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"Can I Even Do This?"
Nancy's and Anna's Stories of Staying in the Closet and Implications for Music Teacher Educators

Sarah M. Minette
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

UNC
GREENSBORO

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to better understand how two music educators of different generations navigate the complexities of being lesbians[1] throughout their careers. Nancy[2] began teaching in the late 70's and Anna began teaching in the post–2015 same–sex marriage amendment campaign. Several themes developed over the course of analysis: "I think I'm gay"; "But I'm not a gay music teacher"; and generational and political issues. While Nancy's and Anna's stories are unique and cannot be generalized, both offer considerations into how we as music teacher educators and colleagues may offer support and guidance to those with whom we work and help prepare for their next steps as music teachers.

Keywords: LGBTQ studies, music teacher preparation, intergenerational

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[1]In this paper I use lesbian, queer, and gay interchangeably to reflect how Nancy and Anna described themselves throughout our conversations.
[2]All names in this paper are pseudonyms.

Introduction

Researchers have explored the ways in which gay and lesbian music educators negotiate their identities (Cavicchia, 2010; Furman, 2012; McBride, 2017; Minette, 2018 Natale–Abramo, 2011; Palkki, 2014; Paparo & Sweet, 2014; Taylor, 2011). Others have discussed the role of music education in the lives of transgender students (Nichols, 2016; Palkki, 2016; 2017), and the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in music teacher education programs (Bergonzi, 2015; Garrett, 2012; Minette, 2018; Salvador & McHale, 2017; Taylor, 2016). Most studies about gay and lesbian music educators' experiences have focused only on the experiences of gay or lesbian band educators or choir educators (Cavicchia, 2010; Furman, 2012; Natale–Abramo, 2011; McBride, 2017; Palkki, 2014; Taylor, 2011; 2016; 2018). Intergenerational LGBTQ studies are have been limited in teacher education and, apart from Taylor's (2011) and Minette's (2018) study, have been absent from music education. Little research has explored the experiences of gay and lesbian retired music educators. This study explored the intergenerational lives of Nancy and Anna as gay music teachers[3], and the ways in which music teacher educators might better support queer preservice music teachers as well as our queer colleagues.

Literature Review

Historical

Knauer (2009) wrote that "there are an estimated three million LGBTQ individuals who are age sixty–five and older" (p. 308). These "LGBTQ Elders" experienced McCarthyism, the Lavender Scare, pre–Stonewall politics, post–Stonewall, the AIDS epidemic, and the passing of the same–sex marriage amendment (Knauer, 2009). Because of the historical stigma associated with gay and lesbians, many elder LGBTQ individuals have never fully come out publicly. In the

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[3]Nancy and Anna did not specifically self-identify as lesbians. Nancy used lesbian and gay interchangeably, while Anna typically used queer to describe herself. For the purposes of this paper, I use all three.

next paragraphs, I have briefly described some of the generational issues that LGBTQ

individuals, especially older LBGTQ individuals have faced.

The post–World War II purges of gays and lesbians from the federal and teaching

workforces has remained a relatively untouched area of research in education. David Johnson's

2004 publication, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians,*

documented events that led up to the purging of hundreds of gay and lesbian federal workers in

Washington D.C. during the Truman (1945–1953) and Eisenhower (1953–1961) presidencies.

Johnson's book chronicled the McCarthy era that employed scare tactics among federal workers

to inform the government of suspected Communists, gays, and lesbians. Several other books,

including Karen Graves' historical account of the Florida teacher purges, *And They Were*

Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers (2009)*,* and Jackie Blount's

expansive historical narrative, *Fit to Teach: Same–Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the*

Twentieth Century (2005), extended Johnson's work and expanded the research to include

federal policies in Washington D.C. that subsequently informed policies in education.

Additionally, these policies led to fear, superfluous stereotyping, and general mistrust of lesbians

and gays that lasted for many years after the federal and teacher purges ceased.

Between 1956–1966, the Johns Committee, comprised of Florida state Senators Charley

Johns, Dewey Johnson and John Rawls, led campaigns in Florida to rid public schools of gay and

lesbian teachers. The committee suggested that Florida K–12 schools and universities had a

"problem with homosexuality" (Graves, 2009, p. 8). This "problem" was based on a previous

investigation headed by the Hillsborough County superintendent who produced a list of 20 gay

and lesbian teachers (Graves, 2009). The Johns Committee asserted that the state had not done

enough to find and fire gay and lesbian educators. By the end of this campaign, over 200

teachers had lost their jobs and teaching licenses.

In 1976, and again in Florida, Anita Bryant endorsed similar persecution tactics that

Senator McCarthy used during the Red and Lavender scares and claimed that in addition to the

Communists, gays and lesbians were conspiring against America (Graves, 2009; Harbeck, 1997).

This assertion was in response to a proposed Miami ordinance that would protect lesbian and

gays from discrimination "in housing, employment, and public accommodation based on 'sexual

preference'" (Harbeck, 1997, p. 39). Bryant used the religious right ideology to claim that her

campaign "held evidence of a conspiracy to harm children, families, country, God, and the

American way" (Harbeck, 1997, p. 45). Bryant and her followers acknowledged that gays and

lesbians would likely continue to exist. Harbeck (1997) described the overall sentiment of Bryant

and her followers as such,

> [T]hese people should not have a chance to increase their numbers through seduction or
>
> recruitment. Only the invisible, silent lesbian or gay man could be an acceptable member
>
> of the local community, and she or he would have no need for extraordinary legal
>
> privileges. . . .Visibility, acceptance, and protection provided lesbians and gay men with
>
> the opportunity to increase their numbers. Spouses would leave their families, children
>
> would turn against their parents, and the whole foundation of society would crumble as
>
> the American family was destroyed. (p. 46)

Bryant was convinced that "if homosexuals were given carte blanche to glamorize their

'deviant lifestyle' in Miami–area classrooms, the American family would be destroyed and the

American way of life would disappear" (Bryant, quoted in Harbeck, 1997, pp. 46–47). Goffman

(1963) cited the ancient Greeks who "originated the term *stigma* to refer to the bodily signs

designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier" (p. 1). Bryant used the stereotype of the "limp–wristed, seductive, crossdressing, male homosexual, who was sexually interested in young boys" (Harbeck, 1997, p. 44) to perpetuate the stigma that something was morally wrong with homosexual [*sic*] educators.

In June 1977, a public vote of 69–31% repealed the proposed Miami ordinance, with over 300,000 people voting (Harbeck, 1997). After the successful campaign, Bryant announced that the "Save Our Children" campaign would begin a national movement against special privileges for gays and lesbians and built on the fears that gays and lesbians would attempt to molest and recruit children. Successful campaigns led to repeals of similar anti–discrimination laws in St. Paul, Minnesota; Wichita, Kansas; and Eugene, Oregon.

LGBTQ Issues in Music Teacher Preparation

The topic of diversity in preservice teacher education has often included conversations about ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language barriers, disability studies, and some gender studies (Athanases & Larrabee, 2002; Brant, 2014; Lipkin, 2003; Sherwin & Jennings, 2007; Sweet & Paparo, 2010. Music teacher education programs may have excluded LGBTQ issues due to perceived time constraints or curricular relevance (Salvador & McHale, 2017). Quinn and Meiners (2011) called this "education exclusion" (p. 140), and suggested that by excluding LGBTQ issues in curriculum, institutions reproduce heteronormative classrooms which future educators may carry with them as they go out into their future classrooms. By not addressing these issues in teacher education programs, LGBTQ preservice teachers and faculty may feel silenced by the institution and the profession. Furthermore, preservice educators may not be prepared to deal with issues that may arise in their future classrooms.

Salvador and McHale's (2017) study reported a clear sentiment among music teacher educators that including topics, such as LGBT issues, should not be a part of the preservice music teacher curriculum:

> I do not believe that we as music educators need to teach lengthy units on social justice. For example, LGBTQ is none of our business and has NOTHING to do with one's education. This being the case, to teach a course or even a lengthy unit on such a topic is essentially a waste of time for undergraduates, and rather should be reserved for masters or doctoral coursework. Teaching social justice is as easy as saying "We are all equal and should be treated as such. We should celebrate our differences as much as we celebrate our similarities. In the end, we are all human beings." End of story. I just saved myself a week of time to talk about more important topics such as music selection, instructional behaviors, and curricular issues. (p. 15)

Salvador and McHale (2017) offered considerations for music teacher educators to include LGBTQ issues in their curriculum. Reading and discussing case studies, current events, and ethnographic studies were suggested as initial experiences that may benefit students. The researchers also suggested that music teacher educators model activism (anti–homophobia activism) and suggested inviting guest speakers as culture bearers to share their experiences with preservice teachers. Salvador and McHale also recommended that these issues not be tied to a specific unit or day, but rather, be embedded throughout the coursework.

Garrett's (2012) study addressed strategies for the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in music education. Garrett suggested that while that music education was important in all students' lives, if taught in an inclusive and welcoming environment, it may play an even greater role in the lives of LGBTQ students. Garrett suggested that music educators have the power to create welcoming

environments in their classrooms. By using inclusive language, addressing the importance of pronoun usage, and eliminating heteronormative language in describing music, attitudes may change towards LGBTQ individuals.

Sexual and Professional Identity

Sexual identity has been defined as the way in which someone acts on their romantic desires (Lorber, 2012). Gay men have identified as gay because they are sexually attracted to men; lesbians have identified as lesbian because they are sexually attracted to women. Sexual identity for gays and lesbians is contextual, relational, and unstable. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) proposed a model specific to the lesbian identity, because, as they asserted, "there are elements of female socialization that uniquely and profoundly affect the experience of lesbian identity formation: the repression of sexual desire, the interrelationship of intimacy and autonomy, and the recent availability of reinforcement for nontraditional behavior" (p. 518). McCarn and Fassinger's study suggested that lesbians engaged with two paths as they came to understand their identities   : individual sexual identity and group membership identity. They suggested that individual sexual identity is supported by the group membership identity, by a realization that the two co–exist.

Like other identities, individuals construct   their professional identity through context and relationships. Educators often adopt a teacher identity in their classrooms that is unlike identities they may embrace outside the school day. Teachers may interact with a variety of individuals throughout the school day: students (from very young to young adults), administrators, parents, teachers, and support staff. Researchers have explored teacher identity development and how teachers negotiate their personal and professional identities within the context of a school setting (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Woodford, 2002). Teacher identity is not

a fixed state; it evolves with the experiences of the teacher, the interactions that the teacher has through their career, and the settings in which they teach.

Citing Kegan (1994), Rodgers and Scott (2008) considered the ways in which teachers developed their professional teacher identity. They posed the questions, "*How* does the teacher make sense of social, cultural, political, and historical forces? *How* does she make sense of her relationships with others? *How* does she construct and reconstruct meaning through stories?" (p. 739). These questions reflected the ways in which identity construction was grounded in social interaction. Teacher identity development can span years, and even decades, as teachers moved through their preservice teaching identity, to veteran teaching identity, and finally, retired teacher identity. While moving through these different stages of teaching identity, other forces contributed and influenced identity development which included one's teaching philosophy, teaching strategies, teaching content area, additional education, political position, and socio–economic status (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

Method

The following study comes from a larger intergenerational qualitative study that I completed for my doctoral dissertation. In that study, I worked with six gay and lesbian music educators who careers spanned over 40 years. For purposes of the current study, I chose to highlight the experiences of the youngest and oldest participants.

Design

The purpose of this study was to understand the lives as lived of Nancy and Anna, two lesbian music educators. Questions guiding the research included:

- How do lesbian music educators describe their sexual identity and professional identity?
- How do lesbian music educators negotiate the tensions between these identities?

- What are the similarities and differences among the participants of different generations?

To address these questions, I conducted an intrinsic case study (Stake, 2005). The purpose of this study was not to draw generalizations about lesbian music educators, rather to understand the "particularity *and* ordinariness" (Stake, 2005, p. 445) of the case. In this particular study, I was most interested in learning about the similarities and differences of two lesbian music educators who have taught in different social, cultural, and political eras.

Data Generation and Analysis

Data generation took place over approximately eight months. I conducted three, individual one–hour conversations with Nancy and Anna, and these conversations were audio recorded and video recorded using FaceTime. The first round of interview questions pertained to three themes: growing up, professional identity, and sexual identity (Connell, 2015). I used the first interview from each participant to guide the second and third interviews and to ask clarifying questions. The second and third interviews were semi-structured, to allow for additional conversations that may not have occurred had I just relied on specific interview questions.

Additionally, I asked Nancy and Anna to write in a weekly journal for six weeks. The journaling process allowed Nancy and Anna to be even more reflective in the research process and offered additional anecdotal evidence and experiences that they may not have mentioned in our conversations. I provided a list of prompts to the Nancy and Anna that they could choose for inspiration, but also encouraged them to write freely as they wanted (Appendix A).

As Nancy and Anna shared their stories about their past and their partners, I struggled to visualize them as their younger selves. I decided that one of journals would include a visual story titled, "My life in eight pictures." Drawing from Meyer's (2017) use of photo elicitation, I asked

Nancy and Anna to send me eight pictures from different moments in their lives. Four of the pictures needed to be from specific times (Appendix B). The other four pictures I described to be "literal, such as pictures of people or places that have been important to you, or they can be figurative, for instance a picture of an inanimate object that represents or symbolizes something about you as a music educator and/or as a gay/lesbian individual. Pictures may represent both positive and negative aspects of your life" (Meyers, 2017, p. 414). I requested that the participant describe each picture so that I could have a better contextual understanding of the situation. During the third interview the participants and I talked about the pictures and why they chose these pictures to share with me. This additional layer of data generation about the participants' lives provided additional insight that other conversations would not necessarily elicit and deepened our level of mutual trust as well as my understanding of their lives.

After the interviews concluded I then began the process of comparing Nancy and Anna's stories (Fraser, 2004). Rather than a traditional coding approach, I considered Allsup's (2017) suggestion of thinking and writing thematically that allows researchers to "write in (allow for) 'spaces' within our texts" (p. 14). Thematic thinking and writing allows for additional questions to be asked by the readers and does not provide a tidy conclusion. However, when representing the complex narratives of humans, attaching a specific code to an event or feeling could potentially reduce that individual's lived experience.

Theoretical Frameworks: Performing Gender

Theories offer ways of understanding experience through various lenses. Theories do not resonate as truths, nor should they be interpreted as such, especially when thinking through theory to understand lived experiences of individuals. Here, I share the theoretical lenses through

which I read as I deepened my understanding of the experiences of the participants with whom I worked.

Butler (1990) contended that performativity is an unconscious act, and one that is done over and over to reproduce social norms. Butler (1990) suggested that gender is constructed through the repeated acts of individuals, along with the accepted, previously established, societal notions of gender and sexuality. Ferfolja (2007) used Butler's 1990 model of performativity to describe the various identities that a gay or lesbian teacher may decide to adopt throughout the school day. Ferfolja suggested that, in addition to performing gender expectations of masculinity and femininity, gay and lesbian teachers may have also considered performing heterosexuality. By acting straight (or heterosexual), one was perceived by others to be straight until the silence was broken (Ferfolja, 2007). Butler (2004) suggested that by "normalizing" homosexuality through marriage rights, one was only "normalized" by being gay *and* being married, and then any other form of homosexuality was still considered illegitimate (i.e., being single and gay was considered not normal); therefore, according to Butler (2004) any positioning of oneself within marriage discourse was performing heterosexuality. Ferfolja (2007) described the ways in which gendered schools often "silence and marginalize those who do not conform to the dominant gender and (hetero)sexual discourses that operate in broader society" (pp. 569-570), suggesting that individuals who did not fit into expected binaries of sex and gender may have been subjected to exclusion from the larger school community.

Connell (2015) wrote specifically about the complexities of performing gender or "gender expression" in the classroom setting (p. 117). She also suggested that "to do gender correctly is to perform not only masculinity or femininity, but also heterosexuality" (p. 12). In the context of performing gender as a music educator, Connell identified an assumption that

male teachers were strict, masculine, and authoritative, while female educators were often seen as nurturing, motherly, and soft-spoken, and that deviations from these expectations may have elicited scrutiny from administrators, students, parents, and teachers. For this paper, I considered the ways in which the participants engaged in performative behavior, either consciously or subconsciously.

Researcher's Lens

As a straight, cis–gender, White woman, I have not ever had to consider my label as "straight music teacher." As a straight person I had not really considered what it must feel like to have your sexuality come before anything else that you are. I have plenty of friends who are gay, students who are members of the LGBTQ population, but I am still an outsider; and while I can empathize, I will never be able to understand or know the tensions of these lived experiences. It is with this understanding that I approach this research in a sensitive manner as to not mine the participants for information, but rather, engage in a dialogue that helps me better understand the specific needs of these individuals.

Participants

I posted an invitation to take a recruitment survey on several social media networks, including LGBTQ Safe Space for Music Educators, American Choral Directors Association, and American Orff Schulwerk Association. Six individuals were invited to participate in the larger study, my doctoral dissertation. For this study, I chose to highlight Nancy and Anna because they had the largest span of career and age.

Nancy

Born and raised in a large suburb located outside a major metropolitan city on the west coast of the United States, Nancy spent the last year enjoying retirement after 35 years of teaching music, most of which was orchestra. When she was a young girl, Nancy struggled to

find her place in school. Often bullied for wearing glasses and her weight, as well as being a

self–proclaimed tomboy, Nancy found pride in her musical ability. She was introduced to the

clarinet by her mom and when Nancy turned nine, her mom went out and bought a clarinet for

her to play. Nancy did not have a say in choosing the instrument, but quickly took to it. Her

elementary and junior high band teacher took notice of her dedication and increasing

improvement, and encouraged Nancy to switch over to bassoon, which she did for the remainder

of junior high. In high school, Nancy played clarinet more than bassoon, and commented that her

teacher provided her with many additional opportunities to grow musically through featured

solos and participation in honors ensembles.

Nancy made the decision to become a music teacher because she believed it to be her role

in life.

> I think I always kind of wanted to be a teacher of something, probably because I was
>
> always put in that position with my three little brothers. I had to take care of them, and
>
> teach them things, and I guess I was kind of good at it; they kept me making me do it. So,
>
> teaching was kind of fun. I liked doing that.

Anna

Anna's musical life began as early as she was born. "Well, as the story goes I guess,

when I was born, my mom was like, "Does she have all her fingers and toes?" "Yeah, she looks

great." "Well, she's going to play a musical instrument someday." Anna's mom enrolled her into

early childhood music classes when Anna was about two years old. When Anna turned five, her

mother signed her up for piano lessons. Anna was not particularly interested in piano and her

mom had to "nag" her to practice. Fourth grade signaled the beginning of band, and Anna's mom

wanted Anna to play an instrument.

Anna chose trumpet and experienced great success early on in her musical training. She played trumpet in fourth and fifth grade and enjoyed the instrument, but struggled with the range, which was further complicated when she got braces. Her middle school teacher saw Anna's potential and suggested that she switch over to baritone. Anna made the switch and fell in love with the instrument. Her passion for music led her to participate in all–county and all–state ensembles every year. She also picked up trombone so that she could play in jazz band.

In her mind, she thought she would go to college and study engineering and minor in music performance. However, when she attended drum major camp the summer before her junior year in high school, her mind was changed. She fell in love with being in front of an ensemble and set her mind to go into music education. Anna ended up attending a large Midwest university where she thrived in the close–knit music community.

Comparative Findings and Discussion

For purposes of analysis I compared the themes that emerged between Nancy and Anna's interviews and journal entries: "I think I'm gay"; "But I'm not a gay music teacher"; and generational and political issues. While Nancy's and Anna's stories are unique and cannot be generalized, both offer considerations into how we as music teacher educators and colleagues may offer support and guidance to those with whom we work and help prepare for their next steps as music teachers.

I Think I'm Gay

Anna and Nancy shared similar experiences that led them to the realization that they are gay. Both dated men in high school but realized that something just did not feel quite right. For Anna, it was a lack of excitement towards her boyfriend that made her wonder if something else was preventing her from becoming closer to him. "We were really good friends, and I guess I

didn't realize immediately that the way I was feeling wasn't what others of my friends that were

women were feeling about their boyfriends." Anna maintained a long–distance relationship with

her high school boyfriend for three years into college. She shared with me that the breakup was

painful, more for him than for her, and that they are no longer in contact. When she broke up

with him, she did not share with him that she thought she might be gay. Anna considered that she

might be bisexual, but upon dating women she realized where her real feelings lay. "When I

started dating women, I came to terms that I wasn't interested in men at all and started

identifying as a lesbian."

Nancy's senior year was a pivotal moment for her in her sexual identity development.

She and another girl, who were close friends, became involved in a secret relationship that

involved seemingly innocent sleepovers, a social activity that is common among young girls.

They were able to hide their explorations by playing on this heteronormative and gendered

activity. They were scared to share their experiences. "We never even talked about it really it just

happened. It was pretty scary. Never told anyone else, we didn't even talk about it ourselves

really." Nancy had heard of other young gay people who were kicked out of their homes or had

painful family coming out experiences, including her gay cousin and who had a negative family

coming out experience. Nancy's full realization that she was gay was at the college dance that

she attended her sophomore year. It was here that she saw gay and lesbian couples dancing

together and connecting in a way that she had never experienced before. For Nancy, this was the

"moment of no return."

But I'm Not a Gay Music Teacher

Nancy's fear of coming out in the public schools likely stemmed, at least in part, from the

political movements that occurred during the same time she was in college and her first years of

teaching. She knew she was a lesbian, and she knew that her income was coming from public taxes. She struggled to negotiate this thin line of public life and private life. "Well, you're paid by public money and out there in the public. People get to know you, so you can't really hide." Nancy was student–teaching when Anita Bryant began to spread the "Save Our Children" campaign throughout the Midwest. Nancy realized that her sexuality could negatively impact her job and her livelihood. She and her partner moved to the Pacific Northwest to get away from the homophobic rhetoric of the Midwest and to live in a more accepting community. However, after several years of teaching in her new location, Nancy found herself facing a state legislative amendment that could potentially impact her as well as her program.

> Sarah: Were you ever concerned what might happen to your program if people found out about your sexuality?
>
> Nancy: Especially during that time I told you about with ballot initiatives that were going around [here]. There were two different times where they were trying to pass this thing that said—It would have been a witch–hunt for gay teachers—to push them out. And I got the paper and they have letters to the editor. And during that time, I would read the letters and some of them were just—wow, you know, in favor of this initiative.
>
> Sarah: That must have been hard to read.
>
> Nancy: They were written by parents of some of my kids. So, it's like you know, if they knew, if they knew about me, they'd probably take their kid out of my program.

Nancy commented about "holding off again" during our conversations that hinted at the constant decisions about "coming out" that gays and lesbians often make throughout their lifetime. While she came out to her friends in college, she refrained from sharing her sexuality

while she was student teaching. She never came out when she was teaching during her first job,

but had hoped for a more open life, a merging of public and private lives, when she and her

partner moved.

At one point prior to student teaching, Nancy had an uncomfortable conversation with

her college professor as to how she might navigate the complexities of her sexuality in the

classroom. As her college professor had suggested, Nancy made a conscious effort to "pass" as

straight.

> Well I just tried to cover it up as much as I could. I went back to what my mom did to my
>
> hair and got a permanent. So, I could look better, and I wore fancier clothes than I would
>
> normally have worn, and just trying to present yourself so you can pass. So, nobody
>
> is going to put you in a stereotype.

By putting on the heterosexual mask of straight woman (Butler, 1990; Goffman, 1963),

Nancy was conforming to the heteronormative expectations placed on educators (Connell, 2015;

Kissen, 1996), in hopes of not damaging her program. Butler (2004) described this performance

of balancing the social construction of gender and sexuality as "compulsory heterosexuality" (p.

24). Society expects teachers to act—and be—heterosexual (Blount, 2005; Connell, 2015). The

idea of appearing "heterosexual until proven otherwise" (Connell, 2015, p. 12) permeated my

conversations with the participants regarding sexuality in the classroom.

Nancy never came out to her students during her career. She always maintained a clear

divide between her sexual identity and her professional identity. Connell (2015) described this as

"splitting" where teachers "[draw] a very strict line between [their] identity as a teacher and their

identity as [gay]" (p. 75). Like the participants in Connell's (2015) study, Nancy believed her

sexual identity to be potentially dangerous to her career. She shared with me in one of her journal reflections how she felt she had to maintain her "teacher identity" outside of school.

> I pretty much can't go to any restaurant or store in [town] without seeing someone who knows me—parent or kid. The kids who see me always think it's a really big deal that they saw me! Even if it's just driving my car down the road! So I found that I had to keep my "teacher" identity up even outside of school hours unless I was sure I was going to a place that was private. What would have happened to me if my underground life had been exposed while I was still teaching? I'd like to think it would be a non-issue, but somehow I don't think so.

Nancy's decision to not come out was stemmed by two ballot initiatives that went through her state that would prohibit openly gay teachers from getting and maintaining jobs, despite the seemingly progressive mentality that led her to make the move when she completed her first few years of teaching in the Midwest.

As a first–year teacher, Anna was experiencing similar feelings as Nancy, despite the generational differences. When I asked Anna what does "professional" mean to her, she responded.

> I think it's for me it just means that I am cognizant that in a way I'm always performing for students, I'm always being watched, and that I always need to put ion my best face no matter what I'm feeling and I need to maintain you know boundaries and space between what my students need to know about what I think especially when it comes to any issue that is not musical and just sort of maintaining that once again friendly but not friends space.

I asked Anna to elaborate on what she meant by "performing for students" as part of her

professional identity.

> I think, and I don't mean it in an inauthentic way where I'm faking it or anything like that,
>
> I just feel like so much of my teaching isn't just the material I present, it's how I am and
>
> how I am with my students, so maintaining my teacher persona is a big part of me. But,
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> there are aspects of me that I don't want to say sanitize or remove because that's not true,
>
> but it's just using what parts of me are relevant for what's going on in my school day.. I
>
> guess the easiest example would be that I'm a swearer but obviously I don't swear at
>
> school, so it's not like I'm sanitizing it it's just like, hey this isn't useful right now. If it
>
> doesn't benefit my students [then] it doesn't benefit me. So that's just how I think about it.
>
> Some of the mornings I've been really stressed out and overwhelmed, and it's like, okay
>
> that's my job to deal with that that's not something my students need to see. That's not
>
> something I need to put on them.

Anna's negotiations of the tensions between sexuality and her professional identity resonate with

Butler's (1990) description of performativity. Anna was attempting to establish herself as a

professional music educator early in her career. She believed that any discussion of her personal

life might impede her credibility but also any efforts to maintain and grow the music program. .

As a first-year teacher, Anna was dealing with many concerns that were bigger priorities than

whether or not she should come out to her students. Maintaining a thriving program was one of

the priorities. For fear of students not wanting to join band, or even worse, drop band, she saw

her sexuality as a liability and wasn't ready to "go there" with her students.

> I don't know, it's also like the internalized homophobia talking. You know, I just—
>
> especially being the only person in the building who teaches band, I just wouldn't want to

be the gay teacher, the gay band teacher. I know that I have students who believe and

come from all sorts of different backgrounds, which is amazing, but also part of me

thinks that as the only band teacher—well, I would feel really bad if something like that

drove someone away from taking—I don't know. I guess I just haven't really worked that

out yet.

This comment came earlier in our conversations together, before she got a haircut which made

her "visibly queer." Even then, however, Anna remained unsettled about explicitly coming out to

her students. She often shared with me the internal dialogue that she had with herself, "do I

really want to do this now?" as a way of attempting to talk herself out of a potentially

uncomfortable situation.

Both Anna and Nancy refrained from sharing their personal lives with colleagues and

students. They both were aware of the potential ramifications of what disclosing their sexuality

could have had on their professional careers as well as their music programs. Despite their

intentions to perform heterosexuality (Butler, 1990) through "splitting" (Connell, 2015) both

women chose to present themselves, through their clothing, as androgynous. While Nancy went

out of her way to put on make-up and perm her hair, she did not present as overly feminine.

Anna chose to wear more masculine clothes, such as trousers, button-down shirts, and ties. This

outward presentation contradicts Ferfolja's (2007) description of how educators perform the

gender expectation of masculinity and femininity. Further research into how and why music

educators choose to present themselves as either feminine, masculine, or androgynous, could be

interesting and potentially further disrupt the binary notion of male versus female. Although this

study discussed two identities, professional and sexual, more research could be done to learn

about additional intersections of identity among the LGBTQ population including race, religion, and/or socio-economic status.

Generational and Political Issues

Anna's generation has been exposed to more gays and lesbians in the media, so the social component may have allowed her to see herself as a lesbian more readily than Nancy. However, it is likely that the homophobic language of some political movements happening at the time of her coming out created an internalized homophobia as mentioned earlier. Anna came into her sexuality during the 2015 same-sex marriage campaign, so she was hearing and experiencing mixed signals of acceptance and hate. She shared with me the emotional tensions she felt during this time.

> [I] was still coming to terms with like, I only see straight characters on TV and I only have straight characters in my books. . . . I have so many people telling me this is okay but then I'm also getting messages from a larger society that sure it's okay but it's not something we talk about or not something that's visible.

Because Anna is a part of a generation where there are more visibly queer individuals on media outlets, she used those as a way to help her ground herself in her lesbian identity. She also relied on other friends who identified as queer, but she did not have any particular role models to help her weave her identity into her teaching.

Nancy grew up in a religious household during a political time where it was socially unacceptable to be gay. She internalized the anti–gay rhetoric for such a long time that she struggled to accept who she really was. She was aware of her sexual identity but struggled to accept it because of her internalized homophobia. Nancy grew up in a time where homophobic language was pervasive through the social and political climate. She also experienced

homophobic words spoken by her family and church. Nancy shared that in addition to being fearful of the "Anita Bryant's" in the world she remained "hidden" because "Well, you're paid by public money and out there in the public, people get to know you, so you can't really hide. Though I did a pretty good job of hiding through my 35 years, but that was just kind of my thought."

When the Supreme Court passed the same–sex marriage bill in 2015, many lives were changed that day. Advocates continued to fight for the rights for individuals to use bathrooms that align with their gender rather than their assigned birth sex. Fears regarding pedophilia in education surround lesbian and gay issues, even in 2021. Within the past few years, same–sex couples and other individuals have taken private businesses to court because, based on the owner's personal religious beliefs, they were denied service ("Supreme court rules for Colorado baker in same–sex wedding case," 2018).

In 2016, when data collection took place, there were still states that did not have non–discrimination policies covering sexual orientation or gender identity.[4] While it was not often that we heard about a teacher being fired for being gay, lack of guaranteed legal protection could have been a reason why teachers feared coming out in their classrooms. The previous (2017-2021) White House administration rolled back protections for LGBTQ youth in schools. Betsy DeVos, then Secretary of Education, indicated that schools that did not receive federal funding did not need to abide by the federal laws on discrimination against LGBTQ individuals ("Betsy Devos is grilled on discrimination against LGBTQ students," 2017). In spite of all the work done by pro–LGBTQ activist groups to advance rights for LGBTQ people, the climate seemed to be becoming more dangerous for LGBTQ students and teachers.

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[4]During the revision process of this article, the Supreme Court voted in favor (6-3) of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include gay and transgender workers from workplace discrimination. June 15, 2020.

Despite the span of more than 40 years between Nancy and Anna, both of them experienced similar feelings towards explicitly bringing their sexuality into their classroom. These feelings were influenced by the generational and political movements of the times. Additionally, while Anna and Nancy both self-identified as gay, neither one of them were out to their school communities. Anna was more concerned for the well-being of her program and Nancy was more concerned about the public perceptions.

Implications for Music Teacher Educators: Creating Safe and Open Spaces for Teachers

Both Nancy and Anna shared that they wished they would have had a mentor to work with as they were preparing to student teach and while they were student teaching that would have helped them navigate the complexities of going back in the closet to teach, after living their authentic lives in college. Nancy's experience with her college professor was not helpful as she began the process of transitioning from student to teacher. Donahue (2007) suggested that in addition to the transition that young teachers made as a "student of teachers to a student of teaching to a teacher of students" (p. 75), gay and lesbian teachers also have to figure out how, if, and when they disclose their sexuality to their school community. Taylor's (2011, 2018) participants commented on the mentorship they received from gay and lesbian music educators and the importance this mentorship had on their development as young music teachers.

Music teacher educators, and the profession in general, should reconsider the ways in which we are perpetuating gender binaries and performativity through clothing choices (Minette, 2018; Palkki; 2017) and how even clothing choices may inhibit a teacher's ability to fully be themselves in a classroom. Both Anna and Nancy chose to dress in ways that were less feminine and a bit more masculine. While this often does not cause concern for women, men who prefer to

dress more feminine than masculine may feel less inclined to do so if we continue to promote gender binaries through clothing in music education.

Let us, for a moment, consider how and why we place student teachers in K–12 programs. In what ways are we connecting LGBTQ preservice teachers with LGBTQ in–service teachers as mentor teachers? While placing student teachers in "successful" music programs could benefit their teaching, perhaps we might consider the impact of a strong gay or lesbian music educator mentor on a future music teacher who identifies as gay or lesbian. Perhaps this could be someone who may have more experience dealing with professional identity and sexual identity negotiations (Sweet & Paparo, 2010).

It is also important to consider the ethical implications of potentially outing either the teacher or the preservice teacher without their permission. In what ways could our own well–meaning intentions have a negative impact on the overall experience? While these are understandable concerns, asking the mentor teacher if they would like to be a mentor specifically because they are gay or lesbian gives them the chance to say either "yes" or "no." Asking the preservice teacher if they would like to be paired with a gay or lesbian teacher is equally important. This comes with the understanding that both parties have disclosed their sexuality to the advising professor.

Are schools welcoming of all teachers? Describing the participants' experiences in his study, McBride (2017) noted, "At the heart of this safe space existed a very unsafe space: the school. Even when out, . . . there was a need [for the teachers] to downplay or disguise and suppress sexual identity for the perceived benefit of the students" (p. 212). McBride also advocated for open spaces for the participants in his study to be able to weave their sexual and professional identities together. This reminds us of the historical erasure of gay and lesbians in

the teaching profession, as well as the dangerous stereotypes that have perpetuated—and continue to reinforce—anti–gay propaganda and rhetoric. Nancy's fears of being discovered, while teaching in a public institution where public tax dollars paid for her salary, were not misguided.

Considerations for Future Research

Despite the recent June 2020 Supreme Court ruling to include gay and transgender individuals in non-discriminatory policies, negative attitudes and personal beliefs towards LGBTQ individuals will remain and will take time to change. In what ways are schools and communities allowing for truly safe and open spaces for gay and lesbian teachers to be able to disclose their sexuality, *if they want to*, without fear of receiving a bad review, harassment, or firing? How are educational and political leaders using their power to model inclusivity and diversity within their own institutions? What kinds of conversations are taking place at local, state, and national levels to ensure that *all* LGBTQ individuals are protected from harassment, bullying, and hate speech so that they can truly be a part of the school community? I ask these questions, not only for myself as I consider the next steps that I take in my work, but also to encourage future researchers to consider in what ways they might make their voices heard and—more importantly—begin taking action.

Epilogue

Recently, Anna reached out to me to let me know that she decided this past year (her third–year teaching) to come out to her school community. We are now in the process of completing a follow–up study to explore why she made the decision to come out. In our first conversation I asked her to share with me what she thought was different now than when I first met her, three years ago. She shared with me that she felt professionally established as a band

director enough so that she believed that disclosing her sexuality would not necessarily prevent students from participating in or leaving band. Anna shared with me that because she asks students to be vulnerable in her classes and to take risks, she felt she needed to be more authentic, and by coming out to her students, she might "help someone" be able to be their authentic self in her classroom. Finally, Anna stressed that "it is not fair that queer teachers take on this responsibility" and that while she did not necessarily *want* to come out, she felt a *need* to in the current political climate in order to be real with her students. She shared with me that straight teachers need to be better about advocating, and that the support needs to be explicit, sustained, and said out loud. If we might take something from Anna's suggestion, it is that we need to do this for our LGBTQ colleagues, and we should do it now.

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APPENDIX A

Journal Prompts

1. How would you describe yourself as a person? As a teacher?

2. How would you describe the school where you teach/taught? Paint a picture of the students, faculty, what the school looks like.

3. Describe an interaction that you had with a colleague, administrator or student this week that made you consider your sexuality?

4. Have any of your students come out to you? What was that experience like for you as a teacher? Can you describe some of the emotions you felt? Did that experience change your relationship with this student?

5. Do you know any other gay or lesbian teachers in your school? Have you disclosed your sexuality to them? Are your interactions with them any different than interactions with your heterosexual colleagues?

6. Describe your thinking about creating safe spaces for students.

7. Teachers are often held to a higher "moral" standard than other professions. It is not unusual for teachers to adopt a different identity in the school and outside the school. What identities did you adopt throughout this week. Describe each identity and the ways in which they are similar or different.

8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years, 10 years, 15 years? What are your hopes and dreams in your professional and personal lives?

9. Did anything happen this week that you would like to discuss in our next interview?

APPENDIX B

Visual Story Prompts

1. A picture of you and your family when you were in middle school/high school.

2. A picture of you in college.

3. A picture of you with a partner, past or current.

4. A current picture of you dressed as you would normally dress for a day of teaching.