nothing has changed or altered in how they [students] interact with me. In fact, they have enjoyed our classes more, become more active, and there's a sense of ease, without losing their respect and the boundary that separates me from them.

This finding coincides with one of the assumptions of CPM where explicit messages of one's sexuality are more likely to be disclosed explicitly in supportive work environments. The greater the discloser's desire to share, expectation of positive outcomes, and perception of an acceptable level of personal risk, the more likely they are to openly communicate about their sexuality (Helens-Hart 610). In a way, these personalized strategies of disclosure reflect how teachers connect and engage with students by showing vulnerabilities and blurring the boundaries between the inner truth and outer performance (Palmer 6). As Turner posited, the way LGBTQ+ teachers confront and construct their identity as professionals can be regarded as emotional work. There can be different emotional reasons for their strategies (288). There are times when the participants were able to verbally disclose their sexuality to foster an engagement with the students, while others may use nonverbal strategies (e.g., instructional materials, theoretical perspectives) to present their sexual identities in a subtle manner without verbally stating it.

These choices speak of one's personal tension to have their beliefs govern and guide their own lives (Palmer 5) where they can explicitly be out and proud or subtle in how they try to present their own identities. According to hooks, lying and keeping secrets will only burden people and generate stress, resulting in the creation of "a false self to mask fears and insecurities" (48). The findings showed how teachers did not view sharing this part of their lives as something that would lead to embarrassment or shame. Instead, they believed that opening up about their personal experiences could strengthen their credibility and simultaneously offer important life lessons to their students. As a result, it led to positive experiences with them and their students, proving how young people have the ability to recognize the complex layers of our understanding of sexual identity and critically engage with LGBTQ+ content if given a chance (Robinson 30).

Implicit disclosure through classroom activities

Another aspect that shaped the participants' disclosure decision is their integration of discourses on diversity in their classrooms. Participants were able to implicitly disclose their sexual identities when they initiate conversations on value and respect for diversity. Course content and classroom discussions have been an avenue for the majority of the participants in embodying and hinting their identities to highlight the diverse perspectives of knowledge creation. For instance, Niz, a female pansexual teacher, explained how she highlighted the importance of pronoun preferences of many individuals in teaching of the English language. She shared, "I try to inject pronoun preferences when given the chance while teaching grammar or sentence construction." This is also seconded by Rose, a female queer teacher, in which she discussed gender-related topics in her classes. She mentioned how she engaged with students "[b]y teaching issues regarding toxic masculinity, discrimination, gender specific violence, cultural devaluation of the feminine and gender roles." Through these examples, the participants were able to initiate a discourse on respect and inclusivity by embracing social issues in the classroom. Moreover, Nicky, a cis-gendered pansexual teacher, tries to integrate his advocacies and insights as a queer individual when he discusses topics on popular culture and queer studies. He shared:

In my class introductions, I have never mentioned directly that I am queer, but when I discuss the research topics, I have studied which include popular culture and queer studies, I mention that the interest in pursuing these topics is driven by my support for the passage of the SOGIE Equality Bill as I belong to the Filipino LGBTQIA+ community.

Participants were also able to explain how they were able to implicitly disclose their sexual identities by integrating LGBTQ+ content as examples for their classroom topics. Further, Jake, a bisexual teacher, explained how he tried to ensure that there were queer representations in his instructional material. It is interesting to also note how he purposely veered away from heteronormative ideologies. He recounted:

In developing and designing my teaching materials (e.g., visual aids, guides, assessments, etc.) and activities, I make sure that queer concepts have sufficient representation in those resources. Sometimes, I do away from heteronormative ideas (e.g., the traditional family structure) to foreground modern families composed of same-sex couples.

Based on the excerpts, the disclosure messages of the participants can also be implicit. CPM considers implicit disclosure as the use of ambiguity to manage the transfer of information to others (e.g., McKenna-Buchanan et al.; Petronio). This can be seen in the

participants' integration of discussions on gender pronouns and queer concepts (e.g., homosexual relationships, SOGIE policy) in their instructional material and classroom discussions. These conversations may be intended by the participants to implicitly hint or disclose their own sexual orientations to their students. Through these strategies, the participants were able to use creative and pragmatic means to subtly disclose their sexual and gender identities in the classroom while managing their personal boundaries with their students.

In this particular disclosure strategy, it can be seen how LGBTQ+ teachers can opt to choose a subtle and implicit way to disclose their sexual identities without the potential risk of explicit messaging. This strategy reflects the careful decision-making of LGBTQ+ teachers in how they manage their personal and private information to others, specifically their students. This aligns with CPM's notions of boundary coordination operations where individuals control the disclosure of information by creating personal and collective boundaries (Hosek and Thompson 330). Personal boundaries relate to which one manages information about themselves while collective boundaries relate to information about one's own group or affinity.

Interestingly, the findings showed how the self-reflexivity of LGBTQ+ teachers (i.e., linking their personal selves to their professional practice) can greatly impact their pedagogical process, recognizing in turn the impact of their sexuality on students' learning. By providing personal examples and representations of LGBTQ+ topics, participants were able to model intimate subjectivities with the view of debunking heteronormative ideologies and disrupting the silencing of queerness. Utilizing an inclusive course content that recognizes LGBTQ+ experiences creates a dialogue outside the restrictive traditions of cultural sensitivity, taking students "on a journey toward more truthful ways of seeing and being in the world" (Palmer 6). Through these classroom discourses, the participants were able to integrate different perspectives from gendered language to the definitions of family, ultimately challenging normative and hegemonic ideologies. This recognizes identity intersections that dismantle the dominant dichotomies of gender and sexuality from the heteronormative perspective (Letts 119). These discourses may foster a culture of constantly questioning forms of marginalization, paving the way for actions that promote equity in the classroom. Through this, LGBTQ+ individuals can express and disclose their identities freely.

Challenges in disclosing one's sexual identity

Despite popular notions of LGBTQ+ acceptance in the country (Austria 22), educational institutions and classrooms are still not a safe place for LGBTQ+ educators to come out. Even with initiative and policies in Gender and Development (GAD) in the country, the classroom is still entrenched with hegemonic structures that inhibit LGBTQ+ individuals to disclose and present themselves in a way that aligns with their sexual identity. This is reflected with how the participants explain various transgressions that they experience from their co-workers and even students. Randy recalled hearing derogatory statements on his sexuality from students and co-teachers when he shared:

Discrimination among people who have the same sexual identity as me will always be a problem especially if you are in the teaching profession. You would often hear students calling you with derogatory names. You would also hear co-workers degrading sexual identities that are [sic] not align with their own in their discussion inside the classroom.

The transgressions experienced by the participants can be from their administrators forcing them to conform to dress codes and even instilling fear by not renewing their job positions. Polski explained:

Discrimination and double standards at work are really severe. You'll be criticized for your clothes and hair, and forced to conform to school standards. There's always the fear of being removed, and it happened during my permanency year without any explanation given.

These issues of discriminatory practices can also affect how some of the participants integrate LGBTQ+ topics and perspectives in their classrooms. Jake discussed how many of his school administrators are still against incorporating these types of topics and course content as they will only lead to students' moral decay. He shared:

In my view, schools have a long way to go before attaining a space that embraces everyone regardless of sexual identity. In my case, some administrators in our school are not yet ready and willing to accept queer ideas or opinions, especially in teaching. To them, LGBTQ-related perspectives would result in students' moral decay.

However, participants were able to expound on how their disclosure process can have complexities that reflect their desire to be out at work in order to actively challenge the normative stance of how sexuality is understood and policed within the school setting. Sony explained this when he said:

There are still narrow-minded views on gender, and it's difficult to eradicate, such as seeing gay teachers as predators or abusers, viewing them as weak and superficial. These perspectives exist everywhere, but they need to be countered and normalized. I believe my experience is not unique among other teachers like me, so there's no other way but to stand up, fight, and educate.

Based on the accounts of the participants, it is noteworthy that their disclosure as LGBTQ+ educators may have met some forms of resistance from their schools. This took many forms including derogatory remarks from their own students, policing the way they dress and act by their school administrators, prohibiting queer perspectives and LGBTQ+ content in their classrooms, and even being labelled as predators or abusers. This shows how schools can actively silence the voices of individuals on LGBTQ+ issues and deliberately perpetuate the demarcation of LGBTQ+ teachers' personal and professional lives. This aligns with how heteroprofessionalism, which hegemonizes heteronormativity to regulate self-presentation of LGBTQ+ faculty (Mizzi 1617), encourages teachers to conceal their sexual identities and distance themselves from gender diversity (Rumens and Ozturk 683). Moreover, heteroprofessionalism contributes to the fear in LGBTQ+ faculty regarding others' perception of their identities, whilst promoting internalized heterosexist notions of professionalism (Mizzi 1605). This can be seen in the tensions faced by LGBTQ+ teachers who grapple with pressures from their heterosexual co-teachers to refrain from disclosing their identities in the classroom (Gregory 58) and the tensions to disclose their identities to promote solidarity efforts in the classroom (Khayatt 118). This challenges the openness of teachers to disclose their identities in their classrooms as it is not an automatic and emotionless task but an alterable and ever-changing process (Gregory 59) that takes a lot of complex and layered decision-making (Sapon-Shevin 73). Participants' experiences of disclosure affirm how the school climate and culture contribute to how open they will be about themselves in their classrooms (see Tompkins et al.). Their experiences surfaced how the heteronormative

space of schools can negatively affect their working and teaching practices in which they can only position their own sexuality as private while their heterosexual colleagues were able to disclose their identities without any problems, resulting in the physical, social, and spiritual isolation of LGBTQ+ teachers (Gray and Harris 1).

This finding confirms the significant roles of school leadership and school climate in creating safe spaces in schools. Many studies have already determined how support from school leaders can be vital in helping LGBTQ+ educators overcome their fears of discrimination and allowing them to authentically be who they are (e.g., Jackson; Taylor et al.). As Wright and Smith argue, it is essential for all school administrators to assist each teacher in their professional development, given the range of difficulties they are confronted with (394). They should be able to encourage teachers to feel at ease in the classroom, enabling them to feel safe enough to give every student the best instruction and support possible.

Conclusion

As heteroprofessionalism restrains the agency of LGBTQ+ teachers to embody their sexual identities in their own classrooms, it has affected their enactment of professional practices and surveillance of their own self-expressions. Through self-disclosure, this allowed a space for LGBTQ+ teachers to freely recognize their own positionality, acknowledging how hetero/cisnormativity operates in the classroom where such structures silence queer identities (Seal 10). However, it should be noted how LGBTQ+ teachers' disclosure process is marked by complex and various factors that influence their decision-making. The findings suggest how LGBTQ+ teachers were able to disclose their sexual identities in different forms and strategies that they may find suitable in the environment they work in. Although they may not be exhaustive or definitive, these findings expand the framework of CPM in order to recognize how disclosure in the classroom is inextricably tied to the instructional context of the classroom, hence, recognizing the influence of different context, individuals, and norms. The context of the classroom fleshes out how the disclosure of LGBTQ+ teachers can have multiple layers that they need to traverse (i.e., by reconciling their desire to humanize themselves by disclosing their identities and potentially risking othering and discrimination by the stigma of homosexuality). Moreover, the current study expands the understanding of CPM by focusing on the how rather than the why of disclosing private information by determining the strategies used by LGBTQ+ teachers.

The findings also demonstrated the influence of heteroprofessionalism within educational contexts, which may inhibit the disclosure process of LGBTQ+ teachers in the classroom. However, the findings also revealed how the participants were able to utilize their disclosing strategies (e.g., verbally, nonverbally, pedagogically) to challenge the stigma that surrounds their own sexual and gender identities. Through initiating classroom discussions about LGBTQ+ issues and perspectives, participants were able to share a part of themselves with their students while simultaneously challenging this stigma on homosexuality and queerness. In effect, they were able to foster engagement and critical thinking among their students in order to reject heteronormative ideologies, illustrating how LGBTQ+ teachers can resist the marginalizing effect of the stigma by completely accepting who they are.

Despite the contributions of the current study, there are few limitations that give cause for further consideration of the findings. First, the recruitment of participants

resulted in a number of participants from the social sciences and the humanities (e.g., languages, communication, literature). The subject matters in the social sciences may have enabled many of them to discuss issues and concepts on sexual identities more freely in their classrooms. Hence, these strategies may not be an absolute representation of Filipino teachers at large. Instead, the findings should be situated within the contexts of the experiences of the participants. Future research should examine the disclosure and concealment strategies of lesbian and trans-identified teachers who were not represented in this study. The findings of the study should not be read as essentializing claims to the diverse lived experiences of the participants.

As a whole, the present study was able to contribute to the discourse of how Filipino LGBTQ+ teachers demonstrate their self-disclosure process within their classrooms. As expected, participants also noted the different challenges they experienced after coming out. One way to foster a safe space for these LGBTQ+ teachers is to specifically address gender-based discrimination in the school and its policies. To cultivate safer spaces, it is vital to bring these issues into the conversations where institutional policies cater to allow and celebrate a culture where teachers can be supported in their own respective expressions of gender and sexual orientation. As pointed out by the participants, school administrators should seek to make their schools safe places for LGBTQ+ individuals and to privilege all forms of diversity. Schools should actively work to (de)construct and critique discourses on gender and sexuality. As Niz explained, "raising awareness and familiarizing oneself with this kind of discussion could help a lot of teachers in the institution change their perspectives."

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APPENDIX A

Survey Questionnaire

1. Have you disclosed your sexual identity in your classroom? If yes, recount the specific moment you had that discussion with your class. If not, explain the reason for withholding your sexual identity from your students.
2. How do you enact your sexual identity inside of the classroom? What do you think is the reception of your students to it?
3. How do you enact your sexual identity among your peers and administrators? What do you think is their reception?
4. In what ways were you able to incorporate your sexual identity in your teaching profession (i.e., instructional delivery, development of materials, research works, collaboration with other teachers)?
5. What are your challenges and issues in incorporating your sexual identity as a teacher?
6. How should the Department of Education deal with discussions on gender and LGBTQ+ issues?
7. How does technology used in education enable or disable queer topics, queer pedagogies, etc.?

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