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Microinterventions and well-being: the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators

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MICROINTERVENTIONS AND WELL-BEING:

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LGBTQ+ MUSIC EDUCATORS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my patient and loving husband, Wayne.

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ABSTRACT

Music educators encounter complex working environments that might contribute to mental health strain and exacerbate music teacher shortages. Additionally, LGBTQ+ music educators face unique struggles from microaggressive discrimination in the workplace, which contributes to emotional, behavioral, and cognitive distress. Given the absence of a body of research on LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microinterventions in music education, the purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to highlight LGBTQ+ music educators' lived experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions. Drawing on microaggression theory, I sought to reveal how their sense of microaggressive stress changed by engaging with microinterventions. I recruited participants using a Qualtrics background questionnaire and employed purposive homogeneous sampling to identify six information-rich cases of adult participants who worked as music educators, identified as LGBTQ+, and regularly experienced microaggressions in the workplace. Participants met for six 60-minute sessions over a six-week period, alternating between individual and small-group

professional learning community sessions.

This qualitative study began with interviewing participants about their experiences with microaggressions. Phase 2 consisted of a small group training on LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microinterventions. Phase 3 involved collecting data on the participants' recollections and reactions to the training material. Data collection included semi-structured interviews, online journaling, and follow-up interviews. I analyzed transcripts using IPA and employed member checks, rich descriptions, external audits, triangulation, and researcher bias discussion to build trustworthiness. Findings revealed that the participants experienced a wide range of LGBTQ+, transgender, gender, and intersectional microaggressions, which contributed to emotional, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations of microaggressive stress. All participants employed select microintervention tactics to prevent some harm from recurring and make perpetrators aware of their actions. When distress from unchallenged harm persisted, the microaffirmations, microprotections, and microvalidations from supportive and kind people helped to diminish it. I argue that these educators, their colleagues, and their school leaders might benefit from ongoing training on microaggressions and microinterventions.

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GLOSSARY

Agender: "A person who does not identify with or experience any gender" (PFLAG, 2025).

Asexual: "A person who does not experience sexual attraction" (PFLAG, 2025).

Bisexual: A person who is "emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one gender" (HRC, 2023).

Bystander: An individual who witnesses microaggressive encounters and might support targets by employing microintervention tactics (Sue et al., 2021).

Disarm microaggressions microintervention category: A collection of antibias strategies and tactics that responders might use to prevent microaggressive traumatization and communicate disagreement with perpetrators (Sue et al., 2021).

Educate perpetrators and stakeholders microintervention category: A collection of antibias strategies and tactics that responders might use to maintain relationships with perpetrators and encourage them to reflect on their discriminatory beliefs (Sue et al., 2021).

External support and alliances microintervention category: A collection of antibias strategies and tactics that responders might use to prioritize self-care and seek help to minimize microaggressive harm (Sue et al., 2021).

Gay: An individual who is "emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender" (HRC, 2023).

Gender microaggression: Gender microaggressions convey deprecating messages about a person's gender, such as asserting that women should not engage in stereotypically

masculine activities (Capodilupo et al., 2010).

Genderqueer: An individual who identifies as "being both male and female, neither male nor female, or as falling completely outside these categories" (HRC, 2023).

Hermeneutic phenomenology: A methodological approach to understanding the fine details of lived experience for an individual or small group of people (Smith et al., 2022).

Hermeneutic circle: A recurring process of analyzing the parts and whole of a given text to develop an understanding of each component in the context of the whole (Smith et al., 2022).

Homophobia: The fear, hatred, or discomfort of people with same-sex attractions (HRC, 2023).

Idiography: An in-depth study of the particulars of an individual case or small group of research participants (Smith et al., 2022).

Intersectional microaggression: Intersectional microaggressions convey negative messages about the multiple identities of marginalized individuals, such as gender, race, and sexual orientation (Nadal et al., 2015).

Lesbian: A woman who is "emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women" (HRC, 2023).

LGBTQ+: An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals with a plus sign "to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities" (HRC, 2023).

LGBTQ+ microaggression: LGBTQ+ microaggressions convey disparaging messages to LGBTQ+ individuals, such as assumptions of predatory sexual behavior and insulting

homophobic slurs (Nadal et al., 2010).

Make the invisible visible microintervention category: A collection of antibias strategies and tactics that responders might use to inform perpetrators of their harmful actions with non-threatening communication (Sue et al., 2021).

Microaggression: Verbal, behavioral, or environmental communication that conveys a negative message to individuals based solely on their marginalized gender, racial, or LGBTQ+ identities (Sue et al., 2007).

Microaggression taxonomy: A system of defining and categorizing microaggressive experiences (Sue, 2010b).

Microaggression theory: A framework for understanding subtle acts of discrimination against individuals with marginalized identities (Sue, 2010b).

Microaggressive stress: The negative biological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impacts of microaggressive attacks (Sue, 2010a).

Microintervention: An antibias strategy that targets or bystanders might use to diminish or challenge microaggressive encounters (Sue et al., 2021).

Microintervention tactics: The specific individual actions from the four microintervention categories that targets or bystanders might use to challenge microaggressive encounters (Sue et al., 2021).

Pansexual: An individual who is "emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of any gender" (HRC, 2023).

Perpetrator: An individual who enacts microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007).

Phenomenology: A philosophical examination of lived experiences with a given

occurrence (Smith et al., 2022).

Professional learning community: A group of individuals who share and critically examine their educational practices to foster improvements in the learning environment (Stoll et al., 2006).

Racial microaggression: Racial microaggressions convey denigrating messages to people of color, such as assumptions of inferior intelligence and criminality (Sue et al., 2007).

Stealth: The ability of a transgender person to avoid the social detection of their gender identity (Jacob, a research participant).

Target: An individual who is the recipient of microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007).

Transcendental phenomenology: A methodological approach to understanding the essence of the shared lived experiences of a small group of people (Smith et al., 2022).

Transphobia: The fear, hatred, or discomfort of people who portray genders that are different from their sex at birth (HRC, 2023).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Microaggressions are verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights or insults against marginalized individuals, such as people of color (Sue et al., 2007). Victims of microaggressions can develop psychological distress. To illustrate varying manifestations of LGBTQ+ microaggressions and the need for LGBTQ+ music educators to develop skills to address microaggressive encounters, I begin this chapter with a series of vignettes of my experiences with microaggressions as an LGBTQ+ music educator.

Four Vignettes of Experiences with LGBTQ+ Microaggressions

I began teaching in a public-school setting in the South, where I experienced several microaggressions about being a gay man. Although many of these experiences occurred earlier in my career, the microaggressive beliefs and the lack of solutions to address such harm persistently remain in music education. The vignettes of my experiences contain content that might be upsetting to some people, so readers may want to skip ahead to the introduction to the study on Page 4.

Beginning in Fear

After graduating with my Bachelor of Music degree, I was excited to begin my first year of teaching as an elementary music teacher. I received and accepted a job offer immediately upon graduation, so I spent my summer filled with anticipation for the coming school year. As fall approached, my principal called two other newly hired teachers and me into his office for an orientation meeting with him and the assistant principal. During that meeting, the principal began discussing a former teacher from that school who had recently been convicted of sexually abusing children at a previous school

and had started grooming children in that school. At first, it seemed like my principal was attempting to inspire careful reflection on how elementary teaching is different for male educators; however, as my principal discussed the convicted teacher, he repeatedly and synonymously interchanged the terms homosexual and pedophile. Two things were apparent by the end of the meeting: My principal was utterly unaware that I, his new music teacher, was a homosexual male, and that he saw no difference between pedophiles and homosexuals. My excitement over my first year of teaching quickly changed to terror, and I worked tirelessly to conceal my homosexual identity.

That Faggot Teacher

My principal summoned me to his office—the principal who first hired me after college. I was uncertain what he needed, but I assumed the worst as he typically came directly to my room for everyday questions. He informed me that a parent had complained about me and shared that they did not want "that faggot teacher around their child." My principal shared that no other wrongdoing on my part had occurred. He refused to tell me which parents had complained. His demeanor was not in his normal upbeat state. Tensely, he stated, "You never told me about that." He was referring to my homosexuality as if he had a right to know and discuss my private life, which I had made every possible effort to conceal. I was livid. I wanted to leave and never return. My anger sparked a direct verbal response to him: "That's because it is none of your business." He was silent. I left his office.

The LGBTQ+ Ally, Almost

Around my 10th year of teaching, I was working at a school where there was no

concealing my homosexuality. On my first day at this new school, I attended a staff meeting where I overheard a teacher ask to a colleague if I was gay. A second voice prominently responded, "he's a music teacher," with an emphasis on the word music as if to imply the stereotype that all male music educators are homosexuals. I later learned that the voice belonged to a member of the teaching team I was joining. I overlooked the incident; however, a classroom assistant began approaching me to discuss my homosexuality. I often redirected conversations to professional topics, but she persisted in her demands to discuss my private life so much that I ignored her altogether. My silence angered her.

One day, the assistant approached me and began talking about her son and his husband. It seemed that she was attempting to communicate that because of her son's homosexuality, she was a safe person for me to rely on in the building, an ally. Unfortunately, her aggressiveness and insistence on breaching my privacy made me uncomfortable around her. I viewed her as dangerous and intentionally kept a distance from her. As a result of maintaining my privacy, she developed exceptional negativity towards me, which became contagious among her social circle at the school. Her behavior was a contributing factor to my leaving that school.

The Rainbow

Elementary music often includes concert performances featuring younger learners. Sometimes, school divisions take a collaborative approach to concert planning by combining students from many schools into one central performance. While planning such an event, the conductor selected a rainbow-themed concert that featured songs

referencing colors, such as Blue Skies by Irving Berlin. The concept behind the rainbow theme was that music has many different styles and genres that elementary students might enjoy. There was no mention or connection to LGBTQ+ individuals or issues in any of the concert materials. Still, one of the music educators expressed her concern that having a rainbow theme might create a perception that the school division was supporting and teaching LGBTQ+ ideas to young children. A host of division emails and communications ensued following the teacher's complaint, each carefully examining the issue. It was apparent from the communications that the division wanted to avoid any perception of an LGBTQ+ connection in the concert.

Even though these events happened in the earlier years of my teaching career, I still vividly recall them. I feel frustrated that I did not possess the knowledge and confidence to properly advocate for my personal and professional well-being as a young teacher and LGBTQ+ individual. My experiences with microaggressive encounters fuel my enthusiasm for finding solutions that might help other LGBTQ+ music educators avoid experiences similar to mine. By better understanding LGBTQ+ teachers' experiences with microinterventions, I might help more music educators to challenge perpetrators of subtle LGBTQ+ discrimination, establish appropriate professional boundaries, and seek help from trusted sources when necessary.

Introduction to the Study

Researchers who have studied microaggressions in music education focused on differing contexts and perspectives, such as gender and LGBTQ+ discrimination. In a study on female and feminine-presenting band directors (Shouldice, 2024), participants

reported experiencing second-class citizenship and restrictive gender roles, which are gender microaggressions. In a study on LGBTQ+ conductors (Ricker, 2023), participants reported experiencing emotional trauma from workplace harassment and job loss. Moreover, the long-term stress that LGBTQ+ individuals experience might result from an expectation to conceal sexual minority identities in music education (Houser, 2021). In a duoethnography of LGBTQ+ music educators, Smith and Vũ (in press) reported rejection from family members, discrimination from school administrators, property damage from students, and blatant harassment from students' parents that negatively impacted their physical and mental well-being. Victims of microaggressions may experience increased psychological distress and diminished well-being.

Some scholars have sought solutions to microaggressive discrimination and to improve well-being in music education. For example, Hess (2016) explored the microaggression of LGBTQ+ students having to translate dominant-culture discourse into relevant communication and suggested that inclusive language and representational choices might promote their well-being. These microaffirmations are small acts that might increase marginalized individuals' sense of belonging and freedom of expression in the learning environment (Hendricks, 2018, 2025; Sánchez-Gatt, 2023; Tsui et al., 2023). In reviewing extant literature on microaggressions, identity trauma, and mental health in music education, Smith (2023) argued that LGBTQ+ music teachers are at risk of experiencing microaggressions and highlighted the need to examine microinterventions, which include microaffirmations, as tools to counteract such risks.

Personal Justification

Although I felt frustrated about not having the knowledge and confidence to handle challenging situations regarding my homosexuality in education, the lack of viable solutions for the contemporary discrimination I experienced was a substantial contributing factor to my dilemma. For most of my career, it was legal to fire a teacher for being gay (Totenberg, 2020), and the pernicious belief that homosexuals are child predators was communicated to me by more than one of my principals. I had no interest in drawing undesired attention.

When facing challenging encounters, I felt that the best option for my job security and well-being was to ignore the painful offenses, conceal my homosexuality, and focus on being the best music teacher possible. Indeed, I busily buried myself in teaching and coaching multiple extracurricular activities. Knowing that my homosexuality disadvantaged my standing within the school, I felt determined to make myself as valuable an employee as possible. At the same time, I avoided social interactions with colleagues, ensured that I lived and socialized in a different city from my school division, and refrained from social media interactions. These collective experiences were exhausting and devastating.

In preparing to write this dissertation, I discovered that my experiences, although deeply personal, were not necessarily unique, as scholars have reported similar experiences from other LGBTQ+ music educators who have encountered contemporary discrimination (Gunther, 2022; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016; Taylor, 2011; Thomas-Durrell, 2019). I might have avoided many of the adverse consequences of

microaggressive encounters if the knowledge of anti-bias strategies had been available during my early teaching career. Moreover, and equally motivational to my research efforts, other LGBTQ+ educators might avoid adversity by examining microinterventions as potential solutions to subtle discrimination.

Practical Justification

Hostilities toward LGBTQ+ individuals in schools might result in queer teachers feeling afraid of the educational environments in which they work (DeJean, 2004) and leaving the profession due to the environmental oppression of LGBTQ+ identities (Maher & Toledo, 2022). The resulting diminished well-being of teachers can put students at risk of developing psychological distress (Harding et al., 2019). Similarly, teachers risk developing secondary trauma from recurring exposure to trauma-affected students (Smith, 2021). These challenges might diminish job satisfaction, teacher retention, and the well-being of students and teachers.

LGBTQ+ music educators might experience emotional distress (Furman, 2011), fear of social activities (McBride, 2016), and damaged interpersonal relationships (Carter, 2013) from harassment and maltreatment related to their LGBTQ+ identity. Because music educators often work as the only or perhaps one of the few music instructors in their buildings (Gunther, 2022), they may contend with these harms in isolation. These teachers may have few options to remedy such adversities. Creating knowledge about how they might employ microinterventions to address harm in the workplace might reduce the negative outcomes of microaggressive discrimination, improve teacher and student well-being, and diminish music teacher shortages.

Approach and Framework

This qualitative study included a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to examining lived experiences with a given phenomenon (Smith et al., 2022). Heidegger developed hermeneutic phenomenology to interpret lived experiences within varying related contexts. Heidegger was concerned with revealing hidden or camouflaged meanings in his studies (Smith et al., 2022). Additionally, Heidegger structured hermeneutic phenomenology to permit the use of secondary theories. This study examined the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music teachers with microaggressions to reveal how their sense of microaggressive stress changed from engaging with microinterventions. Microaggression theory (MT) was the supporting lens for this study.

Microaggression Theory

Sue et al. (2007) proffered MT as a framework for understanding subtle acts of racial discrimination. Microaggressions are verbal, behavioral, or environmental discrimination that perpetrators enact, whether knowingly or unknowingly, against targets, or recipients of microaggressive insults. Nadal et al. (2010) expanded MT to include LGBTQ+ microaggressions, such as heterosexist language, which includes LGBTQ+ slurs; and sexual pathology, which includes the stereotype that homosexuals are child predators. Targets who repeatedly encounter microaggressions might develop microaggressive stress, which is the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive distress that can occur following microaggressive attacks (Sue, 2010a).

Microinterventions

Sue et al. (2021) developed four microintervention categories to challenge microaggressions and diminish or prevent microaggressive stress. Microinterventions are a tiered system of methods for responders, who are targets or bystanders, to address the varying factors, relationships, and contexts in which microaggressions might occur. Each category includes a collection of tactics that responders might use to achieve categorical objectives. Categories and selection rationale include:

- *make the invisible visible:* Responders use non-threatening communication to inform perpetrators of their harmful actions.
- *educate perpetrators and stakeholders:* Responders maintain relationships with perpetrators and encourage them to reflect on their discriminatory beliefs.
- *disarm microaggressions:* Responders attempt to prevent traumatization and communicate disagreement with perpetrators.
- *external support and alliances:* Responders prioritize self-care and seek help to minimize microaggressive harm (Sue et al., 2021).

Theoretical Justification

Sue (2010b) developed MT as a framework to understand subtle acts of racial discrimination but later expanded it to include microaggressions against other marginalized identities. Nadal et al. (2010) extended MT to include LGBTQ+ microaggressions. Because social trends can change, particularly among younger populations, manifestations of microaggressions might change, which indicates the need to reexamine subtle discrimination and harmful impacts continually (Platt & Lenzen,

2013). Microinterventions (Sue et al., 2021) resonate with my research interest in helping LGBTQ+ music educators challenge ever-shifting subtle discriminations.

A study of LGBTQ+ music teachers' experiences with microaggressions and microinterventions might provide new insights into categorizing microaggression manifestations and using anti-bias strategies to effect change in educational experiences. The four microintervention categories have multiple strategies and objectives (Sue et al., 2021), but they do not include guidelines for specific contexts, such as schooling environments where children are present. Microinterventions used in those settings might require nuanced guidelines to prevent causing harm to young learners.

Expansions of MT might include new, more nuanced microinterventions that better fit educational environments. Such strategies might consist of microaffirmations, such as including LGBTQ+ performance music, historical context, and affirming communication during instruction. Ensemble directors might provide microvalidation choices of concert attire, vocal assignment parts, and respect for student pronouns. New microchallenges might include child-friendly phrases, such as "that makes me sad," or a gentle reminder that "children are present" to alert the perpetrator that something is amiss without causing alarm. Moreover, this study might identify microinterventions for LGBTQ+ teachers who are not open about their sexualities due to unsafe work environments.

Research Problem

Teachers can experience stress and burnout from increasingly challenging work environments (Jeon et al., 2024; Travers, 2017), which might contribute to the growing

national teacher shortage (Carter, 2021). All 50 states and the District of Columbia have a critical need for teachers in at least one content area for the 2024–2025 school year, which includes music educator vacancies in seven states (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). Music teachers may experience depression and anxiety from extended school hours and limited personal time outside of the classroom (Payne & Royston, 2024). Additionally, these educators might develop emotional distress, diminished mental health, physical exhaustion, relationship issues, and impaired creativity (Ryan, 2024; Van Klompenberg, 2023a, 2023b). Music educators may experience diminished well-being because of these generalized workplace stressors.

LGBTQ+ music teachers can experience further difficulties in schooling environments (McBride, 2017; Nichols, 2013), such as emotional damage from managing and publicly denying LGBTQ+ identities in marginalizing contexts (Houser, 2021; Ricker, 2023). Despite these challenges, many LGBTQ+ music educators have demonstrated exceptional commitment to quality teaching and exemplary work ethic (Furman, 2012; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016; Taylor & Calaham, 2024); however, some colleagues and students have considered LGBTQ+ teachers less credible than heterosexual educators (Sundblad, 2020; Taylor & Raadt, 2021). These challenging experiences might exemplify microaggressions, which are subtle discriminatory encounters that might result in substantial mental, physical, and psychological harm (Sue et al., 2021).

Music education scholars have suggested supports for LGBTQ+ teachers to address discrimination and improve mental health, such as mentorship, support groups,

and increased access to mental health (Smith, 2023). School and district leaders might be better equipped to foster supportive environments if they received training on workplace discrimination against queer educators (Houser, 2021). Emerging educators might foster increased inclusivity in schools by receiving preservice training on social skills and diversity education (Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). Classroom teachers might use small classroom interactions to affirm students, such as smiling at them, asking about their day, and learning and pronouncing their names correctly (Hendricks, 2025). Teachers might further affirm students by including positive role models to counteract harmful stereotypes. School systems might convey support for LGBTQ+ individuals in many ways, such as including pronouns in email signatures, honoring transgender students' names in school documentation, and allowing transgender singers to choose their voice parts in choirs (Garrett & Palkki, 2021).

An abundance of recently proposed anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has likely presented obstacles to proposed LGBTQ+ supports (American Civil Liberties Union, 2024). Additionally, there has been a substantial increase in the illegalization of many of these supports in states across the United States since the 2025 presidential inauguration (Williams Institute, 2025). Given the hurdles to addressing systemic LGBTQ+ discrimination in music education, LGBTQ+ music educators might benefit from tools to challenge extant discrimination directly. Sue et al. (2021) developed such tools as microinterventions, or antibias actions, to challenge subtle LGBTQ+ discrimination and foster more positive victim outcomes.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions to reveal how their sense of microaggressive stress changed from interacting with microinterventions. By interviewing and reading the journals of LGBTQ+ music educators, I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of LGBTQ+ microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions in music education. The outcomes of this study may offer insights for LGBTQ+ music educators working in contexts that are unwelcoming or hostile to queer individuals, as well as teacher preparation programs that can develop and disseminate microintervention training. Four questions guided this examination of the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study:

1. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microaggressions, if any?
2. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microaggressive stress, if any?
3. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microinterventions, if any?
4. How did LGBTQ+ music educators' sense of microaggressive stress change from interacting with microinterventions, if at all?

Conclusion and Orientation of the Study

Examining experiences with microaggressions might reveal how LGBTQ+ music

educators' sense of microaggressive stress changed by engaging with microinterventions. I hope to learn how the participants in this study dealt with microaggressions and, if they used microinterventions, which tactics were best suited for the educational environment. A richer understanding of their experiences might inform future professional development training on microaggressions and microinterventions.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature that informed this study. I then discuss the methodological approach in Chapter 3. A crucial component of this study was to teach the research participants about LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microinterventions. Therefore, in Chapter 4, I present a training plan to immerse participants in identifying LGBTQ+ microaggressions, selecting appropriate microintervention categories, and role-playing tactics using real-life examples that I discuss in the Chapter 2 literature review. I report study findings in Chapters 5–10 and discuss those findings in Chapter 11.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study centered on the microaggressive experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers. Complex challenges have existed in the educational workplace, such as overcrowded classrooms, excessive job demands, and low morale work climates, which contribute to teacher stress, burnout, and decreased productivity (Jeon et al., 2024; Travers, 2017). The diminished well-being of teachers can put students at risk of developing psychological distress (Harding et al., 2019). Similarly, teachers risk developing secondary trauma from recurring exposure to trauma-affected students (Smith, 2021). These workplace difficulties have likely contributed to a national shortage of educators (Carter, 2021). The U.S. Department of Education (DOE, 2023) projected that for the 2023–2024 school year, 45 states and the District of Columbia would have teacher shortages in at least one content area. That demand increased for the 2024–2025 school year, during which all 50 states and the District of Columbia have a critical need for teachers in at least one content area, which includes widespread music educator vacancies in seven states (DOE, 2025).

In addition to general stressors, music educators can face unique workplace challenges. Music teachers may experience depression and anxiety from extended school hours and limited personal time outside of the classroom (Payne & Royston, 2024). Additionally, these educators might develop emotional distress, diminished mental health, physical exhaustion, relationship issues, and impaired creativity (Ryan, 2024; Van Klompenberg, 2023a, 2023b). Because music educators often work as the only or perhaps one of the few music instructors in their buildings (Gunther, 2022), they may contend with these harms in isolation.

LGBTQ+ music teachers can experience further difficulties in schooling environments (McBride, 2017; Nichols, 2013), such as emotional damage from managing and publicly denying LGBTQ+ identities in marginalizing contexts (Houser, 2021; Ricker, 2023). Some colleagues and students may question the professional capabilities of LGBTQ+ educators by considering them less credible than heterosexual educators (Sundblad, 2020; Taylor & Raadt, 2021). As a result of LGBTQ+ identity, some music instructors reported experiencing dangerous false accusations with grave consequences, such as job termination or incarceration (Furman, 2012; Ricker, 2023; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016; Taylor & Zeke, 2018). These challenging experiences might exemplify microaggressions, which are subtle discriminatory encounters that might result in substantial mental, physical, and psychological harm (Sue et al., 2021).

Teachers might experience intersectional microaggressions, which are microaggressions that simultaneously target more than one type of marginalized characteristic, such as race, sexual orientation, gender, social class, religious faith (Lewis et al., 2018), psychiatric illness, physical disability, or cognitive impairment (Olkin et al., 2019). Intersectional microaggressions can exponentially increase the psychological distress and diminished well-being of victims (Hendricks, 2025). Because of this possibility and the lack of a body of literature on microaggressions in music education, I begin this review by detailing microaggression theory (MT), including microinterventions and victim dilemmas. Next, I discuss racial, LGBTQ+, gender, and intersectional microaggressions in educational contexts. I have limited this study to these types of microaggressions to maintain a manageable scope for a single study. I conclude

by reviewing music education studies on varying LGBTQ+ topics to identify microaggressive encounters and propose microinterventions as solutions to diminish or challenge resulting harms.

Microaggression Theory

Sue et al. (2007) proffered MT as a framework for understanding subtle acts of racial discrimination. Microaggressions are verbal, behavioral, or environmental communications that convey negative messages to individuals based solely on their marginalized gender, race, or LGBTQ+ identities. Perpetrators enact microaggressions against targets, who are the recipients of microaggressions. Most perpetrators unintentionally commit microaggressions due to unrealized hidden biases regarding marginalized populations (Sue, 2010b).

Sue (2010b) observed three categories of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Microassaults include comments and actions that degrade or convey rudeness to marginalized individuals. Microinsults are explicit verbal and nonverbal attacks on marginalized individuals with intentions to harm. Microinvalidations are comments or behaviors that perpetrators use to negate or exclude marginalized individuals. Racial microaggressions manifest in eight recurring themes:

- *alien in one's own land*, such as assumptions of foreign birth for Asian and Latine Americans;
- *ascription of intelligence*, such as assumptions regarding intelligence based on racial identity;
- *color blindness*, which include attempts to avoid acknowledging racial identity;

- *criminality or assumption of criminal status*, such as assumptions of criminality based on racial identity;
- *denial of individual racism*, which include perpetrators' denial of racial biases;
- *myth of meritocracy*, which is a belief that race is not a factor for success in life;
- *pathologizing cultural values*, such as the assumption that non-White culture is fundamentally flawed or the belief in White cultural superiority; and
- *second-class citizens*, such as the preferential treatment of White consumers (Sue, 2010a).

Microaggression Taxonomies

A taxonomy is a system of defining and categorizing microaggressive experiences. Sue's (2010b) eight categories of racial microaggressions were the first microaggression taxonomy. Scholars have expanded MT to include new taxonomies that reflect the experiences of a broader range of marginalized populations (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014; Capodilupo et al., 2010; Nadal, 2013; Nadal et al., 2010, 2015). I explore these expansions by discussing LGBTQ+, gender, and intersectional microaggression taxonomies.

LGBTQ+ Microaggression Taxonomies

There are multiple LGBTQ+ taxonomies, which include categorizations of LGBTQ+, transgender, and bisexual microaggressions (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014; Nadal, 2013; Nadal et al., 2010). Although there are some overlapping categories among these taxonomies, context-specific applications of each category may provide deeper insights into the experiences of various identities within the LGBTQ+ community. Nadal

et al. (2010) developed a taxonomy to categorize LGBTQ+ experiences. To accomplish this goal, they reviewed the scholarly literature on "microaggressions, sexual prejudice, antigay harassment, sexual stigma, modern heterosexism, modern homonegativity, transphobia, and genderism" (p. 226; see Burn et al., 2005; Herek, 2000, 2007; Hill & Willoughby, 2005; Morrison & Morrison, 2002; Walls, 2008). The LGBTQ+ taxonomy consists of eight categories:

- *heterosexist language or transphobic terminology*, which includes language used to ridicule LGBTQ+ individuals, such as LGBTQ+ slurs and the use of incorrect pronouns;
- *endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative culture*, which include expectations for LGBTQ+ individuals to behave and live like heterosexuals, such as hiding homosexual identity at family or work functions;
- *assumption of universal LGBTQ+ experiences*, which include assumptions that all LGBTQ+ individuals have the same life experiences, such as the stereotypes that all male music teachers are gay, and all female band directors are lesbians;
- *exoticization*, which include treating LGBTQ+ individuals as objects or degradingly, such as men propositioning lesbians for group sex;
- *discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences*, which include the use of disrespectful communication or religious judgment, such as, "God hates gays";
- *denial of societal heterosexism or transphobia*, which includes the denial of harsh treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals, such as blaming victims who voice concerns about homophobic encounters;

- *assumptions of sexual pathology or abnormality*, which include assumptions of inappropriate LGBTQ+ sex lives or predatory behavior, such as the myth that homosexuals are child predators; and
- *denial of individual heterosexism or transphobia*, which include defensive reactions from perpetrators regarding their microaggressive behavior, such as a perpetrator becoming angry when questioned about addressing a transgender individual with incorrect pronouns (Nadal et al., 2010).

In conjunction with the LGBTQ+ taxonomy, transgender microaggressions include:

- *physical threats or harassment*, such as hostile or aggressive behavior from perpetrators that does not result in physical assault; and
- *denial of bodily privacy*, such as intrusive questions or remarks about body parts (Nadal, 2013).

Bisexual individuals can experience unique microaggressions (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014). Perpetrators who enact these harms might come from heterosexual, homosexual, or gender-expansive populations, which indicates a lack of belonging in any community for bisexual people. Bisexual microaggressions include:

- *hostility*, such as slights or insults that ridicule bisexuality, which can occur from heteronormative, homosexual, or gender-expansive populations;
- *denial or dismissal*, such as questioning bisexuality as a valid sexual identity;
- *unintelligibility*, such as claims of confusion or impossibility of understanding bisexuality;
- *pressure to change*, which include pressures from romantic partners to change

sexual orientation identity to match current relationships;

- *lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender legitimacy*, such as assertions that bisexuality does not belong in the LGBTQ+ community; and
- *dating exclusion and hypersexuality*, which include people who avoid dating bisexual individuals and the stereotype that bisexual people have innumerable sexual encounters and partners (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014).

Gender Microaggression Taxonomy

Capodilupo et al. (2010) developed a taxonomy of gender microaggressions. They conducted a qualitative inquiry using a focus group with 12 female participants with a wide range of racial identities to gather information about their experiences with microaggressions. The participants' discussions informed the gender microaggression taxonomy:

- *sexual objectification*, such as treating women like sexual objects;
- *second-class citizen*, such as the preferential treatment of men;
- *assumptions of inferiority*, such as assumptions of women's incompetence;
- *denial of the reality of sexism*, such as an assertion that women do not experience mistreatment;
- *assumptions of traditional gender roles*, such as assumptions that women should not engage in stereotypically masculine activities;
- *use of sexist language*, such as degrading language about women; and
- *denial of individual sexism*, such as a man denying his sexist behavior (Capodilupo et al., 2010).

Intersectional Microaggression Taxonomy

Nadal et al. (2015) developed a taxonomy of intersectional microaggressions. In a qualitative study on microaggressions and intersectionality, they engaged 80 research participants with varying religious, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation identities in interviews and focus groups on their experiences with microaggressions. The participants' discussions informed the intersectional microaggression taxonomy:

- *exoticization of women of color*, such as the objectification or dehumanization of women of color;
- *gender-based stereotypes for lesbians and gay men*, such as assumptions of gay femininity and lesbian masculinity;
- *disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups*, such as the cultural challenges that LGBTQ+ persons of color or religious faiths might experience in their communities;
- *assumption of inferior status of women of color*, such as women of color only being caretakers, nannies, or babysitters;
- *invisibility and desexualization of Asian men*, such as the negative portrayals of Asian men;
- *assumptions of inferiority or criminality of men of color*, such as the stereotype of men of color being aggressive;
- *gender-based stereotypes of Muslim men and women*, such as the negative perceptions of Muslim men and the lack of agency for Muslim women; and
- *women of color as spokespersons*, such as someone asking a woman of color to

determine if a comment or action was offensive (Nadal et al., 2015).

Vaccaro and Koob (2019) argued that targets of microaggressions might benefit from research that probes beyond microaggression taxonomies to examine the influence of power and intersectionality. They developed an intersectional model of LGBTQ+ microaggressions to conceptualize how microaggressive encounters filter through the intersectional complexities of perpetrators, targets, and contextual factors. Vaccaro and Koob argued that victims' choices to respond or disengage from perpetrators of microaggressions are likely a result of such intersectional complexities. For example, a gay man living in San Francisco, California, a city that supports LGBTQ+ rights, might respond differently to LGBTQ+ slurs than a lesbian woman living in the Deep South, which was a region that typically suppresses LGBTQ+ rights. Additionally, LGBTQ+ targets might respond differently to perpetrators in higher positions of power, such as a boss or a father figure, as opposed to a peer or a friend, who might have a position of equal or less power. Few studies have included examinations of varying intersecting identities, such as gender and race, race and sexual orientation, race and social class, and race and religion (Lewis et al., 2018). Additional research on LGBTQ+ music educators' experiences might yield a deeper understanding of microaggressions and microinterventions by examining the compounding harm of extant intersectionality and power dynamics.

Microaggressive Stress

Microaggressive stress is the negative biological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impacts of microaggressive attacks (Sue, 2010a). Targets who repeatedly

encounter microaggressions can develop microaggressive stress. Symptoms of microaggressive stress include:

- *biological*, such as increased heart rate and blood pressure;
- *cognitive*, such as racing thoughts;
- *emotional*, such as distress and negative emotions; and
- *behavioral*, such as coping or reactionary mechanisms (Sue, 2010a).

Scholars have identified connections between targets experiencing microaggressions and developing microaggressive stress (Costa et al., 2023; Owen et al., 2018; Schmitt et al., 2014). In a meta-analysis of 249 correlational studies on perceived discrimination and psychological well-being, representing 144,246 research participants, Schmitt et al. (2014) reported a significantly negative relationship between perceptions of pervasive discrimination and diminished psychological well-being, indicating that psychological well-being decreases as perceptions of discrimination increase. Similarly, Owen et al. (2018) identified and reviewed 21 quantitative studies from 2007 to 2017 on mental health and microaggressions outside therapy settings, representing more than 6,000 research participants, and found an association between microaggressions and impaired psychological functioning, such as depression, emotional distress, and rumination. In a meta-analysis of 141 articles on the negative impacts of microaggressions, Costa et al. (2023) argued that experiences with microaggressions predicted "decreased psychological well-being, [diminished] physical health, [poor] job outcomes, and negative coping" (p. 145). Additionally, intersectional microaggressive experiences predicted more profound adverse outcomes. Individuals who experience

microaggressions risk developing microaggressive stress.

Microaggressive stress can manifest in varying intensities based on the severity and frequency of microaggressions. Recurring microaggressive encounters significantly predict diminished mental health outcomes (Nadal et al., 2014). LGBTQ+ individuals experience homonegative microaggressions and resulting traumatic symptoms significantly more than heterosexual individuals (Robinson & Rubin, 2016). Moreover, PTSD symptoms increase as victims experience more LGBTQ+ microaggressions. Targets might internalize microaggressions and perpetrate them on other marginalized individuals, indicating the potential for a cycle of microaggressive harm (David et al., 2018). Victims of microaggressions might develop and perpetuate microaggressive stress.

Microaggressions pose grave risks for marginalized populations. Transgender individuals who defend their identities following microaggressive encounters can experience an increased risk of suicidal ideation (Howe, 2019). Bisexual women of color can experience diminished mental and physical well-being following microaggressive encounters (Smith, Bostwick, Burke, et al., 2023). Similarly, Asian Americans who experience racial microaggressions can develop lowered self-esteem and diminished physical well-being (Wong-Padoongpatt et al., 2017). Microaggressive stress might increase negative self-image and expectations of future rejection in LGB individuals (Dietz, 2015). Individuals from marginalized populations are likely at risk of developing microaggressive stress, which presents substantial threats to physical, mental, and life well-being.

Victim Dilemmas

Political and social pressures might create dilemmas for victims who respond to perpetrators' discriminatory behaviors. A recent national wave of anti-LGBTQ+ bills in the United States has likely presented obstacles for impacted individuals to locate help after experiencing microaggressions (Movement Advancement Project, 2025; National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2025; Trans Legislation Tracker, 2024). During the 2024 legislative session, lawmakers introduced 527 anti-LGBTQ+ bills, which included 209 bills favoring LGBTQ+ censorship in schools, banning transgender students from sports, and the forced reporting of LGBTQ+ students to their parents (The American Civil Liberties Union, 2024). Florida passed the *Child Protection in Public Schools* bill into law, prohibiting educators from referring to LGBTQ+ topics except in approved Department of Education courses (Human Rights Campaign, 2024). Victims might not feel safe addressing perpetrators because extant political hostilities establish a tension between explicitly revealing LGBTQ+ identity in response to microaggressions and the human need for safety.

Perpetrators might present additional obstacles to victims addressing microaggressive encounters. Such obstacles might include secondary microaggressions, which are harmful reactions that occur following victim responses to subtle discrimination (Johnson et al., 2021). Secondary reactions include victim blaming, 'splaining, and gaslighting. Victim blaming and 'splaining refer to perpetrators blaming targets for microaggressive encounters and attempting to rationalize such encounters with non-marginalized target characteristics, respectively. Gaslighting refers to an attempt by

perpetrators to cause targets to doubt their experiences. Additionally, because some victims of microaggression develop PTSD (Robinson & Rubin, 2016), the possibility exists that perpetrators might further target those individuals who exhibit symptoms of mental health struggles due to a societal stigma surrounding mental illness (Hess, 2024). These perpetrator reactions might make responding to microaggressions more painful for victims.

Some scholars place an increased burden on victims who respond to perpetrators. Rini (2018) argued that victims have an obligation to reflect on the potential negative outcomes of responding to perpetrators. She asserted that the concept of microaggressions is a complex and privileged dialogue among academic circles and asserted that victims of microaggressions contend with multifaceted concerns about if and how to respond to perpetrators. Moreover, victims might reflect on whether responding to a microaggression is beneficial or might increase adverse victim and perpetrator outcomes. Reni suggested that victims have a moral imperative to determine if a microaggression might have resulted from misinterpretation and advised the persistent reflection on giving perpetrators the benefit of the doubt to avoid causing unjust reactionary harm.

Victims contend with several barriers to addressing microaggressive encounters. Given the hostile legal climate, LGBTQ+ individuals might encounter consequences for advocating for their well-being, and perpetrators might transform victim responses into more harm. Moreover, some scholars have placed on victims the burden of addressing microaggressive encounters with respect for the perpetrator's well-being (Rini, 2018),

which is warranted given that many perpetrators are also victims of microaggressions themselves. These dilemmas have created a need for a broad framework of nuanced microaggression responses that victims might carefully select and use to challenge microaggressions meaningfully.

Critics of Microaggression Theory

Although I used MT as a supporting lens for this study, it is essential to note that some scholars debate the theory's merits. One such critic, Lilienfeld (2017a), summarized MT as having five fundamental premises and argued that each premise was ambiguous and without research-based evidence. Lilienfeld offered a list of 18 suggestions for microaggression theorists to add credibility and clarity to the theory, which included identifying an alternative to the term microaggressions, developing a method of observing microaggressions other than self-reports from victims, and avoiding the assumption that microaggressions negatively impact targets.

In rebuff of Lilienfeld's assertions, Sue (2017) argued that although the critic had presented a well-crafted argument grounded in empirical psychology, he had overlooked the primary focus of MT, which is about listening and understanding those who are most oppressed. Sue (2017), a professional psychologist, elaborated on the limitations of psychology as a tool to understand the human condition, stressed that psychology was developed and supported by the dominant culture, and embraced alternative ways of knowing and understanding human experience. Some scholars argued in support of Lilienfeld (2017a; Haidt, 2017; Ong & Burrow, 2017); however, Lilienfeld (2017b) responded by asserting disagreement with each of Sue's rebuttal premises and

championed psychology as the best tool to scrutinize and develop MT properly. In this study, I sought to better understand the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with workplace harm, which aligned with Sue's (2017) stance of listening and understanding oppressed individuals.

Microinterventions

Sue et al. (2021) developed microinterventions to challenge microaggressions and diminish or prevent microaggressive stress. Microinterventions are a tiered system of methods used by respondents, who are targets or bystanders, to address the varying factors, relationships, and contexts in which microaggressions might occur. Each of the four categories include selection rationales and tactics:

- *make the invisible visible:* Responders use non-threatening communication to inform perpetrators of their harmful actions. Tactics include (a) developing perspicacity, (b) disempowering innuendos by naming them, (c) undermining meta-communication, (d) challenging stereotypes, (e) broadening ascribed traits, (f) seeking clarification, (g) making the meta-communication explicit by rephrasing the statement or action, and (h) reversing and restating the offending remark.
- *educate perpetrators and stakeholders:* Responders maintain relationships with perpetrators and encourage them to reflect on their discriminatory beliefs. Tactics include (a) differentiating between intent and impact, (b) contradicting stereotypes, (c) appealing to perpetrator principles, (d) pointing out the commonality, (e) promoting empathy, and (f) pointing out perpetrator benefits.

- *disarm microaggressions:* Responders attempt to prevent traumatization and communicate disagreement with perpetrators. Tactics include (a) interrupting–redirecting, (b) stating values and limits, (c) expressing disagreement, (d) describing what is happening, (e) nonverbal communication, (f) using an exclamation, and (g) reminding perpetrators about rules.
- *external support and alliances:* Responders prioritize self-care and seek help to minimize microaggressive harm. Tactics include (a) alerting leadership, (b) reporting incidents, (c) seeking therapy or counseling, (d) seeking spiritual or religious community, (e) using a buddy system, and (f) attending support groups (Sue et al., 2021).

Microinterventions comprise three types of defenses against microaggressive harm: microaffirmations, microprotections, and microchallenges (Sue et al., 2021). Microaffirmations are small acts or phrases that validate a person's identity. Microprotections are the everyday actions that promote anti-discriminatory behavior. Microchallenges are attempts to challenge individuals who perpetrate biased words or actions directly. Later in this chapter, I discuss examples of LGBTQ+ microaggressions in music education and suggest microintervention tactics as possible solutions. Those examples illustrate the defining characteristics of microintervention tactics.

Victims might unknowingly escalate tensions by misusing microinterventions to challenge microaggressions. Perpetrators might escalate their aggression in response to targets who yell or display anger (Nadal, 2023). Additionally, microaggressions might engage victims' trauma and result in emotional imbalance. To avoid these pitfalls,

victims might calmly address perpetrators, inquire about the intentions of their actions, and communicate the resulting impact of those actions. Victims might use "I" statements to avoid unintentionally attacking perpetrators. Moreover, some encounters might require assistance from a trusted source before responding. Microinterventions may empower LGBTQ+ individuals to address microaggressive encounters confidently; however, responding targets might consider the potential values of calmness and de-escalation as complements to addressing subtle discrimination.

The Path to Microinterventions

Scholars have explored strategies to cope with the harm of microaggressive encounters. In a study on racial microaggressions and resilience (Mills et al., 2023), Black undergraduates reported coping with microaggressive encounters by focusing on academic success; assertively conveying diverse perspectives to perpetrators; and embracing their own cultural expressions of appearance, language, and social interaction. Similarly, in a study on microaggressions in the workplace (Holder et al., 2015), Black female executives reported coping with adverse racial encounters by practicing self-care, religious or spiritual routines, minimizing cultural differences, and self-validation. Additionally, the executives reported caring for each other by creating support networks and mentoring emerging Black workers. In a study on microaggressions in higher education (Lewis et al., 2013), Black female students reported utilizing three categories of coping tactics: resistance, collective support, and self-protection. Resistance strategies included verbally responding to perpetrators and embracing their own cultural beauty standards. Collective strategies included using support networks. Self-protection

strategies included becoming desensitized to offending remarks and focusing on individual success. Although these victims may have experienced a positive impact, most of the strategies necessitated that victims cope without addressing perpetrators.

Some victims of microaggressions might benefit from confronting perpetrators directly. In a study on coping and mental health (Sanchez et al., 2018), Asian and Latine American college students who experienced racial microaggression reported increased psychological distress; however, students who responded directly to perpetrators experienced less distress than targets who utilized coping strategies that avoided perpetrators. In a study on responding to microaggressions (Morales, 2021), Black students reported benefiting from beasting in response to racial microaggressions, which is an assertive target response that affirms cultural counternarratives. Those students utilized three types of beasting: asserting Black intellect; "centering Black history, culture, and perspectives; and affirming Black diversity and heterogeneity" (p. 75). Challenging perpetrators' microaggressive behavior might lead to more positive victim outcomes than solely utilizing coping strategies.

De-Escalating Responses to Microaggressions. Scholars have searched for effective strategies for responding to perpetrators. Plous (2000) conducted a training exercise about responding to perpetrators with college students. The students kept a log of observed microaggressions, which informed training scenarios. The students role-played perpetrators, who enacted microaggressions; and targets, who responded to those encounters. The students had trouble responding to perpetrators without escalating the encounters. Tactics that might de-escalate challenging situations and make perpetrators

aware of their harmful actions include clarifying questions, communicating feelings, and maintaining respect for perpetrators (Plous, 2000).

Incorporating Plous's work, Byrd (2018) replicated the role-play training and reviewed extant microaggression literature to identify eight categories of microaggression responses that might prevent perpetrator escalation: (a) appealing to perpetrator values, (b) expressing feelings, (c) clarifying questions, (d) empathizing with perpetrators, (e) contradicting information, (f) humor, (g) involving others, and (h) non-verbal responses. The combination of training on specific responses and role-play exercises may have increased participants' confidence to respond effectively to perpetrators. Sue et al. (2021) included the work of Plous (2000) and Byrd (2018) in the microintervention framework and recommended that future training plans include a role-playing component.

Microaggressions in Education

Microaggressions can create substantial harm in a multitude of education settings. Microaggressions manifest as subtle behavioral, communicative, and environmental insults or pejorative messages to individuals based on their marginalized identities, such as race, sexual orientation, or gender (Sue, 2010b). Microaggressions may negatively impact mental, physical, and psychological well-being. Individuals with multiple marginalized identities can experience multiple or intersecting microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2015). For example, an LGBTQ+ person of color might experience LGBTQ+ and racial microaggressions. Moreover, due to the nature of intersectionality, an individual with multiple marginalized identities might have a greater risk of experiencing microaggression. The resulting harm of intersectional microaggressions can

exponentially increase the psychological distress and diminished well-being of victims (Hendricks, 2025). I explore the manifestations and negative impacts of microaggressions in education by discussing racial, LGBTQ+, gender, and intersectional microaggressions.

Racial Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions convey denigrating messages to people of color, such as assumptions of inferior intelligence and criminality (Sue et al., 2007). The subtleness of microaggressive encounters might create a barrier to recognizing these subtle insults and the resulting harm. Racial microaggressions likely reinforce stereotypes; maintain racial power disparities; and result in victims feeling isolated, invisible, emotionally distressed, and unwell (Osman et al., 2024; Spanierman et al., 2021).

In educational contexts, racial microaggressions might result in substantial physical and emotional harm to victims and disrupt the learning environment (Hughley, 2019; Lee et al., 2023; Pusey-Reid et al., 2022). In a study on microaggressions in early childhood education (Essien & Wood, 2024), Black children reported a lack of recognition for their classroom contributions and excessive punishment for behaviors, even when such behaviors mirrored White students' actions. Moreover, the children asserted that their experiences made them feel like second-class citizens because of their race. In higher education (Ogunyemi et al., 2020), students of color reported experiencing bias during faculty and peer interactions. Additionally, class discussions on racial topics often became tense and awkward. The cumulative stress of these challenging encounters typically compounded into debilitating emotional distress. Among higher education faculty and staff (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020), African Americans reported encountering

White peers who assumed they had diminished intelligence, criminal history, and cultural abnormality. These microaggressions caused them to seek support networks, establish boundaries, and work harder than expected to demonstrate excellence as a means of coping with resultant stress. The uniqueness of individual experiences with varying racial microaggressions might result in a host of adverse victim outcomes.

Targets can experience multifaceted, deleterious effects of racial microaggressions. In a study on microaggressions in predominantly White institutions (PWIs; Robinson-Perez, 2024), Black undergraduates reported experiencing racial slurs, excessive on-campus identification checks, and degrading political slogans, which caused fears of dressing too stereotypically Black, safety concerns, and depression. In engineering programs (Burt et al., 2019), Black graduate students reported experiencing unfair grading, excessive questioning to verify comprehension, and belittling in the presence of other students, which caused diminished self-perceptions of professional identity and loss of comfort within their respective programs. Similarly, Native American women in doctoral education programs reported having feelings of isolation and being unwelcome after encountering stereotypes about Native Americans from White students (Shotton, 2017). In addition to causing diminished well-being, targets of racial microaggressions might experience substantial obstacles to achieving their educational goals (Smith et al., 2011).

Racial inequities can exist in music education programs. The Eurocentric focus of music education often limits student engagement to Western European styles (Sánchez-Gatt, 2023), which restricts the musical expression of students of color and exemplifies

the systemic environmental microaggression of the perceived low value of non-European musics. In a study on race, sexuality, and religion (Thomas-Durrell, 2019), Black music educators reported having fewer resources and administrative support than their White colleagues. Additionally, they enacted code-switching to blend in with White peers due to challenging social pressures from living among White populations in the South, which historically had egregious mistreatment of Black populations. Because of these experiences, these educators struggled with fear over having to choose between advocating for better working conditions or prioritizing personal safety. It is evident from these studies that racial microaggressions substantially impede people of color from attaining educational and life success and lasting well-being.

Racial inequities exist in music education. In an exploration of these disparities (Robinson & Hendricks, 2018), Deejay shared his experiences as a Black undergraduate student and a public-school educator. During college, the institutionalized superiority of Western classical music made him feel that he was less capable than his White classmates of succeeding in theory and diction courses. Moreover, he started to view his voice, his primary instrument, as a weakness when performing in the art song tradition. He felt marginalized in his college and further marginalized as a Black educator in a public-school setting that served students of color as the lowest priority. Similarly, in a study on disparities between HBCU and PWI music programs (Earvin, 2024), HBCU music programs had less scholarship funding, a disparity of advanced degree attainment among faculty, and fewer music curricula and degree offerings. In a study on music education students attending PWIs (Parker, 2024), Black undergraduates reported having to work

harder to prove their academic worth than their White peers, while simultaneously ensuring that those peers did not feel uncomfortable around their Blackness. The exclusion of Black musics from musical coursework and racial insensitivity throughout the programs caused some Black undergraduates to question if they belonged in their university programs. The system of music education supports White advancement and erects barriers to Black success.

LGBTQ+ Microaggressions

LGBTQ+ microaggressions convey disparaging messages to LGBTQ+ individuals, such as assumptions of predatory sexual behavior and insulting homophobic slurs (Nadal et al., 2010). The pervasive nature of LGBTQ+ microaggressions reinforces disparities among LGBTQ+ populations and increases the likelihood of psychological distress and substance abuse (Nadal, 2023). Additionally, individuals who experience LGBTQ+ microaggressions might develop mental health struggles and suicidal ideation (Cascalheira & Choi, 2023; DeSon & Andover, 2024; Howe, 2019; Nadal et al., 2016; Salim et al., 2019). Victims who experience diminished mental health might conceal their struggles because of a societal stigma concerning mental health (Hess, 2024), which further victimizes microaggression targets and delays seeking help.

In educational contexts, LGBTQ+ microaggressions may result in feelings of anger and helplessness, interpersonal relationship struggles, and an increased likelihood of experiencing future microaggressions (Baricevic & Kashubeck-West, 2019; Nadal et al., 2011). Scholars have argued that microaggressions cause LGBTQ+ educators to fear negative encounters (DeJean, 2004) and leave the profession altogether (Maher &

Toledo, 2022). In a study on microaggressions at a religious university (Hughes, 2019), LGBTQ+ students ranked microaggressions as the most critical on-campus concern. Moreover, the students reported experiencing derogatory religious language, hostility in residence dorms, and a lack of professors addressing extant microaggressions during classes. In social work classrooms (Byers et al., 2020), LGBTQ+ students reported experiencing homophobic and transphobic insults resulting from religious communication and claims that the perpetrators were exercising their freedom of speech. Additionally, the classroom instructors did not address microaggressions, overgeneralized LGBTQ+ experiences, and excluded LGBTQ+ issues from social-work curricula. The uniqueness of individual experiences with varying LGBTQ+ microaggressions might result in a multitude of adverse victim outcomes.

LGBTQ+ targets can experience interruptions to their academic progress and increased self-destructive behavior. In a study on microaggressions in college settings (Crane et al., 2020), LGBTQ+ students who experienced microaggressions reported higher levels of classroom discomfort and intentions to transfer universities than students who did not. In a study on microaggressions and substance abuse (Winberg et al., 2019), more than half of responding LGBTQ+ college students reported hearing the phrases "that's so gay" and "no homo." Individuals who heard these phrases were significantly more likely to develop hazardous alcohol and drug use. In addition to causing diminished well-being, LGBTQ+ individuals might experience substantial life setbacks because of microaggressions.

LGBTQ+ microaggressions can occur in music education spaces. LGBTQ+

students might experience the ongoing environmental microaggression of having to translate teachers' dominant-culture discourse into relevant communication (Hess, 2016). In a study on the experiences of LGBTQ+ band conductors (Ricker, 2023), one participant reported experiencing microaggressions that resulted in a sense of shame, job loss, negative coping, and hiding his sexual identity. Moreover, LGBTQ+ music educators might develop diminished well-being and mental health challenges because of recurring microaggressive encounters (Smith, 2023). It is evident from these studies that LGBTQ+ microaggressions contribute to victims experiencing a multitude of adverse consequences, psychological harms, and difficulties in maintaining success.

Gender Microaggressions

Gender microaggressions convey deprecating messages to women, such as beliefs that women should not engage in stereotypically masculine activities and exist for men's sexual objectification (Capodilupo et al., 2010). Moreover, gender microaggressions create a gateway for perpetrators to commit acts of sexual harassment and violence (Gartner & Sterzing, 2016). Victims of gender microaggressions are significantly more likely to experience feelings of depression and anxiety (Feigt & Rodriquez, 2020).

In educational contexts, gender microaggressions might result in feelings of isolation and underappreciation, which contribute to hostile environments (Haynes-Bataz et al., 2022; Lester et al., 2017). In a survey about microaggressions and depressive symptoms, 98% of responding medical students indicated experiencing microaggressions and ranked gender microaggressions as occurring most frequently (Anderson et al., 2020). Medical students who frequently experienced microaggressions developed higher

levels of depression and withdrawal from academic activities than students who did not. Gender microaggressions can pose substantial threats to women's well-being.

Victims of gender microaggressions might experience secondary harm. In a study on microaggressions in physics and astronomy programs (Barthelemy et al., 2016), participants reported that perpetrators and school administrators frequently ignored female victims following incident reports. The victims' experiences were nuanced and difficult to sort into extant categorical definitions, such as gender microaggression taxonomies (Capodilupo et al., 2010). Similarly, in a study on gender microaggressions on college campuses, Gartner (2021) argued that gender microaggression taxonomies did not accurately reflect female students' experiences. Gartner identified new categories of microaggressions, which included invisibility, or feeling ignored by males on campus; caretaker and nurturer, which include expectations to clean and supply snacks; a presumption of incompetence when compared to male students; and the expectation to work in stereotypically feminine occupations.

Men can also become victims of gender microaggressions (Pitcan et al., 2018). In a study on racial microaggressions in higher education (Robinson-Perez, 2024), Black male students reported experiencing gender microaggressions in addition to racial discrimination. These men struggled with perceptions of toxic masculinity and aggression based on gender stereotypes, which caused feelings of hopelessness to counteract such preconceptions. In another study (Perkins & Durkee, 2024), recurring experiences with gender microaggressions predicted imposter syndrome among Black undergraduates. Men might experience substantial obstacles to achieving academic success because of

gender microaggressions.

Music educators can experience gender microaggressions. In a study on female and feminine-presenting band directors (Shouldice, 2024), participants reported experiencing varying microaggressions, such as second-class citizenship, restrictive gender roles, and environmental microaggressions. Second-class citizenship microaggressions included assumptions that female directors were the assistant directors, not valuing their ideas, talking over them, and ignoring them. Restrictive gender roles included assumptions about female directors' marriage, children, and pregnancies, as well as perceptions that they are bitchy, aggressive, and loud. Environmental microaggressions included lacking female director role models, adjudicators, professional leaders, high school directors, and guest conductors. In a study on female band directors and workplace harm (Huddleston, 2024), participants reported leaving their music education teaching positions due to toxic work environments from gender microaggressions. In addition to causing diminished well-being, the contextualized manifestations of gender microaggression highlight how microaggressions can manifest in nuanced, subtle acts of harm in differing settings.

Intersectional Microaggressions

Intersectional microaggressions convey negative messages about the multiple identities of marginalized individuals, such as gender, race, and sexual orientation (Nadal et al., 2015). For example, instead of experiencing microaggressions about a single characteristic, such as race or gender, an LGBTQ+ female of color might experience microaggressions about race, gender, and sexuality—perhaps simultaneously.

Because of the significant relationship between intersectional microaggressions and psychological distress, victims might experience increased depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (DeSon & Andover, 2024; Lee et al., 2015, 2023), which might result in higher levels of negative coping (Costa et al., 2021).

In higher educational contexts, intersectional microaggressions might cause victims to feel invisible and demeaned by peers, which might contribute to conflict fatigue and a desire to escape school environments (Fematt & Ramirez, 2024; Hseih & Nguyen, 2020). In a study on intersectionality in higher education (Morales, 2014), Black undergraduates reported experiencing racial, gender, and class-based microaggressions. Racial microaggressions included exoticization from White students based on perceptions of unique hair, skilled dancing, and superior athleticism. Gender and class microaggressions included perceptions of aggressive Black males and intimidating Black females based on perceptions of low-income family status. In another study (Midgette & Mulvey, 2021), male students were more likely to report experiences with racial microaggressions, and female students were more likely to report experiences with gender microaggressions. Women of color working in higher education have reported microaggression fatigue from feeling invisible to administrators and encountering people who assert that they have inferior professionalism (Young & Anderson, 2021). It is evident from these studies that cumulative experiences with varying intersectional microaggressions may result in substantial mental health struggles.

Individuals with multiple marginalized identities can encounter obstacles to

academic and professional achievement. Among LGBTQ+ BIPOC in higher education, dropout rates and psychological distress might increase as encounters with racial and LGBTQ+ microaggressions increase (Barrita et al., 2023). In a study on intersectionality and well-being (Miller et al., 2021), LGBTQ+ college students with disabilities reported experiencing negative communication regarding LGBTQ+ identity and a lack of accommodations for disabilities, which contributed to increasing depressive symptoms. Latine engineering undergraduates reported experiencing racial and gender microaggressions from White peers and professors (Smith, Poleacovschi, Feinstein, & Luter-Teasley, 2023). Racial stereotypes included assumptions of inferior intelligence and less ability to succeed academically. Gender stereotypes included perceptions of Latino criminality and Latina inferiority, which contributed to feelings of isolation, decreased academic performance, and diminished mental health. In addition to causing diminished well-being and substantial obstacles to achieving education goals, the experiences of individuals with intersectional microaggressions highlight the dramatic and substantial increase of harm from microaggressive attacks.

Intersectional microaggressions may occur in music education. In a study on the intersections of race, religion, and sexuality (Thomas-Durrell, 2019), Black LGBTQ+ musicians living in the Bible Belt reported experiences with family rejection, religious judgment, and social pressures to hide their sexual identities. Similarly, in a study on race and sexuality in HBCU bands (Carter, 2013), Black gay band players reported tension between their sexuality and the social pressures of being strong African American men, which created a persistent sense of anxiety over potential social rejection for their

sexuality. In a study on queer Black youth participating in music education programs (Sánchez-Gatt, 2024), participants reported experiencing deep emotional harms from intersectional microaggressions about their race and sexuality, which included demeaning questions, emotional abuse, and a lack of boundaries from a music director. Other perpetrators included administrators and classmates. Additionally, although the music program included some diverse musics, such repertoire was not meaningfully selected and utilized to foster representation and inclusion, which further isolated the participants from their peers.

In a study on racial microaggressions in music programs at PWIs (McCall et al., 2023), Black male doctoral students reported that White students and professors treated them as if they were intimidating threats. For example, some White students moved away from Black students and secured their belongings. Additionally, White professors challenged their writing styles by asserting that their writing was too defensive and constrained. Despite these obstacles, the Black doctoral students overcame adversities to achieve success. Similarly, in a study on music education students attending PWIs (Parker, 2024), Black undergraduates reported experiencing a lack of trust from their White professors, which stemmed from professors not addressing racial insults during class times and a lack of support for reported instances of racial discrimination. Some students reported questioning the value of their education in the face of the mental anguish they were experiencing.

The participants of these studies encountered persistent harm due to some of their most innate personal characteristics. These harms were derived from family, social, and

community contexts; manifesting as an ever-present multi-directional onslaught of insult, criticism, and pain. Although individuals suffering from intersectional harm may persevere, they might benefit from developing and implementing tools to counteract such harm. Additionally, music education students and spaces might benefit if educators learned antibias strategies to create safe and welcoming environments.

Perpetrators can manifest many types of microaggressions based on targets' race, sexual orientation, gender, and intersectional identities. Such manifestations likely occur in a diverse range of educational settings and can result in targets experiencing adverse mental, physical, and psychological health. Diminished well-being might contribute to victims developing self-destructive coping behaviors and experiencing difficulties achieving educational and life goals. Strategies to foster improved well-being might help victims.

Microaffirmations in Music Education

Music education scholars have proposed microaffirmations as tools to counteract microaggressive harm against individuals with marginalized identities (Hendricks, 2025; Sánchez-Gatt, 2023; Tsui et al., 2023). Microaffirmations are "small acts that validate and affirm a person's humanity, racial/cultural identity, experiential reality, and worth or value. They make a person feel welcomed, seen, heard, respected, valued, supported, and affirmed" (Sue et al., 2021, p. 30).

Microaffirmations may help LGBTQ+ and students of color feel more comfortable in the learning environment. For example, inclusive language and representational curricular choices might promote LGBTQ+ students' well-being (Hess,

2016). Teachers might begin affirming students of color by developing awareness of personal and environmental biases, such as disadvantaging classroom arrangements, unfair behavior management strategies, and non-representational classroom decor (Tsui et al., 2023). Affirming students of color might include centering their voices and choices, such as providing choices of musical engagement during racial crises and opportunities to write or freestyle rap. Sánchez-Gatt (2023) proposed three categories of affirmations: interpersonal, curricular, and environmental. Interpersonal affirmations include providing students with opportunities to heal past and present harms by reimagining life through fantasy-based brainstorming. Curricular affirmations refer to the inclusion of Black artists in the classroom. Environmental affirmations encompass providing multiple forms of musicking beyond the traditional Western European framework.

Hendricks (2025) argued that the music education community might employ holistic acceptance to extend microaffirmations to "all individuals with their respective needs, concerns, and identities" (p. 116). Holistic acceptance involves recognizing and embracing how a student's many qualities, complexities, and identities coalesce to form unique individuality (Thomas-Durrell, 2023). With such caring, radical acceptance, teachers might co-create learning spaces with students in which all learners may fully express their unique identities. Microaffirmations are one component of the microintervention framework. Hendricks (2025) and Smith (2023) have proposed that microinterventions might improve music education spaces and highlight the need to examine them as tools to counteract interpersonal, curricular, and environmental biases.

Recognizing and Challenging LGBTQ+ Microaggressions in Music Education

Challenging LGBTQ+ discrimination in music education might begin with recognizing its varying presentations. Because I highlight the microaggressive encounters of research participants from varying studies, I provide brief descriptions of each participant and use their names to organize my discussion about their experiences. Using their names also maintains a focus on the personal impact of microaggressions and resulting microaggression stress. In some instances, I discuss victims who experienced egregious harm but did not challenge their perpetrators. I highlight how a lack of challenging perpetrators might have exacerbated any resulting harm and suggest how the victims might have used microinterventions. I use these discussions not as form of victim blaming, but as a tool to illustrate the scope of microaggressive harm and the possibilities of microinterventions as tools to combat discrimination. Understanding the factors inherent in these discriminatory encounters may foster thoughtful considerations of antibias responses. I discuss such factors in the themes of (a) unintentional harm, (b) harm from close relationships, (c) traumatizing attacks, and (d) threatening situations. Following each theme, I discuss how microinterventions might serve as solutions to microaggressive harm.

Unintentional Harm

Subtle LGBTQ+ discrimination can occur during everyday music class interactions. In a study on gay music educators' challenges and resilience (Talbot & Hendricks, 2016), Kevin reported encountering students who frequently said, "that's so gay" (p. 59). Kevin addressed offending remarks by engaging students in playful

exchanges to diffuse tensions and encourage reflection. Similarly, Sara participated in a study on transgender choral singers' experiences (Palkki, 2020), and she reported that her choir director accidentally used gendered language, such as referring to tenor and bass sections as men. Because Sara had a bass voice, her classmates politely reminded their choir director to use non-gendered language. In a study on lesbian band conductors (Furman, 2012), Kathryn reported conversing with her students about bullying. Kathryn prompted her class to consider why theater students frequently experience bullying, which helped them identify their hidden assumptions that all theater students are homosexuals. Kevin, Sara, and Kathryn may have encountered unintentional harm. Offending individuals might not have corrected such harm if responding teachers and students had not engaged them in a gentle dialogue examining their actions.

Some LGBTQ+ preservice teachers have encountered unintentional harm. In a study on LGBTQ+ preservice music teachers' experiences (Paparo & Sweet, 2014), Brett shared that his cooperating teacher knew about his homosexual identity but criticized his decision to address LGBTQ+ slurs from students. Frustrating Brett further, the teacher complimented gay men's fashion skills when assigning him choir costume responsibilities. Similarly, in an investigation of how lesbian music teachers navigated sexual identities (Minette, 2021), Nancy reported that a college professor advised that she dress more conventionally feminine during student teaching. Nancy immediately changed her appearance. The supervising teachers may have intended earnest advice or compliments, so their remarks might have resulted in unintentional harm. Such harm might recur without meaningful dialogue about their comments.

Microinterventions: Make the Invisible Visible

Kevin's, Sara's, and Kathryn's responses to microaggressions are examples of the "make the invisible visible" (MIV) tactics of developing perspicacity, seeking clarification, and undermining meta-communication, respectively (Furman, 2012; Palkki, 2020; Sue et al., 2021, pp. 93–97; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). Kevin developed perspicacity by guiding students to reflect on heterosexist language harm (see Nadal et al., 2010; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). Sara's classmates sought clarification on their choir director's gendered language by gently correcting his offending remarks (Palkki, 2020). Kathryn used a discussion prompt to undermine the meta-communication that homosexual students deserved harassment and physical harm (Furman, 2012). Kevin, Sara, and Kathryn may have used MIV tactics to prevent perpetrators from becoming defensive so that they might reflect on their microaggressive behavior.

Brett and Nancy did not challenge the perpetrators' offending comments but might have benefited from the MIV tactics of disempowering innuendos and undermining meta-communication (Minette, 2021; Paparo & Sweet, 2014; Sue et al., 2021). The compliment of gay fashion skills is an example of the universal-experience microaggression (see Nadal et al., 2010). Brett might have disempowered his cooperating teacher's innuendos by explaining that LGBTQ+ slurs are hurtful terms and that not all gay men are fashion experts (Paparo & Sweet, 2014). Nancy's experience with her supervising college professor exemplified intersectional microaggressions (Minette, 2021). The professor simultaneously asserted that her choice of attire was inappropriate based on her sexuality and gender. Nancy might have undermined the meta-

communication that masculine attire was inappropriate by communicating that the professor gave an impression of prejudice against females and lesbians. LGBTQ+ music educators might use MIV tactics to make perpetrators aware of their unintentional harm and engage in meaningful dialogues about hidden beliefs.

Harm From Close Relationships

Some LGBTQ+ music educators experience discrimination from individuals with whom they are in close personal or professional relationships. In a study on intersectionality in music education (Taylor & Calaham, 2024), Rashaad, a gay African American middle-school choir director, shared that he often heard preachers assert that homosexuals were an abomination to God. Also, his mother's religious expectations that he become heterosexual led to frequent arguments. Rashaad's sister mended her brother and mother's relationship by affirming Rashaad as a talented and intelligent man deserving of his mother's pride. Similarly, in a study on LGBTQ+ collegiate band directors' experiences (Ricker, 2023), John reported that administrators dismissed him from his teaching position at a private religious university due to his homosexual identity. John challenged his firing by asking why school leaders punished him for his sin of homosexuality but did not punish other faculty for their sins. School leaders amended their decision to immediately dismiss John by allowing him to remain in his position until the school year ended. Rashaad and John faced the potential for substantive personal loss; however, thoughtful responses to discrimination likely helped mitigate such losses.

LGBTQ+ music educators might experience negative emotions regarding unchallenged discrimination from close relationships. In a study on how LGBTQ+ band

directors negotiated sexual identities (Taylor, 2011), George reported that his principal admonished him for publicly introducing his husband during the conclusion of a student concert. George assured his supervisor that such an introduction would not recur but avoided discussing the hurt his principal caused. Similarly, in a study on gay music educators' identity disclosures (Palkki, 2015), Sam reported experiencing frustration from encounters with the stereotype that all male music educators are gay. Sam avoided discussing the stereotype, which he associated with televised portrayals of gay music teachers. In a study on preservice transgender music educators' experiences (Silveira, 2019), Joseph reported that he worried about being accepted in his musical ensemble. Well-meaning friends attempted to comfort him by stating that transgender identity was not an essential consideration in music ensembles, which Joseph felt erased his identity. LGBTQ+ music educators who encounter unchallenged discrimination from close relationships might experience multiple harms: the initial discrimination, relationship damage, and the accompanying distress from not challenging the offending remarks.

Microinterventions: Educate Perpetrators and Stakeholders

Rashaad's and John's experiences highlight the religious aspects of disapproving microaggressions (see Nadal et al., 2010; Ricker, 2023; Taylor & Calaham, 2024). Rashaad's sister's and John's responses to these microaggressions are examples of the "educate perpetrators and stakeholders" (EPS) tactic of appealing to perpetrator principles (Sue et al., 2021, p. 111). Rashaad's experiences exemplified the intersectionality of being a man who is Black and gay (Taylor & Calaham, 2024). Social and family expectations compounded the difficulties of him openly sharing his

homosexuality and gender expressions. Rashaad's sister appealed to her mother's principles by personalizing Rashaad's attributes to maintain family relationships. Similarly, John appealed to his school leaders' sense of principles by asking to remain in his position until the school year ended (Ricker, 2023). Moreover, John's experiences highlight how microaggressive beliefs might lead to overt discrimination. John's firing represents overt discrimination; however, school leaders based his termination on disapproving religious beliefs. Rashaad and John might have used EPS tactics to diminish adverse outcomes by maintaining relationships with perpetrators.

George, Sam, and Joseph did not challenge the perpetrators' offending behaviors but might have benefited from the EPS tactics of pointing out perpetrator benefits, contradicting stereotypes, and differentiating between intent and impact (Palkki, 2015; Silveira, 2019; Sue et al., 2021; Taylor, 2011). George might have pointed out how his principal may benefit from being more inclusive by asking if heterosexual teachers would have faced the same admonishment for introducing their spouses (Taylor, 2011). Sam might have contradicted the stereotype by verbalizing that not all male music educators are gay (Palkki, 2015). Joseph might have differentiated between his friends' helpful intentions and harmful impacts by verbally acknowledging their desire to help and communicating his feelings of erasure (Silveira, 2019). Maintaining personal and professional relationships is likely a vital life skill; however, harm from those relationships might strain such connections and compound adverse outcomes. LGBTQ+ music educators might use EPS tactics to diminish the negative consequences of microaggressions and maintain vital relationships.

Traumatizing Attacks

Some LGBTQ+ music educators experience traumatizing attacks on their sense of self-worth. In a study on gay African American band members attending HBCUs (Carter, 2013), Ken reported experiencing challenges with the religious admonishment of his homosexuality, such as church members who encouraged him to avoid dying of AIDS by becoming heterosexual. Similarly, Leslie participated in a study on lesbian band directors (Furman, 2012), and she reported experiencing character attacks from students' parents based on her perceived homosexuality, which resulted in deep emotional pain. In a study on a transgender music educator (Bartolome, 2016), Melanie shared an encounter with a choir director's instructions not to sing because some people would find her disgusting. Melanie's relationship with singing forever changed. Ken, Leslie, and Melanie experienced intentional attacks that might have diminished their long-term well-being.

Some LGBTQ+ music educators might take extreme measures to cope with diminished well-being. In an autoethnography on identifying gay coming-of-age experiences through performing musical theater works, Cayari (2019) discussed his struggles with his faith and sexuality. He sought his youth pastor's advice, who used religious judgment in an attempt to convince him to live as a heterosexual. Uncertain of how to respond, he acquiesced to his pastor's pleas, which further complicated his struggles. In a study on a transgender high school band student (Nichols, 2013), Rie reported that a student called her "a fag" (p. 267) and the teacher refused to correct the offending student. Rie reported feeling helpless to address the ongoing harm and even wished for death to avoid returning to the school. Similarly, in a study on a gay musician

living in the South (Taylor & Zeke, 2018), Zeke reported that church leaders fired him over consensual flirting with a church member. The firing was preceded by church members publicly shaming him during a church meeting. Zeke felt humiliated and isolated himself from everyone. Cayari, Rie, and Zeke might have protected themselves from traumatizing harm by isolating themselves; however, those acts of self-preservation might have compounded the harmful effects of blatant attacks and potentially delayed finding acceptance and healing.

Microinterventions: Disarm Microaggressions

Ken, Leslie, and Melanie experienced traumatic effects from disapproving LGBTQ+ microaggressions (see Nadal et al., 2010) but did not challenge the perpetrators' offending actions. They might have benefited from the "disarm microaggressions" (DM) tactics of nonverbal communication, stating values and limits, and interrupting-redirecting (Bartolome, 2016; Carter, 2013; Furman, 2012; Sue et al., 2021, pp. 129–131). Ken might have encouraged church members to reflect on their remarks about AIDS by using nonverbal communication, such as shaking his head in shocking disagreement (Carter, 2013). Leslie might have stated values and limits by communicating her expectations for respect and cordiality to set boundaries of acceptable behavior during challenging parent interactions (Furman, 2012). Melanie might have interrupted and redirected her choir director's insults by reminding him about school rules prohibiting harassment (Bartolome, 2016). Maintaining control of personal responses might have enabled Ken, Leslie, and Melanie to select DM tactics carefully.

Cayari, Rie, and Zeke did not respond to traumatizing microaggressions but might

have benefited from the DM tactics of interrupting–redirecting, describing what was happening, and expressing disagreement (Cayari, 2019; Nichols, 2013; Sue et al., 2021; Taylor & Zeke, 2018). Cayari might have expressed disagreement with his youth pastor's remarks by describing how the conversation increased the tension between his faith and sexuality (Cayari, 2019). Rie might have described what was happening by stating that the other student was harassing her, and the teacher was complicit by not intervening (Nichols, 2013). Zeke might have expressed disagreement with church leaders who shamed and fired him by expressing his beliefs about God's love and homosexuality (Taylor & Zeke, 2018). Maintaining control of personal responses to challenge substantial discrimination confidently with DM tactics might empower LGBTQ+ music educators to feel less traumatized by placing the burden of microaggressions on perpetrators.

Threatening Situations

Some LGBTQ+ music educators might encounter threats to their livelihood and personal freedoms. In a study on lesbian band directors (Furman, 2012), Nora reported that school administrators teased her about a contractual moral turpitude clause because she lived with a lesbian woman. Nora cautioned school leadership that she would pursue legal action if they continued threatening her. Similarly, in a study about transgender choral singers' experiences (Palkki, 2020), Jon reported that a state music association denied his request to sing tenor in the honors choir because he was born with a female body. Jon's music teacher contacted the association's lawyer, who advised association leadership to abandon gendered choral policies. In a study on gay music educators'

challenges and resilience (Talbot & Hendricks, 2016), James reported that administrators accused him of sexual abuse because of a single conversation that he had with a student in a school hallway. James contacted his union representative for support. Investigators exonerated James; however, his administrators did not renew his contract. Threatening situations might result in irreparable life harm. LGBTQ+ educators might struggle to challenge such danger alone.

Some educators might worry about the consequences of challenging LGBTQ+ discrimination. In a duoethnography on LGBTQ+ music educators' early career experiences and mental health (Smith & Vũ, in press), Tawnya reported experiencing administrators' expectations to hide her homosexual identity, parents boycotting meetings with her, LGBTQ+ slurs, and property damage. School administrators did not address the offenders and encouraged Tawnya to remain silent. She left her job without pursuing legal action due to worrying that judges would take away her then-partner's child; however, Tawnya relied on friends to cope with her experiences. In a study on LGBTQ+ African American music educators working in the Bible Belt (Thomas-Durrell, 2019), Zion reported witnessing band parents shout LGBTQ+ slurs at band students. He wanted to challenge the parents' harassment, but he worried about revealing his homosexuality in his religiously conservative teaching context. These studies make it evident that many LGBTQ+ individuals in dangerous contexts have little or no support to address discrimination. These educators might feel they have no choice but to isolate and compartmentalize their lives.

Microinterventions: External Support and Alliances

Nora's, Jon's, and James's responses to microaggressions are examples of the "external support and alliances" (ESA) tactic of reporting incidents (Furman, 2012; Palkki, 2020; Sue et al., 2021, p. 155; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). Nora's warning of seeking legal counsel informed school leadership that their questioning was inappropriate and potentially illegal (Furman, 2012). Jon's music teacher's bystander support of contacting a lawyer forced association leadership to reconsider the appropriateness of gendered choral policies (Palkki, 2020). James's experience exemplified the sexual-pathology microaggression (see Nadal et al., 2010). Because this situation could have led to his incarceration, he alerted union leadership to advocate on his behalf (Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). His firing highlights the possibility that music educators might reveal perpetrators' intentions using microinterventions. Some perpetrators who discriminate against targets might cease offending behaviors upon gaining awareness of their harm; however, school leaders persisted in their discrimination by not renewing James's contract after investigators determined his innocence. Nora, Jon, and James used ESA tactics because they might have faced microaggressions that were too consequential to act in solitude.

Tawnya's experiences highlight disapproving microaggressions (see Nadal et al., 2010). Perpetrators might have believed that something was wrong with Tawnya's perceived sexuality and used that belief to enact overt discrimination against her (Smith & Vũ, in press). Tawnya's response to those harms exemplified the ESA tactic of buddy systems (Sue et al., 2021). Taking legal action was not an option for Tawnya, so she used

the support of friends to cope with her experiences (Smith & Vũ, in press). Zion might have benefited from the ESA tactics of using support groups or counseling to process complex emotions about needing to hide his sexual identity and not aiding harassed LGBTQ+ students (Sue et al., 2021; Thomas-Durrell, 2019). Some discrimination is so severe that threatened LGBTQ+ music educators may prioritize self-care as the best response. Using ESA tactics to find support might achieve that care.

Problems and Potential Solutions

Throughout this review on LGBTQ+ microaggressions in music education and subsequent discussions on microinterventions as potential solutions, I sought to understand the varying factors, relationships, and contexts of subtle LGBTQ+ discrimination; and how music teachers might use microinterventions to challenge such discrimination. LGBTQ+ music educators have experienced many types of microaggressions in social, familial, and professional relationships. Some microaggressions presented as subtle insults (Palkki, 2020; Paparo & Sweet, 2014; Smith & Vũ, in press), and others developed into threatening situations, such as criminal charges and job loss (Furman, 2012; Ricker, 2023; Taylor & Zeke, 2018). Because of these harms, music educators contended with diminished well-being and substantive personal losses. These findings add support for Smith's (2023) argument that LGBTQ+ music educators are at risk of experiencing microaggressive discrimination and developing microaggressive stress.

Microaggressive stress is a dominant outcome among educators who have experienced LGBTQ+ microaggressions. These teachers have experienced anxiety

(Cayari, 2019; Minette, 2021; Silveira, 2019; Smith & Vũ, in press; Thomas-Durrell, 2019), anger (Taylor & Calaham, 2024), and deep emotional pain (Furman, 2012; Taylor, 2011). Some educators encountered severe microaggressions that resulted in pernicious trauma (Bartolome, 2016; Furman, 2012; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016; Taylor & Zeke, 2018), which has likely changed their involvement with music education.

The exponential increase of harm from intersectional microaggressions resulted in some LGBTQ+ music educators contending with cultural, social, and religious admonishment. These circumstances resulted in their need to hide their identities (Carter, 2013), profound struggles with interpersonal relationships (Taylor & Calaham, 2014), and being forced out of their communities (Taylor & Zeke, 2018). Educators working under these circumstances might benefit the most from the adoption of microintervention practices in music education.

Music educators might use microinterventions to address microaggressions and provide bystander support for colleagues and students. Music educators who have used microinterventions have likely prevented some microaggressions from recurring, diminished harmful outcomes, and mended strained relationships. These findings support Sue et al.'s (2021) claims of microintervention efficacy. Music educators may begin implementing microinterventions by reflecting on their words and actions to identify potential microaggressive behavior. Moreover, music educators might use the microintervention framework to reflect on the circumstances of microaggressive encounters, determine if responses are needed, and identify appropriate response categories. Given the potential for microaggressive discrimination to evolve, educators

might benefit from familiarity with all categories of microintervention responses.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions to reveal how their sense of microaggressive stress changed from interacting with microinterventions. Accomplishing these goals necessitated that I developed a deep understanding of participants' lived experiences, indicating the need for a qualitative research approach. Phenomenology is a qualitative approach that pertains specifically to lived experiences.

I begin Chapter 3 by restating the purpose, presenting the phenomenological research design, and discussing the rationale for my role as the researcher. I then discuss the recruitment and selection of participants, research procedures, data collection, and data analyses. I conclude this chapter by addressing trustworthiness.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions to reveal how their sense of microaggressive stress changed from interacting with microinterventions. By interviewing and reading the journals of LGBTQ+ music educators, I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microinterventions in music education. The outcomes of this study may offer insights for LGBTQ+ music educators working in contexts that are unwelcoming or hostile to queer individuals, as well as teacher preparation programs that can develop and disseminate microintervention

training.

Design and Rationale

Phenomenological research encompasses a multitude of styles and philosophical underpinnings. I discuss the phenomenological approach I used in this study and present my rationale for why this approach was the best fit to address my research questions. I also present methodological literature for professional learning communities (PLCs), which I incorporated as a method in this study.

Research Questions

Four questions guided this examination of the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study:

1. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microaggressions, if any?
2. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microaggressive stress, if any?
3. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microinterventions, if any?
4. How did LGBTQ+ music educators' sense of microaggressive stress change from interacting with microinterventions, if at all?

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Smith (1996) developed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a psychological approach to understanding the qualitative intricacies of lived experiences. IPA is suitable for exploring sensitive topics through deep examinations of the fine

details of lived experiences. Smith et al. (2022) argued that IPA centers so profoundly on the particulars of individual experiences that researchers might focus on what a phenomenon is like for a single person. In studies with small groups of participants, researchers can use IPA to identify how experiences are similar and dissimilar. This focus on the singular provides more flexibility to create a research design that best fits the research problem. IPA incorporates the philosophical and theoretical foundations of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography.

Phenomenology is a philosophical examination of lived experiences with a given phenomenon (Smith et al., 2022). Multiple phenomenological approaches exist; however, each approach's overarching goal is to understand human experiences better. Husserl founded transcendental phenomenology to understand and describe lived human experiences (Smith et al., 2022). Husserl employed intentionality, which is the conscious act of examining a phenomenon of lived experience and reducing it to its most fundamental essence. Husserl aimed to examine lived experiences wholly, without bias, as if encountering them for the first time. To help achieve this bias-free examination, Husserl documented his biases regarding any research problem so that he might intentionally remove them from consideration in his phenomenological analyses.

Heidegger, a student of Husserl, developed a new branch of phenomenology, hermeneutics, to interpret lived experiences within their contexts (Smith et al., 2022). Heidegger was concerned with revealing hidden or camouflaged meanings by interpreting lived experiences with a given phenomenon. For Heidegger, humans are *Dasein*, which means to exist and be within the world, unseverably intermingled with the

intricacies of human life, and, therefore, it was impossible to set aside biases. Therefore, Heidegger incorporated his preconceptions about research problems as a component of his phenomenological investigations. He sought to understand why he had such preconceptions and how they changed through examining the lived experiences of others. Due to the focus on deep examinations of lived experiences, Smith et al. (2022) created IPA within the hermeneutic tradition.

Hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation that originated as a practice of interpreting religious writings (Smith et al., 2022). Texts in IPA research come from participants' journals and interview transcriptions. Analyzing those texts involves the hermeneutic circle, which is a recurring process of analyzing the parts and whole of a given text. Analysis occurs in a multi-directional pattern, repeatedly moving from part to whole and whole to part until an understanding of each component in the context of the whole forms.

The analytical part–whole focus complements idiography, which is the in-depth study of the particulars of an individual case or small group of research participants (Smith et al., 2022). Idiographic research is the opposite of seeking findings to draw generalizable conclusions. Instead, idiography concerns the fine details of an experience and the meaning that individuals ascribe to them. In IPA, researchers address idiographic concerns by employing purposive sampling to select information-rich cases carefully.

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions to reveal how their sense of

microaggressive stress changed from interacting with microinterventions. Experiencing LGBTQ+ microaggressive harm and potentially responding to aggressors with microinterventions are markedly personal occurrences, which necessitated collecting highly detailed information about lived experiences. Exploring the fine details of personal experiences might foster a careful understanding and selection of microinterventions as antibias tactics to neutralize, diminish, or challenge microaggressive harms and add rich information for developing microintervention training programs. Therefore, the phenomenological approach of IPA was an appropriate methodology. I have incorporated the IPA-appropriate methods of journaling, interviewing, purposive sampling, and part-whole analytic approaches in my research design.

Professional Learning Communities

A PLC setting aligned with the role-playing practice of microinterventions in this study, which I discuss in Chapter 4. The concept of a PLC originated among researchers in the 1960s and gained traction in K–12 school settings throughout the 1990s (All Things PLC, 2023). PLCs emerged from reflective practices among educators; however, there was no succinct, widely accepted definition (Stoll et al., 2006). A PLC comprises a group of individuals who share and critically examine their educational practices to foster improvements in the learning environment. Schools and districts might use PLCs to implement initiatives that foster a culture of ongoing improvements to school environments among educators (DuFour et al., 2024). Key PLC features include:

- *shared values, visions, and goals:* PLC members share a common purpose of improving school environments, culture, and student learning. Based on the

common purpose, PLC members establish binding group norms to identify and achieve individual and group goals.

- *collective responsibility and leadership:* Teachers and administrators develop collaborative relationships to share PLC responsibilities and decision-making.
- *collaboration and shared individual practices:* PLC members commit to openly discussing individual teaching practices, praising successes, and identifying areas of improvement.
- *supportive conditions:* PLC members provide empathy and support for each other and receive support from administrators.
- *collective reflection, learning, and application:* PLC members commit to learning and applying new skills to improve student learning (Hord, 1997; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Stoll et al., 2006; Vangrieken et al., 2017).

PLCs have multiple uses in education and research. A PLC represents a continuous cycle of teacher collaboration, reflection, and application of new skills (DuFour et al., 2024). Various manifestations of PLCs in school environments include formal, formative, and preset agenda PLCs (Vangrieken et al., 2017). Schools may use formal PLCs to implement new learning standards, whereas formative PLCs do not have preset objectives. A PLC with a preset agenda typically includes preestablished schedules, formats, and goals to meet various needs, such as increasing professional content knowledge, addressing specific challenges, and performing research.

This study centered on understanding the lived experiences of a small group of LGBTQ+ music educators. These educators reflected on their experiences in the

professional environment through the lens of microaggression theory and applied newly acquired microintervention skills to challenging encounters. To facilitate this process, the educators met in a PLC with a preset agenda (Vangrieken et al., 2017). The PLC features of a shared vision, collective responsibility, collaboration, mutual support, and collective reflection align with this study's goal and methodological choices, which I embedded in the participant training plan that I discuss in Chapter 4.

Researcher Role

My role in this study was as an interviewer and teacher. I had no professional or personal relationships with the participants in this study, so no positions of power existed between me and the participants. I am aware of some personal biases about LGBTQ+ life and the harms that queer individuals face, such as my principal synonymously interchanging the terms homosexual and pedophile from the first vignette in Chapter 1. Throughout this study, I reflected on those assumptions and learned much from the participants. I tracked much of this reflection by keeping a research journal.

Participants

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions to reveal how their sense of microaggressive stress changed from interacting with microinterventions. Therefore, it was essential to select participants who had experienced microaggressions and microaggressive stress. I discuss the selection and recruitment of participants. Then I introduce the six participants: Jacob, George, Asher, Veronica, Kathy, and Chris.

Selection and Recruiting

Participant selection criteria included adults who identified as LGBTQ+, were music educators in the United States, and experienced microaggressions. Additionally, prospective participants needed to be willing to learn about LGBTQ+ microaggression typologies, role-play the microintervention framework, and discuss their experiences throughout the six-week study timeframe.

I began recruiting participants by posting invitations on Facebook and Reddit in groups geared toward music educators and LGBTQ+ individuals (see Appendix A). The posts included a brief study description, selection criteria, and a non-identifiable link to an online Qualtrics background questionnaire (see Appendix B). The questionnaire comprised questions about general demographics and experiences with LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microaggressive stress.

Of the 38 received questionnaires, 14 individuals reported ongoing experiences with LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microaggressive stress, and an interest in participating in a six-week study about their experiences. I invited the 14 respondents to a semi-structured screening interview to probe their reported experiences. Nine individuals agreed to participate in a screening interview. Two respondents withdrew before the interview, and seven completed the screening process. I reviewed the seven interview transcripts to identify those with highly detailed accounts of microaggressive encounters. One participant was a heterosexual individual who initially reported ongoing experiences with microaggressions on the background questionnaire; however, during the interview, this individual clarified that they had not experienced LGBTQ+ microaggressions for

many decades. I removed their transcript from further consideration for participation in this study.

The remaining six transcripts had detailed accounts of microaggressive encounters. All six interviewees reported multiple ongoing microaggressive experiences in work environments, and several reported microaggressive encounters in their personal lives. Perpetrators included the participants' parents, administrators, colleagues, students, and students' parents. The prospective participants included two lesbians, a gay man, two transgender males, and an agender, transgender student teacher, which allowed for the possibility of converging and diverging experiences among the group.

Based on the transcript review, I employed purposive homogeneous sampling to select only the six individuals who reported encountering microaggressions and experiencing microaggressive stress. The six selected participants received a study description (see Appendix C), a request to confirm whether they would participate in the study, and an invitation to select their pseudonyms. All six individuals consented. Chris was the only participant to select a pseudonym. I selected pseudonyms for the others; however, I shared their pseudonyms with them during the final interview. The participants did not request any changes.

Jacob

Jacob, a White transgender male, taught chorus, band, and general music classes during his five years of teaching in the Southwestern United States. Jacob shared that he felt lucky to teach in a supportive environment but encountered harmful situations because of his transgender identity. He described himself as a passing male except for his

voice, which was still transitioning. During interviews, Jacob spoke quickly, with an upbeat demeanor and a passion for music education; however, he shared his fear that responding to microaggressions in the workplace might compound the harm from colleagues and students' parents. His experience of transitioning from female to male while teaching provided a unique perspective for examining microaggressive encounters.

George

George, a White transgender male, taught orchestra for three years in the Northeastern United States. During this time, he began the process of transitioning his body from female to male and experienced multiple negative encounters because of his transgender identity. George shared that he often felt uncertain of how to address such encounters. His experiences of beginning the transition process while teaching provided a unique perspective for examining microaggressive encounters.

Asher

Asher, a White individual, was a preservice music teacher who was completing his student teaching in the Midwestern United States. A first-generation American, Asher was born with a female body and identified as agender and transgender; however, they did not report having plans for a physical transition. He used the prefix of Mx. and he/they pronouns. Asher carried a visual aid pronoun card to assist with social interactions. When this study began, Mx. Asher Spivey was finishing his secondary placement and was soon to begin his elementary student teaching placement. Their experiences as a queer student teacher and substantial concerns about entering the profession provided a unique perspective for examining microaggressive encounters.

Veronica

Veronica, a White female, taught elementary music for five years in the Western United States. She was a pansexual woman who used she/they pronouns and was active in LGBTQ+ activities in surrounding communities. Veronica spoke passionately about working with children and wanted to help all children feel comfortable in school environments. Their experiences as an openly queer woman in a predominantly religious community provided unique insight for examining microaggressive encounters.

Kathy

Kathy, a White female, taught middle school band, chorus, and general music for ten years in the Midwestern United States. She was a queer lesbian woman who was born into an evangelical family and community. She initially kept her sexuality a secret; however, someone in her school found out that she was in a relationship with another teacher in her district. Her experiences as a female band director, who was a lesbian, provided unique insight for examining microaggressive encounters.

Chris

Chris, a White male, was a lifelong music teacher with a philosophy of always serving the best interests of the children he met. He retired after teaching secondary chorus for 30 years in the Southern United States and was actively serving as a choral clinician and guest conductor. For most of his career, Chris had been open about his marriage to his husband with students and coworkers. As a frequent guest conductor, Chris encountered microaggressive comments on guest stages while working with large groups of performers. His extended career and frequent guest stage interactions provided

a unique perspective for examining microaggressive encounters.

Three Phases

The research design consisted of three phases, which included six weekly sessions with the participants. Phase 1 consisted of the recruitment and selection of research participants. Phase 2 involved teaching the participants about microaggressions and microinterventions. Phase 3 consisted of follow-up interviews to gather participants' recollections and reactions to the Phase 2 training content.

Phase 1: Participant Selection

The objective of Phase 1 was to identify research participants and collect information about their previous experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions (see Table 3.1). This phase began with the selection and recruitment of participants, using Protocol 1 for the screening interview (see Appendix D). After obtaining informed consent, I emailed the participants their online journals and the training website link. I encouraged them to read the website content but assured them I would cover all the information in the group training session.

Phase 2: Participant Training

The objective of Phase 2 was to teach participants how to identify microaggressions and use microintervention tactics that best fit those encounters. The participants met in a PLC to engage with the training content, which I discuss in Chapter 4. This session lasted approximately 75 minutes. Afterward, I invited participants to continue journaling and reflect on their experiences and the training content.

Table 3.1

Procedures by Phase

Phase Description	Procedures
	Phase 1
The researcher purposively selects research participants with information-rich experiences.	1. Social media invitations 2. Background questionnaire 3. Screening interviews (Protocol 1) 4. Review of interview transcriptions 5. Purposive homogeneous selection of information-rich cases 6. Inviting participants, informed consent 7. Phase 2 scheduling 8. Sharing online journals
	Phase 2
Participants engage in training content that focuses on identifying LGBTQ+ microaggressions and utilizing microinterventions.	1. Participants participate in a training PLC on microaggressions and microinterventions.
	Phase 3
Participants discuss microaggressions in their contexts and if they used microinterventions to challenge those encounters. Participants meet weekly to discuss occurring events.	1. Group interview in a PLC (Protocol 2) 2. Individual interviews (Protocol 2) 3. Group interview in a PLC (Protocol 3) 4. Individual interviews (Protocol 3)

Phase 3: Application and Data Collection

The objective of Phase 3 was for participants to reflect on their experiences as potential microaggressions and microinterventions. This phase consisted of four weekly, semi-structured interviews, alternating between group and individual sessions. I used Protocol 2 for the first two weeks and Protocol 3 for the final two weeks (see Appendices E & F). Following data collection, I initiated the analytical procedures and employed member checks to solicit feedback from the participants, the results of which are detailed below.

Data Collection

Appropriate data collection methods for an IPA study include a sampling questionnaire, online journals, interviews, follow-up interviews, and other relevant artifacts offered by the participants (e.g., articles and website links; Smith et al., 2022). Although the sampling questionnaire's primary purpose was to inform the purposive selection of participants, it also collected substantial information about the participants' experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions. I utilized that information to create the protocol for the first round of interviews.

Using three protocols, I conducted five semi-structured interviews with each participant: a screening, two individual interviews, and two group interviews. The semi-structured interview format provided a structure to begin the interviews, while also allowing participants to reflect and speak freely about the experiences that concerned them the most. Based on their responses, I improvised probing follow-up questions to develop a deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews require skilled interviewers to ensure that critical opportunities for deeper understanding are not inadvertently overlooked. I utilized multiple interview protocols and follow-up interviews to ensure that I asked the participants pertinent questions and allowed time for their continued reflection and responses.

I used Protocol 1 for the screening interview (see Appendix D), which I designed as a template for transferring responses from the background questionnaires and developing model questions. I filled out a separate Protocol 1 template for each screening interview, which included removing all template directions and unused model questions.

The participants received a journal to collect their additional responses following the interviews.

Journaling afforded participants the same opportunity; however, journaling required participants to sit at a computer and type their thoughts, which some participants found uncomfortable. Each participant received an online journal, which I created with a shareable document from a university Google account. I named each journal file using a six-digit alphanumeric code, such as GJ983K and maintained a handwritten master list of codes and participant names. Additionally, the last letter of each code was the first letter of each participant's pseudonym. Each journal contained a participant writing prompt:

> Please use this journal to record your experiences during this study. For example, you may have additional thoughts or clarifications about interview questions that you can record here. If you experience a microaggression, you might write about how it happened, who enacted it, and how it made you feel. Reflect on how you reacted to the encounter. If you used a microintervention, describe how you enacted the tactic and how your response changed the situation.

The journals yielded limited data. Three of the six participants wrote journal entries at the beginning of the study. A total of four entries were collected.

I used Protocol 2 to guide interviews for the first two weeks in Phase 3 (see Appendix E). Protocol 2 comprised questions about the participants' recent experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microintervention use. I used Protocol 3 to guide interviews in the last two weeks of Phase 3 (see Appendix F), which, in addition to including questions about recent experiences, included reflection questions

about how the participants' experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions had changed since the screening interview.

I scheduled individual interviews for 45 to 60 minutes at participants' chosen times of convenience; however, I limited interviews to times outside of my working hours. To determine the most convenient time for group interviews, I inquired with each participant about which weeknights worked best for them and identified Thursday evenings for group meetings. I conducted, recorded, and transcribed interviews using video conferencing software and a backup portable audio recorder.

The process of conducting five interviews over a six-week period provided multiple opportunities for me to ask follow-up questions about participants' previous responses. As the weeks progressed, the interviews became shorter because responses and follow-up questions had diminished, indicating that data saturation had occurred. I combined the transcribed interviews with the journal entries. These texts became the texts required for the hermeneutic circle analysis.

Fostering Participant-Led Experiential Data

Fostering participant-led experiential data is a key goal in IPA studies (Smith et al., 2022). I created interview protocols that centered participant-led questioning to guide the semi-structured interviews for this purpose. The first collected data came from the online background questionnaire (see Appendix B), which included multiple open-ended questions for participants to share experiences that were important to them that might not have been covered in other questions. These data collected from those submissions informed a unique first interview protocol for each participant (see Appendix D),

allowing the first interview to probe into the participants' reported experiences.

The second interview protocol began with an open-ended participant-led question, allowing the participants to begin the interview by discussing what was most pertinent to them (see Appendix E):

- Question 1: Participant-led interview
    - Question: We last met one-on-one about two weeks ago and spoke about several situations in your school. How have things been since then?
    - Directions: This question allows the participants to begin the interviews by discussing topics of interest to them.
    - Probe: Tell me more about that. How did that start?

Additionally, the protocols included multiple probing questions about the participants' experiences and sense-making:

- How does that feel?
- What were you thinking when that happened?
- What was it like when you heard those assumptions?
- How do those negative emotions affect your daily life?
- Tell me more about that. How did that start?
- What was your immediate reaction?

The third interview protocol was like the second but included reflection questions on how the participants' sense of microaggressive stress had changed (see Appendix F):

- Describe what microinterventions mean to you.
- Think back to our very first interaction. You shared that you experienced (name-

calling, disapproval, harassment) on a daily-weekly-regular basis. How are those experiences different today?

- One final question: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding any of your experiences during this study?

The structure of the protocols helped ensure that the focus of each interview was on the participants' experiences and interpretations of those experiences.

Data Analysis

The interviews and online journals from this study yielded qualitative data about the six participants' experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions. Smith et al. (2022) developed seven steps for analyzing data from studies using an IPA approach:

1. First case: Reading and rereading the anonymized verbatim transcripts.
2. Exploratory noting.
3. Constructing experiential statements.
4. Searching for connections across experiential statements.
5. Naming the personal experiential themes (PETs) and consolidating and organizing them in a table.
6. Continuing the individual analysis of other cases.
7. Working with personal experiential themes to develop group experiential themes (GETs) across cases (Smith et al., 2022, pp. 78–101).

I began my analysis by reading Jacob's interview transcripts while listening to the interview recordings and correcting the transcripts as needed. As I read each transcript

again, I highlighted and bolded key phrases. During the third reading, I began writing my initial thoughts about Jacob's interview responses as exploratory notes (see Appendix G). After reflecting on the exploratory notes and rereading the corresponding interview segments, I wrote the initial experiential statements (see Table 3.2). To aid these steps, I inserted a page-length text column on either side of the transcript page, one for the

Table 3.2

Exploring the First-Case Transcripts

Experiential Statement	Segment of Jacob's Interview Transcript	Exploratory Note
A group of parents made a defamatory article about me. They attacked my father. I reported them.	167: Jacob: "Yeah, when I started at my main building. There was a parent group that found out I was a Trans teacher."	
	168: Jacob: "**They published an article,** they hadn't met me. I hadn't even started teaching. This was in like September before school had begun, and they made an article about me, and how I was going to indoctrinate their kids."	Published an article about me
	169: Jacob: "I had never met these people. But they made an article about me and about like gender confusion being **forced upon children."**	Forcing upon children
	170: Jacob: "My dad got. I didn't even know about this, and my dad knew about it before I did, **and he got mad**, and he kept commenting on it, and like I don't know what he was saying. He was saying like mean things to them, and then **they wrote a letter** about us."	Bystander support from dad They attacked my dad
	171: Jacob: "Just like saying like untrue things, like saying he's a drug addict, saying that I'm mentally ill. Anyway, I got them to take the article down after like reporting it to the national something for human rights. I don't know what it was. **And they took the article down."**	They had to take the article down

exploratory notes and one for the experiential statements.

I transferred the experiential statements into a new document and searched for connections among them. After grouping similar statements into clusters, I named the PETs for each group and organized them into a table. To maintain fidelity to Jacob's story, I included quotes from his interview transcripts, along with their page numbers, to facilitate rereading segments as needed (see Appendix H). Following this first case analysis, I repeated these steps with the other five participants' transcripts. The six case analyses resulted in a variety of PETs:

- *Jacob:* harassment, misgendering, insults, distress, countering the harm, and kindness.
- *George*: misgendering, worry, insults, avoidance, compassion for students, self-care, and positive outcomes.
- *Asher*: misgendering, insults, fear, emotional pain, responses, and kindness.
- *Veronica*: gay jokes, legal restrictions against LGBTQ+, addressing student behavior, solitude, exclusion, teachers treat me differently, reactions to harm, worry, protection, and distress.
- *Kathy*: religious judgment, political messaging, bullying, protecting students, harassment, fear, avoidance, appropriate student behavior, female band teacher, and token gay.
- *Chris*: mental illness, family rejection, indoctrination, fear, emotional pain, challenging harm, and kindness.

The next step in the process was to create GETs for the research participant

group. I began this component by brainstorming six potential GETs: genderism, the harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress. To evaluate these proposed themes, I imported the corresponding quoted material of each experiential statement for all participants into a table organized by the proposed GETs (see Appendix I). Having all the participants' experiential quotes in one table enabled me to check for consistency of themes across all cases. This cross-case analysis yielded several opportunities to reorganize the experiential quotes and consolidate PETs. This process affirmed the six proposed GETs and emergent subthemes (see Table 3.3). Although the

Table 3.3

Global Experiential Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme	Participant
Genderism	Misgendering by students	Jacob
	Misgendering by colleagues	Jacob
	Misgendering by staff	Jacob
	no subthemes	George, Asher, Veronica, Kathy, Chris
The Harm	Slurs	Jacob, Veronica
	Insults	Jacob, Asher, Kathy, Veronica
	Bullying	Jacob, Kathy
	Aggression	Jacob
	Indoctrination	Jacob, Chris
	Mental illness	Jacob, Chris
	no subthemes	George
Distress	Fear	All six participants
	Emotional pain	All six participants
	Avoidance	Jacob, George, Asher, Veronica, Kathy
Challenging Harm	*no subthemes*	All six participants
Kindness	*no subthemes*	All six participants
Changing Distress	*no subthemes*	All six participants

GETs applied to all six research participants, the subthemes did not. For example, all participants experienced genderism; however, only Jacob's experiences necessitated further organization into subthemes for a clear presentation of his findings.

Using the GETs table as a guide, I began writing the findings chapter for each participant. This process involved multiple drafts and revisions to present each participant's experiences clearly and concisely. Moreover, I further refined the sorting of experiential quotes and thematic organization for and among the participants. The result of this analytical process was the presentation of the findings in Chapters 5 through 10.

Trustworthiness

Peoples (2021) discussed eight tactics for building trustworthiness in phenomenological research but cautioned that some tactics were challenging for solitary dissertation researchers. I employed five of Peoples' tactics: member check, rich description, external audit, triangulation, and explanation of researcher bias. I employed member checks to solicit participant feedback by emailing each participant a copy of their findings chapter (see Appendix J). Two participants requested no changes and affirmed that the write-up accurately portrayed their experiences. A third participant clarified two interactions, and I made those corrections in their chapter. The remaining three participants did not respond to the member check; however, during the final interview, I reviewed each participant's core experiences to check for accuracy of my understanding.

Transcript data provided rich descriptions of the participants' lived experiences and interpretations of those events. Moreover, I provide context from their personal and

professional settings to add a deeper understanding of their responses. The multi-perspective accounts of LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microinterventions highlight converging and diverging experiences among the participants. Additionally, one participant offered artifacts, which I used to triangulate his account with a defamatory article.

I shared all methods, excerpts from these data, and analytical processes with external auditors, including three professors of music education, who served as a committee to provide input on the research design and interpretations of data. I discussed my biases in the role of the researcher section in this chapter. Additionally, the study design included multiple follow-up interviews, which allowed me to ask probing and clarifying follow-up questions, and participants to become increasingly more comfortable sharing their experiences.

Artificial Intelligence Disclosure

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly more commonplace tool, which included applications to help college students design and produce writing for coursework assignments (Bulanda, 2025). In this study, I used electronic tools such as spelling and grammar checkers. Additionally, I used video conferencing software to transcribe the recorded interviews, which I later checked for accuracy. I also used *Animaze* (Holotech, 2025), which was an AI phone application, to develop training videos for the participants' website. I used these videos in conjunction with the training plan that I discuss in Chapter 4. No other sources of AI were used while conducting this study or writing this dissertation.

Above and Beyond: Trustworthiness

Smith et al. (2022) discussed trustworthiness in terms of going beyond traditional practices, such as member checks and external audits. They suggested six of Levitt et al.'s (2018) journal article reporting standards for qualitative research for this purpose. I review these standards and reflect on how I have attempted to meet them.

Study Objectives, Aims, and Research Suggestions

Smith et al. (2022) suggested that an IPA study includes a clear focus on what participants experience and how they make sense of those experiences. The focus of this study was on participants' lived experiences with microaggressions, microinterventions, and microaggressive stress. The first three research questions specifically addressed these experiences. The fourth research question pertained to how participants' sense of microaggressive stress changed from engaging with microinterventions, which focused on their interpretation of their experiences. All research components aligned with these objectives.

Participant Selection Suggestions

Smith et al. (2022) suggested that an IPA study includes a clear description of how researchers utilize purposive sampling to recruit a homogeneous sample. This description should reflect how the participants align with the study's primary goal and their ability to communicate about their experiences. Moreover, researchers might include the procedures for recruitment and a rationale for participant selection. I have included a detailed description of the participants' experiences with microaggressions and recruitment procedures in the participants and data collection sections of this chapter.

Data Collection Suggestions

Smith et al. (2022) suggested that an IPA study includes a clear description of data collection, which details how researchers fostered participant-led experiential data. Moreover, researchers might reflect on the data collection process and whether it changed throughout the study. I discussed how I incorporated participant-led experiential data collection and changes in the selection and recruitment and data collection portions of this chapter.

Data Analytic Strategies Suggestions

Smith et al. (2022) suggested that an IPA study includes a clear description of how the researcher made exploratory notes, experiential statements, PETs, GETs, and sub-themes. I engaged in a detailed discussion of how I conducted the seven IPA analytical steps in the data analysis section in this chapter. Moreover, I included an excerpt of an interview, which included exploratory noting and experiential statements (see Table 3.2).

Methodological Integrity Suggestions

Smith et al. (2022) suggested that an IPA study includes a discussion on how collected data reflect diverse elements of the phenomenon of interest. All participants identified as LGBTQ+ and experienced microaggressions; however, they were in different stages of their careers, in different teaching contexts, and many were still in a process of self-discovery. Chris was a gay man who had taught for more than 30 years in the South, whereas Asher was a transgender, agender student teacher from the Midwest. Both of them experienced substantial harm, but Chris had finished his time in the

classroom, and Asher had tremendous fear about what their career might become.

All participants experienced genderism, but due to the nature of their sexuality and gender, they experienced different forms of it and other harmful encounters. Some participants experienced aggressive harm in the workplace; others experienced substantial harm from their families. The collection of their experiences highlights the destruction that microaggressions can cause and the varied manifestations they can take. Similarly, the participants experienced microaffirmations and microprotections; however, those acts of kindness originated from various sources in differing settings.

Findings Suggestions

Smith et al. (2022) suggested that an IPA study includes illustrations of GETs and subthemes to capture the depth of the analytical process. Moreover, researchers might present themes in conversation with these data, such as providing contextualizing quotes, sense-making commentary from participants, and highlighting convergence and divergence among the participants' experiences. I included multiple tables to illustrate the analytical process. First, I presented an excerpt of an interview transcript to visualize how I generated exploratory notes and experiential statements (see Table 3.2). I further visualized the analytical process by presenting visualizations of the first case's exploratory notes (see Appendix G) and PETs (see Appendix H), which included quoted excerpts from the transcripts. To illustrate the cross-case analysis, I presented a comprehensive table of GETs (see Appendix I), which also included quoted excerpts from the transcripts. I presented an overview of the final GETs and subthemes in Table 3.3. I have presented themes in dialogue with these data in Chapters 5–10 and further

discuss areas of convergence and divergence in Chapter 11.

CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANT TRAINING PLAN

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions to reveal how their sense of microaggressive stress changed from interacting with microinterventions. This goal necessitated that participants had a working knowledge of LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microinterventions. Therefore, it was crucial for research participants to have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences through the lens of microaggression theory, develop skills to identify LGBTQ+ microaggressions, and enact appropriately selected microintervention tactics. I created a training plan to accomplish these objectives using the microaggressive encounters I identified in the music education literature discussed in Chapter 2. This training plan consisted of a sequence of eight brief components:

1. Have I experienced microaggressions?
2. Seven types of LGBTQ+ microaggressions.
3. Identifying LGBTQ+ microaggressions.
4. Four types of harm.
5. What about microinterventions?
6. Four microintervention categories.
7. Identifying microinterventions.
8. Practicing microinterventions.

Using the eight training components, I invited participants to create a supportive environment in which they collectively reflected on their experiences with

microaggressions, learned about microinterventions, and practiced applying that newly acquired knowledge to improve their contexts. This structure aligned with key PLC characteristics: collective responsibility and leadership; collaboration and shared individual practices; supportive conditions; and collective reflections, learning, and application (Hord, 1997; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Stoll et al., 2006; Vangrieken et al., 2017). Therefore, I highlight how I have included PLC features throughout my discussion of each component.

I created a website to present the training components to the participants and serve as a resource throughout the study.[1] The website consisted of three pages: training, practice, and references. The training page comprised a welcome message and Components 1–7 (see Figure 4.1), and the practice page comprised Component 8. Each page included engaging interactive components such as embedded training videos, concealed drop-down menus to reveal question answers, colorful displays, and various font styles to emphasize key terms. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss each component's objectives, contents, interaction parameters, and website features.

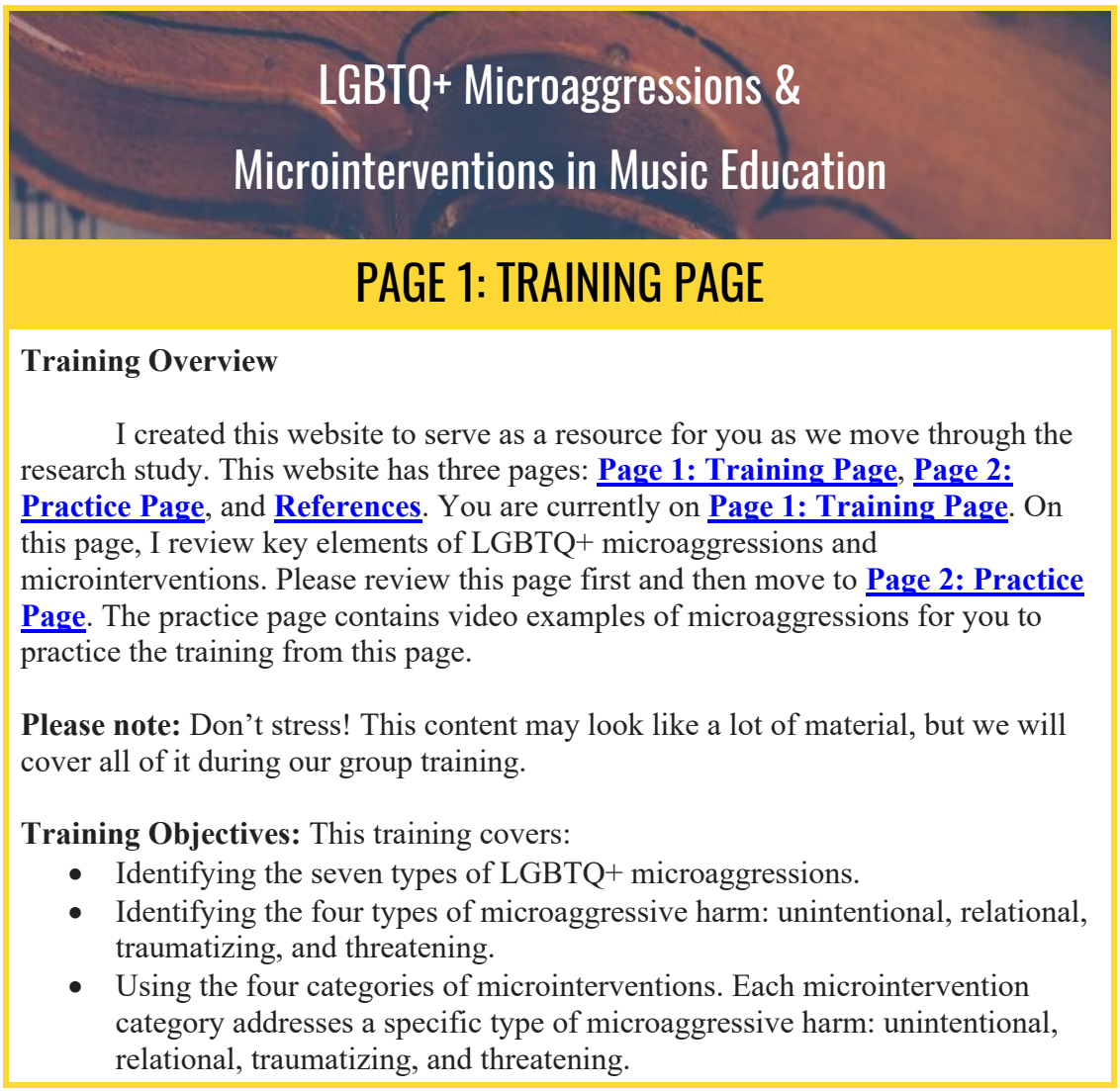
Component 1: Have I Experienced Microaggressions?

This training session was the first PLC of the study, so Component 1 began with each group member introducing themselves. Following introductions, members briefly discussed and reached a consensus on how to establish supportive PLC conditions (Hord, 1997; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Stoll et al., 2006; Vangrieken et al., 2017), such as honesty, mutual support, equal participation, and confidentiality considerations. I shared

[1] https://sites.google.com/view/antibiastraining?usp=sharing

Figure 4.1

Training Website Welcome Message



with the group that although I had the utmost respect for each participant, I could not guarantee confidentiality in a group setting and advised them to save any confidential information for the next individual interview or journal.

The opening activity was a prompt about microaggressive experiences, which I

read to the participants. I developed this prompt to spark reflection among group participants on whether they might have experienced LGBTQ+ microaggressions (see Figure 4.2).

Component 1 Content

Have you ever experienced any of the following encounters?

- LGBTQ+ slurs, sayings like "that's so gay."
- Someone is refusing to use your correct pronouns.
- Stereotypes: "Gay men are so great at fashion."

Figure 4.2

Component 1 Website Layout

HAVE I EXPERIENCED MICROAGGRESSIONS?

Have you ever experienced any of the following encounters?

- LGBTQ+ slurs, sayings like "that's so gay."
- Someone is refusing to use your correct pronouns.
- Stereotypes: "Gay men are so great at fashion."
- Religious judgment or disrespectful communication about your LGBTQ+ identity.
- Assumptions that you have a wildly inappropriate sex life or are a danger to children.
- Having to hide your LGBTQ+ identity.
- Expectations to act more straight.
- Insults about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender expansive.

If your answer to this question is yes, you have likely experienced microaggressions. **Microaggressions are subtle communications or actions that convey a cutting sense of you being less than everyone else based on your gender, race, or LGBTQ+ identity (Sue, 2010).** Microaggressive encounters can have a wide range of consequences, such as painful emotions, isolation, trauma, and even loss of freedom through police arrest. Please feel free to share any reactions to the training content as we move through the material.

- Religious judgment or disrespectful communication about your LGBTQ+ identity.
- Assumptions that you have a wildly inappropriate sex life or are a danger to children.
- Having to hide your LGBTQ+ identity.
- Expectations to act more straight.
- Insults about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender expansive.

If your answer to this question is yes, you have likely experienced microaggressions. Microaggressions are subtle communications or actions that convey a cutting sense of you being less than everyone else based on your gender, race, or LGBTQ+ identity (Sue, 2010). Microaggressive encounters can have a wide range of consequences, such as painful emotions, isolation, trauma, and even loss of freedom through police arrest. Please share any reactions to the training content as we review the material.

Component 2: Seven Types of LGBTQ+ Microaggressions

The goal of Component 2 was for PLC participants to develop an awareness of the LGBTQ+ microaggression taxonomy (Nadal et al., 2010). Component 2 comprised a brief introduction and summary of the taxonomy, along with examples adapted for a music education setting. To incorporate collective PLC responsibility and leadership (Hord, 1997; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Stoll et al., 2006; Vangrieken et al., 2017), I read the introduction and asked participants to read each category aloud to the group, which is a strategy that I repeated in several components.

Component 2 Content

Researchers have identified seven types of LGBTQ+ microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2010):

- *Heterosexist or transphobic terminology:* Examples include using incorrect pronouns and phrases such as:
    - "That's so gay," or "You're a queer."
    - "She lives with a woman. They must be dykes."
- *Heteronormative expectations:* Examples include prohibitions against displaying pictures of same-sex spouses in the classroom and phrases such as:
    - "Please act more straight in the classroom."
    - "You like women because you haven't met the right man."
- *Assumption of universal LGBTQ+ experiences:* Examples include someone asking an LGBTQ+ individual to speak on behalf of all LGBTQ+ people or stereotypes such as:
    - "All male music teachers are gay."
    - "All female band directors are lesbians."
- *Exoticization of LGBTQ+ experiences:* Examples include someone asking to see the genitalia of a transgender person or phrases such as:
    - "Gay friends are the best because they're so much fun."
    - "Gay weddings are awesome. I'll wear my tutu, feather boa, and glitter."
- *Disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences:* Examples include talking about the love lives of straight composers but not gay ones, and phrases such as:

    - "God does not like gays."

- *Denial of heterosexism/transphobia:* Examples include phrases such as:
    - "I can not have a bias against gay people. I have gay friends."
    - "You worry too much. Your sexuality had nothing to do with not getting the job."
- *Assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality:* Examples include phrases such as:
    - "Don't catch AIDS."
    - "Why are you allowed to teach children?"
    - "Gays are child predators" (Nadal et al., 2010).

Component 3: Identifying LGBTQ+ Microaggressions

The goal of Component 3 was for PLC participants to apply the information about the LGBTQ+ microaggression taxonomy from Component 2, which exemplified the PLC aspect of collective reflection, learning, and application (Hord, 1997; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Stoll et al., 2006; Vangrieken et al., 2017). To accomplish this goal, Component 3 comprised four real-life scenarios of LGBTQ+ microaggressions for the participants to read and determine the exemplified taxonomy category. On the training website, each example included a clickable drop-down menu that revealed the answer (see Figure 4.3). Additionally, I used the same four examples again in Components 4 and 5 to allow the participants to explore new training content with familiar scenarios. I read the introduction and asked participants to read each example aloud to the group.

Component 3 Content

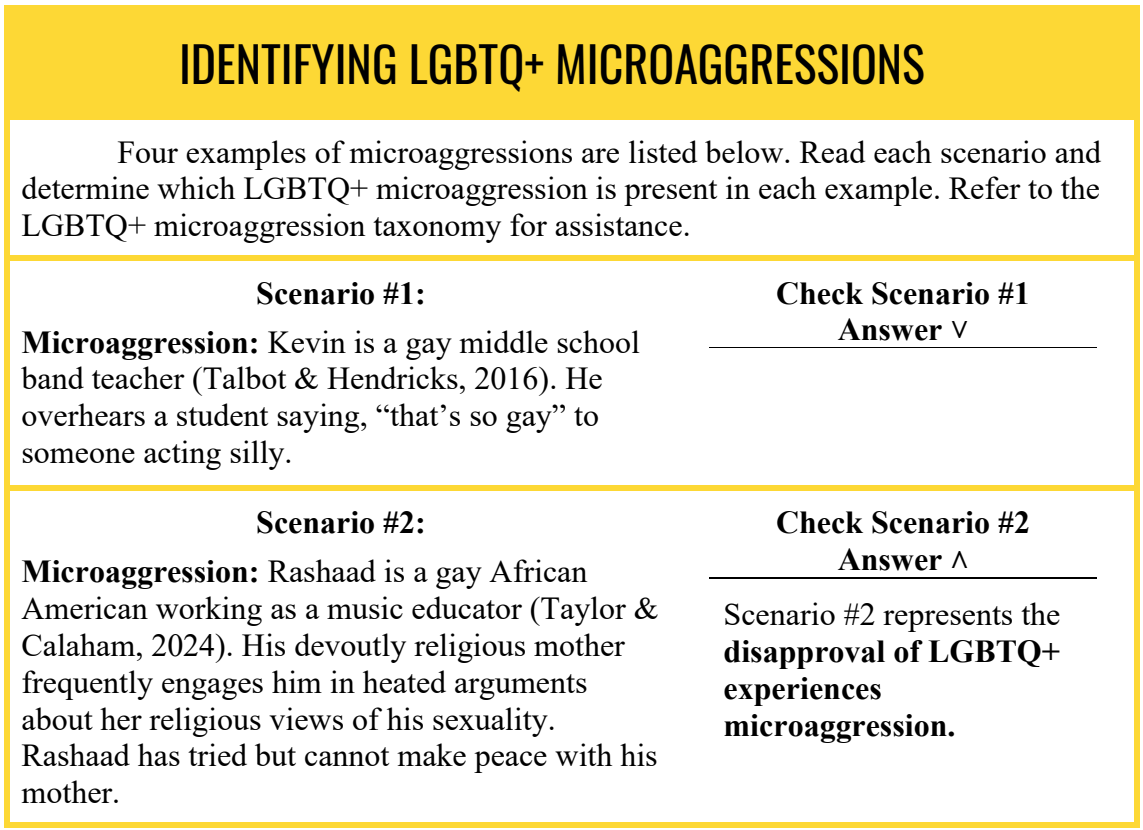
Four examples of microaggressions are listed below. Read each scenario and determine which LGBTQ+ microaggression is present. Refer to the LGBTQ+ microaggression taxonomy for assistance.

Scenario 1

Microaggression: Kevin is a gay middle school band teacher (Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). He overhears a student saying, "that's so gay" to someone acting silly.

Figure 4.3

Component 3 Website Layout



Note: Scenario 1 has a closed answer drop-down. Scenario 2 has an open one.

Check-answer drop-down menu: This example represents the heterosexist language microaggression.

Scenario 2

Microaggression: Rashaad is a gay African American working as a music Educator (Taylor & Calaham, 2024). His devoutly religious mother frequently engages him in heated arguments about her religious views of his sexuality. Rashaad has tried but cannot make peace with his mother.

Check-answer drop-down menu: This example represents the disapproving aspects of LGBTQ+ experience microaggression.

Scenario 3

Microaggression: Ken is a gay African American student who participates in band at a Historically Black College or University (Carter, 2013). Ken frequently encounters harassment from other students who view the band as a homosexual activity. Complicating his struggles, a church member approaches Ken after the Sunday worship and asks Ken to avoid dying from AIDS by becoming heterosexual. Ken struggles with strained relationships as a result of these harms.

Check-answer drop-down menu: This example represents sexual pathology/abnormality and heteronormative expectations microaggressions.

Scenario 4

Microaggression: Nora is a lesbian music teacher who tries to conceal her sexuality (Furman, 2012). Nora invites another lesbian woman to move into her home; however, school administrators become aware of the sexual orientation of the housemate.

Administrators begin teasing Nora about her contractual moral turpitude clause.

Check-answer drop-down menu: This example represents sexual pathology/abnormality and heteronormative expectations microaggressions.

Component 4: Four Types of Harm

The goal of Component 4 was for PLC participants to develop an awareness of the types of microaggressive harms and the corresponding microintervention categories. To accomplish this goal, I summarized the types of harm exemplified in the four Component 3 scenarios and asserted connections to the microintervention rationales. I read and discussed the content with the group.

Component 4 Content

Consider the types of harm present in each of the previous four examples:

- Student comments such as "that's so gay" might represent unintentional harm.
- Rashaad's conflict with his religious mother might represent relational harm.
- Ken's struggles with blatant harassment from peers and church members might represent traumatizing harm.
- Nora's harassment regarding her employment and sexuality from her principal might represent a threatening harm.

These types of harm (unintentional, relational, traumatizing, and threatening) correspond to the microintervention categories, which we will discuss later in this training:

- **Make the Invisible Visible** for *Unintentional Harm*
- **Educator Perpetrators and Stakeholders** for *Relational Harm*

- **Disarm Microaggressions** for *Traumatizing Harm*
- **External Support and Alliances** for *Threatening Harm*

Component 5: What About Microinterventions?

The goal of Component 5 was for participants to develop an awareness of how microinterventions might change microaggressive encounters. To accomplish this goal, I paired the four examples from Component 3 with microintervention tactics to guide group discussion. Following our discussion, I asked the group two brief reflection questions to gauge their early perspectives on the training content and noted their responses for follow-up later in the study. I read the introduction and then called on participants to read the examples to the group.

Component 5 Content

Consider the same four previous examples of microaggressions, now paired with microinterventions, which are strategies to counteract encounters with subtle discrimination. Consider how each microaggressive experience is changed, if at all, by the microintervention.

Scenario 1

Microaggression: Kevin is a gay middle school band teacher (Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). One day, he overhears a student saying "that's so gay" to someone acting silly. *Microintervention:* Kevin does not believe the comment was intended to cause harm, so he gently encourages the offending student to consider the harm of such phrases.

Scenario 2

Microaggression: Rashaad is a gay African American working as a music educator (Taylor & Calaham, 2024). His devoutly religious mother frequently engages him in heated arguments about her religious views of his sexuality. Rashaad has tried but cannot make peace with his mother. *Microintervention:* Rashaad's sister loves her brother and mother very much. She intervenes by affirming Rashaad as a talented and intelligent man deserving of his mother's pride. Her efforts help to mend family relationships.

Scenario 3

Microaggression: Ken is a gay African American student who participates in band at a Historically Black College or University (Carter, 2013). Ken frequently encounters harassment from other students who view the band as a homosexual activity. Complicating his struggles, a church member approaches Ken after the Sunday worship and asks Ken to avoid dying from AIDS by becoming heterosexual. Ken struggles with strained relationships as a result of these harms. *Microintervention:* Ken shakes his head in shocking disagreement with his friends and church members. He tells them that he feels uncomfortable and changes the topic of conversation.

Scenario 4

Microaggression: Nora is a lesbian music teacher who tries to conceal her sexuality (Furman, 2012). Nora invites another lesbian woman to move into her home; however, school administrators become aware of the sexual orientation of the housemate. Administrators begin teasing Nora about her contractual moral turpitude clause. *Microintervention:* Nora cautions school leaders that she will pursue legal action if they continue threatening her.

Group Reflection Questions

We have just covered a lot of information about the types of microaggressions, encounters with microaggressions, and how microinterventions change those encounters. I am going to ask you two reflection questions and call on you in a random order to share your thoughts. First, reflect on your past experiences regarding your LGBTQ+ identity. Can you identify microaggressions in those experiences? If yes, would you have benefited from a microintervention strategy to challenge that experience?

Component 6: Four Microintervention Categories

The goal of Component 6 was for participants to develop an awareness of the four microintervention categories, selection rationales, and tactics. Sue et al. (2021) developed examples of microintervention tactics; however, those examples pertained to racial microaggressions. I adapted those examples to correspond to LGBTQ+ microaggressions. I read the introduction and called on participants to read about each category to the group.

Component 6 Content

Researchers developed four categories of microinterventions to challenge microaggressions (Sue et al., 2021). Each category addresses a specific type of harm: unintentional, relational, traumatizing, and threatening.

- *Category 1: Make the invisible visible:*
    - *Rationale:* Responders use non-threatening communication to inform perpetrators of their unintentionally harmful actions.
    - Relates to unintentional microaggressions.
    - *Tactics:*

        - *Developing perspicacity (insight):* "Do you realize how that comment makes me feel?"
        - *Disempowering innuendos by naming them:* "That's not true. Amanda and her wife are wonderful people."
        - *Undermining meta-communication (hidden meanings):* "Being gay doesn't mean that I'm a predator."
        - *Challenge the stereotype:* "That's a stereotype. Jane and I can have a friendship without her being in love with me."
        - *Broaden the ascribed trait:* "Straight people kiss in public all the time."
        - *Seeking clarification:* "What exactly are you saying?"
        - *Make the meta-communication explicit by rephrasing the statement or action:* "You seem uncomfortable every time I sit near you in the staff meeting."
        - *Reverse and restate:* In response to someone saying, "God hates gays," a target might say, "God loves everyone."
- *Category 2: Educate perpetrators and stakeholders:*
    - *Rationale:* Responders maintain relationships with perpetrators and encourage them to reflect on their discriminatory beliefs.
    - Relates to relational microaggressions.
    - *Tactics:*
        - *Differentiate between intent and impact:* "I think you meant to

help, but your words hurt me."

- *Contradict stereotypes:* "No, all male music teachers are not gay."
- *Appeal to perpetrator principles:* "Why are you treating me differently from the other teachers?"
- *Point out the commonality:* "That's a negative stereotype about agender people. Pat really cares about their students, just like you. Try getting to know Pat before you judge them."
- *Promote empathy:* "Most LGBTQ+ people want to feel welcome in society and lead happy lives. How would you feel if everyone judged you just for existing?"
- *Point out perpetrator benefits:* "I know you care about this school. You might improve your leadership by becoming more inclusive."

- *Category 3: Disarm microaggressions:*
  - *Rationale:* Responders attempt to prevent traumatization and communicate disagreement with perpetrators.
  - Relates to traumatizing microaggressions.
  - *Tactics:*
    - *Interrupting–redirecting:* "I feel anxious. Let's talk about something else."
    - *Stating values and limits:* "I will not tolerate demeaning language about LGBTQ+ people."
    - *Expressing disagreement:* "I disagree with your belief that

LGBTQ+ people are going to hell."

- *Describe what is happening:* "Every time we talk, you address me with feminine pronouns even though I've asked you to stop."
- *Nonverbal communication:* Shaking your head in disagreement or looking shocked.
- *Use an exclamation:* "Ouch!" "No!"
- *Reminding perpetrators about rules:* "Stop insulting me. There are rules in this school about harassment."

- *Category 4: External support and alliances:*
  - *Rationale:* Responders prioritize self-care and seek help to minimize threatening microaggressive harm.
  - Relates to threatening microaggressions.
  - *Tactics:*
    - *Alerting leadership:* Alert your principal or central office.
    - *Reporting incidents:* To a lawyer, the police, or a trusted school employee.
    - *Therapy or counseling.*
    - *Seeking spiritual or religious community.*
    - *Using a buddy system:* With a trusted colleague or friend.
    - *Attending support groups* (Sue et al., 2021).

Mental Health Break

This training addresses sensitive topics that might evoke stress responses in

participants. Therefore, I included this break to check in with the participants before proceeding with the role-play portion. I used this time to ask the participants how they felt and sought their permission before continuing. This break provided an opportunity for participants to support one another by discussing their reactions to the material. No participant exhibited a stress reaction to the content. However, if substantial stress reactions had occurred, I would have paused the training and allowed the participants another break. Moreover, if the stress reaction had persisted, then I would have offered to reschedule the remainder of the training.

Component 7: Four Examples of Microinterventions

The goal of Component 7 was for the participants to apply the information from Component 6. To accomplish this goal, Component 7 comprised four new examples of real-life microaggressions, which I paired with microintervention tactics for participants to analyze and identify microintervention categories and tactics. On the training website, each example included a clickable drop-down menu that revealed the answer (see Figure 4.4). I read the introduction and called on participants to read each scenario to the group.

Component 7 Content

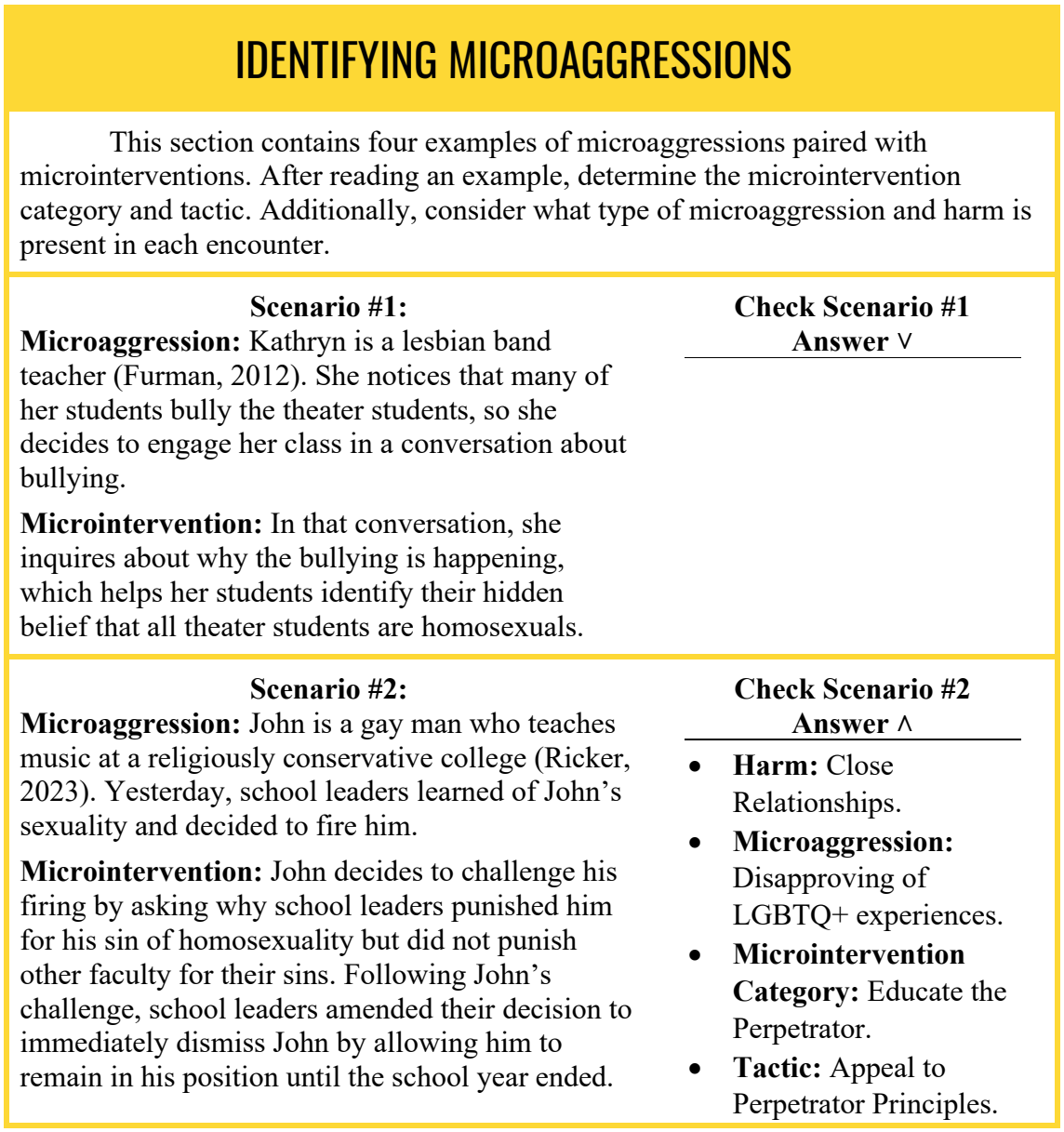
This section contains four examples of microaggressions paired with microinterventions. After reading an example, determine the microintervention category and tactic. Additionally, consider what type of microaggression and harm is present in each encounter.

Scenario 1

Microaggression: Kathryn is a lesbian band teacher (Furman, 2012). She notices

Figure 4.4

Component 7 Website Layout



Note: Scenario 1 has a closed answer drop-down menu. Scenario 2 has an open one.

that many of her students bully the theater students, so she decides to engage her class in a conversation about bullying. *Microintervention:* In that conversation, she inquires about

why the bullying is happening, which helps her students identify their hidden belief that all theater students are homosexuals.

Check-answer drop-down menu:

- *Harm:* Unintentional harm. Although the band students consciously bullied the theater students, they had not yet realized their behavior was rooted in the judgment of LGBTQ+ individuals.
- *Microaggression:* Disapproving of LGBTQ+ experiences.
- *Microintervention category:* Make the invisible visible.
- *Tactic:* Undermine meta-communication.

Scenario 2

Microaggression: John is a gay man who teaches music at a religiously conservative college (Ricker, 2023). Yesterday, school leaders learned of John's sexuality and decided to fire him. *Microintervention:* John decides to challenge his firing by asking why school leaders punished him for his sin of homosexuality but did not punish other faculty for their sins. Following John's challenge, school leaders amended their decision to immediately dismiss John by allowing him to remain in his position until the school year ended.

Check-answer drop-down menu:

- *Harm:* Close relationships.
- *Microaggression:* Disapproving of LGBTQ+ experiences.
- *Microintervention category:* Educate the perpetrator.
- *Tactic:* Appeal to perpetrator principles.

Scenario 3

Microaggression: Leslie is a lesbian music teacher; however, she tries to conceal her sexual identity at work (Furman, 2012). Despite her best efforts, parents continue to contact school administrators and accuse Leslie of being unfit to be around children. These character attacks upset Leslie because she has not committed any wrongdoing professionally or personally. *Microintervention:* Leslie sets boundaries and limits during her next challenging parent interaction by communicating her expectations for mutual respect and polite interactions.

Check-answer drop-down menu:

- *Harm:* Traumatizing attacks.
- *Microaggression:* Sexual pathology or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences.
- *Microintervention category:* Disarm microaggressions.
- *Tactic:* State values and set limits.

Scenario 4

Microaggression: Tawnya is a lesbian band director in a secondary school setting (Smith & Vũ, in press). Although Tawnya is not open about her sexuality at school, administrators approach her and communicate their expectations that she hide her perceived homosexual identity. Because of her perceived homosexuality, students damage her car and use LGBTQ+ slurs against her. Parents boycott meetings with her. Administrators do not address the offending individuals and instead ask her to remain quiet about the incidents. *Microintervention:* She considers taking legal action but worries that a judge might take away her partner's child from their home. Tawnya

decides to contact trusted friends to discuss and cope with her experiences.

Check-answer drop-down menu:

- *Harm:* Threatening situations.
- *Microaggression:* Disapproving or assuming abnormality.
- *Microintervention category:* Seek external support.
- *Tactic:* Buddy systems.

Component 8: Practicing Microinterventions

The goal of Component 8 was for participants to practice enacting microintervention tactics. To accomplish this goal, Component 8 comprised seven scenarios for the participants to role-play microinterventions. The seven scenarios depicted six new real-life microaggressions and one fictitious encounter that was not an example of a microaggression. To avoid any participants from playing the role of perpetrators, I created video recordings of fictional avatar characters saying microaggressive comments for each scenario (see Figure 4.5). In addition to the videos, the training website included clickable drop-down menus that revealed potential solutions. Moreover, to spark reflection on how to implement microinterventions best (see Nadal, 2023), I included some probing questions about tone of voice and body language. I read the introduction and asked group members to read and respond to each scenario.

Component 8 Content

This page contains seven scenarios about LGBTQ+ music educators. Using these scenarios, practice selecting and enacting microintervention tactics that best fit the

microaggressions.

Directions:

1. Read the example description.
2. Determine if a microaggression has occurred. If yes, consider the type of harm in the microaggression: unintentional, relational, traumatizing, or threatening.
3. Select an appropriate microintervention category and tactic.
4. Practice the microintervention tactic by playing the video and saying the tactic to the video character.
5. Afterward, click and read "one possible answer" to explore a possible tactic.

This page contains the microintervention categories and types of harm for your convenience. Please note that there are likely multiple appropriate responses for each scenario.

Scenario 1

Melanie is a transgender singer in a school choir (Bartolome, 2016). During rehearsal, her choir director says, "Stop singing. People will find you disgusting."

One possible answer drop-down menu: This example represents traumatizing harm. The "disarm microaggressions" microinterventions may best fit this encounter (Sue et al., 2021, p. 129). For example, Melanie might interrupt her choir director's insults by redirecting his attention to school rules prohibiting harassment.

Scenario 2

Nancy is a lesbian preservice music teacher who typically dresses in more masculine attire (Minnette, 2021). Because Nancy will start student teaching next week,

Figure 4.5

Component 8 Practice Scenarios Website Layout

PRACTICE SCENARIOS

Scenario #1:

Melanie is a transgender singer in a school choir (Bartolome, 2016). During rehearsal, her choir director says, "Stop singing, because people will find you disgusting".

Consider whether this microaggression represents **unintentional, relational, traumatizing, or threatening harm.** Pick a corresponding microintervention category and tactic.

Scenario #7:

When concluding a successful student concert, George thanks the audience for supporting the band program and introduced his parents and husband, who were attending the event (Taylor, 2011). George feels he has a close relationship with his community and wants to share his family with the families he teaches. George's principal later asks George, "Please tell me that you will never introduce your husband at a school event again." George assures his supervisor that he will not repeat his behavior, but he avoids discussing the hurt his principal caused.

Note: The photos are of the avatars from the training videos, which I created with the Animaze phone app for IOS. From *Animaze: By Facerig*, by Holotech, 2025 (https://www.animaze.us/). Used with permission (see Appendix K).

her college professor approaches her and says, "I think you should dress more conventionally feminine during your student teaching." Nancy worries that her

professor's views might complicate her student teaching experience and decides to change her appearance.

One possible answer drop-down menu: This example represents unintentional harm. The "make the invisible visible" microinterventions may best fit this encounter (Sue et al., 2021, p. 93). For instance, Nancy might undermine the metacommunication that masculine attire on females was inappropriate by communicating that the professor gave an impression of prejudice against lesbians.

Probing question: Describe what role the body language and tone of voice might play in Nancy's response.

Scenario 3

Sam is a gay music teacher (Palkki, 2015). In a conversation with a colleague, he shares upcoming plans for himself and his husband. That colleague responds, "I always assumed that you were gay. After all, all male music teachers are gay." Because of this experience, Sam avoids discussing his sexuality at school.

One possible answer drop-down menu: This example represents relational harm. The "educate perpetrators and stakeholders" microinterventions may best fit this encounter (Sue et al., 2021, p. 108). For example, Sam might contradict the stereotype by verbalizing that not all male music educators are gay.

Scenario 4

Michael is a gay chorus teacher who works for a principal with conservative religious views. Following a concert, Michael's principal approaches him and says, "Good job on the concert. Your natural gift for music helped the children do their best."

One possible answer drop-down menu: This example does not represent a microaggression. Although Michael does not feel comfortable with his principal's conservative views, her compliment to him does not reference his sexuality or any personal characteristic.

Scenario 5

Brett, a gay music student teacher, overhears students saying LGBTQ+ slurs and decides to speak with them about their word choices (Paparo & Sweet, 2014). Brett's supervising teacher, Judy, is aware of Brett's homosexuality but criticizes his choices by telling Brett that "the students' remarks were not about him." In a separate encounter, Judy compliments gay men's fashion skills when assigning Brett costume responsibilities for the choir.

One possible answer drop-down menu: This example represents unintentional harm. The "make the invisible visible" microinterventions may best fit this encounter (Sue et al., 2021, p. 93). For instance, Brett might disempower his cooperating teacher's innuendos by explaining that LGBTQ+ slurs are hurtful terms and that not all gay men are fashion experts.

Probing question: Describe what might happen if Judy becomes upset with Brett for addressing her comments. If she does, what options would Brett have?

Scenario 6

Zion is a gay African American band leader who lives in the Bible Belt (Thomas-Durrell, 2019). Zion conceals his sexual identity at work. During a band event, Zion observes parents shouting LGBTQ+ slurs at some band students. Zion wants to challenge

the parents' harassment, but he worries about revealing his homosexuality in his religiously conservative teaching context.

One possible answer drop-down menu: This example represents threatening harm. The "seek external support and alliances" microinterventions may best fit this encounter (Sue et al., 2021, p. 152). For example, Zion might use support groups or counseling to process complex emotions about needing to hide his sexual identity and not aiding harassed LGBTQ+ students.

Scenario 7

When concluding a successful student concert, George thanks the audience for supporting the band program and introduced his parents and husband, who attended the event (Taylor, 2011). George feels he has a close relationship with his community and wants to share his family with the families he teaches. George's principal later asks, "Please tell me you will never introduce your husband at a school event again." George assures his supervisor that he will not repeat his behavior, but he avoids discussing the hurt his principal caused.

One possible answer drop-down menu: This example represents relational harm. The "educate perpetrators and stakeholders" microinterventions may best fit this encounter (Sue et al., 2021, p. 108). For instance, George might point out how his principal might benefit from being more inclusive by asking if heterosexual teachers would face the same admonishment for introducing their spouses.

Final Check-In

Upon completing all training components, I asked the participants if they had any

questions about the content and congratulated them on their hard work. Additionally, I provided them with directions for beginning the next phase of this study, which I discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER FIVE: JACOB

Jacob was a transgender male who, at the time of the study, had taught music for five years in the Southwestern United States. Although he had taught elementary general music and secondary band in several settings, he enjoyed teaching band the most. Jacob reported many negative encounters relating to his transgender identity. Those experiences involved multifaceted elements that I discuss throughout most of the findings below. Because of these recurring elements, I begin this chapter by introducing two of Jacob's core experiences as vignettes. I then discuss his experiences in themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress.

Two Vignettes

Jacob reported that many people had conveyed their disapproval of his transgender identity. Some of these individuals had utilized their transphobic perspectives to cause egregious harm to him. I discuss this harm in vignettes of a defamatory article and an abusive colleague.

Vignette 1: The Defamatory Article

Jacob had learned that a conservative watchdog group published a defamatory article about him as he prepared for a new teaching position. Parents at his new school had found out that he was transgender and, before meeting him, reported him to the group, which had a published mission of publicly naming and shaming LGBTQ+ teachers. The article creators had asserted that Jacob would indoctrinate and force gender confusion upon children. Jacob had learned about the article from his father, who discovered it online. His father had become angry and confronted the watchdog group by

commenting on their article, making disapproving remarks about it. The group had retaliated by publishing a letter stating that Jacob was mentally ill and unfit to teach, and his father had an addiction to drugs.

The administrator at the new school had helped Jacob confront the watchdog group and parents by giving him resources to report the article. Jacob had filed a grievance with the "national something for human rights" but forgot the organization's full name. He asserted his relief that the watchdog group had removed the article and letter from their site following his report. Later that year, one of the parents who contacted the watchdog group had engaged Jacob in a conversation about a school performance. Jacob reported that the parent had said, "Hey, I want to let you know that's the best concert I've ever seen here." He asserted that he had thanked her but wished to himself that she had waited to meet him before judging him.

Vignette 2: The Abusive Colleague

Jacob reported several experiences of bullying from an abusive colleague. He had frequently attempted to speak with her when she brought her class to and from the music room: "Oh hey, they did a great job today, or, have a good rest of your day!" However, the teacher often ignored him or forced out a curt "thanks." She had also consistently referred to him with feminine pronouns. He had struggled to determine why the teacher would not converse with him because he had observed how eagerly she interacted with other teachers. He shared that he had suspected her behavior toward him might pertain to his gender transition.

The tension with the abusive colleague had affected classroom instruction. Jacob

had always pulled students out of their homeroom class for 10-minute intervals to select their preferred instrument choices for the coming year. The abusive colleague had refused to let her students participate and was rude to Jacob about his request. He shared that he was at a loss to find common ground with her.

Jacob reported that he had avoided the abusive colleague as much as possible because felt stressed around her. This aversion had included giving up almost half of his lunch period so he could enter the lunchroom after her departure. Jacob had only started shortening his lunch period after repeated attempts to interact peacefully with her; however, she remained consistently rude and acted differently around him. A benefit to Jacob's delayed lunch was that he had eaten with the friendlier teachers, which he enjoyed.

The harassment from the abusive teacher was so severe that Jacob had considered transferring buildings to avoid her. The possibility of leaving his job was challenging because he worked at the "best elementary school." It had the district's highest test scores and fewest behavior referrals. Still, he shared that he had wanted to get away from her so much that he considered working at a less preferred school to avoid her.

Genderism

Jacob had started teaching before starting his transition from female to male. Pronouns had been a complex issue for him throughout this process. Although he had lived in districts that were generally accepting of his transgender identity, he regularly experienced misgendering in the workplace. I discuss these experiences in themes of misgendering by students, colleagues, and authority figures.

Misgendering by Students

Jacob had been flexible with how students addressed him during his transition; however, some students consistently misgendered him. During his first year of teaching, Jacob had asked students to address him as "Teacher Smith" instead of "Mr. Smith," because he had not completed his transition. Once he began to appear more masculine, he provided students with the option of addressing him as "Smith" or "Mr. Smith." Most students respected his pronouns; however, one elementary student had consistently addressed him as "Miss Smith." Jacob typically gave this student a disapproving look to avoid this student's power-struggle behaviors, such as escalating classroom disruptions, talking over Jacob, and shoving classroom furniture. Jacob had cautioned that student to stop their disruption, or he would submit a discipline referral. The student responded with verbal insults about gender confusion. Jacob reminded the student about the expectations for appropriate student-teacher communication and referred them to his principal, who supported him by addressing the student's behavior.

Misgendering by Colleagues

Some of Jacob's colleagues had misgendered him. Jacob explained that some adults had accidentally misgendered him, such as his community choir director, who sometimes used she/her pronouns to refer to him. He asserted that the director had likely not acted maliciously because she had pronoun and gender diversity posters in her room. Jacob shared that the director had just forgotten sometimes; however, he was 90% certain other misgendering encounters were malicious.

Some colleagues had consistently used feminine pronouns to refer to Jacob. One

of them was the abusive teacher from the second vignette. Another was a special education teacher who had spoken with Jacob on a regular basis. One day, that teacher had picked up a class from music and referred to Jacob as "Miss Smith" while speaking to the children. Other colleagues had also initially said "Mr." but still used feminine pronouns. Jacob described this behavior as "weird" and worried it had confused students. He questioned the intent of such behavior: "Honestly, why would you?"

Misgendering by Authority Figures

Some of Jacob's administrators had gendered him appropriately; some had not. Jacob shared that his first administrator had consistently gendered him correctly, and that was good. In his next teaching position, his boss had consistently misgendered him, but Jacob asserted that it did not feel malicious. He had then moved to a new district, and that administrator, who had helped him during the article incident, was supportive. Initially, he had used Jacob's correct pronouns but later switched to feminine pronouns. This administrator had also written "she" on Jacob's evaluations, which Jacob asserted was unfortunate because they were good evaluations that he could not use with future employment applications. His latest administrator had never misgendered him.

Although misgendering had been a consistent issue, Jacob maintained a sense of patience and compassion for his students. He asserted that the children who had disrupted class with recurring gender insults had not hurt him. Instead, he had been more concerned about teaching children to have more appropriate behaviors. When adults had misgendered him, he reflected on their likely intent, allowing for the possibility of miscommunication. Explicit misgendering from Jacob's colleagues, students' parents,

and administrators had caused Jacob substantial harm, which included recording misgendering in official school documentation that might limit future career opportunities.

The Harm

Jacob had encountered many types of negativity about his gender. Some encounters consisted of subtle slights, and others included aggressive outbursts. I discuss these encounters in themes of slurs, insults, bullying, aggression, assumptions of indoctrination, and assumptions of mental illness.

Slurs

Jacob had experienced LGBTQ+ slurs throughout his life. As a child, people had often called him a dyke, among other names. Although Jacob asserted that he had experienced fewer slurs as an adult, he still heard some from students. Most slurs from students occurred with children from classes he had not taught. Some students had called him "zesty," which was a new term for him. Jacob explained that he had not felt the students intended it maliciously. Instead, they had tried to joke with him, thinking they were funny. He had asserted that they should not have spoken with an adult that way.

Some of Jacob's students had called each other names such as the "F-slur," "zesty," and "tranny." Jacob asserted that these remarks had harmful connotations. Although some students had spoken to each other that way, he asserted that most people had not been bold enough to call him a slur unless he was talking about his transgender experiences on social media. Jacob had received multiple slurs and insults during those online conversations, but he dismissed them because they were from people who did not

know him.

Insults

Jacob had experienced many types of insults about his transgender identity. Some people had used slurs and misgendering language to slight him, such as the elementary student who insulted him about gender confusion. Others had lobbed more targeted insults at him, such as the parents who instigated the defamatory article. He had typically avoided the adults who insulted him.

One high school student had used classwork to convey insults. Jacob had created a composition assignment and communicated his expectations that students use positive messages in their work. One of the students had composed a song that included belligerent remarks on Jacob hiding the truth about his identity. Jacob asserted that the student's insults had not angered him, but he wanted to help them understand the harm such negative behavior might cause.

Bullying

Jacob had experienced bullying in several of his teaching locations. The abusive teacher from the second vignette had consistently bullied him during professional and lunchroom interactions. A teacher's aide had enacted similar bullying tactics. Jacob asserted that she had always been mean to him, which included reporting him to the superintendent for having alcohol in the classroom. During a follow-up meeting, Jacob explained to the superintendent that he had only disinfected some recorders with rubbing alcohol in case a student needed to borrow one. Jacob questioned why the aide had not spoken with him about the issue before reporting him.

The aide's mistreatment continued during a summer camp, where she had consistently undermined him in front of children. For example, Jacob had rinsed his fingers in the water fountain after passing out popsicles one day, and the aide publicly criticized him for it. Out of frustration, Jacob had looked at her Facebook page, hoping to understand more about this situation. She had anti-trans content, a Confederate flag, and posts about using bathrooms that match sex at birth on her page. Jacob asserted that she was bullying him because he was transgender, but he thought that he had no proof because she had not explicitly insulted his gender. He had never sought help from the school administration because of the subtlety of those encounters. Jacob reported that he had been uncertain of what to say.

Aggression

Jacob had been the target of an aggressive outburst by a parent. The parent had accosted him in a restaurant, complaining that her autistic son was confused by his transgender identity. Prior to this encounter, the parent had been competitive over her daughter's singing competition preparation and demanded that Jacob provide lessons, even after he had suggested a private instructor. Jacob had helped the child to the best of his ability, and she won the silver medal in her singing competition. However, his hard work and the daughter's success had not been enough to prevent the mother's aggressive outburst in the restaurant.

Assumptions of Indoctrination

Jacob had reported several encounters with aggressors who insinuated that he was indoctrinating children. At this school, teachers had occasionally gathered for breakfast

before students arrived. On such a morning, Jacob had overheard teachers talking about him as he entered the breakfast room: “I don’t care if people want to cut off their boobs when they’re an adult and pretend to be a man, but I just don’t think you should force it on the kids.” He had also read colleagues’ social media posts about transgender educators indoctrinating children, which included comments such as “kids don’t need to know if you’re trans,” and “kids don’t need to know if you’re gay.”

Jacob asserted that he had made no attempts to indoctrinate children because he had not spoken about being transgender or gay in his elementary classroom. Some children had asked him about his gender, and he responded that he was a boy. Jacob had only discussed his identity with high school students when they asked about it. One high school student had asked if he was taking testosterone, and he answered, “Not yet, but I’m going to be.” He explained that answering some questions from older students was more comfortable because they were more capable of understanding transgender topics. Despite his discretion, he shared that he felt frustrated with the fact that straight teachers could freely discuss their private lives without threats of being fired, but LGBTQ+ teachers could not.

Assumptions of Mental Illness

Jacob had encountered some people who asserted that transgender individuals had a mental illness. Jacob had regularly heard this topic, including between two middle-school students eating lunch in his classroom one day. One girl had shared that she was non-binary and wanted to use they pronouns. The other child questioned if that had been a manifestation of mental illness. Jacob engaged both students in a gentle conversation

about the exchange by asking the second child if she believed that her friend had a mental illness; she replied, “No.” Jacob asserted that the conversation had been pleasant and open to all perspectives.

The defamatory article had brought Jacob’s mental health into question publicly. He had also heard mental health comments from colleagues who had asserted that only two genders exist and “everything else is a mental illness.” Jacob claimed that the mental illness argument had been just a lack of knowledge about LGBTQ+ life and affirmed himself as not having mental illness, save for some occasional anxiety.

Jacob had experienced extensive harm in school settings. Individuals who had enacted the slurs, insults, bullying, and aggressive outbursts had likely attempted to inflict pain upon him because of his transgender identity. Some harm likely had surpassed attempts to inflict pain and breached the boundaries of defaming his moral character. These events had likely contributed to a hostile work environment and substantial distress for Jacob.

Distress

Jacob maintained a positive demeanor while discussing the challenging events he had experienced as a transgender educator. He asserted that many transgender individuals likely experienced depression because of the socio-political state in the United States, but he had not felt that way. Although Jacob seemed to maintain high spirits during the interview, he shared several adverse outcomes from his experiences. I discuss this distress in themes of fear, emotional pain, and avoidance.

Fear

Jacob shared his fear of losing his career because of his transgender identity. The defamatory article had changed work dynamics from "Oh! There's a new music teacher. Let's see how it's gonna go!" to "No! There's a new music teacher, and they're trans, and that's terrible!" He asserted that this tension meant he had to work harder to prove himself as a quality educator so that his future colleagues and students' parents would not petition to fire him. Moreover, he asserted that they might form a negative opinion if he had confronted their offensive behaviors.

Jacob explained that his job security fears had increased when he addressed LGBTQ+ topics with students. He asserted that he had not felt comfortable teaching a required curriculum unit on gay rights and social justice because it might give students' parents a reason to complain about him being transgender. Similarly, the parent of the high-school student who had written the insulting composition about him was a school administrator from another school. That parent had removed their child from Jacob's class following that incident. Jacob shared his frustration with the administrator's influence in the district: "It sucks to have to walk around eggshells."

Emotional Pain

Several of Jacob's experiences had resulted in feelings of emotional pain. Jacob had attempted to avoid some of that emotion by skipping the first part of his lunch. He also considered transferring buildings to avoid the abusive teacher. Student behavior had been more challenging to avoid. Jacob shared his suspicions that the students' parents had encouraged their insulting behaviors. The elementary student who had made insulting

remarks about gender confusion was the child of a teacher from another school district. Jacob described the teacher as a cordial individual who had always used appropriate gendered language toward him; however, he asserted that the child had learned the transphobic insults from the teacher at home.

Jacob shared his concern that the high school child who wrote the belligerent song about him had overheard transphobic discussions with their school-administrator parent at home. Although Jacob had never heard the administrator say anything negative, he shared his concern that the situation might affect his job security. Jacob shared that he felt hurt and upset that their parents had allowed them to make insulting remarks about him continuously.

Avoidance

Jacob's distress had intensified to the point of him developing stress-avoidant behaviors. When the defamatory article had preemptively threatened his reputation, he tried to avoid getting fired by working harder to prove his worth as an educator. He had avoided the abusive teacher by skipping the first 15 minutes of his lunch and dodging social interactions with her. His contemplations of leaving his job to escape this teacher exemplified substantial avoidance behaviors. Moreover, because of his fear of negative consequences from colleagues and students' parents, he avoided voicing his opinion about LGBTQ+ topics and challenging the offensive behaviors of his colleagues.

The harmful situations that Jacob encountered had contributed to a prominent sense of distress. This sense had manifested as fear and emotional pain, which evolved into avoidant behaviors. This distress had created an undue burden on Jacob's well-being

and an obstacle to his serving students to the best of his ability. Moreover, adverse outcomes from this distress had essentially limited Jacob's rights and responsibilities to engage in the same professional communication as most other teachers.

Challenging Harm

Jacob had developed multiple strategies to challenge harms pertaining to his transgender educator identity. During the conversation about LGBTQ+ issues and mental illness between two students who had eaten lunch in his room, Jacob engaged them in a gentle dialogue to clarify their intended point of view. Jacob had used that strategy many times with students. When he had taught the mandated gay rights and social justice curriculum, a student had voiced religious concerns about the material. Jacob had affirmed the child's right to express his religious beliefs and restated the school district's expectations that all students learn that material.

Jacob had used authoritative responses to severe student behaviors. When the elementary student insultingly remarked about gender confusion, Jacob gave the student a stern look and instructed them not to speak to him in that manner. He also referred them to the principal, who had supported him by addressing the child's behavior. Jacob also reported the high-school student who had made the insulting composition to his administrator. Although Jacob was not upset by the students' remarks, he had been concerned that having no consequences might convey that harassment is permissible.

One of the principals had asked Jacob to identify an appropriate consequence. Uncertain of how to respond, Jacob had contacted his union representative, who had advised that he should not have to identify appropriate consequences for behavior

referrals. The representative had supported Jacob by interceding with the administrator on his behalf. Jacob asserted that they resolved the issue, and he felt relieved to no longer encounter the student's transphobic remarks.

Jacob shared that he had often reflected on individuals' offensive behaviors to consider whether they intended harm. With the students he had referred to his principal, there was an established pattern of insults about Jacob's transgender identity. However, when the community band director used feminine pronouns, Jacob believed it had been an accident due to her inclusive classroom decor and previous history with her. He shared that the negative behavior patterns of his colleagues, such as the abusive teacher and the teacher's aide, had led him to believe that their insults were intentional.

Jacob asserted that challenging the insulting behavior of colleagues was uncomfortable for him. Sometimes, he avoided them by skipping lunch. When he had considered challenging an adult's insults, he panicked and froze. Other times, he had given a disapproving look. Jacob had wanted to avoid confrontations with other adults, especially in the presence of students. He had not engaged the breakfast room teachers who spoke about him "pretending to be a man" in a confrontation, but he also did not run away from the exchange. Instead, Jacob had politely acknowledged those teachers by saying, "How are you guys?" Then he stayed in the room and ate some quiche. He had resisted. The teachers ceased their conversation.

Jacob had explicitly challenged some of his bullies. After he had received suggested resources from his principal, Jacob filed a grievance report about the defamatory article from the conservative watchdog group. Similarly, after the special

education teacher had said “Miss Smith” to his class, one of the students corrected her. The teacher later questioned if Jacob had used “Mr. Smith” with the children. Jacob had affirmed “Mr. Smith” as his title and reminded her that his full name was on his classroom door. She had agreed to improve her communication skills with him.

Jacob had utilized multiple challenging strategies to diminish and stop the continuing harm. Assertive responses included reporting incidents to authority figures, restating rules, and silent resistance to egregious harm. Moreover, Jacob had clarified students’ and adults’ behaviors by setting expectations of mutual respect and affirming appropriate forms of addressing him. Using these challenging strategies, Jacob had stopped some recurring harm and made several offenders aware of their harmful perspectives.

Kindness

Jacob had embraced acts of kindness from several individuals who cared about his well-being. When the defamatory article emerged, Jacob’s father had attempted to protect him by repeatedly commenting on the post. Likewise, Jacob’s principal had provided him with resources to confront the watchdog group. An art teacher also asked Jacob how he was “feeling with all of the political stuff.” Jacob’s two dogs were circling him for attention during our conversation. He smiled, said that the support he had received was nice, and picked up one of the dogs to hug.

Friendly teachers had shown Jacob kindness during lunch. They had treated him with respect and socially engaged with him. One of those teachers had been a lesbian whom he trusted as a workplace confidant. Jacob had sought her advice after an

elementary student insulted him about gender confusion. The teacher advised Jacob to report the incident. Jacob asserted that he might not continue working if every teacher were negative, so supportive teachers, like his new lunchtime companions, made his workday "a lot better."

A student stood up for Jacob when the special education teacher called him Miss Smith. The student had said, "You have to call him Mr. Smith. He's transgender. So we use Mr." Jacob asserted that he had been unaware of the student's actions until the teacher discussed the exchange with him. He explained that he had never discussed that he was transgender with the students but thought that it was good that the child supported him.

Jacob had mentored a transgender youth who wanted to start using he/him pronouns. The student had asked Jacob if he should wait until he moved to a more accepting environment. Jacob had advised him that people could be rude to transgender individuals, so waiting until he moved to a more accepting environment before he switched pronouns was a wise choice. The affirming and protective acts of kindness had helped defray Jacob's distress. Moreover, Jacob had passed that kindness on to others needing support.

Changing Distress

Jacob diminished his distress by utilizing challenging strategies. His emotional pain and fear over the defamatory article and insulting letter diminished following the authorities' removal of those items from online publication. His frustration over students' behaviors resolved after he engaged students in clarifying dialogues, set boundaries, and

sought administrators' behavioral support. His resistance to the insulting breakfast conversation and clarifying conversation with the special education teacher had made the insulting teachers aware of their harm. Those actions had likely helped to prevent or lessen his sense of pain. The special education teacher even agreed to improve her use of honorifics, indicating a possible reduction in future distress.

Some of Jacob's distress had remained unchanged due to unchallenged situations; however, the affirming and validating acts of kindness from supportive individuals helped to defray that distress. Jacob had never challenged the abusive teacher's behaviors or the school-employee parents who condoned insulting behaviors from their children. He had felt immense distress from those situations. The lunchroom companions, supportive principals, and an elementary student had stood up for Jacob. Those actions resonated with him and made his job more enjoyable. Their kindness had helped diminish lingering distress.

During the member check process of this study, Jacob shared that he discovered the defamatory article had been republished on a different online source. This fresh harm might reopen old wounds. Jacob might employ a microintervention strategy; however, given that this study's data collection had ended, discussing his response to this harmful recurrence was best suited for a future follow-up study.

Connecting Theory and Lived Experience

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed Jacob's findings through themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress. The goal of this study was to understand each participant's lived experiences with microaggressions

and microinterventions, which necessitates interpreting the findings through the lens of microaggression theory. I discuss this interpretation in themes of microaggressions, microaggressive stress, microinterventions, and diminished microaggressive stress.

Microaggressions

Jacob experienced genderism and harm in the form of microaggressions. Table 5.1 presents an overview of these experiences and their corresponding microaggression categories. Jacob encountered misgendering language, insults about gender confusion, slurs, and slights about his hidden truth, which exemplified the "heterosexist language or transphobic terminology" microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 229). He experienced

Table 5.1

Jacob's Encounters with Microaggressions

Microaggression	Person	Action
Heterosexist language or transphobic terminology	Multiple persons	Misgendering
	A student	Insulting composition about Jacob's "truth"
	A student	Insults about gender confusion
	Students	Slurs: "F-slur," "tranny," and "zesty
Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences	Random persons	Social media insults
	Teacher's aide	Bullied Jacob
Assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality	Breakfast teachers	Asserted Jacob's indoctrination
	Abusive teacher	Consistently bullied Jacob
	Reporting parents	Reported Jacob to the watchdog group
	Watchdog group	An article asserting that Jacob had a mental illness and would indoctrinate students
Physical threats/ harassment	A parent	Aggressive outburst in a fast-food restaurant
Denial of bodily privacy	Breakfast teachers	Insults about cutting off private body parts

accusations of indoctrinating children and having a mental illness. These encounters exemplified the "assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality" microaggression (p. 232). Moreover, the actions of the abusive teacher and the students' parents who reported him to the watchdog group also represented this microaggression. The aide's bullying and social media insults represented the "discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences" microaggression (p. 231). The insulting breakfast conversation about cutting off private body parts represented the "denial of bodily privacy" transgender microaggression (Nadal, 2013, p. 96), and the mother's aggressive outburst in a restaurant exemplified the "physical threats or harassment" transgender microaggression (p. 95). These microaggressions conveyed a cutting sense of harm to Jacob because of his transgender identity.

Microaggressive Stress

Jacob experienced substantial distress from microaggressive encounters. Although he maintained a positive mindset and strived to minimize the severity of his experiences, there were signs of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral microaggressive stress. The school-employee parents' condoning the insulting behaviors of their children and the recurring misgendering by colleagues had been painful experiences. Jacob also feared voicing his opinion on LGBTQ+ topics and getting fired after the article. His pain and fear were emotional manifestations of microaggressive stress. Jacob's sense of stress when interacting with the abusive teacher was a cognitive manifestation of microaggressive distress. His avoidance of the abusive teacher and consideration of changing jobs exemplified behavioral manifestations of microaggressive distress. Further

exacerbating these ongoing stressors, Jacob observed social expectations that he remain silent about LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace, which limited his options for utilizing microintervention strategies.

Microintervention Strategies

Jacob enacted multiple microintervention strategies to challenge some microaggressive behaviors. Table 5.2 presents an overview of his use of microintervention tactics. Jacob used the "seeking clarification" tactic to clarify a student's perspective on mental health and non-binary individuals (Sue et al., 2021, p. 97). His disapproving looks and silent-breakfast resistance exemplified the "nonverbal communication" tactic (p. 131). He utilized the tactics of "alerting leadership" and "reporting incidents" to challenge multiple encounters, including the article and student behaviors (p. 155). Jacob addressed students' insults and some instances of misgendering by using the "reminding perpetrators about the rules" and "developing perspicacity" tactics (p. 93). Jacob stopped many of these harms from recurring and made offending individuals aware of their harms with these microintervention tactics.

Bystander Support

Several individuals provided bystander support to Jacob during microaggressive encounters. Table 5.2 presents an overview of bystanders' use of microintervention tactics. The support from the art and friendlier lunchroom teachers exemplified the "support group" tactic (Sue et al., 2021, p. 158). Jacob's father's confrontation with the watchdog group represented the "express disagreement" tactic (p. 130). A student's correction of a teacher's use of Miss Smith exemplified the "describe what is happening"

Table 5.2

Jacob's Experiences with Microinterventions and Bystander Support

Microintervention Tactic	Person	Action
Seeking clarification MIV [a]	Jacob	Clarifying conversation about LGBTQ+ and mental illness with two students at lunch
Developing perspicacity MIV [a]	Jacob	Clarifying "Mr. Jacob" with a special education teacher
Expressing disagreement DA [b]	Father	Confronting article comments
Describe happenings DA [b]	A student	Clarified "Mr." to a teacher
Reminding about the rules DA [b]	Jacob	Stating "You don't talk to me like that" to an insulting student
Nonverbal communication DA [b]	Jacob	Silently eating quiche after insults
	Jacob	Giving "the look"
Alerting leadership ESA [c]	Jacob	Reporting issues to the principal
Reporting incidents ESA [c]	Jacob	Reporting the article to authorities
Support groups ESA [c]	Art teacher	Checked on Jacob's well-being
Support groups ESA [c]	Teachers	Companionship, acceptance, and advising support during lunch
Buddy system ESA [c]	Principal	Provided resources for the article complaint
Buddy system ESA [c]	Union rep.	Supported Jacob with the principal
Buddy system ESA [c]	Jacob	Mentored a transgender youth

[a] Make the invisible visible microintervention category

[b] Disarm microaggressions microintervention category

[c] External support and alliances microintervention category

tactic (p. 131). The supportive principal's actions, the union representative's support, and Jacob's mentorship of a transgender youth represented the "buddy system" tactic (p. 157). These supportive individuals stopped some harm from persisting, such as the article and recurring student insults, and diminished harm when Jacob did not challenge the perpetrators. These moments of support and kindness provided affirmation, protection,

and validation, which made his job more enjoyable and supported his well-being.

Diminished Microaggressive Stress

Jacob experienced many types of LGBTQ+ microaggressions and resulting microaggressive stress. His use of microintervention tactics helped neutralize some distress and made perpetrators aware of their harmful actions. When Jacob did not challenge harms directly, the microprotections and microaffirmations from supportive individuals helped to diminish his microaggressive stress. Their actions helped Jacob find moments of acceptance and living authentically. Brief exchanges of affirming and caring words helped fuel Jacob's passion for teaching music and fostered small acts of resistance against the harmful words and actions of aggressors. Although the stress from some colleagues had remained, the kindness of others helped to counteract it.

CHAPTER SIX: GEORGE

George was a transgender male who, at the time of this study, had taught elementary music for three years in the Northeastern United States. He had played string instruments and began learning music at the age of nine. George reported several negative encounters relating to his transgender identity. Those experiences involved multifaceted elements that I discuss throughout the findings below. Because of these recurring elements, I begin this chapter by introducing two of George's core experiences as vignettes. I then discuss his experiences in themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress.

Two Vignettes

Some school leaders had caused harm to George because of his transgender identity. Some of these harms had been accidental, and some had not. I discuss these encounters in vignettes of the mentor and the boss.

Vignette 1: The Mentor

George had started teaching before transitioning from female to male, and this time was a "very sensitive point" in his life. A mentor had helped him adapt to the demands of teaching, but she was not as supportive of his gender transition. George asserted that she and other staff members repeatedly referred to the whole staff, including him, as ladies, making him uncomfortable. He explained that he appreciated her mentorship but felt uncomfortable discussing his concerns with her. George's discomfort with addressing negative encounters stemmed from his goal of avoiding potentially adverse outcomes, which might manifest if he drew attention to his transgender identity.

Vignette 2: The Boss

George's boss had misgendered him in front of his students. George had started working with his students in the middle of the year, and a few of them did not enjoy music class. He had struggled with the students' behavior one day, so his boss entered the room to refocus their attention. During that process, the boss referred to George by his former female name and with feminine pronouns, which those students had never before heard. George asserted that this event confused them because they had never questioned his gender.

George and his boss had a meeting to discuss the class. During that conversation, his boss asked George to share his perspectives. The boss apologized to George upon learning of his misgendering. George concluded that his boss had not realized that he had begun transitioning. The encounter had been "upsetting, for sure, like fear and anxiety." George shared that he had feared his students might realize he was transgender and use that knowledge to harm him. He had voluntarily left the position where this "difficult and embarrassing experience" occurred; however, because of the expansion of the music program, he agreed to return to that position.

Genderism

George had several hostile encounters regarding his gender. Because he had started transitioning after he became a teacher, many encounters included criticisms about his changing appearance. In the opening vignettes, George's mentor and boss treated him harshly during this transition by referring to him with feminine language and his former name. George had also encountered criticism from colleagues and students about his

changing appearance, which included invasive questions about his new hairstyle and clothes, comments about how he was once "so pretty," and requests to see pictures of him before the transition. George reported that these comments felt negative to him.

The Harm

George had encountered several harmful situations related to his transgender identity, which included the mentor's persistent refusal to acknowledge his transition. Her behavior contrasted sharply with that of his colleagues, who had more nuanced interactions with him. The subtle changes in workplace social dynamics made it difficult for George to describe the harm. He said, "I can't exactly put my finger on it, but just the way that men interact with each other, they don't interact with me that way." George asserted that some of his peers had interacted with him differently due to a lack of mutual respect. The dilemma of clearly defining such social conflict had stalled the identification of potential resolutions.

Distress

When recalling his experiences as a transgender educator, George spoke slowly, and at times, he was tearful. He frequently referenced a sense of hurt from his encounters and worry about his future well-being in education. I discuss this distress in themes of fear, emotional pain, and avoidance.

Fear

George shared that he had experienced multiple fears about his well-being. Some of those fears stemmed from internalizing the reported experiences of other transgender educators. Reading those accounts had caused him to "feel a lot of fear, truly," that he

might suffer similar harm. Similarly, he feared that his coworkers might ask him questions about his transition.

George asserted that he feared students' parents might harm him or remove children from his music class if he revealed his transgender identity to them. The encounter with his boss had exacerbated that fear. He shared that his elementary students had overheard things about transgender individuals and feared that his boss's statements might result in students complaining to their parents. George had voluntarily left his job soon after that encounter.

Emotional Pain

George had experienced emotional pain from his workplace encounters. He shared that although he had appreciated working in his district, he felt hurt by the reactions of his mentor, colleagues, and students to his transition. He divulged that he had recalled a more profound sense of emotion during group conversations in this study. George reported that hearing other participants' experiences helped him process why he had felt so conflicted by some of his experiences. George concluded that he had shut down his emotions to avoid feeling emotional pain.

Avoidance

George's distress had intensified to the point of him developing stress-avoidant behaviors. Staff members typically had gone out socially after professional development; however, because he feared questions about his transition, he never joined them. When he had emailed students' parents, he switched between his former and current names based on whether they knew him before his transition. George had utilized these strategies to

avoid drawing attention to his transition because he feared punitive outcomes. His decision to leave his job exemplified a substantial act of avoidance. His sense of emotional pain and fear had likely contributed to that decision. His discomfort with addressing workplace harms might have further compounded that distress.

Challenging Harm

George had developed multiple strategies to challenge harm pertaining to his transgender identity. He had challenged his boss's remarks by engaging in a descriptive conversation about the misgendering encounter. He explained that he had felt anxious about the situation, but he had not avoided the conversation with his boss. In that dialogue, George explained that he had transitioned since he started teaching and clarified how his boss should address him moving forward. The boss apologized for his behavior. Although the apology could not undo the harm, the boss had taken accountability for his actions. That act of contrition might indicate improved future interactions between them.

George shared that he had often felt uncertain about advocating for his well-being in the professional environment. He had attempted to speak with his mentor about her use of feminine language toward him; however, she continued to refer to him with feminine language after that conversation. He had not pursued the conversation further; however, instead of ignoring his distress, he utilized friendships and self-care to challenge it. George had formed some friendships with trusted queer colleagues, and others continued from those who knew him before his transition. He shared that he had felt safe enough to talk openly about himself with them and appreciated the jovial banter. George had practiced self-care by restricting work-related tasks and performing in a local music

ensemble. These strategies helped George minimize distress from harmful experiences.

Kindness

Several people had extended acts of kindness to George. Some coworkers had fostered a safe space for him to discuss his work and life experiences. Outside of work, George's friends had provided a support network. By practicing self-care, George had extended kindness to himself. These protections and affirmations had helped him counteract persistent distress from harmful acts.

Changing Distress

Towards the end of this study, George shared that he would soon return to the workplace, where his mentor and boss had misgendered him. He explained that he felt "a little bit better" returning to that position because he had participated in the microintervention training. He asserted that by reading formal strategies and their corresponding outcome goals, he had reflected on how he might adapt those responses to future situations. The process of learning about LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microintervention strategies and hearing other participants in this study talk about their experiences had diminished his sense of emotional pain "in a good way." His increased confidence might further diminish distress from challenging future negative encounters.

Connecting Theory and Lived Experience

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed George's findings through themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress. The goal of this study was to understand each participant's lived experiences with microaggressions and microinterventions, which necessitates interpreting the findings through the lens of

microaggression theory. I discuss this interpretation in themes of microaggressions, microaggressive stress, microinterventions, and diminished microaggressive stress.

Microaggressions

George experienced substantial negativity in the form of microaggressions. Table 6.1 presents an overview of these experiences and their corresponding microaggression categories. Although the students may not have realized that they were insulting George's masculinity, their criticisms about his changing appearance and compliments about his former feminine beauty exemplified the "endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative" microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 229). Similarly, although George

Table 6.1

George's Encounters with Microaggressions

Microaggression	Person	Action
Heterosexist language or transphobic terminology	Boss	Misgendered George and used his former name in front of students
	Mentor	Misgendering language
	Colleagues	Misgendering language
Endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative culture	Students	Criticized George's changing appearance
Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences	Colleagues	Negative changes in social interactions
	Mentor	Initial refusal to acknowledge George's transition
Denial of individual heterosexism or transphobia	Mentor	Continued refusal to change interactions with George following his dialogue with her

could “not put his finger on” how his collegial interactions changed, he observed that the social climate was different and perceived that change as unfavorable.

The changing social dynamic and the mentor’s initial refusal to acknowledge his transition represented the “discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences” microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 231). The mentor’s continued refusal following George’s conversation with her about his transition exemplified the “denial of individual heterosexism or transphobia” microaggression (p. 232). The misgendering language from George’s mentor, boss, and colleagues represented the “heterosexist language or transphobic terminology” microaggression (p. 229). These microaggressions conveyed a cutting sense of harm to George because of his transgender identity.

Microaggressive Stress

George experienced substantial distress from microaggressive encounters in the form of emotional and behavioral microaggressive stress. He developed a palpable sense of fear about his well-being and job security. These concerns were most evident in George’s description of his state of mind following the encounter with his boss. His sense of emotional pain from his boss’s and mentor’s actions added another layer of distress. His pain and fear were emotional manifestations of microaggressive stress. George often avoided social interactions with colleagues, tried blocking out his sense of pain, and left his job because of his emotional duress, which represented behavioral manifestations of microaggressive stress.

Microintervention Strategies

George enacted multiple microintervention strategies to challenge some

microaggressive behaviors. Table 6.2 presents an overview of his use of microintervention tactics. George utilized the "developing perspicacity" tactic when he attempted to reason with his mentor about his transition (Sue et al., 2021, p. 93). During the follow-up conversation with his boss, he employed the "differentiate between intent and impact" tactic (p. 108), and once the boss realized his error, he apologized. George's friendships within the workplace exemplified the "buddy system" tactic (p. 157).

Bystander Support

Trusted friends provided bystander support to George following microaggressive encounters. Table 6.2 presents an overview of bystanders' use of microintervention tactics. Their understanding and camaraderie represented the "support group" tactic (Sue et al., 2021, p. 158). George relied upon their microaffirmations and microvalidations as a

Table 6.2

George's Experiences with Microinterventions and Bystander Support

Microintervention Tactic	Person	Action
Developing perspicacity MIV [a]	George	Conversation with his mentor
Differentiating between intent and impact EPS [b]	George	Conversation with his boss
Buddy system ESA [c]	Friends	Friendships with colleagues
Support Group ESA [c]	Friends	Friends outside of work
Support Group ESA [c]	Participants	Group dialogue about LGBTQ+ experiences
Support group ESA [c]	George	Attended microintervention training

[a] Make the invisible visible microintervention category

[b] Educate perpetrators and stakeholders microintervention category

[c] External support and alliances microintervention category

safe space in his personal and professional contexts. During this study, participants discussed their experiences as LGBTQ+ educators, which exemplified the "support group" tactic (p. 158). Additionally, he extended microprotections to himself by practicing self-care, which included limiting his work responsibilities outside of the workday and engaging in activities that brought him joy. The microintervention strategies and bystander support prevented some harm from recurring, made perpetrators aware of their actions, and reduced distress associated with persistent microaggressive behavior.

Diminished Microaggressive Stress

George encountered many LGBTQ+ microaggressions and resulting manifestations of microaggressive stress. His use of microintervention tactics helped neutralize some distress and made perpetrators aware of their harmful actions. The microaffirmations and microvalidations from his support network helped to defray the distress from situations that George did not feel comfortable challenging; however, his confidence to address such harms had grown from learning about microinterventions. George's evolving confidence in challenging future harm might increasingly diminish distress and support his well-being.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ASHER

Asher was a college student who, at the time of this study, was student–teaching in the Midwestern United States. He described himself as a first-generation American who was agender, asexual, and transgender. He used the Mx. prefix and he/they pronouns. Mx. Asher Smith had been born with a female body and had not sought physical transition to a male one. Asher said, "The way that I best describe myself is kind of like an amorphous blob, like whoever you want."

Asher reported several negative encounters relating to his immigrant and LGBTQ+ identities. Those experiences involved multifaceted elements that I discuss throughout most of the findings below. Because of these recurring elements, I begin this chapter by introducing two of Asher's core experiences as vignettes. I then discuss his experiences in themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress.

Two Vignettes

Asher experienced multiple harms pertaining to their queer and immigrant identities. Some harm manifested in close familial relationships, and others manifested as negative environmental messaging. I discuss these encounters in vignettes of first-generation American and political attacks on LGBTQ+ individuals.

Vignette 1: First-Generation American

Asher's parents had emigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe. Because Asher and his sister were first-generation Americans, they had grown up around people from a culture that was different than their own. Asher praised his sister's unfailing

support and empathy, which he attributed to their upbringing. His relationship with his parents had been different. Asher shared that although his parents had sincerely hoped for his happiness, they had difficulty understanding and accepting his gender. The tension had grown, so Asher no longer wanted to teach them about his gender. His sister was adept at explaining things to them and mediated between Asher and their parents.

Asher's experiences as a child of first-generation immigrants had informed his presence in the classroom. He asserted that although he was White, he had still felt emotional pain from political attacks on immigrant populations. During student teaching, a student had joked about wanting the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authorities to visit another student's home. Asher shared that the comment had upset him, and he still regretted not challenging it. He had experienced intersecting harms about his gender and immigrant identities.

Vignette 2: Political Attacks on LGBTQ+ Individuals

Asher asserted that their university was "unfortunately, going down a very specific [political] slope." They shared that they were scared to live in their community because the recurring political attacks on the LGBTQ+ population made them feel that the government hated them. Because local state leaders had asserted that LGBTQ+ topics were inappropriate for elementary learners, Asher shared that they wondered how to manage their queerness in the school environment. The repeal of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs had exacerbated these pressures. Asher explained that they felt scared by the negative political messages. They had experienced intersecting harms about their gender and immigrant identities from government leaders, family relationships, and the

educational environment.

Genderism

Asher had experienced misgendering throughout his collegiate and student teaching experiences. As his coursework progressed, he observed music classrooms to fulfill practicum requirements. During those placements, he displayed his pronouns and Mx. prefix on a lanyard and his school identification badge. Most students respected him; however, some elementary children had misgendered him. Although he had the same cooperating teacher throughout his practicums, the teacher did not correct the misgendering by students. Later in his degree program, Asher had a seminar class with a teacher's assistant (TA), whom Asher knew from a previous methods course. The TA had misgendered Asher during classes.

Asher had experienced misgendering during student teaching. They shared that they felt frustrated that everyone was identified by the correct gender except for them. Like the practicum placement teacher, the student-teaching cooperating teacher had not corrected the students. Asher credited the children for using "Mx. Spivey" but expressed concern that they had not used the correct pronouns. Asher expressed frustration about the children not utilizing the pronoun lanyard. Because Asher's gender was such an essential part of their identity, instances of misgendering had upset them.

The Harm

Asher had encountered many types of negativity about his immigrant and gender identities. Some encounters consisted of subtle slights from students. In the first vignette, a student had made an insulting comment about ICE. Another student had mimicked the

Nazi salute. The cooperating teacher had promptly addressed that behavior, which Asher supported wholeheartedly.

Asher had encountered multiple expectations to conform his gender performance to social customs. Some pressures had come from his parents, who had not accepted his gender, and others had originated from his LGBTQ+ peers. During their undergraduate studies, a transgender friend had told Asher to exhibit more typically masculine behaviors, which included doing away with comfort items such as My Little Pony figurines and Plushie stuffed animals. Asher asserted that these insults targeted his intrinsic characteristics, which he could not control.

Asher had experienced character attacks from the political debates in his state. In the second vignette, they had gleaned from political messaging that LGBTQ+ topics were inappropriate for students. They had also heard of the stereotype that LGBTQ+ individuals were child predators. This character attack had been a substantial concern for Asher as they progressed from coursework into student teaching and envisioned their future career. The various manifestations of harm had presented obstacles to Asher's well-being and academic success.

Distress

Asher's experiences as a preservice teacher had left him with more questions than answers about the risks of being a queer educator. These questions had developed into substantial senses of anxiety and hurt about teaching, maintaining a sense of authenticity within professional boundaries, and avoiding the pitfalls of defamatory character attacks. I discuss these stressors in themes of fear, emotional pain, and avoidance.

Fear

Asher had always planned to teach in a local community; however, he worried about how well he might thrive in those rural environments. Some of his concerns had involved safety considerations. He shared that he had felt unsafe around the students who mimicked the Nazi salute and wore clothing with conservative political slogans. Moreover, Asher shared that he had felt highly distressed after a student stated a desire for ICE to take someone away. Other concerns had stemmed from not knowing how to manage those behaviors and his queerness in the professional environment. Asher elaborated on this concern, "It's kind of like I've been thrown into the water, learning how to navigate." Although he had routinely used his adopted pronouns, he had no experience setting clear communication boundaries in the workplace.

Asher shared their concerns about not feeling a sense of belonging during their student teaching placement. Their cooperating teacher had described the community as "the edge of civilization," which Asher asserted had felt less accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals. Moreover, Asher explained that they had been the only queer person among the music education staff. That isolation had contributed to Asher doubting whether they could work in that setting, even if a school offered him employment.

Asher spoke about his fear of not securing employment because of his queerness. He described a social norm where everyone was kind to people during face-to-face interactions but spoke poorly about people in private. Asher asserted that because he had looked visibly queer, people might assume that he would molest children. He reported fearing that this assumption might become the rationale for not finding a teaching

position. Asher asserted many times that he had never desired to harm children but had concerns that potential accusers might not believe him. He shared that he worried about what might happen to him if that fear became a reality.

Emotional Pain

Some of Asher's fears had become sources of emotional pain. The expectations from their parents to conform to traditional gender roles had created such a sense. Asher explained that he had no interest in explaining his gender to them anymore and relied on his sister to mediate among them. Gender conformity expectations had also come from LGBTQ+ individuals. When Asher was in college, a transgender student had told them to act more like a man. Asher said, "I had this pressure…and that kind of just hurt."

Asher had experienced pain from misgendering encounters, which sometimes included students. Asher shared that they felt sad when students misgendered them, and they were uncertain about how to correct those children. Although he praised the students for trying to gender him correctly, he asserted his hope that they would try "this much harder" as he gestured his thumb and index finger closely together. Pain from misgendering was evident when Asher spoke of how pleasantly surprised they had been during the first meeting with their cooperating teacher:

> He gendered me properly, and I'm just, like, no one has ever done that for me. That was, wow! Surprising! You actually read my email signature. Surprising! I have not had a lot of people just get it right from the first try.

The glee that Asher had felt over this affirming experience indicated the depth of their emotional pain from invalidating encounters, which included a student's insult about ICE

taking someone away. Asher asserted that they had felt uncertain of how to respond and harbored that pain.

Avoidance

Asher's distress had intensified to the point of them developing stress-avoidant behaviors. They had avoided conservative environments and people they perceived to have conservative views. They repeatedly spoke of their discomfort with anything that "resembled the alt-right pipeline," because they had felt threatened in these contexts. Asher's experiences as a queer individual had resulted in substantial fears about their safety and well-being. These fears had compounded their sense of emotional pain, which they felt from attacks on their gender and immigrant identities. The collective fear and pain had evolved into a heightened awareness and avoidance of conservative settings. This distress had likely added to the complexities of graduating from college and entering the professional workforce.

Challenging Harm

Asher had developed multiple strategies to challenge harms pertaining to his transgender identity. He had sometimes taken a direct approach to challenging potential harm. They had learned how to correct adults' insulting behaviors by observing a student in their class cohort and mimicking those responses. During student teaching, Asher displayed his Mx. prefix and he/they pronouns on his identification badge, pronoun lanyard, and email signature, which proactively shared his communication expectations. Asher asserted that he had not felt comfortable directly challenging some perpetrators of harmful behaviors. Instead of ignoring those encounters, he had challenged resulting

distress by working with a queer, transgender mental healthcare provider to process and heal from these experiences.

Kindness

Asher had experienced multiple manifestations of kindness that helped counteract the distress from harmful encounters and supported his authentic living. Perhaps most importantly, he had extended kindness to himself. He had countered negative environmental messaging by affirming his optimistic teaching nature and asserting that he never wanted to hurt children. His wellness routine had also included working with a therapist and doing stuff he had loved, such as crocheting, playing games, collecting things, and talking with friends. He shared that he had cherished his friendships because he felt welcomed and supported.

Many people in Asher's life had extended affirming kindness to them. Peers had respected him and usually gendered him correctly. Professors had also gendered him appropriately, most of the time, which he shared made him glad. As a student teacher, Asher had worked closely with their cooperating teacher and university supervisor, who affirmed their identity by addressing them appropriately. Asher had practiced self-affirmations by reminding themself that nothing would prevent them from living authentically.

Asher had experienced acts of protection. He had dated someone with his "own port," who wanted to correct the TA who misgendered him. Asher shared his excitement that someone was willing to defend his gender. Asher's sister had protected family relationships by mediating between Asher and their parents. The supportive individuals

who had extended affirming and protective acts of kindness helped defray Asher's distressing sense of fear and emotional pain from harmful encounters. Moreover, they had held space for Asher to thrive.

Changing Distress

Asher diminished his distress from utilizing challenging strategies. Their confidence to address harm outside the work environment had neutralized some resultant distress. Asher's proactive communication of his Mx. prefix and pronouns had prevented some harm from occurring. When harm happened that Asher had not challenged, he worked with a mental health care provider to process and heal. By utilizing these strategies, Asher had decreased lingering distress from harmful encounters.

Some of Asher's distress had persisted from unchallenged harm. The affirming and validating acts of kindness from others had helped defray that distress. His sister and relationship partner had supported Asher with affection and protection. Asher's university supervisor and cooperating teacher had validated and affirmed his identity by using appropriate gendered communication with him. These acts of affirmation had diminished his distress, and he shared his appreciation for this support.

Connecting Theory and Lived Experience

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed Asher's findings through themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress. The goal of this study was to understand each participant's lived experiences with microaggressions and microinterventions, which necessitates interpreting the findings through the lens of microaggression theory. I discuss this interpretation in themes of microaggressions,

microaggressive stress, microinterventions, and diminished microaggressive stress.

Microaggressions

Asher experienced substantial negativity in the form of microaggressions. Table 7.1 presents an overview of these experiences and their corresponding microaggression categories. Misgendering language from a TA and K–12 students exemplified the "heterosexist language or transphobic terminology" microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 229). The practicum and cooperating teachers worked with Asher for an extended period, but they never corrected students who misgendered him. Their lack of corrective action represented the "denial of societal heterosexism or transphobia" microaggression (p. 232). The political attacks on LGBTQ+ individuals and the reported experiences of other transgender individuals exemplified the "assumption of sexual pathology or

Table 7.1

Asher's Encounters with LGBTQ+ and Bisexual Microaggressions

Microaggression	Person	Action
Heterosexist language or transphobic terminology	Teacher's assistant K–12 students	Misgendering Misgendering
Denial of societal heterosexism/ transphobia	Cooperating teacher Practicum teacher	Ignored misgendering language Ignored misgendering language
Assumptions of sexual pathology or abnormality	Environmental Local politicians	LGBTQ+ as child predators Attack LGBTQ+ rights and LGBTQ+ moral character
Hostility and pressure to change	Transgender\ college peer	Pressured Asher to act and become more manly

abnormality" microaggression (p. 232). In addition to these LGBTQ+ microaggressions, some of Asher's experiences exemplified multiple bisexual microaggressions. The transgender college peer who aggressively pressured Asher to change their behaviors to present and act more masculine represented the "hostility" and "pressure to change" microaggressions (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014, pp. 493, 495). These microaggressions conveyed a cutting sense of harm to Asher because of his transgender identity.

Several of Asher's experiences exemplified intersectional microaggressions. Table 7.2 presents an overview of these experiences and their corresponding microaggression categories. His parents emigrated from Eastern Europe to the United States; however, they maintained their cultural and religious beliefs, which created tension with Asher's gender identity. This lack of acceptance exemplified the "disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups" intersectional microaggression (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 155). Asher asserted that his White appearance had provided him with privilege in the United States; however, the political attacks and ICE raids against immigrant populations caused him intense emotional pain. If Asher were a person of color, these harms might have exemplified the "assumption of inferior status of men and women of color" intersectional microaggressions (pp. 155–156). However, because Asher was White, neither this microaggression category, nor any other established microaggression category, reflected his experiences. In the classroom, the students who mimicked the Nazi salute and wore conservative attire triggered the pain that Asher felt from harm to immigrant and LGBTQ+ populations, which was similar to

Table 7.2

Asher's Encounters with Intersectional and Transgender Microaggressions

Microaggression	Person	Action
Physical threats/harassment	Students	Insults about the Nazi salute, political attire
Disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups	Parents	Have not accepted Asher's gender
Assumption of inferior status of men and women of color	Politicians	Political attacks on immigrants and ICE raids
	Student	Insult about ICE

the transgender microaggression of "physical threats/harassment" (Nadal, 2013, p. 95). Although this microaggression came from the transgender microaggression typology, it fit with Asher's immigrant and transgender identities.

Microaggressive Stress

Asher experienced substantial distress from intersecting microaggressive encounters about their gender and immigrant identities. Although he maintained a positive mindset and strived to minimize the severity of his experiences, there were signs of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral distress. His fears revolved around his well-being, not knowing how to manage gender identity in the workplace, not finding acceptance, and discrimination in hiring practices. Additionally, the fear of being falsely accused of hurting children exacerbated Asher's concerns and contributed to a sense of pain. Conformity pressures, frequency of misgendering, and tension with parents also contributed heavily to that pain. Asher's fear and pain were emotional manifestations of

microaggressive stress. His distress contributed to developing stress-avoidant behaviors, such as avoiding conservative environments, which was a behavioral manifestation of microaggressive stress. Asher's vigilant awareness of conservative settings and their perception of safety at any given moment exemplified cognitive stress.

Microinterventions

Asher enacted multiple microintervention strategies to stop some microaggressive behaviors. Table 7.3 presents an overview of his use of microintervention tactics. His

Table 7.3

Asher's Experiences with Microinterventions and Bystander Support

Microintervention Tactic	Person	Action
Appealing to perpetrator principles EPS [a]	Sister	Mediated family relationships
State values and set limits DA [b]	Asher	Corrected adults in personal contexts who misgendered
State values and set limits DA [b]	Asher	Proactively communicated Mx. prefix and pronouns in email signature and lanyard
State values and set limits DA [b]	Relationship partner	Offered to protect Asher by correcting misgendering
Buddy system ESA [c]	Peers	Appropriate gendered language
Support groups ESA [c]	Cooperating teacher	Consistently gendered Asher correctly
Support groups ESA [c]	University supervisor	Appropriate gendered language
Seeking therapy ESA [c]	Mental health provider	Provided mental health care services to Asher

[a] Educate perpetrators and stakeholders microintervention category

[b] Disarm microaggressions microintervention category

[c] External support and alliances microintervention category

correction of misgendering adults outside the workplace and proactive communication of his prefix and pronouns represented the "stating values and limits" tactic (Sue et al., 2021, p. 130). They also practiced self-care with a transgender mental health care provider, which represented the "seeking therapy" tactic (p. 156). Asher reported that both tactics helped minimize and diminish microaggressive harm.

Bystander Support

The kind actions of supportive individuals in Asher's life exemplified bystander support, which diminished distress from harm he did not challenge directly. Table 7.3 presents an overview of bystanders' use of microintervention tactics. Their relationship partner's protective offer to correct the TA who misgendered them represented a "stating values and limits" tactic (Sue et al., 2021, p. 130). Their sister's efforts to mediate family relationships exemplified the "appealing to perpetrator principles" tactic (p. 111). Several friends supported Asher with acceptance and respect, which represented the "buddy system" tactic (p. 157). The university supervising teacher and the cooperating teacher respected Asher's communication expectations and supported them throughout student teaching, which exemplified a "support group" tactic (p. 156). These supportive individuals stopped some harm from occurring, such as avoiding misgendering language by using Asher's honorific and pronouns from the outset, and diminished harm from unchallenged encounters. These microaffirmations, microprotections, and microvalidations were a beacon of joy for Asher.

Diminished Microaggressive Stress

Asher experienced many types of LGBTQ+, transgender, and intersectional

microaggressions and resulting microaggressive stress. His use of microintervention tactics helped prevent and neutralize some distress. He was uncertain about how to challenge workplace harm safely and professionally. Bystander support of microaffirmations, microprotections, and microvalidations from supporters, friends, and family diminished remaining microaggressive stress. Their actions helped Asher find moments of authenticity and acceptance.

CHAPTER EIGHT: VERONICA

Veronica was a pansexual woman who, at the time of this study, had taught elementary music for four years in the Western United States. Veronica used she/her and they pronouns, depending upon the setting, and had often described themself as queer and bisexual. They reported several negative encounters relating to their queer identity. Those experiences involved multifaceted elements that I discuss throughout most of the findings below. Because of these recurring elements, I begin this chapter by introducing two of Veronica's core experiences as vignettes. I then discuss their experiences in themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress.

Two Vignettes

Veronica experienced several negative encounters about their queer identities. Some of these harms manifested from their unwelcoming new school, and others occurred within their relationship with new colleagues. I discuss these encounters in vignettes of a new teaching district and the poster.

Vignette 1: A New Teaching District

Veronica had started teaching in a progressive city but later moved to a conservative setting in another state. Politicians in their new state had frequently attacked diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and LGBTQ+ rights. State leaders had recently banned more than 20 books from public schools, which included writings specifically about the LGBTQ+ population. Moreover, their new environment had a large religious community that disapproved of the queer community. Veronica asserted that these socio-political factors had resulted in a lack of knowledge among their colleagues and students'

families about issues facing LGBTQ+ populations.

Veronica had experienced tense encounters about their queerness in the workplace. They had noticed that their colleagues winced when they spoke about their queerness. Veronica shared that they had wondered if those responses were a result of their colleagues not having lived in community with queer people. No one had ever been explicitly rude to them; however, people had become visibly uncomfortable. Veronica explained that they feared this discomfort might result in misinterpretations of their actions with students, leading to accusations of child predation. Political attempts to restrict teachers' rights had exacerbated Veronica's concerns. They asserted that the state's attempt to restrict teachers' unions and collective bargaining might limit their ability to defend themself against malicious character attacks.

Vignette 2: The Poster

Veronica had displayed a portrait of a popular Black musical artist in their classroom. The photo had been similar to a driver's license photo, showing the artist's head and top of the shoulders. The artist had not worn a shirt in the picture. Veronica asserted it had been a good conversation piece about the many ways to make music and art, especially for their students, who typically never left their home state.

A few teachers, who Veronica described as passive-aggressive, had not approved of the poster's content and voiced their concerns to the school administration. The principal had sent Veronica an email stating that the poster was inappropriate, someone had complained about it, and he had removed it. Veronica elaborated on their emotional pain from the incident: "I barely knew half of my colleagues by name, let alone like

anything about who they are as people, so that definitely hurt a lot."

Veronica had decided to challenge the principal's decision. They had explained to him that the poster was part of a museum exhibit intended for public display. Moreover, they had asked the principal to confirm any district policy violations. In their communication, they had detailed the state's definition of indecent material and asserted that the poster did not meet that definition. Veronica had also sought the advice of trusted colleagues about the situation, who advised that no wrongdoing occurred. Still, the principal had not amended his decision. Veronica explained that they had feared the teacher complained because they were openly queer in school and wished she had spoken with them about the poster before going to the principal.

Genderism

Veronica had been discovering their gender identity, so pronouns were not a serious issue. Instead, pronouns had become a new expression of identity, which they were still working out. Veronica had started using they pronouns to acknowledge their wholeness as a person, but experienced subtle slights about it. Those insults had manifested as questions about why one set of pronouns was not "good enough" for them. In the new school, Veronica had not used they pronouns. Veronica explained that she had used she/her pronouns because they felt safer in that context and because they still fit her. In their new state, Veronica had only divulged using they pronouns around people who practiced "radical acceptance."

Veronica shared that they never felt constrained about their gender appearance. They had oscillated between wearing feminine, masculine, and androgynous attire; and

their hair had been multiple lengths and colors. They explained that this changing appearance had been like trying on new costumes to determine what felt most authentic. Like Veronica's discretion in divulging pronouns, they had reserved experimenting with their appearance around people who were "fluent in the language of understanding" gender expressions. By utilizing these safe spaces, they avoided invasive questions.

In school, Veronica had prioritized comfort in the workplace, which included masculine attire. Still, their new school district had not been a place of radical acceptance. They shared that, given their journey of self-discovery, they felt uncertain about living authentically in that setting should they realize they were nonbinary or gender nonconforming. Although Veronica had managed their gender with patience and caution, a persistent awareness of the lack of safety for their most authentic self-expressions remained.

The Harm

Veronica had encountered several types of negativities about their queerness. Many encounters had manifested as negative environmental messaging about LGBTQ+ individuals. Others had comprised subtle slights occurring in social situations. I discuss these encounters in themes of slurs and insults.

Slurs

Although Veronica had not encountered slurs that were explicitly targeted at them, they heard students use the word "gay" as a slur. There had been a social media joke about "the first person who moves is gay," which became popular among their students. The joke had been problematic for Veronica because students either intended

harm or did not understand its meaning. They had wanted to help students understand the harm of this joke.

Insults

Veronica had experienced slights about their sexuality as a youth. They had grown up living in a community with queer people. Before coming out in their 20s, some people had assumed that Veronica was queer because of these friendships. Veronica explained that these slights had delayed their process of realizing their queerness.

Veronica had experienced insults in the workplace. Some had comprised targeted attacks, such as the political efforts to restrict LGBTQ+ rights and book banning from the opening vignette. The resulting restrictions had prevented Veronica from sharing personal details in their classroom. They asserted that although their sexual orientation was not relevant to their instructional content, the restrictions had limited which musicians and music they felt comfortable teaching.

Some insults had been more subtle, such as colleagues wincing whenever Veronica discussed queerness. They had also heard colleagues make negative comments about race and LGBTQ+ topics. Those remarks included slights, such as assertions that it was inappropriate for students to be transgender, complaints of political correctness, and frustrations pertaining to recurring conversations about race or sexuality. Veronica had often heard colleagues rationalize their perspectives by asserting their freedom to have an opinion. These defenses had served as a "dog whistle" to guide Veronica's future interactions with these colleagues.

Veronica had experienced multiple types of harm. Most of these encounters were

from environmental messaging about LGBTQ+ individuals. Still, they had observed these slights and understood that they pertained to their queerness. As a result of these experiences, Veronica had maintained a vigilant awareness of their safety to express themselves freely. These events had fostered a less inclusive work environment.

Distress

Veronica maintained high spirits while discussing their experiences as a pansexual, queer educator. Although Veronica asserted that they had not worried about disclosing parts of their identity among colleagues, they shared several adverse outcomes from their experiences. I discuss this distress in themes of fear, emotional pain, and avoidance.

Fear

Veronica shared several fears about managing their LGBTQ+ identity in the classroom. In the second vignette, they spoke of fearing false accusations of child predation due to misinterpreted interactions with students. They further shared that the political efforts to reduce teachers' rights to unionization had exacerbated this fear. Veronica was considering whether to remain in the profession.

Emotional Pain

Veronica had a sense of emotional pain from their harmful experiences. In the second vignette, Veronica had felt hurt by a complaining teacher who had not spoken with them about the poster before approaching the school administration. The principal's lack of support had amplified that hurt. They had believed that most educators were open to learning about different ways of life, but they doubted such a conversation would

happen in their new school.

Veronica expressed their frustration with the persistent questions about gender and sexuality. They asserted that they felt exhausted from such devaluing questions, because they were still discovering the answers for themself. During the training session on microaggressions and microinterventions in this study, Veronica recalled a deeper sense of pain: “For me, like, this brings up really tense body feelings, thinking about students that I’ve had over the years, too, and my own experiences, people that I know and care about very much.” Veronica shared their gratitude for the break during training to practice self-care.

Avoidance

Veronica’s distress had intensified to the point of them developing stress-avoidant behaviors. Because of safety concerns, they had not used they pronouns in the workplace. Instead, they had switched to she/her pronouns, which reserved their most authentic gender expressions for non-work settings. Moreover, they had reserved experimenting with clothing for safe spaces.

Veronica had restricted their dialogue on LGBTQ+ topics in the classroom; however, they addressed some student behaviors pertaining to queer topics. When these moments had occurred, Veronica distanced themself from the conversations by using phrases such as “people in our school community” to illustrate harm and promote empathy without drawing unwanted attention to their queerness. Veronica’s avoidance of authentic gender expression and personal details in the classroom stemmed from state laws that characterized LGBTQ+ topics as inappropriate content for classrooms and

prescribed punishment for teachers who violated those mandates. Their consideration of leaving the education profession because of these political harms exemplified substantial avoidance behavior.

Challenging Harm

Veronica had a passion for interrupting harm against marginalized populations. They had developed multiple strategies to support this endeavor. Some strategies pertained explicitly to students' behaviors. When the social media joke of "whoever moves first is gay" became popular among students, Veronica had clarifying conversations with students to make them aware of the joke's harm.

Veronica had challenged students' behaviors by questioning their understanding of their actions. They observed that older students "snicker and smile" when making inappropriate comments. Veronica questioned them to determine whether they understood their words. The students had a variety of responses, such as "I don't know." Veronica had typically delved deeper into these conversations by explaining that the students' discomfort with the questioning was a sign that they were aware of their offensive remarks. Veronica had then explained the harm and disrespect of such remarks.

Veronica had used child-friendly terms to illustrate corrective responses: "If I've got a piece of broccoli in my teeth, please tell me about that, but don't make me feel bad about it." Veronica explained that they could fix something like broccoli in their teeth but could not change personal characteristics such as having an accent or what language they spoke. They had established a boundary of not making jokes about personal things. Veronica had used this boundary to affirm children and taught that unsupportive

behaviors were not helpful for the goal of learning. Students had responded to Veronica's discussion in one of two ways: First, "they really get it, and it really sticks with them," or secondly, they become uncomfortable and dissociate.

Veronica had challenged administrative decisions. In the second vignette, they had challenged their principal's decision to remove the poster of a musical artist. When this challenge occurred, they sought the counsel of friends to help reflect on their actions and the reasonableness of the administrator's communication and decision. Veronica shared that they had felt comfortable initiating this challenge because they had extensively familiarized themself with district policies as a vigilant act of self-protection.

Veronica had challenged negative encounters about their queerness. They had upheld clear behavior expectations for students to avoid bullying and treat one another with courtesy. By relying on friends and learning district policy, they had challenged harm from individuals in positions of power. Veronica had used these strategies to foster a more understanding and inclusive classroom environment. They had also made school leaders, colleagues, and students aware of their harmful behaviors.

Kindness

Veronica frequently expressed their compassion for individuals who slight the LGBTQ+ population. Instead of judging their coworkers' wincing responses or negative comments, Veronica gave them the benefit of the doubt by reasoning that their new community was not familiar with LGBTQ+ issues because they had not lived in community with queer people. Similarly, Veronica had not punished students for any offensive actions. Instead, they had taken the time and effort to help them understand

why their words or actions were harmful.

Veronica had received kindness from others. When the poster incident occurred, friendly colleagues helped Veronica to reflect on the situation and determine the best course of action. Outside of work, friends and friendly places fostered environments of radical acceptance that affirmed Veronica, which made it safe for them to exist freely and authentically. Perhaps most importantly, Veronica had extended the kindness of compassion to themself by understanding that their journey of self-discovery had not yet finished and allowed space for the person they might become.

Changing Distress

Veronica diminished their distress by utilizing challenging strategies. Veronica shared their hopes that their correction of student behaviors would serve as a frame of reference for future behavior choices. Their compassion and desire to help children develop inclusiveness had become a way to diminish distress from workplace encounters. By challenging the poster incident, Veronica had an outlet for their frustrations instead of internalizing that distress. Some of Veronica's distress had remained; however, the affirming and validating acts of kindness from their personal life helped to diminish it. These acts had occurred in places of radical acceptance where Veronica was free to exist and express authentically without caution.

Connecting Theory and Lived Experience

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed Veronica's findings through themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress. The goal of this study was to understand each participant's lived experiences with microaggressions

and microinterventions, which necessitates interpreting the findings through the lens of microaggression theory. I discuss this interpretation in themes of microaggressions, microaggressive stress, microinterventions, and diminished microaggressive stress.

Microaggressions

Veronica experienced substantial negativity in the form of microaggressions. Table 8.1 presents an overview of these experiences and their corresponding microaggression categories. Students' jokes contained slurs, which represented the "heterosexist language" microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 229). The political

Table 8.1

Veronica's Encounters with LGBTQ+ and Intersectional Microaggressions

Microaggression	Person	Action
Heterosexist language	Students	Using the word gay as a slur
Endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative culture	School environment	Lack of safety to use they pronouns
	Acquaintances	Insulting question about "one set of pronouns" not being "good enough"
Assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality	Local politicians	Attacks on LGBTQ+ rights, assertions of the inappropriateness of LGBTQ+ topics
Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences	Colleagues	Wincing response and secret complaints
	Principal	Acting on the poster without first communicating and not discussing their concerns afterward
Disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups	Community	Religious judgment of LGBTQ+ persons

portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals as child predators and attacks on LGBTQ+ rights exemplified the "assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality" microaggression (p. 229). Their colleagues' wincing responses and the principal's lack of communication before removing the poster represented the "discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences" microaggression (p. 231). These dynamics created a lack of safety for Veronica to use they pronouns at school and fostered an environment conducive to asking insulting questions about their pronouns. These situations exemplified the "endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative culture" microaggression (p. 229). Moreover, the community's religious judgment of LGBTQ+ individuals depicted the "disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups" intersectional microaggression (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 155). These microaggressions conveyed a cutting sense of harm to Veronica because of their pansexuality and gender expressions.

Microaggressive Stress

Veronica experienced substantial distress from microaggressive encounters. Although they maintained a positive mindset and strived to minimize the severity of their experiences, there were signs of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive distress. Veronica feared false child predation accusations and adverse outcomes from political attacks on LGBTQ+ rights. They also had a sense of emotional pain from the handling of the poster incident, insulting LGBTQ+ remarks from colleagues, and devaluing questions about gender expressions. Their fear and pain were emotional manifestations of microaggressive stress. Veronica's stress developed into avoidant behaviors, such as code-switching pronouns and avoiding discussions of personal details in the classroom,

which were behavioral manifestations of microaggressive stress. The vigilant awareness of their safety at any time represented a cognitive manifestation of microaggressive stress.

Microintervention Strategies

Veronica enacted multiple microintervention strategies to stop some microaggressive behaviors. Table 8.2 presents an overview of their use of microintervention tactics. When students made insulting remarks or slurs, Veronica engaged them in a conversation to help them understand the harm of their words and

Table 8.2

Veronica's Experiences with Microinterventions and Bystander Support

Microintervention Tactic	Person	Action
Developing perspicacity MIV [a]	Veronica	Conversations with students about understanding harmful words
Differentiating between intent and impact EPS [b]	Veronica	Clarifying conversations about personal characteristics and harmful insults
Expressing disagreement DA [c]	Veronica	Conversation with the principal about the poster
Stating values and limits DA [c]	Veronica	Reminding students about positive classroom behavior
Buddy system ESA [d]	Friends	Provided support during the poster incident
Support group ESA [d]	Friends	Fostered safe spaces of radical acceptance

[a] Make the invisible visible microintervention category

[b] Educate perpetrators and stakeholders microintervention category

[c] Disarm microaggressions microintervention category

[d] External support and alliances microintervention category

reminded their class about appropriate behavior expectations, which represented the "developing perspicacity" and "stating values and limits" tactics, respectfully (Sue et al., 2021, pp. 93, 130). Veronica also utilized the "differentiating between intent and impact" tactic to help students distinguish between humor and insulting personal characteristics (p. 108). Their challenge to their principal's decision to remove the poster exemplified the "expressing disagreement" tactic (p. 130). Veronica stopped some microaggressive behavior and made perpetrators aware of their harmful actions using these tactics.

Bystander Support

The kind actions of supportive individuals in Veronica's life exemplified bystander support, which diminished the harm that Veronica did not challenge. Table 8.2 presents an overview of bystanders' use of microintervention tactics. The support from a friendly colleague during the poster incident exemplified the "buddy system" tactic (Sue et al., 2021, p. 157). The safe spaces and people who practiced radical acceptance exemplified the "support group" tactic (p. 158). The microaffirmations and microvalidations diminished Veronica's lingering microaggressive stress and provided safety for their most authentic identity expressions.

Diminished Microaggressive Stress

Veronica experienced many types of LGBTQ+, gender, and intersectional microaggressions and resulting microaggressive stress. Their use of microintervention tactics helped neutralize some distress and made perpetrators aware of their harmful actions. Supportive individuals' microprotections and microaffirmations helped diminish their stress from unchallenged microaggressive behavior and persistent harm.

CHAPTER NINE: KATHY

Kathy was a lesbian female who, at the time of the study, had taught band, chorus, and general music for ten years in the Midwestern United States. Her school was in a rural setting with an evangelical and politically conservative community. Kathy reported several negative encounters relating to her lesbian, queer identity. Those experiences involved multifaceted elements that I discuss throughout most of the findings below. Because of these recurring elements, I begin this chapter by introducing two of Kathy's core experiences as vignettes. I then discuss her experiences in themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress.

Two Vignettes

Kathy experienced tension about her sexuality with family members and individuals from her school community. The tension with her family fueled her desire to provide a safe environment for her students. I discuss these experiences in vignettes of family tension and balancing self-expression in school.

Vignette 1: Family Tension

Kathy had grown up in an evangelical family. When the topic of her family first came up during the interview, she paused, nervously giggled, and shared that it was a sensitive topic. She described her mother's family as extremely evangelical. Kathy's father's family was less religious but had politically conservative leanings. When Kathy had discovered her lesbian sexuality in college, she shared her discovery with her parents. They responded, "This is absolutely not what God intends for you." Kathy asserted that she loved them, but the conflict had been difficult. She stopped talking about her

sexuality with them and repressed that part of her life. Kathy shared that as time went on, she regretted that repression and resumed living openly as a lesbian woman.

Kathy's father had made many attempts to reconcile her sexuality with his conservative values. These attempts had occurred through recurring conversations between them; however, setbacks typically followed any progress. Her father eventually heard about a local church that affirmed LGBTQ+ individuals. He suggested that Kathy join it to find acceptance within the religious community so that he could accept her without dishonoring his beliefs. Kathy explained that his suggestion was a momentous compromise for him. The relationship between Kathy and her father had improved because of those conversations.

Kathy and her mother had not spoken often of her sexuality. The mother had repeatedly asserted her disapproval of homosexuality and never deviated from that stance. Kathy's father had, at times, tried to sway his wife's judgment subtly, but was unsuccessful. A tension remained between Kathy and her mother.

Vignette 2: Balancing Self-Expression in School

Students in Kathy's school had worn clothes with political slogans on them. Some students had shirts with slogans such as "FJB" and "Let's go Brandon," which were derogatory slurs about President Joe Biden. Some students had worn shirts with anti-LGBTQ+ slogans, such as "Let's make America straight again." One such student had become angry with a teacher who displayed a "we're stronger together" flag, which included the Black Lives Matter slogan and the transgender flag. The student had warned the teacher to leave him alone and referenced the offensive slogan on his shirt. One of

Kathy's colleagues reported these incidents to the school administrators.

One student had worn a transgender flag wrapped around them to school. Kathy had questioned her administrator whether wearing the flag was appropriate for school. The principal had permitted that flag as long as its presence did not cause a commotion among the students. Kathy explained that she supported transgender rights but worried about the precedent of allowing such candid expressions. She shared her concern about what might happen if a student escalated political expression by wearing a Nazi flag and asserted that a reasonable boundary between self-expression and inappropriate behaviors must exist.

Upon seeing the student draped in the transgender flag, several teachers approached Kathy, asking what the flag symbolized. Kathy shared, with a twinge of discomfort, that she had felt like the "token gay kid." They had also referred to her as the resident husband, subtly hinting at her queerness. Kathy dismissed the slight as being unimportant but asserted that she had laughed to herself about being a queer spokesperson.

Genderism

Kathy had experienced subtle insults about her gender, such as her colleagues referring to her as the resident husband. Kathy had taught middle school and worked with predominantly male band director colleagues. She had recently attended her state music education conference and described the band sessions as chauvinistic. Kathy reported that the high school band directors had typically congregated separately from the elementary educators and shared that she "felt like the idiot in the middle." Some directors had

assumed that she played the flute because she was a female, but her primary instrument was not from the woodwind family. Kathy asserted that it was funny to observe how the male band directors behaved throughout the conference. The social interactions among them and the remarks from her teacher colleagues were subtle insults about gender.

The Harm

Kathy had encountered many types of negativity about her lesbian sexuality. Some encounters consisted of subtle slights; others involved harsh judgments from loved ones. I discuss these encounters in themes of insults and bullying.

Insults

Kathy had experienced several types of insults about her queerness, such as students' shirts with anti-LGBTQ+ slogans and being treated like a "token gay." Additionally, her mother had persisted in her negative judgment after Kathy's multiple attempts to reason with her. These insults conveyed negativity about her sexuality.

Bullying

Kathy had witnessed bullying in her school. She asserted that one of her students was likely gay but had not come to that realization himself. Students had frequently bullied him by turning his name into a slur and repeatedly calling him that. Similarly, an abusive teacher had used her staunchly conservative perspectives to bully a student teacher. During one encounter, she had aggressively shared her negative opinions about the LGBTQ+ community. Kathy reported that the student teacher had felt mortified by the experience, so much so that she never returned to the building. This encounter had not been the first incident with the abusive teacher, as she frequently voiced her opinions

among the staff. Kathy had avoided interacting with her as much as possible.

Kathy had experienced multiple types of harm. Several of these encounters manifested as environmental insults to LGBTQ+ individuals. Other encounters consisted of targeted attacks on her sexuality. These events had fostered a less inclusive school environment and painful family tensions.

Distress

Kathy maintained a positive demeanor about many of her experiences as a lesbian educator; however, she spoke more slowly and softly, hesitantly, when we discussed her family. She shared several fears about living and working in her conservative community and spoke candidly about her pain from family tensions. I discuss this distress in themes of fear, emotional pain, and avoidance.

Fear

In the second vignette, Kathy had expressed concerns about the well-being of LGBTQ+ students if school leaders continued permitting controversial forms of students' self-expression. Similarly, she shared her concern about what might happen to her well-being if she disclosed her queerness, so she hid her sexuality in the workplace. She had told no one about dating a female teacher from another school in the district. Kathy asserted that she had feared that students' parents might complain to school leaders about her relationship and remove their children from her classes. Eventually, people started to notice the relationship and questioned her about it. She had been uncertain about how to respond to their inquiries.

Emotional Pain

Kathy had experienced substantial emotional pain from harmful encounters regarding her sexuality. In the first vignette, her pain had stemmed from her parents' harsh treatment and rejection of her sexuality. She also referred to herself as the "idiot in the middle" when discussing her experiences as a female band director, conveying discomfort. The principal's refusal to address students' controversial attire had added another layer of hurt. Kathy interpreted that decision as him maintaining the status quo of the low importance of students' well-being. Additionally, she shared her worries about LGBTQ+ students feeling unsafe at school. Although the students' safety was one of Kathy's top priorities, her most profound sources of emotional pain were the tensions that existed with her parents over her sexuality.

Avoidance

Kathy's distress had intensified to the point of her developing stress-avoidant behaviors. The tension with her parents had become substantial, so she repressed her sexuality. That conflict had erupted again when she resumed living openly as a lesbian woman, so she avoided continued conversations with her mother about it. Likewise, Kathy asserted that she had feared adverse outcomes from disclosing her new relationship at school, so she concealed it, especially from the abusive teacher who had negative views about LGBTQ+ individuals. Kathy had avoided interacting with her as much as possible. Kathy had experienced fear and emotional pain from harmful encounters. Much of this emotion had stemmed from her evangelical upbringing; however, harm also occurred in the school settings. An outcome of this distress had been Kathy's repression

and concealment of her sexuality, which might have exacerbated her distress further.

Challenging Harm

Kathy developed multiple strategies to challenge harm pertaining to her lesbian identity. After she had stopped repressing her sexuality, she and her father engaged in a recurring conversation in an attempt to develop a mutual understanding. Kathy had repeatedly answered his questions and highlighted how his beliefs were causing her harm. She had similarly conversed with her mother; however, that dialogue ceased once they reached an impasse.

The emotional pain from family tensions had fueled Kathy's desire for her students to have a safe environment. When harm had occurred in the school, she challenged offending students to improve their behavior, such as aiding a bullied student. When students had worn shirts with insults, one of Kathy's colleagues reported them to the school leaders. When a student had worn the transgender flag, Kathy reported it to the principal, worried about a potential slippery slope of students' self-expression. A primary outcome of Kathy's challenging strategies was that she made individuals aware of their harm, and as a result, several of those harms ceased.

Kindness

Kathy had experienced acts of kindness from supportive individuals who cared about her well-being. Several colleagues, students, and students' parents had found out about her relationship with a female teacher from another school. Many of them had congratulated her, "We love both of you! We're so excited for you!" Kathy's father had eventually embraced his daughter's sexuality and attempted to intervene with her

mother's judgment. Kathy shared that she had appreciated these protections and affirmations and passed them on to students.

Changing Distress

Kathy had diminished her distress by utilizing challenging strategies. The distress of repressing her sexuality ended once she had confronted her parents' judgment. Although her parents had unleashed another round of insults, Kathy was free to live as her authentic self. By having conversations with her father, that relationship had improved, and the once distressing pain started healing.

Some distress had remained. Kathy's lingering distress had stemmed from the abusive teacher's anti-LGBTQ+ remarks, concealing her relationship at school, the social environment among male band directors, and her mother's persistent rejection. However, the kind acts of affirmation and protection from supportive individuals had defrayed that distress. Many individuals in the school community had supported and praised Kathy's relationship, and her father attempted to intervene on her behalf against her mother's judgment. Moreover, Kathy had extended this kindness by protecting LGBTQ+ students.

Connecting Theory and Lived Experience

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed Kathy's findings through themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress. The goal of this study was to understand each participant's lived experiences with microaggressions and microinterventions, which necessitates interpreting the findings through the lens of microaggression theory. I discuss this interpretation in themes of microaggressions, microaggressive stress, microinterventions, and diminished microaggressive stress.

Microaggressions

Kathy experienced substantial negativity in the form of microaggressions. Table 9.1 presents an overview of these experiences and their corresponding microaggression categories. Students' use of slurs to bully LGBTQ+ youth represented the "heterosexist language or transphobic terminology" microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 229). Students' "make America straight again" shirts exemplified the "endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative culture" microaggression (p. 231). Another example of this microaggression was Kathy's father's willingness to accept her homosexuality on the condition that she join a church that was affirming of LGBTQ+

Table 9.1

Kathy's Encounters with Microaggressions

Microaggression	Person	Action
Heterosexist language or transphobic terminology	Students	Slurs/bullying LGBTQ+ students
Endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative culture	Kathy's father	Offered acceptance if Kathy joined a church
	Some students	Wore "make America straight again" shirts
Assumption of universal LGBTQ+ experiences	Teachers	Asking Kathy to explain LGBTQ+ student behaviors
Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences	Some students	Used political slogans to insult LGBTQ+ individuals
	Abusive teacher	Anti-LGBTQ+ remarks
	Kathy's parents	Religious judgment of Kathy's sexuality
Denial of individual heterosexism or transphobia	Kathy's mother	Continued refusal to accept Kathy's sexuality

individuals. Kathy's teachers enacted an "assumption of universal LGBTQ+ experiences" microaggression by asking her to explain the expressions and behaviors of LGBTQ+ students (p. 230). The abusive teacher's anti-LGBTQ+ remarks, students' use of political slogans to insult queer individuals, and Kathy's parents' initial religious judgment represented the "discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences" microaggression (p. 231). Kathy's repeated communication attempts did not change her mother's persistent rejection, which exemplified the "denial of individual heterosexism or transphobia" microaggression (p. 232). These microaggressions conveyed a cutting sense of harm to some students and Kathy because of their LGBTQ+ identities.

Kathy encountered intersectional and gender microaggressions. Table 9.2 presents an overview of these experiences and their corresponding microaggression categories. The male band directors fostered an unwelcoming environment for female directors, and some directors assumed that she played the flute because of her gender. These actions exemplified the "assumptions of traditional gender roles" gender microaggression (Capodilupo et al., 2010, p. 204). Kathy's parents used their evangelical religious beliefs to judge and reject her lesbian sexuality, which represented the "disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups" intersectional microaggression (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 155). Kathy's colleagues referred to her as the "resident husband," which insinuated a masculine stereotype based on her queerness and represented the "gender-based stereotypes for lesbian and gay men" intersectional microaggression (p. 154). Kathy experienced a diverse range of microaggressions about her sexuality, gender, and religious upbringing throughout her personal and professional contexts.

Table 9.2

Kathy's Encounters with Intersectional and Gender Microaggressions

Microaggression	Person	Action
Disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups	Kathy's parents	Rejected Kathy's sexuality because of their religious beliefs
Gender-based stereotypes for lesbians and gay men	Teachers	Referred to Kathy as the resident husband
Assumptions of traditional gender roles	Band directors	Assumed that Kathy played the flute; unwelcoming environment for female band directors

Microaggressive Stress

Kathy experienced substantial distress from microaggressive encounters in the form of emotional and behavioral microaggressive stress. She exuded a strong sense of emotional pain when speaking about the tense relationship with her parents. Her principal's lack of addressing students' insulting attire and the unwelcoming environment for female band directors added to that pain. Additionally, Kathy had multiple concerns about the well-being of both herself and the students. This pain and fear were emotional manifestations of microaggressive stress. Kathy's negative emotions evolved into her avoiding individuals who fostered harmful situations, which was a behavioral manifestation of microaggressive stress.

Microinterventions

Kathy enacted multiple microintervention strategies to challenge some microaggressive behaviors. Table 9.3 presents an overview of her use of microintervention tactics. She utilized the "developing perspicacity" tactic in her initial

attempts to reason with her parents about her sexuality and recurring follow-up conversations with her father (Sue et al., 2021, p. 93). In the dialogues with her mother, Kathy employed the "appealing to perpetrator principles" tactic to find some common ground (p. 111). She stopped some microaggressive behaviors and made perpetrators aware of their harm using these microinterventions.

Bystander Support

Several individuals provided bystander support to Kathy during microaggressive encounters. Table 9.3 presents an overview of bystanders' use of microintervention tactics. Her father's attempted intervention with her mother exemplified the "promote empathy" tactic (Sue et al., 2021, p. 113). Similarly, Kathy's discussion with her administrator about self-expression guidelines represented this tactic. Her protection of

Table 9.3

Kathy's Experiences with Microinterventions and Bystander Support

Microintervention Tactic	Person	Action
Developing perspicacity MIV [a]	Kathy	Initial attempts to explain her sexuality to her parents
Developing perspicacity MIV [a]	Kathy	Conversations with her father
Appealing to perpetrator principals EPS [b]	Kathy	Repeating attempts to reconcile with her mother
Promote empathy EPS [b]	Kathy's father	Intervening with wife's judgment
Promote empathy EPS [b]	Kathy	Discussion about transgender students' safety
Buddy system ESA [c]	Kathy	Protection of bullied students
Support group ESA [c]	Various	Support of Kathy's relationship

[a] Make the invisible visible microintervention category

[b] Educate perpetrators and stakeholders microintervention category

[c] External support and alliances microintervention category

LGBTQ+ students represented the “buddy system” tactic (p. 157), and the acceptance and support of her relationship exemplified the “support group” tactic (p. 158). The support of bystanders diminished the harmful outcomes of microaggressive encounters.

Diminished Microaggressive Distress

Kathy experienced many types of LGBTQ+ microaggressions and resulting microaggressive stress. Her use of microintervention tactics helped neutralize some distress and made perpetrators aware of their harmful actions. The microprotections and microaffirmations from supportive individuals helped to diminish her emotional and behavioral stress from unchallenged or recurring microaggressive behaviors. Their actions helped Kathy renew familial relationships and find an accepting community within the school environment.

CHAPTER TEN: CHRIS

Chris was a gay male who, at the time of the study, had taught choral music for more than 30 years throughout the Southern United States. Mr. Chris Webster had also frequently served as a guest conductor at schools throughout his region. He reported many negative encounters relating to his homosexual identity. Those experiences involved multifaceted elements that I discuss throughout most of the findings below. Because of these recurring elements, I begin this chapter by introducing two of Chris's core experiences as vignettes. I then discuss his experiences in themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress.

Two Vignettes

Chris experienced many painful experiences because of his homosexuality. Some of those harms occurred in his relationship with colleagues, and others manifested as attacks from members of the LGBTQ+ community. I discuss these encounters in vignettes of the coach's bullying and the celebrity impersonation.

Vignette 1: The Coach's Bullying

Chris had experienced recurring bullying from an athletic coach with whom he worked closely. The coach's aggressive behavior had peaked during the production of a school musical. Chris had a passion for Broadway shows and worked hard to build the musical program at his school. During his final year of teaching, the students worked on producing the school's first live show since the emergence of COVID-19, which was also their first musical with Chris, due to the prolonged impact of the pandemic. He shared that the children had worked hard, and he was proud of them.

The school had no auditorium, so musical performances took place in the gym. Chris and the coach had to coordinate their shared use of that space. The coach had previously bullied the music staff but had been particularly harsh to Chris. Throughout show rehearsals, Chris met with students on Saturdays to avoid inconveniencing athletic programming. As the final rehearsal date approached, the coach had stopped communicating with Chris, even though his daughter was a key performer. Finally, the coach had answered Chris's multiple communication attempts with a letter on the day of the final rehearsal. Not only had the coach refused access to the gym for the musical, but he also conveyed many disparaging and insulting comments to his colleague. Chris shared that he felt the coach was escalating his bullying one last time because of Chris's pending retirement.

With only an hour left before the rehearsal, Chris had reported the situation to his supervisor. The coach had declined the supervisor's request to permit the rehearsal. Chris shared that panic had ensued as he awaited the arrival of 300 eager students to perform their first Broadway musical. Fearing disaster, Chris had reported the incident to the school principal, who maintained an authoritative presence among her staff. After Chris had explained the predicament, the principal radioed for the coach to report to her office and asked Chris if he would like to witness the upcoming conversation. Chris had declined and quickly returned to the music room, terrified of what might happen: "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! And the kids! I hear the kids outside."

Chris asserted that he feared a physical altercation might occur after the "red-faced" coach had knocked on the music room door: "I'm like, if he hits me, I'm just

going to press charges, and then I'll get this rehearsal right." Instead of using violence, the coach said, "You're one of the most amazing teachers I've ever known." Chris asserted that the principal must have had some leverage over the coach to bring about such a dramatic transformation in his behavior. The final rehearsal and show had occurred successfully. Chris elaborated on his thought process from the encounter: "Kids choose to take my class. I choose to find solutions to all obstacles. I've got to serve the kids. That's what you do." Chris's exceptional commitment to his students had served as a beacon for him to overcome substantial mistreatment from the coach.

Vignette 2: The Celebrity Impersonation

Chris had encountered unique challenges while teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. A major hurdle had been finding ways to keep his students engaged during online classes. Chris had worn costumes, such as novelty hats, to solve this issue, and his students loved it. During one lesson, a group of students had suggested that he dress like a popular celebrity. Chris had felt that the request was reasonable and not illegal, so he agreed. He shared that he had looked ridiculous, but the students were happy and participating. Excited by the success, he shared a short video clip of his appearance on social media. Soon after, his phone had received numerous notifications of attacks from LGBTQ+ community members calling him ableist. The continued online response had evolved into a difficult experience that worsened throughout the coming days.

The attacks had centered on the impersonated celebrity's public struggles with mental health, which Chris had not considered. He had reflected upon the situation and posted an online apology for his choices, explaining that his goal was to serve his

students' needs best and that he never intended any insult to individuals with mental health concerns. The LGBTQ+ individuals who had attempted to cancel his reputation within music education had refused the apology.

Chris reported that a group of social-justice-minded music educators had summoned him for an online meeting to shame him for his teaching practices. Because of their persistent attacks, Chris had decided to meet with them. Before the meeting, he had carefully read their rules, which included the statement, "The cisgender can't talk until all of the people whom he has abused have spoken." Chris shared that he had felt terrified but listened to their concerns as they denigrated his instructional choices and moral character. When they had permitted him to speak, he again apologized for his portrayal of the celebrity and restated his positive intentions.

Chris had highlighted social imbalances within the group, which consisted of one male and was predominantly White. He had asserted that their actions appeared like "just a bunch of White people coming for an old gay guy who was just trying his best" to teach his students. A group member had started crying. Chris had asserted that she understood the group's actions were wrong. These educators had shared their mission of challenging harm; however, they acted without carefully reflecting on the circumstances and the most beneficial outcomes. Chris had managed their aggressive response tactics with patience, and his assertive response preserved his reputation and made the group aware of their misguided approach.

Genderism

Chris had encountered derogatory remarks about his mannerisms. Because he had

guest-conducted choral events frequently, his first encounter with many student groups typically occurred during stage rehearsals in the days leading up to a concert. During such an event, the choir consisted of a large group of high school boys in a conservative setting, which he shared had frightened him. The singers had been well prepared for the event, which Chris praised; however, they required further vocal instruction on how to support their singing properly and maintain focus while performing. With his dedication to helping students learn, Chris had a moment of acting like his "you know, animated self," and one of the boys exclaimed, "Mrs. Webster." He explained that although the student's remark felt intentional, he overlooked it and continued with his goal of leading the singers. His persistence had paid off, and the singers responded well to his direction. A teacher had later inquired about his success with the singers following the concert. Chris had replied that it came from just being himself and maintaining sound training techniques.

The Harm

Chris had encountered many types of negativity about his sexuality. Some of those experiences included aggressive bullying, such as the attacks from the coach. Others comprised malicious assumptions about Chris's moral turpitude and mental health. I discuss the malicious assumptions in themes of assumptions of indoctrination and mental illness.

Assumptions of Indoctrination

Chris had recently heard from a former student who wanted to reconnect with him. As an adult, this singer had transitioned from male to female and wanted to discuss

some of her experiences in Chris's music program. During that conversation, she recalled her father's lateness picking her up following an after-school rehearsal. Chris had recalled waiting with her and feeling "a certain energy" from her dad once he arrived. Chris explained that he had felt threatened by the man. He shared that the father had not wanted his child to participate in music because he knew that Chris was gay, but his child took the class against his wishes. The father responded by moving her to another school to get her away from "all the things" that Chris was teaching. Chris shared that he had felt shocked by the revelation because he was so dedicated to teaching his students.

Assumptions of Mental Illness

Chris had experienced multiple character attacks pertaining to mental health. In the second vignette, Chris had dressed up as a celebrity to engage online students' focus on coursework. A group of social-justice-minded music educators had accused him of mocking individuals living with mental illness and tried to cancel his career. Those accusations had caused Chris substantial harm.

Chris had experienced harm from the relationship with his father, which had become tense because of his sexuality. Chris had realized that he was gay shortly after he began college. He had diligently worked through the first semester, earned high grades, and avoided the party scene. By Christmas time, Chris had started his first relationship. He explained that his father had learned of his relationship and confronted him about it:

> If you continue to have a relationship with him, we will disown you, and we will not pay for your college. We're going to send you to therapy tomorrow, and we're going to fix this, because if you are in music school, you're either going to be a

minister of music or a teacher. If you're gay, you'll be neither.

Chris further explained the nature of his anger following his father's comments: "It lit a fire under my ass that still burns." He had questioned how his father could suddenly turn off his love.

Chris had experienced extensive harm in his personal and professional lives. Some harm had likely stemmed from a lack of knowledge about inappropriate expressions, such as the gender insults on the concert stage. Other harm had comprised momentous insults to his character, mental health, and value as a human being. Although these events had fueled his desire to excel, they had also established obstacles to success.

Distress

Chris had maintained an upbeat demeanor while discussing his life as a gay choral educator. Because he had focused on teaching and making music with developing singers, he avoided the sting from many harmful encounters. Still, he shared several adverse outcomes from his experiences. I discuss this distress in themes of fear and emotional pain.

Fear

Chris had experienced several fears as a gay educator. He shared that he had worried about being fired because he was gay when he first started teaching. Chris asserted that, during that time, he had not felt empowered to speak out against harm or authentically express himself because of societal pressures regarding sexuality and professional demeanor. Although he had developed more confidence as his career progressed, he shared that he still experienced fear when interacting with predominantly

conservative populations.

Chris had sometimes worked with conservative populations when he traveled to conduct choirs. His fear intensified upon arriving at one such destination, and he wondered whether he could successfully engage with those children while still being authentically himself. Similarly, during his final teaching position, there was a brief period when most of his choirs comprised students from staunchly conservative families. These children had openly communicated their "Republican politics," and Chris felt intimidated by their perspectives. He explained that part of his struggle had been that he always felt safer in more racially diverse populations, so engaging with a predominantly White conservative student group had felt threatening.

Emotional Pain

Chris shared that he had felt an immediate sense of emotional pain from his father's rejection. That emotion had contributed to his compassion for others; however, he did not reflect on many of his other experiences with a sense of pain. During the final interview of this study, Chris had recalled a deeper sense of that emotion. He explained that he had "pushed away things that, in hindsight, were blatantly homophobic." For example, even though he had shared the situation with the coach, he forgot that they were once friends outside the workplace. Chris asserted that the coach had developed a hatred of gay people, and since Chris was gay, their connection suffered. He explained that the former closeness between them had added another layer of pain to the coach's harsh actions.

The adverse outcomes of Chris's experiences had likely contributed to a

prominent sense of distress. Although he had maintained a successful lifelong career as a music educator, he did so while contending with the distress from harmful encounters. These harms had likely necessitated Chris to identify and utilize comprehensive strategies to neutralize and diminish harm.

Challenging Harm

Chris had employed multiple strategies to challenge offensive behaviors. In the opening vignettes, Chris had reported the coach's behavior to his supervisor and school principal. He had also met with the group of music educators to clarify his instructional intentions for increasing student engagement and challenged their attempts to cancel his career. When he observed bullying, he had become "ugly and nasty in a way that scares" bullies from repeating their behaviors. Chris had employed these tactics only in response to severe harms.

Chris had relied heavily on developing mutual respect to challenge harm. If a child had called him a name, he leveraged his persistent respect to question that behavior: "Have I ever disrespected you, ever?" When Chris needed a more involved conversation about a student's behavior, he spoke with them individually to avoid demoralizing them. In those instances, Chris discussed how the child's behavior was disrespectful and inquired about the reason for their actions. He asserted that by respectfully holding children accountable for their actions, he had been able to maintain an appropriate student-teacher relationship and minimize future behavioral problems. Chris had worked to build this circular respect with and among his students.

Chris had utilized communication about his life as a proactive approach to

challenging harm. Following school concerts, he would typically thank his supportive husband. During guest conducting events, Chris typically developed a working relationship with singers over the course of a few rehearsal days. During this time, he gradually shared small details about his married life, and he observed children's curious reactions, seemingly questioning if they heard him correctly. Chris had often used that curiosity to start a dialogue about their lives and teach a song pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community. During this instruction, Chris shared his fears of growing up during the emergence of HIV and recollections of friends who had succumbed to the disease. Chris asserted that this dialogue was good for the singers because it either affirmed queer youth or made them aware of what life was like for LGBTQ+ individuals. Many students, parents, and teachers had thanked him for speaking on the topic, and some shared their experiences as gay youth.

Sometimes, Chris had challenged acts of harm in his personal life, such as gay peers who had been dismissive of transgender issues. In those conversations, he had explained that some people struggle to understand transgender individuals in the same way that society once struggled to understand homosexuality. Chris had encouraged his peers to respect that struggle.

Chris had challenged his father's actions and insisted upon loving respect for his husband. He had informed his dad that he would no longer participate in family functions unless his husband were invited and welcomed as an equal family member. Chris's father had inquired if he was to blame for Chris being gay. The question had stemmed from guilt over years of drinking too much. Chris had acknowledged his father's drinking but

explained that he had been aware of his homosexuality since he was a young child. He shared that he was exceptionally proud of doing the hard work of mending the relationship with his father before it was too late. They had started speaking to each other daily on the phone because they found forgiveness.

Chris had utilized multiple challenging strategies to diminish and stop some harm. He had used his compassion and focus on developing mutually respectful relationships with children as his predominant mechanism to prevent and minimize harm in his classroom. His challenging strategies of reporting incidents to authority figures, engaging in clarifying conversations, and setting clear boundaries helped diminish and prevent some severe harm from recurring.

Kindness

Chris had embraced the acts of kindness from supportive individuals who cared about his well-being. His cooperating teacher had embraced his sexuality and encouraged him to be himself during his student teaching. She had explained that children detected when adults were not honest, and they did not like it. Chris had used that encouragement to find ways to avoid hiding his identity in the workplace.

Chris had extended protective kindness to bullied children. A student's crying mother had approached him at a music conference out of concern for her gender-fluid child, who was experiencing bullying in school. Chris had assured her that no bullying would occur in his room. The parent had praised Chris for thanking his husband after teaching conference concerts but questioned why he had not mentioned him following school concerts. Her affirming encouragement had helped Chris to adopt that practice in

his workplace, and from then on, Chris worked and lived as authentically as possible.

A teacher had validated Chris's dialogue about gay life with young singers. She had previously observed his guest conducting and was excited that her students would soon meet him. She explained that she had always felt like a pariah in her community because of her progressive views; however, Chris's interactions with her students made her feel seen. She had encouraged him to continue his dialogue about LGBTQ+ life with singers, even when he felt uncomfortable.

Chris had extended acts of kindness to himself. One of his friends had once shared some words of affirmation, which Chris incorporated into a self-care routine for coping with distress. Chris would calm himself by pausing, breathing, and recalling his friend's words, "You are enough." He had often practiced this routine to focus on providing young singers with the best possible musical experience.

Chris had championed his passion for giving students his best possible efforts as his most valuable tool as an educator. He elaborated on this passion, "We have to accept and love all the kids, whatever they're feeling at the moment, what they may not be in two years, and what they may be in five. Whatever! That's what we're supposed to do!" Because of that dedication, Chris's students worked hard and respected him. He expressed appreciation for that rapport: "They loved me, and I loved them."

Changing Distress

Chris diminished his distress by utilizing challenging strategies. He had stopped the coach's bullying by reporting the situation to his supervisor and school principal. His assertive challenge to the group of social-justice music educators had stopped their

attacks on his reputation and attempts to cancel his career. He had stopped the harm of his father's persistent rejection of his husband and sexuality. Those actions had likely helped to lessen his sense of emotional pain and allow the healing process to begin.

Some of Chris's distress had remained in the form of fear about engaging with conservative populations as a gay man. The acts of kindness from several supportive individuals helped to defray this lingering distress. The friend who provided words of affirmation and the encouraging mentor from Chris's student teaching had affirmed Chris's presence and value in education. Supportive students' parents and teachers had encouraged Chris's conversations about LGBTQ+ life with students. The acts of kindness from others had helped Chris replace his self-doubt and fear with a practice of compassion and authenticity. With that practice, Chris had paid forward the protective kindness he had received.

Connecting Theory and Lived Experience

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed Chris's findings through themes of genderism, harm, distress, challenging harm, kindness, and changing distress. The goal of this study was to understand each participant's lived experiences with microaggressions and microinterventions, which necessitates interpreting the findings through the lens of microaggression theory. I discuss this interpretation in themes of microaggressions, microaggressive stress, microinterventions, and diminished microaggressive stress.

Microaggressions

Chris experienced substantial negativity in the form of microaggressions. Table 10.1 presents an overview of these experiences and their corresponding microaggression

Table 10.1

Chris's Encounters with LGBTQ+ and Intersectional Microaggressions

Microaggression	Person	Action
Heterosexist language or transphobic terminology	Student	Exclaimed "Mrs. Webster" during rehearsal
	Peers	Dismissive of transgender issues
Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences	Coach	Bullied Chris
	Chris's father	Rejected Chris's homosexuality
Assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality	Chris's father	Threatened therapy to cure Chris
	Chris's father	Asserted that homosexuals can not become teachers or church workers
	Student's father	Asserted that Chris was indoctrinating his child
Gender-based stereotypes for lesbians and gay men	Student	Exclaimed "Mrs. Webster" during rehearsal

categories. The dismissal of transgender issues by Chris's peers represented the "heterosexist language or transphobic terminology" microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 229). The rejection from Chris's father and coach's bullying exemplified the "discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences" microaggression (p. 231). His father threatened to use therapy to treat Chris's homosexuality and asserted that LGBTQ+ individuals could not work with children or in churches. Moreover, a student's father insinuated that Chris was indoctrinating his child. The actions of both fathers exemplified the "assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality" microaggression (p. 232). The

exclamation of “Mrs. Webster” by a concert singer exemplified the “gender-based stereotypes for lesbians and gay men” intersectional microaggression (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 154). These microaggressions conveyed a cutting sense of harm to Chris because of his homosexuality.

Microaggressive Distress

Chris experienced substantial distress from microaggressive encounters. Although he maintained a positive mindset about developing mutual respect with students, there were signs of emotional microaggressive stress. Chris had a deep sense of emotional pain from his father’s rejection and the coach’s bullying. He also feared for his safety when working with conservative populations and getting fired for being gay as a young teacher. His fear and pain were emotional manifestations of microaggressive stress.

Microinterventions

Chris enacted multiple microintervention strategies to challenge microaggressive behaviors. Table 10.2 presents an overview of his use of microintervention tactics. He leveraged his respect for students to question some of their negative behaviors, which represented the “appealing to perpetrator principles” tactic (Sue et al., 2021, p. 111). His focus on maintaining a classroom culture of respect, acknowledging his husband at school events, and teaching students about LGBTQ+ life represented the “promoting empathy” tactic (p. 113); however, he used this tactic to develop compassion among his community before harm occurred. He assertively challenged classroom bullies with the “reminding them about the rules” tactic (p. 132). Similarly, Chris informed his supervisor and principal about the coach’s bullying using the “alerting leadership” and “reporting

Table 10.2

Chris's Experiences with Microinterventions

Microintervention Tactic	Person	Action
Appealing to perpetrator principles EPS [a]	Chris	Questioned students if he had ever "disrespected them" to inspire reflection on their behaviors
Promoting empathy EPS [a]	Chris	Proactively fostered a culture of respect among his students
Promoting empathy EPS [a]	Chris	Openly spoke of his husband during concert events
Promoting empathy EPS [a]	Chris	Engaged in a dialogue with students about LGBTQ+ life
Stating values and limits DA [b]	Chris	Insisted on his father's acceptance and respect for his husband
Describing what is happening DA [b]	Chris	Described his perspective on the social-justice educator's actions
Expressing disagreement DA [b]	Chris	Disagreed with social-justice educators' conclusions
Reminding about the rules DA [b]	Chris	Challenge student bullies
Alerting leadership ESA [c]	Chris	Alerted his principal about coach
Reporting incidents ESA [c]	Chris	Reported coach to supervisor
Support groups ESA [c]	Supervisor	Requested gym access
Support groups ESA [c]	Principal	Insisted upon gym access
Buddy system ESA [c]	Friend	Gave Chris words of affirmation
Buddy system ESA [c]	Chris	Defended transgender individuals
Buddy system ESA [c]	Mentor	Encouraged Chris's authenticity
Buddy system ESA [c]	Teacher	Affirmed LGBTQ+ dialogue
Buddy system ESA [c]	A parent	Affirmed Chris thanking husband

[a] Make the invisible visible microintervention category

[b] Disarm microaggressions microintervention category

[c] External support and alliances microintervention category

incidents" tactics (p. 155). Chris used these tactics to achieve the best outcome for himself and his students' well-being.

Chris experienced a microintervention tactic as a perpetrator; however, the social-

justice music educators did not express concern for his well-being. He thoughtfully challenged their actions with the "describing what is happening" and "expressing disagreement" tactics (Sue et al., 2021, pp. 130–131). It was possible that Chris unintentionally committed an environmental microaggression against individuals living with mental health struggles; however, the aggressive attack and attempted cancellation of his career were likely not in the best interest of protecting or affirming those individuals. The actions of this group might exemplify the importance of using microinterventions to highlight biases, improve well-being, and de-escalate tensions.

Bystander Support

Several individuals provided bystander support to Chris during microaggressive encounters. Table 10.2 presents an overview of bystanders' use of microintervention tactics. Chris reported the coach's bullying to his supervisor and principal. Those leaders' choices to assist him exemplified the "support group" tactic (Sue et al., 2021, p. 158). The support from his affirming friend, mentor, music teachers, and students' parents represented the "buddy system" tactic (p. 157). Chris also utilized the "buddy system" tactic when he defended the plight of transgender individuals to his friends. These supportive individuals stopped some harm from persisting, such as the coach's bullying, and diminished Chris's fear about working with conservative populations while authentically communicating about his life. These moments of support and kindness provided affirmation, protection, and validation, which made his job more enjoyable and supported his well-being.

Diminished Distress

Chris experienced many types of LGBTQ+ microaggressions and resulting microaggressive stress. His use of microintervention tactics helped neutralize some distress and made perpetrators aware of their harmful actions. The microprotections and microaffirmations from supportive individuals helped diminish his microaggressive stress from persistent or unchallenged microaggressions. Their actions helped Chris develop a practice of mutual respect among students and authenticity about his life. Brief exchanges of affirming and caring words aided Chris's passion for teaching young singers and being an example of a caring and successful gay man.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: DISCUSSION

In this study, I used microaggression theory (MT) as a lens to understand the participants' experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions. The multi-tiered system of microintervention tactics provides microaggression targets and bystanders with multiple options to address microaggressive encounters, ranging from gentle discussions to taking legal action against perpetrators. Music education scholars have emphasized the importance of examining microinterventions to challenge subtle LGBTQ+ discrimination in music education settings (Hendricks, 2025; Hess, 2016; Smith, 2023).

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions to reveal how their sense of microaggressive stress changed from interacting with microinterventions. By interviewing and reading the journals of LGBTQ+ music educators, I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microinterventions in music education. The outcomes of this study may offer insights for LGBTQ+ music educators working in contexts that are unwelcoming or hostile to queer individuals, as well as teacher preparation programs that can develop and disseminate microintervention training. Four questions guided this examination of the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators participating in this study:

1. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microaggressions, if any?

2. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microaggressive stress, if any?
3. What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ music educators with microinterventions, if any?
4. How did LGBTQ+ music educators' sense of microaggressive stress change from interacting with microinterventions, if at all?

I engaged with six participants every week over six weeks. The participants experienced a wide range of LGBTQ+, transgender, gender, and intersectional microaggressions. Perpetrators included students, students' parents, principals, colleagues, family members, and state and national politicians. All participants experienced some type of emotional, cognitive, or behavioral microaggressive stress because of encountering microaggressions. The participants reported decreasing microaggressive stress after using microintervention tactics to challenge some microaggressive encounters and making perpetrators aware of their harmful actions. The participants reported that unchallenged harm led to lingering microaggressive stress; however, the support and care from bystanders in the form of microaffirmations, microprotections, and microinvalidations diminished that distress and supported their well-being.

In this chapter, I discuss key findings about the participants' experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions. I highlight data convergence and divergence, unexpected findings, and connections to reviewed literature. Next, I discuss limitations and recommendations for future research. I conclude by

discussing the implications for the field of music education.

Discussion of Key Findings

In this section, I highlight and relate key findings to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. I compare and contrast themes drawn from this study with findings from other studies to create a deeper understanding of the LGBTQ+ music educator participants' experiences. I present this discussion through themes of microaggressions, microaggressive stress, microinterventions, and diminished microaggressive stress.

Microaggressions

The participants reported experiencing varying microaggressions. Table 11.1 presents an overview of these encounters, which included LGBTQ+, transgender, gender, and intersectional microaggressions. I have listed the names of each microaggression in the first column and have listed the participants' pseudonyms across the top row. Using this matrix format, I have inserted check marks under the participants' names to identify which microaggressions they experienced. I discuss these encounters in themes of LGBTQ+, transgender, gender, and intersectional microaggressions.

LGBTQ+ Microaggressions

There is a great deal of overlap between the LGBTQ+ and transgender taxonomies. The transgender taxonomy encompasses the microaggressions in the LGBTQ+ taxonomy and has two additional transgender-specific categories. Therefore, I could discuss the participants' shared experiences with microaggressions as either LGBTQ+ or transgender microaggressions. Because all participants identified as LGBTQ+ and three participants identified as transgender, I discuss the participants'

Table 11.1

Participants' Experienced Microaggressions

Types of Microaggressions	Participants					
	Jacob	George	Asher	Veronica	Kathy	Chris
Heterosexist language or transphobic terminology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Endorsement of heteronormative or gender normative culture		✓		✓	✓	
Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assumption of universal LGBTQ+ experiences				✓		
Physical threats/harassment	✓		✓			
Denial of bodily privacy	✓					
Denial of individual heterosexism or transphobia		✓		✓		
Denial of societal heterosexism/transphobia			✓			
Assumptions of sexual pathology or abnormality	✓		✓	✓		✓
Hostility and pressure to change			✓			
Disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups			✓		✓	
Assumption of interior status of men and women of color			✓			
Gender-based stereotypes for lesbians and gay men					✓	✓
Assumption of traditional gender roles					✓	

Note. The ✓ symbol indicates the microaggressions that each participant experienced.

shared experiences with microaggressions as LGBTQ+ microaggressions. I discuss transgender-specific microaggressions later in this chapter.

The participants primarily reported experiencing LGBTQ+ microaggressions. All

six participants experienced the "heterosexist or transphobic terminology" and "discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences" microaggressions, and four participants experienced the "assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality" microaggression (Nadal et al., p. 229, 231, 232). I discuss these microaggressions in separate themes.

Heterosexist and Transphobic. All of the participants reported experiencing the "heterosexist or transphobic terminology" microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 229). Jacob's, George's, Asher's, and Chris's experiences of this microaggression manifested as misgendering. Jacob, George, and Asher experienced misgendering from school leaders, such as principals, mentors, and supervising teachers. Jacob, Asher, and Chris experienced misgendering from students; however, Jacob's students also insulted him about his transgender identity. These experiences were similar to the report of a choir director who misgendered transgender singers (Palkki, 2020) and support the argument that transgender educators experience harm in music education (Bartolome, 2016; Nichols, 2012).

Some participants experienced heterosexist and transphobic language such as slurs from their students and dismissive LGBTQ+ perspectives from their peers. Veronica reported that some students used slurs to make insulting jokes. Kathy reported that some students used slurs to bully queer youth. Chris reported that some of his peers spoke disparagingly about transgender individuals. These experiences support findings that LGBTQ+ students and teachers might encounter slurs in schools (Garrett & Palkki, 2021; Nichols, 2012; Smith & Vũ, in press; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016).

Discomfort and Disapproval. All the participants reported experiencing discomfort or disapproval related to their LGBTQ+ identities. The bullying that Jacob and Chris experienced from a teacher's aide and an athletics coach, respectively, conveyed a sense of disapproval of their queer identities. George and Asher experienced disapproval from leaders in their schools, such as George's mentor's initial refusal to acknowledge his transition and Asher's supervising teachers' failure to correct misgendering by students. Moreover, George reported observing negative changes in his social interactions with colleagues due to his transition.

The participants experienced disapproval of gender and sexuality in varying contexts outside of the schooling environment. Some participants reported experiencing this disapproval from close family relationships. The reported threats of disownment from Chris's father and the lack of transgender acceptance from Asher's parents exemplified this microaggression. Kathy reported experiencing rejection from her parents because of the tension between her lesbian identity and their religious faith, which led her to repress her sexuality. Other participants reported experiencing religious-based disapproval. Veronica reported that their community was predominantly religious and judged LGBTQ+ individuals poorly. A standout among these experiences was Kathy's reported observations of students' and coworkers' use of political slogans and beliefs to insult LGBTQ+ individuals, which the reviewed literature did not reflect.

The participants' reported experiences support findings from studies on LGBTQ+ music educators. The bullying from colleagues and lack of support from administrators resonated with the reported bullying of lesbian music teachers who experienced property

damage, boycotting of meetings by students' parents, and harassment from school leaders (Furman, 2012; Smith & Vũ, in press). The rejection from family members supports claims from other LGBTQ+ musicians who have reported family rejection (Carter, 2013). Moreover, the religious-based familial rejection support reports of queer educators enduring harsh religious judgment from their parents (Taylor & Calaham, 2024).

The participants' reports of religious disapproval support findings from scholarship on LGBTQ+ identity and religion. The participants' experiences with religious disapproval support scholarship that revealed some LGBTQ+ individuals face harsh criticism from religious communities (Hughes, 2019; Taylor & Calaham, 2024; Thomas-Durrell, 2019). Kathy's repression of her sexuality resonates with Cayari's (2024) repression after he spoke to a youth pastor. Veronica's report of community judgment of queer individuals aligns with scholarship that revealed religious culture can admonish the LGBTQ+ population (Taylor & Calaham, 2024). In a discussion of religious culture, biblical scripture, and religious judgment of LGBTQ+ individuals, Smith (2018) highlighted tensions between the practice of religious culture and the biblical texts from the Christian faith. In most of those conflicts, the judgment of religious culture conflicted with biblical scriptures portraying God as a supreme entity of love.

The alignment of the participants' reported experiences with research on LGBTQ+ individuals and disapproving harms support the argument that LGBTQ+ individuals can experience microaggressions in their personal and professional contexts (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014; Hess, 2016; Nadal, 2013; Nadal et al., 2010; Smith,

2023; Sue et al., 2010b). Moreover, some of that harm originated from religious practices that perpetrators used to ridicule and reject LGBTQ+ individuals, which contrasts with the message of God's love for all of humanity. These microaggressions convey more than just disapproval or rejection of LGBTQ+ identities; they are condemnations of LGBTQ+ individuals' souls.

Assumptions of Pathology or Abnormality. Jacob, Asher, Veronica, and Chris reported experiencing the "assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality" microaggression (Nadal et al., 2010, p. 232). Jacob repeatedly encountered this microaggression. He reported that the insulting breakfast conversation and watchdog group had explicitly stated that he was a danger to children and would likely indoctrinate them with transgender concepts. Moreover, the actions of the parents who reported him to the watchdog group and the abusive teacher likely exemplify this microaggression. These experiences resemble the reported accusations against a gay teacher who only had a conversation with a student in the hallway (Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). Moreover, Jacob's, George's, and Asher's experiences resonate with a finding of a choir director telling a transgender singer that people would find their voice disgusting (Bartolome, 2016). The alignment between the participants' experiences and the reviewed literature supports the argument that LGBTQ+ individuals are at risk of being perceived as deviants who are threats to children (Furman, 2012; Nadal et al., 2010; Sue, 2010b; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016).

Asher and Veronica reported experiencing political insults, conveying that LGBTQ+ individuals might harm children and that queer issues are inappropriate content

for schools. These encounters exemplify the harm from ongoing anti-LGBTQ+ legislation about LGBTQ+ censorship in schools, restricting transgender students' rights, and prohibitions against discussing LGBTQ+ topics in schools (Human Rights Campaign, 2024; The American Civil Liberties Union, 2024). Absent from the findings were any reported accusations of actual wrongdoing by the participants.

Chris reported experiencing several assumptions of abnormality. His father asserted that he was not worthy of becoming a teacher or working in a church because of his sexuality. Moreover, his father threatened to send him to therapy to cure him. Similarly, a student's father asserted that Chris was indoctrinating his daughter with LGBTQ+ ideas. Some of Chris's experiences resonate with the reviewed literature; some do not. His father's assertions about his career path and the student's father's assumption of indoctrination support findings that churches and schools fire or threaten to fire LGBTQ+ musicians (Furman, 2012; Ricker, 2023; Taylor & Zeke, 2017). The assertion that Chris required therapy to cure him of his homosexuality did not resonate with the reviewed literature. Chris's experiences might indicate renewed perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals as having mental illness.

Transgender Microaggressions

The taxonomy of transgender microaggressions has two microaggressions that the LGBTQ+ taxonomy does not include: "physical threats or harassments" and "denial of bodily privacy" (Nadal, 2013, pp. 95–96). Some of the transgender participants reported experiencing these microaggressions. Jacob experienced a denial of his bodily privacy during the derogatory breakfast encounter where his colleagues mockingly remarked

about his gender transition and pretending to be a man. Although the reviewed literature did not reflect this microaggression, this insult supports the claims of harm by other transgender music educators, which include a choir director telling a transgender singer they are disgusting (Bartolome, 2016), transgender students experiencing slurs and harassment in the music classroom (Nichols, 2013), and rejection of transgender individuals for presenting differently than their biological sex (Palkki, 2020).

Jacob and Asher experienced physical threats and harassment. Jacob reported that a parent began yelling at him in a restaurant about how he was confusing her child. Asher asserted that a student's Nazi salute and other students' shirts with political slogans made them feel threatened. These findings provide support for scholars who have argued that LGBTQ+ music educators are at risk of experiencing microaggressions in the workplace (Ricker, 2023; Smith, 2023).

Gender Microaggressions

Some participants experienced gender microaggressions. Kathy reported that male band directors created an unwelcome environment for female directors. Asher shared that a college peer had pressured him to act and present as more masculine. These experiences exemplified the "assumptions of traditional gender roles" microaggression (Capodilupo et al., 2010, p. 204). Kathy's experiences support scholarship revealing that feminine and female-presenting band directors can experience restrictive gender roles (Shouldice, 2024), which might stem from a lack of female adjudicators of band performances, organizational leaders, and guest conductors; and female directors leaving the profession due to workplace harm (Huddleston, 2024). Asher's experience was different from

Kathy's in that the pressure to change his gender performance came from another transgender individual, which the reviewed literature did not reflect.

Intersectional Microaggressions

A few participants reported experiencing intersectional microaggressions. Asher, Veronica, and Kathy experienced the "disapproval of LGBTQ+ identity by racial, ethnic, and religious groups" intersectional microaggression (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 154), which manifested as ethnic and religious disapproval from family and community members. Asher experienced their parents' disapproval of their gender. Veronica and Kathy experienced religious disapproval of their sexualities from their community and family members, respectively. Their experiences add to and support the voices of other LGBTQ+ music educators who have reported experiencing family rejection (Smith, 2018; Taylor & Calaham, 2024) and church leaders asserting that LGBTQ+ individuals are abominations and unworthy to work in religious institutions (Cayari, 2024; Hughes, 2019; Taylor & Calaham, 2024).

Kathy and Chris reported experiencing the "gender-based stereotypes for lesbians and gay men" intersectional microaggression (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 154). These experiences manifested as colleagues referring to Kathy as the resident husband and a student referring to Chris as Mrs. Webster. These experiences were similar to the stereotypes reported by LGBTQ+ music educators, such as all male music educators are gay (Palkki, 2015) or gay men have excellent fashion skills (Paparo & Sweet, 2014). This alignment supports the argument that LGBTQ+ individuals experience harmful stereotypes in music education (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014; Nadal et al., 2010,

2015; Palkki, 2015).

The participants' reported microaggressive encounters align with extant taxonomies of LGBTQ+, gender, bisexual, transgender, and intersectional microaggressions (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014; Capodilupo et al., 2010; Nadal, 2013; Nadal et al., 2010, 2015). However, Jacob's and Chris's experiences with microaggressions targeting their sexuality and presumed mental illness highlight an expansion of the intersectional microaggression taxonomy. The watchdog group asserted that Jacob was mentally ill because he was transgender. Similarly, Chris's father asserted that Chris was mentally ill because he was dating a boy. Although these microaggressive attacks conveyed disapproval and assumptions of sexual pathology, which were microaggressions from the LGBTQ+ taxonomy, they also conveyed false assumptions of mental illness, which compounded the harm they experienced. I propose that a new "assumptions of mental illness of LGBTQ+ individuals" intersectional microaggression might better reflect Jacob's and Chris's experiences.

Asher's experience of intersectionality was unique among the participants because he was a first-generation transgender American. He contended with harm about his immigrant background and LGBTQ+ identities, which he reported made him feel uncomfortable in conservative environments. The insults he experienced, such as a student's joke about Immigration, Customs, and Enforcement (ICE), were similar to the "alien in one's own land" racial microaggression (Sue, 2010a, p. 37); however, Asher was White, and his family was not originally from the United States. Asher asserted that he had privileges in the United States because of his Whiteness, but he still felt the pain

of attacks on immigrants. Given the mass deportation of Black and Latine immigrants from the United States, which has sparked a nationwide dialogue on immigrants' lives, and Asher's witness, as a first-generation American, of an insult about ICE taking a student away from a classroom, perhaps an "undesirability of immigrants" intersectional microaggression might better reflect harmful communications and behaviors toward immigrant populations.

Microaggressive Stress

The participants reported experiencing microaggressive stress. Sue (2010a) theorized that victims who regularly experience microaggressions might develop biological, emotional, cognitive, or behavioral microaggressive stress. These manifestations might cause victims to become more susceptible to illness, depression, distraction from life tasks, or develop hypervigilance of their surroundings and perceived safety at all times. In this study, I did not investigate biological symptoms of microaggressive distress; however, the participants reported experiencing emotional, behavioral, and cognitive distress.

Emotional distress was the most commonly reported type of microaggressive stress among the participants. All six participants reported fearing losing their jobs because of their LGBTQ+ identities. The participants had additional worries, such as fears of false accusations of child predation, social activities with colleagues, and concerns about anti-LGBTQ+ political insults from local and national leaders. Each of these concerns stemmed from their predominant worry about job security. For many of the participants, this fear increased because of their lack of knowledge about addressing

workplace harm based on their gender and sexuality.

The participants' reported fears align with scholarship about LGBTQ+ educators' experiences in the workplace. Educators have reported regularly experiencing fear and a lack of acceptance in the school environment because of their queerness (DeJean, 2022; Silveira, 2019). LGBTQ+ music educators have reported losing their jobs because of false accusations of harming children (Furman, 2012; Talbot & Hendricks, 2016) and religious judgment of homosexuality (Taylor & Zeke, 2017). These collective experiences support the argument that LGBTQ+ individuals experience fear about adverse outcomes in music education because of their gender and sexuality (Thomas-Durrell, 2019).

All six participants reported a sense of emotional pain from microaggressive encounters. All of the participants had an abusive person in their lives who contributed to that sense of emotional pain. Chris's, Kathy's, and Asher's pain evolved from tense family relationships because of their LGBTQ+ identities. Other participants reported contending with abusive colleagues, students, and school leaders. A few participants reported feeling emotional pain from the actualization of their fears, such as Jacob being accused of indoctrinating children by the parents at his new school and the resulting defamatory letter. One participant, Asher, reported emotional pain from gender-conformity pressures from an LGBTQ+ individual. Moreover, Asher reported that their recurring experiences with misgendering substantially increased their sense of emotional pain.

The participants' reported emotional pain supported scholarship about LGBTQ+

educators' experiences in the workplace. Music educators have reported negative emotions, such as feelings of indignity and racing thoughts, because of experiencing LGBTQ+ microaggressions (Ricker, 2023). LGBTQ+ music educators have reported rejection from family members (Smith, 2018; Taylor & Calaham, 2024; Thomas-Durrell, 2019) and workplace harassment (Furman, 2012; Taylor, 2011). The participants' experiences support the finding that victims who repeatedly experience microaggressions might experience higher levels of microaggressive distress than individuals who experience microaggressions infrequently or not at all (Owens et al., 2018). Additionally, the alignment of the participants' experiences with this scholarship supports the reports of LGBTQ+ individuals suffering deep emotional pain from harms occurring in music education (Furman, 2012; Nichols, 2013; Taylor, 2011).

Most participants reported developing stress-avoidant behaviors, which were behavioral manifestations of microaggressive stress. Four participants adopted code-switching practices, such as Veronica's use of feminine pronouns at work, George's use of his former name to email students' parents, and Kathy's repression of her sexuality from her parents. Additionally, Chris reported that he had restricted the public acknowledgment of his husband's support to non-school-based concerts. Jacob and Veronica reported that their avoidant behavior had led them to consider whether to remain in their teaching positions.

The participants' reported behavioral forms of microaggressive stress align with scholarship about LGBTQ+ educators' experiences in the workplace (Bergonzi, 2014, 2016). LGBTQ+ music educators have reported code-switching between their personal

and professional personas (Thomas-Durrell, 2019) and repressing their sexuality in the workplace (Ricker, 2023). Moreover, queer individuals have reported leaving the education profession because of restrictions on expressing their LGBTQ+ identities (Carter, 2013; Maher & Toledo, 2022). The findings of the participants' reported microaggressive stress and their alignment with LGBTQ+ scholarship support Smith's (2023) claim that LGBTQ+ music educators are at risk of developing mental health struggles because of encounters with microaggressions.

Victim Dilemmas: Obstacles to Recognizing and Challenging Harm

The participants reported experiencing some obstacles in recognizing microaggressive encounters and deciding if and how to respond to them. Sue et al. (2021) discussed five types of victim dilemmas: not recognizing microaggressions, minimizing the harm caused by microaggressions, a desire to avoid conflict, fearing punishment, and feeling uncertain about how to respond. Jacob and George asserted that they could not succinctly define microaggressive conflict occurring in their schools due to the subtlety of perpetrators' behaviors. Similarly, Veronica reported that they had not realized their encounters were microaggressions until the training session.

Jacob minimized the harm of microaggressive encounters by asserting that insults from students were not harmful. Additionally, Jacob explained that he wanted to avoid conflict with colleagues, especially in front of children, and feared punishment if he corrected their insulting behaviors, such as losing his job. George, Asher, and Kathy reported feeling uncertain about how to respond to microaggressive encounters. These dilemmas exacerbated the harm of some encounters by inhibiting participants from

identifying microaggressions and utilizing microintervention tactics in response.

Some participants reported experiencing secondary microaggressions, which are additional harms after the initial microaggressive encounter. Veronica's principal asserted that her poster was inappropriate, which effectively placed blame on Veronica for their choice of classroom decor. The principal's response resembled the dilemma of victim blaming (Johnson et al., 2012). Chris was the victim of the social-justice music educators' misguided approach to microintervention tactics, which support the argument that individuals who respond to perpetrators of microaggressions may reflect on potential negative outcomes of their actions (Rini, 2018). These experiences created additional harm for the participants after they had utilized microintervention tactics to challenge microaggressive encounters. The alignment of Veronica's and Chris's experiences with scholarship on secondary microaggressions supports the argument that victims of microaggressions are at risk of experiencing additional harm (Johnson et al., 2021; Rini, 2018).

Several participants experienced legal restrictions on their ability to address microaggressive behavior in the classroom. Asher and Veronica described state laws that prohibited them from discussing their sexual and gender identities in the classroom, which resembled Florida's *Child Protection in Public Schools* law that prohibited educators from discussing LGBTQ+ topics with students (Human Rights Campaign, 2024; The American Civil Liberties Union, 2024). Asher and Veronica asserted that they could not address LGBTQ+ microaggressions without acknowledging their queerness; however, Veronica tried to accomplish this task by vaguely discussing human emotions

with their students. The legal restrictions increased the risk of additional harm for participants if they revealed too much about their queerness in challenging microaggressions.

Microinterventions

The participants reported using varying microinterventions. Table 11.2 presents an overview of those tactics, which includes a list of microinterventions and the participants' pseudonyms in the first column and row, respectively, and a check mark signifying which tactics each participant utilized. The most widely used tactic among them was developing perspicacity. Jacob, George, Veronica, and Kathy used this tactic to reason with their students and school leaders about the harm of insulting words and misgendering language. Jacob, Kathy, and Chris utilized the buddy system tactic by eating lunch with friends and colleagues, protecting bullied students, and defending the plight of transgender individuals, respectfully.

Among the participants, Chris and Jacob reported using the most tactics. Jacob used eight tactics, and Chris used nine. Their use of tactics might stem from Jacob's numerous microaggressive encounters and Chris's lifelong career as a gay choral director. Asher was the only participant to report using the seeking therapy tactic; however, I did not specifically ask the participants if they sought mental health care. The participants diminished some microaggressive stress and made some perpetrators aware of their harmful actions using these tactics.

I found no studies on LGBTQ+ individuals in music education that have explicitly centered on the use of microinterventions, so the participants' use of tactics did

Table 11.2

Participants' Enacted Microintervention Tactics

Microintervention Tactics	Participants					
	Jacob	George	Asher	Veronica	Kathy	Chris
Seeking clarification MIV [a]	✓					
Developing perspicacity MIV [a]	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Appealing to perpetrator principals EPS [b]					✓	✓
Promote empathy EPS [b]					✓	✓
Differentiating between intent and impact EPS [b]		✓		✓		
Expressing disagreement DA [c]	✓			✓		✓
State values and set limits DA [c]			✓	✓		✓
Reminding about the rules DA [c]	✓					✓
Nonverbal communication DA [c]	✓					
Describing what is happening DA [c]						✓
Alerting leadership ESA [d]	✓					✓
Reporting incidents ESA [d]	✓					✓
Support groups ESA [d]		✓				
Buddy system ESA [d]	✓				✓	✓
Seeking therapy ESA [d]			✓			

Note. The ✓ symbol indicates the tactics that each participant used.

[a] Make the invisible visible microintervention category

[b] Educate perpetrators and stakeholders microintervention category

[c] Disarm microaggressions microintervention category

[d] External support and alliances microintervention category

not align with the reviewed literature. However, some of their reported tactics aligned with the reported responses of other LGBTQ+ music educators who have experienced harm that I discussed as microaggressions and microinterventions in Chapter 2. Some LGBTQ+ music teachers reported using gentle conversations with students to identify the harm caused by insulting comments, which exemplified the developing perspicacity tactic (Talbot & Hendricks, 2016). A lesbian music educator reported relying on friends to cope with workplace harassment, which exemplified the buddy system tactic (Smith & Vũ, in press).

Power Dynamics

All six participants reported encountering complex power dynamics throughout their experiences with microaggressions. Perpetrators of microaggressions included principals, colleagues, students' parents, students, family members, and local and national politicians. The participants had varying levels of authority over each of those populations. Principals and students' parents had substantial influence on the participants' professional and personal lives due to the subordinate nature of being a teacher. Moreover, state and local laws added additional layers of power loss because disapproving parents, colleagues, principals, and political leaders used the legal system to inflict substantial harm on LGBTQ+ individuals and restrict victims' options for challenging that harm.

The participants' reported experiences with power imbalances support scholarship about victims choosing to respond or disengage from perpetrators of microaggressions based on power dynamics and intersectional identities (Vacarro & Koob, 2019). Only a

few educators reported experiencing intersectionality from their gender, race, or sexuality. This intersectionality included Asher's immigrant and transgender identities, Veronica's lesbian sexuality and female gender as a band educator, and Chris's sexuality and gender performance. Garcia (2011) argued that multiplicity, which is a representation of how the fusion of a person's multiple identities interacts with socio-political factors, might help aid the understanding of harm against marginalized individuals. In this context, all of the participants experienced harm at the intersection of their LGBTQ+ and teacher identities. The combination of unequal power dynamics and intersectionality restricted the participants' utilization of microinterventions.

The participants' reported experiences with power imbalances and intersectionality resonated with scholarship about LGBTQ+ educators' experiences in the workplace. LGBTQ+ preservice and student teachers have reported experiencing insults from their supervising teachers (Paparo & Sweet, 2014; Taylor, 2011), choir directors (Bartolome, 2016), principals (Minette, 2021), and students' parents (Furman, 2012). Moreover, queer educators have reported that they felt uncomfortable challenging anti-LGBTQ+ harm because of power imbalances (Cayari, 2019; Nichols, 2013; Smith & Vũ, in press; Taylor & Zeke, 2017; Thomas-Durrell, 2019). The alignment of the participants' experiences with LGBTQ+ scholarship supports the argument that LGBTQ+ educators might feel less inclined to challenge harm originating from individuals in positions of power in education (Taylor, 2011; Thomas-Durrell, 2019; Vaccaro & Koob, 2019).

Empowering Victims Through Externalizing Harm. Victims who contend with microaggressive harm in the context of power imbalances might feel uncomfortable or

unsafe utilizing microintervention tactics to challenge microaggressive perpetrators directly. These victims risk internalizing their lack of action as a personal setback; however, victims can not control the mechanisms of oppression and extant safety risks in unwelcoming environments. When harm occurs within such contexts, victims might consider making the best possible decisions to protect their physical and mental well-being with the knowledge that not addressing microaggressive harm is sometimes the wisest choice. In these situations, the onus of harm is not a result of victims prioritizing safety but instead on the perpetrators of oppression who have created such unsafe environments.

Towards the end of writing this dissertation, someone asked me why a victim should have to do the work of responding to harm. This question became more potent as I considered the unsafe power dynamic some victims face, especially given the current socio-political state of the United States. Changing harmful environments likely requires changing laws, policies, hearts, and minds. Currently, there is no foreseeable rescue from the harm against LGBTQ+ individuals that has and continues to become enshrined through law and policy, which leaves changing the hearts and minds of microaggressive perpetrators as the best hope of effecting local change.

As I pondered my response to the question, a quote came to mind, which is often attributed to rock-star Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters: “No one is you, and that is your power” (Polcaro, 2021). No one knows the effects of harm better than victims. By taking the time and care to educate perpetrators about their harmful actions, which often occur from unrealized hidden biases, victims might turn that harm into power by developing

new allyships, which are likely needed to effect change on a larger scale eventually.

Bystander Support

All six participants reported benefiting from bystander support. Using the same format as previous tables, Table 11.3 presents an overview of tactics the bystanders used and the participants who received that support. Most bystanders utilized the support group and buddy system tactics to provide support to the participants following microaggressive encounters. Kathy and Asher experienced microprotections, such as Kathy's father's attempt to sway his wife's judgment, Kathy's conversation about bullying with a student, and Asher's relationship partner offering to correct the misgendering by a teacher's assistant. These experiences support the reports of lesbian music educators dealing with bullying in the school environment (Furman, 2012; Smith & Vũ, in press).

Several participants reported experiencing or using affirmations. Veronica and Jacob utilized curriculum-based affirmations, which included a poster of a Black musical artist, a social justice unit on gay rights music, and a pronoun poster in a community choir room. Jacob and George reported experiencing microaffirmations from coworkers checking on their well-being and friends supporting them outside the workplace. Veronica experienced the microaffirmation of holistic acceptance from the people and places where they felt safe to express their gender freely.

The participants reported experiences with microaffirmations resonate with scholarship about affirming marginalized individuals in education. Sánchez-Gatt (2023) proposed curriculum-based affirmations as a means to affirm and encourage students of

Table 11.3

Bystanders' Enacted Microintervention Tactics

Microintervention Tactics	Participants and Bystanders						
	Jacob	George	Asher	Veronica	Kathy	Chris	Bystanders
Appealing to perpetrator principals EPS [a]			✓				✓
Promote empathy EPS [a]					✓		✓
Differentiating between intent and impact EPS [a]							✓
Expressing disagreement DA [b]	✓						✓
State values and set limits DA [b]			✓				✓
Reminding about the rules DA [b]							✓
Nonverbal communication DA [b]							✓
Describing what is happening DA [b]	✓						✓
Support groups ESA [c]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Buddy system ESA [c]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note. The ✓ symbol indicates the tactics that the bystander used and the corresponding participants.

[a] Educate perpetrators and stakeholders microintervention category

[b] Disarm microaggressions microintervention category

[c] External support and alliances microintervention category

color. Microaffirmations might include small actions such as smiling or asking someone how their day is going; however, the most effective microaffirmations would presumably be those extended with sincere care for the victim's well-being (Hendricks, 2025).

Holistic acceptance is a microaffirmation practice that involves accepting all the components that comprise a person (Hendricks, 2025; Thomas-Durrell, 2023), such as Veronica's most authentic gender expressions. The alignment of the participants' experiences with scholarship supports the argument that the practice of microaffirmations serves as a powerful tool to counteract discriminatory harm (Hendricks, 2025; Sánchez-Gatt, 2023; Sue et al., 2021; Tsui et al., 2023).

Chris's experiences with microaffirmations differed from those of the other participants. Although he received affirmations from students' parents, mentors, and colleagues, Chris used microaffirmations to proactively avoid future harm to LGBTQ+ youth by teaching young singers about LGBTQ+ life. His conversation with students supports scholarship on the practice of beasting as a means to challenge microaggressive harm, which involved affirming cultural counternarratives in response to racial microaggressions (Morales, 2021). Through that dialogue, Chris emphasized the importance of holistic acceptance among his singers, which supports the framework of microaffirmations as a means to prevent discriminatory harm (Hendricks, 2025; Thomas-Durrell, 2023). These findings support Sue et al.'s (2007) theorizing about the need and benefit of bystander support through microaffirmations, microprotections, and microvalidations.

Diminished Microaggressive Stress

By using microinterventions, the participants reported diminishing some of their microaggressive stress. Moreover, they made some perpetrators aware of their harmful actions. Conversely, when the participants did not challenge perpetrators, the reported

harm and microaggressive stress they experienced persisted; moreover, when the participants experienced lingering distress from unchallenged microaggressions, the caring support of bystanders, who provided microaffirmations, microprotections, and microvalidations helped diminish it. These findings support Sue et al.'s (2007) theorizing about the harm of microaggressive encounters and the benefit of microinterventions to counteract that harm. Moreover, they support Smith's (2023) conclusion that microinterventions might support LGBTQ+ music educators' well-being in the workplace.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study included some limitations, which I discuss as recommendations for future research. The training plan I presented in Chapter 4 contained a lot of information about LGBTQ+ microaggressions and the microintervention framework, including proposed example statements of how individuals might employ microintervention tactics. Towards the end of the study, one participant asked if they had to say the statements exactly as I had presented them. I had not explained to the participants that they could adapt the tactic examples into language they felt comfortable using. Future researchers might adopt that explanation for their microintervention training. Additionally, I did not investigate biological manifestations of microaggressive stress or ask participants about their experiences with mental health care. Future researchers might include these aspects of microaggression theory to probe deeper into victims' reported experiences.

This study included a 75-minute training session for participants to learn about LGBTQ+ microaggressions and microintervention strategies. Although some of the

participants had previously heard of microaggressions, none of them were aware of LGBTQ+ microaggressions or the microintervention framework. This brief training provided an introduction to these topics; however, it did not allow participants sufficient time to develop a comprehensive understanding of the microintervention framework. Future research might involve following up with the six research participants to examine whether their experiences with microaggressions and microaggressive stress have changed since the completion of this study. In a review of 39 longitudinal studies in music education, Ilari (2020) argued that longitudinal studies can benefit the research design in music education research and music teachers' professional practice in the classroom. Moreover, the voices of music teachers were largely absent from those 39 studies. A benefit of a longitudinal approach includes examining change in participants' experiences over an extended period, which resonates with investigating the change in LGBTQ+ music educators' microaggressive stress from utilizing microinterventions in the workplace.

All of the participants mentioned political insults during the interviews. Some participants spoke at length about the political attacks on LGBTQ+ individuals. The emerging political state of the United States is rife with LGBTQ+, transgender, gender, and intersectional microaggressive attacks (see American Civil Liberties Union, 2024; Kane, 2025; Lavietes, 2024). Moreover, Kathy observed a student wearing a transgender flag to school and worried about the possibility of the lack of boundaries for self-expression in public spaces leading to increased harm. Future researchers may examine the intersection of political attacks, self-expression, microaggressions, and

microinterventions to develop an understanding of how freedom of expression and political climates interact with the classroom environment.

Some participants had experiences that might warrant further investigation. Several scholars revealed the reported abusive treatment of several transgender music educators and students (Bartolome, 2016; Nichols, 2013; Palkki, 2020; Silveira, 2019). However, some of Jacob's experiences occurred on a public scale. The abusive colleague and aggressive parents resonate with that prior researcher; however, the watchdog group explicitly attacked his moral character and ridiculed his gender transition in an exceptionally public manner with the defamatory letter. Jacob's entire school community was aware of the letter before he started teaching. Jacob's experiences were similar to the first reported firing of a transgender music educator, Paula Grossman (Norrid, 2025). Future researchers might further investigate the treatment of other transgender music educators to understand more about whether and how their harmful experiences in the school environment have escalated from subtle social interactions to explicit microaggressive attacks.

Asher's experience with a transgender peer pressuring him to act and present more masculine was unique among the findings. Instead of insult or harm coming from heteronormative or gender normative perspectives, this harm originated from within the LGBTQ+ community. Future researchers might explore microaggressions occurring between queer individuals to understand better how the queer community can sometimes work against its own best interests.

Implications

A recurring theme throughout the findings was the difficulty in defining harmful experiences. Moreover, the participants were uncertain of how to advocate for their well-being during those encounters. This lack of information created substantial distress for the participants, especially those who had worked as educators for a brief period or were about to enter the profession. I argue that these participants could have benefited from training on microaggressions, microinterventions, and resulting mental health implications prior to entering the workforce, such as in a college course or program. Moreover, the colleagues and school leaders in the participants' lives might have helped foster a less hostile and more welcoming work environment if they also engaged in such training. By developing an understanding of microaggressions, microinterventions, and resulting mental health outcomes, victims and bystanders might prevent the escalation of mental health decline following microaggressive attacks. These implications echo Smith's (2021) call for professional development and trauma-informed mentorship to help educators deal with secondary trauma.

A challenge to training sessions on topics concerning marginalization and the others of society is that perpetrators in such sessions might not receive the instruction with compassion to change their harmful behaviors. The possibility exists that some perpetrators might escalate their microaggression. Equally important, victims of microaggressive encounters might not yet realize the extent of the harm they have endured. A resulting question becomes how to connect the benefits of knowledge about microinterventions with those individuals who might benefit the most. One possible

answer is for individuals with awareness of microintervention tactics to share that information with individuals in their settings earnestly.

Theoretical implications included potential expansions for the intersectional microaggression taxonomy. Chris and Jacob experienced intersectional microaggressive attacks on their LGBTQ+ identities and presumed mental illness. An "assumption of mental illness of LGBTQ+ individuals" intersectional microaggression might better reflect their experiences. Similarly, Asher's witness of a classroom insult about the ongoing attacks and mass deportations of Black and Latine immigrants might substantiate the need for a categorization of microaggressions against immigrants. An "undesirability of immigrants" intersectional microaggression might best reflect their experiences. Researchers might examine workplace harm, stress, and teaching practice tension of educators who have immigrated to the United States or have family members who have done so. Colleagues and school leaders might extend affirmations to these educators with care to support their well-being.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to understand LGBTQ+ music educators' lived experiences with microaggressions and microinterventions to explore how participants' reported microaggressive stress changed through engagement with microintervention tactics. Participants reported that their stress decreased from using microintervention tactics unless an imbalance of power existed between the participant and the perpetrator. When participants experienced microaggressions that they did not challenge, they reported that their microaggressive stress either remained unchanged or increased in

severity. Microaffirmations, microprotections, and microvalidations from supportive bystanders helped diminish that lingering distress.

I began this study by highlighting the harm of microaggressive encounters and the need for microintervention training through a series of four vignettes about my experiences as a gay music educator. When my first principal had synonymously interchanged the terms “pedophile” and “homosexual,” I did not know that he was enacting a microaggression. Moreover, I had been so afraid of losing my job that I was uncertain if I would have used a microintervention tactic. If I had that moment to live over again, I would have approached my principal at a different time and engaged him in a gentle dialogue about how his remarks made me feel afraid to exist in his school. Similarly, when he informed me that parents had complained about “that faggot teacher,” I would have asked him clarifying questions about why he told me about their complaint but did not share any details about who they or their children were.

The process of hearing the reported experiences of the LGBTQ+ music educator participants helped me to understand that I am not alone in my experiences with microaggressions. The harm of my workplace encounters and my uncertainty about how to address them resonated with the reported experiences of each participant. Equally important, this study has helped me to understand the importance of practicing self-care and affirming the individuals with whom I interact in my teaching and personal contexts.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INVITATION SOCIAL-MEDIA POST

LGBTQ+ music teachers often face unique prejudices in schools, such as slurs, insults, harassment, unfair treatment, false accusations, religious or social judgment, stereotypes, and much more. These experiences can occur with colleagues, administrators, students, or students' parents. Often, there is little or no support to help remedy those situations. If you are a music educator who lives in the United States and regularly has difficulties in school related to your LGBTQ+ identity, perhaps you might benefit from learning how to thoughtfully and professionally challenge such difficulties. I invite you to participate in a brief research study about learning and using research-based tactics to challenge the mistreatment that you experience. Please click the survey link below to start the process. Please feel free to private message me directly so that I can send you more information. Your name and information will remain confidential. I am conducting this study in conjunction with a prominent university in the United States and can provide you with my university email address for future contact.

APPENDIX B: QUALTRICS BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello! Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief background questionnaire about LGBTQ+ music educator experiences. I ask for your participation because I care about LGBTQ+ individuals in music education and hope to understand better how LGBTQ+ educators might develop meaningful skills to challenge or diminish the hardships they experience in schools. This questionnaire is encrypted using University software, so all of your responses will remain confidential. Only the researcher will have access to your answers. The researcher will destroy all questionnaire responses upon the conclusion of the study. Please answer all 16 questions before clicking the red "Submit Survey" button at the end. Thank you again!

Question 1: Please enter your email address.

- o email address: _____

Question 2: Do you identify as an LGBTQ+ individual?

- o Yes
- o No

Question 3: During the last two months, how often have you experienced the following insults in school regarding your LGBTQ+ identity?

	Never	Occasionally	Weekly	Daily
*LGBTQ+ slurs (name calling)	o	o	o	o
*Judgmental religious statements	o	o	o	o
*Addressed with incorrect pronouns	o	o	o	o
*Disapproving communication about LGBTQ+ identity	o	o	o	o

Question 4: How comfortable are you with your LGBTQ+ identity in your school?

- o Very comfortable. I'm very open about my LGBTQ+ identity in school.
- o Less comfortable. I sometimes hide my LGBTQ+ identity in school.
- o Not comfortable at all. I avoid discussing my LGBTQ+ identity in school.

Question 5: During the last two months, how often have you experienced disapproval of your LGBTQ+ identity in your school?

	Never	Occasionally	Weekly	Daily
*From parents/students	o	o	o	o
*From colleagues	o	o	o	o
*From administrators	o	o	o	o

Question 6: During the past two months, how often have you felt overlooked or treated unfairly by anyone in your school because of your LGBTQ+ identity?

- o Never
- o Occasionally
- o Weekly
- o Daily

Question 7: During the past two months, have you experienced members of your school community asserting that unfair treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals does not exist in your school?

- o Yes
- o Maybe
- o No

Question 8: During the past two months, how often have you witnessed someone stating these assumptions about LGBTQ+ teachers in your school?

	Never	Occasionally	Weekly	Daily
*LGBTQ+ individuals are child predators	o	o	o	o
*LGBTQ+ individuals should not display pictures of loved ones or discuss their private lives at school	o	o	o	o
*LGBTQ+ teachers are not effective educators	o	o	o	o
*LGBTQ+ individuals have a mental illness	o	o	o	o

Question 9: During the past two months, have you experienced expectations to act or present as a straight or cisgender person in your school?

- o Yes
- o Maybe
- o No

Question 10: Please briefly describe any additional hardships or negative experiences that you currently experience in school regarding your LGBTQ+ identity.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 11: During the last two months, how often have you experienced any of these adverse reactions to challenging experiences with your LGBTQ+ identity in school?

	Never	Occasionally	Weekly	Daily
*Negative emotions, such as fear, worry, or anxiety	o	o	o	o
*Stress	o	o	o	o
*Mistrust of colleagues or administrators	o	o	o	o
*Considered changing jobs	o	o	o	o
*Avoided social interactions with colleagues	o	o	o	o
*Loss of self-esteem	o	o	o	o

Question 12: Are you interested in learning research-based anti-bias strategies to counteract challenging LGBTQ+ experiences in schools?

- o Yes
- o No

Question 13: What is your interest in learning and applying anti-bias strategies in your school setting to help diminish challenging experiences for LGBTQ+ individuals?

- o I am not interested.
- o I am interested in learning the strategies but uncertain if I will use them.
- o I am interested in learning and potentially applying anti-bias strategies.

Question 14: Are you interested in participating in a six-week research study aimed at exploring your experiences as an LGBTQ+ music educator and applying anti-bias strategies in your setting? Participation will occur through six weekly online meetings lasting about 45-60 minutes each. The study will include one researcher and a small group of supportive LGBTQ+ music educators who experience similar hardships in their schools.

- o Yes
- o No

Question 15: If you answered yes to the previous question and want a researcher to contact you about participating in a study about learning and using anti-bias strategies, then please enter the following information:

- o Name _____
- o Phone number _____
- o Email address _____
- o State where you teach _____
- o Age _____
- o Total years of teaching music _____
- o Gender _____

Question 16: Please share anything else you might want me to know before participants are selected for this study.

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C: STUDY DESCRIPTION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

LGBTQ+ Music Educators and Anti-Bias Strategies: Research Study Invitation

Greetings!

I invite you to participate in a research study about how LGBTQ+ music educators might thoughtfully challenge or respond to difficulties regarding their LGBTQ+ identities in the school environment. LGBTQ+ music teachers often face unique prejudices in schools and have little support to help remedy those situations. If you can relate to these challenges, perhaps you might benefit from learning and applying research-based anti-bias responses to your experiences with ongoing LGBTQ+ discrimination.

I am asking you to participate because I care about LGBTQ+ individuals in music education. I believe it is essential to understand how LGBTQ+ music educators might develop skills to diminish ongoing identity-related hardships and prevent future encounters. I am conducting this research as part of my Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Boston University. Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. At any time, you are free to discontinue your participation without affecting any future contact or experiences you might have with Boston University.

Although there is a risk that talking about difficult experiences might become upsetting, your participation in this study presents the opportunity to learn valuable skills to counteract LGBTQ+ discrimination. I will also provide documentation to potentially help you gain professional development credit in your district. I hope that by conducting this research with you, I might implement future anti-bias response training in other

settings.

This study will occur in three brief phases: A personal interview, small group anti-bias training, and application of anti-bias responses in the workplace. We will meet for approximately 45–60 minutes once a week for six weeks. Additionally, to help capture your reflections after our sessions, I will ask that you periodically journal using a confidential online document, which I will provide to you.

Phase 1: **Week 1: Interview:** Introductory conversation with you and me. We will discuss your ongoing experiences with LGBTQ+ hardships in your school environment *(approximately 45–60 minutes).*

Phase 2: **Week 2: Small group training:** A small group of LGBTQ+ music educators, like yourself, will receive anti-bias response training *(approximately 75 minutes).*

Phase 3: **Weeks 3–6: Application phase:** We will discuss how you and others in the group apply the anti-bias responses in your personal and professional contexts.

Week 3: Small group discussion *(approximately 45–60 minutes)*

Week 4: Interview: A conversation between you and me *approximately 45–60 minutes).*

Week 5: Small group discussion *(approximately 45–60 minutes)*

Week 6: Interview: A final conversation between you and me *(approximately 45–60 minutes).*

During this study, the other research participants will not have access to your details or contact information. I will have access to your name and contact information; however, I will assign your information a fictitious name of your choosing in all documents and maintain absolute confidentiality of your responses and personal information. All I am looking for are your perspectives and understandings about your experiences with LGBTQ+ hardships in music education and using anti-bias strategies in response to those hardships. Our group training will occur on Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 7:30 PM EST. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you so much,

Richard Winfree

APPENDIX D: FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This protocol is based on the Qualtrics background questionnaire (BQ). Before each interview, I will import pertinent questionnaire information into this template and delete unnecessary information such as directions and unused questions.

Question 1: (based on BQ Question 2)

- **Question:** You indicated that you identify as an LGBTQ+ individual. How do you identify in the LGBTQ+ community?

Question 2: (based on BQ Question 3)

- **Directions:** Omit asking about responses that respondents reported as never experiencing.
- **Model question:** Tell me about the **LGBTQ+ slurs** that you experience **weekly**
  (insert experience) (insert frequency)
- **Probe:** How did you react when that happened?

Omit?	Experiences	Frequency
	LGBTQ+ slurs (name calling)	
	Judgmental religious statements	
	Being addressed using incorrect pronouns	
	Disapproving communication about LGBTQ+ identity	

Question 3: (based on BQ Question 4)

- **Directions:** Circle one of the bold words before the interview.
- **Question:** You reported that you are **very-less-not** comfortable with your LGBTQ+ identity in school. Why do you feel that way?
- **Prompt:** Tell me more about that.

Question 4: (based on BQ Question 5)

- **Directions:** Omit asking about responses that respondents reported as never experiencing.
- **Model question:** Tell me about your experiences with disapproval of your LGBTQ+ identity that you **occasionally** experience from **students and their parents**.
- **Probe:** How do you deal with those moments?

Omit?	Experiences	Frequency
	From parents/students	
	From colleagues	
	From administrators	

Question 5: (based on BQ Question 6)

- **Directions:** Omit this question if respondents reported never experiencing unfair treatment or feeling overlooked. Circle one of the bold words before the interview.
- **Question:** Describe the experiences that cause you to feel overlooked or treated unfairly in school on an **occasional-weekly-daily** basis.
- **Probe:** How does that feel?

Question 6: (based on BQ Question 7)

- **Directions:** Omit this question if the respondents answered no. Circle one of the bold responses before the interview.
- **Option 1 Question:** Describe your experiences with members of your school community who assert that unfair treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals does not

exist. **(Yes response)**

- **Option 2 Question:** You indicated that you might have experienced members of your school community pretending that unfair treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals does not exist. Tell me more about that. **(Maybe response)**
- **Probe:** What were you thinking when that happened?

Question 7: (based on BQ Question 8)

- **Directions:** Omit asking about responses that respondents reported as never experiencing. Wait for a response after each component.
- **Model question:** Tell me about times when you have witnessed someone state an assumption that **LGBTQ+ individuals are child predators** that you experience on a **weekly** basis.
- **Prompts:** What is it like when you hear those assumptions?

Omit?	Experiences	Frequency
	LGBTQ+ individuals are child predators	
	LGBTQ+ individuals should not display pictures of loved ones or discuss their private lives at school	
	LGBTQ+ teachers are not effective educators	
	LGBTQ+ individuals have a mental illness	

Question 8: (based on BQ Question 9)

- **Directions:** Omit this question if the respondents answered no on the questionnaire.
- **Option 1 Question:** Tell me about your experiences with expectations to act or present as a straight or cisgender person in your school. **(Yes response)**
- **Option 2 Question:** You indicated that you might have experienced expectations

to act or present as a straight or cisgender person in your school. Tell me about those experiences. **(Maybe response)**

- **Probe:** How do you handle those situations?

Question 9: (based on BQ Question 10)

- **Question:** You reported having experienced **(summarize response)**; tell me more about that experience.

Question 10: (based on BQ Question 11)

- **Directions:** Omit asking about responses that respondents reported as never experiencing. Wait for a response after each component.
- **Model question:** You reported having negative emotions due to challenging experiences with your LGBTQ+ identity in school. Tell me about the **stress** that you experience **weekly**.
- **Probe:** How do those negative emotions affect your daily life?

Omit?	Experiences	Frequency
	Negative emotions, such as fear, worry, or anxiety	
	Stress	
	Mistrust of colleagues or administrators	
	Considered changing jobs	
	Avoided social interactions with colleagues	
	Loss of self-esteem	

Question 11: (based on BQ Question 15)

- Prepare any appropriate question(s) for question 15 survey responses, which asks respondents to share any desired additional information.

APPENDIX E: SECOND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Before each interview, I will import pertinent information from previous interviews into this template and delete unnecessary information. My goal with this protocol is to have a bank of questions about experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions so that I can quickly pivot when the participants share new encounters.

Question 1: Participant-Led interview

- **Question:** We last met one-on-one about two weeks ago and spoke about several situations in your school. How have things been since then?
- **Directions:** This question allows the participants to begin the interviews by discussing topics of interest to them.
- **Probe:** Tell me more about that. How did that start?

Question 2: Previously reported microaggressions

- **Model Question:** You previously described a coworker who called you an LGBTQ+ slur. What interactions have you had with that coworker recently?
- **Directions:** Important concise details about previously reported experiences and create prompts:

Question 3: New microaggressions

- **Question:** Describe any new LGBTQ+ microaggressions that you have identified and experienced recently.

Question 4: New microaggressive stress.

- How did that make you feel?

- What was your immediate reaction to that?
- How did that **reaction-emotions-anger** (etc.) affect the rest of your day?
- How do you manage that reaction-emotion (etc.) while working with children?

Question 5: Previously reported microaggressive stress

- **Model Question:** You previously shared that you feel anxious because of the situation with that parent. How has that anxiety affected you since we last spoke?
- **Directions:** Import concise details about previously reported microaggressive stress. Develop prompts and model questions for each participant:

Question 6: Microinterventions use

- **Model question:** How did you handle your principal saying that to you?
- **Prompt:** What were your thoughts about using a microintervention tactic?
- **Prompt:** Describe how you enacted that tactic.
- **Prompt:** What happened after you used that tactic?
- **Probe:** How did that person react?
- **Probe:** How did you feel after using that tactic?

Question 7: Changing microaggressive stress after microintervention use

- **Model question:** In the past, you have felt angry when someone treats you that way. Describe your anger after you used that microintervention tactic.
- **Directions:** Import pertinent information about how participants feel or react to microaggressive stress. Develop prompts and model questions for each participant.

APPENDIX F: THIRD INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This protocol is very similar to Protocol 2; however, I have added concluding reflection questions. Before each interview, I will import pertinent information from previous interviews into this template and delete unnecessary information. My goal with this protocol is to have a bank of questions about experiences with microaggressions, microaggressive stress, and microinterventions so that I can quickly pivot when the participants share new encounters.

Question 1: Participant-Led interview

- **Question:** We last met one-on-one about two weeks ago and spoke about several situations in your school. How have things been since then?
- **Directions:** This question allows the participants to begin the interviews by discussing topics of interest to them.
- **Probe:** Tell me more about that. How did that start?

Question 2: Previously reported microaggressions

- **Model Question:** You previously described a coworker who called you an LGBTQ+ slur. What interactions have you had with that coworker recently?
- **Directions:** Important concise details about previously reported experiences and create prompts:

Question 3: New microaggressions

- **Question:** Describe any new LGBTQ+ microaggressions that you have identified and experienced recently.

Question 4: New microaggressive stress.

- How did that make you feel?
- What was your immediate reaction to that?
- How did that **reaction-emotions-anger** (etc.) affect the rest of your day?
- How do you manage that reaction-emotion (etc.) while working with children?

Question 5: Previously reported microaggressive stress

- **Model Question:** You previously shared that you feel anxious because of the situation with that parent. How has that anxiety affected you since we last spoke?
- **Directions:** Import concise details about previously reported microaggressive stress. Develop prompts and model questions for each participant:

Question 6: Microinterventions use

- **Model question:** How did you handle your principal saying that to you?
- **Prompt:** What were your thoughts about using a microintervention tactic?
- **Prompt:** Describe how you enacted that tactic.
- **Prompt:** What happened after you used that tactic?
- **Probe:** How did that person react?
- **Probe:** How did you feel after using that tactic?

Question 7: Changing microaggressive stress after microintervention use

- **Model question:** In the past, you have felt angry when someone treats you that way. Describe your anger after you used that microintervention tactic.
- **Directions:** Import pertinent information about how participants feel or react to microaggressive stress. Develop prompts and model questions.

Question 8: Reflection

- **Question:** Think back to our very first interaction. You shared that you experienced (name-calling, disapproval, harassment) on a daily-weekly-regular basis. How are those experiences different today?
- **Probe:** How do you feel about those experiences now?
- **Probe:** Do those experiences still happen? as often? If not, why?

Question 9: Reflection

- **Question:** Describe what microinterventions mean to you.
- **Question:** How do you make sense of the stress that you were experiencing and your use of microinterventions?
- **Question:** How strongly would you recommend that other LGBTQ+ music educators learn how to use microinterventions? Why?

Question 10: Reflection

- **Question:** One final question: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding any of your experiences during this study?

APPENDIX G: JACOB'S EXPLORATORY STATEMENTS

- She bullied me. I ate a quiche and said hello.
- She won't even speak to me.
- That one teacher is always mean to me.
- That one teacher.
- That teacher harasses me in front of the children.
- This one lady reported me to the superintendent.
- A coworker's social media accounts show lots of anti-trans material.
- I work at the absolute best school; I'm considering leaving.
- Some teachers are really nice to me.
- I avoid the staff lunch room to avoid that one teacher.
- A parent reported me to a conservative group; they made an article about me.
- They attacked my father. I reported them.
- They wrote a letter about me on a website, saying that I'm mentally ill.
- A parent started yelling at me in a fast food restaurant.
- The other superintendent keeps misgendering me.
- I have had many mixed experiences with my five principals.
- This one child keeps harassing me about my gender.
- I've heard children use a variety of LGBTQ+ slurs.
- Children openly talk badly about being gay.
- I set limits of acceptable behavior with children.
- One child consistently misgenders me.
- I held boundaries of acceptable student behavior.
- Students use LGBTQ+ slurs.
- There are new slurs about gay people.
- Some children speak about LGBTQ+ mental illness.
- I was called LGBTQ+ slurs as a child.
- If I voice my opinion about LGBTQ+ stuff, people might hurt me.
- I can't voice my opinion, because it will make things worse.
- Some of the people who hated me love me now.
- I have to work harder because I'm trans. I need to prove myself.
- I'm not indoctrinating anyone.
- I don't talk about being trans with children.
- I'm not mentally ill.
- I mentor LGBTQ+ youth when I can.
- Pronouns are a recurring issue for me, but they're also a double-edged sword.
- I'm the only trans educator.
- I'm not a predator.

APPENDIX H: JACOB'S PERSONAL EXPERIENTIAL THEMES

Personal Experiential Theme 1: Harassment

Subtheme 1.1: The Defaming Article

A parent reported me to a conservative group, they made an article about me.
"How I was going to indoctrinate their kids, like, using my full legal name" (p. 16).

They wrote a letter attacking my father because he defended me.
"Just like saying like untrue things like saying he's a drug addict" (p. 16).

They included me in the article.
"They basically just said, I'm mentally ill and unfit to be in a classroom" (p. 28).

My principal tried to help me take the article and letter down.
"He gave me resources to report it" (p. 19).

Subtheme 1.2: Bullying by Coworkers

The soon-to-retire teacher bullied me. I ate a quiche and said hello.
"I don't care if people want to go cut off their boobs… and pretend to be a man" (p. 15).

That abusive teacher restricts her students' participation in music activities.
"She was very rude in our communication… we can't be wasting time" (p. 14).

That abusive teacher: She won't even speak to me.
"I'll say… have a good rest of your day, whatever like. She doesn't talk to me" (p. 13).

This one lady reported me to the superintendent.
"The superintendent said she reported me" (p. 9).

A coworker's social media had lots of anti-trans material.
"She had a bunch of like anti-trans stuff" (p. 10).

Subtheme 1.3: Attacks by Parents

A parent started yelling at me in a fast-food restaurant.
"There was a parent who went off at me" (p. 32).

Personal Experiential Theme 2: Misgendering

Subtheme 2.1: Misgendering in the Presence of Children

One child consistently misgenders me.
"Actually calls me Miss" (p. 12).

This one child harasses me about gender.
"Gender confusion" (p. 4).

That one teacher is always mean to me. (intentional misgendering by teachers)
"Will say she, which is weird because then the kids are probably confused" (p. 12).

She regularly misgenders me in front of students.
"I'll try to do better with that, but you know I'm old, so I might not" (p. 14 FINAL).

Subtheme 2.2: Misgendering by Authority Figures

Pronouns are a recurring issue for me, but they're also a double-edged sword.
"See, the pronouns are a mixed bag" (p. 11).

I have had many mixed experiences with my five principals.
"Out of my administrators, 3 out of 5, consistently gendered me correctly" (p. 20).

A superintendent keeps misgendering me.
"The superintendent did consistently misgender me" (p. 19).

Personal Experiential Theme 3: Insults

Subtheme 3.1: Words Hurt

I was called LGBTQ+ slurs as a child.
"People called me like I got called dyke a lot" (p. 41).

I've heard children use a variety of LGBTQ+ slurs.
"I've heard kids say slurs" (p. 4).

Children openly talk badly about being gay.
"I would hear it was mostly about people being gay" (p. 8).

Students use LGBTQ+ slurs.
"I've heard them call them the f-slur behind [their backs]" (p. 38).

A child insulted me during class.

“The truth” (p. 4, 7 FINAL).

Subtheme 3.2: New Insults

There are new slurs about gay people.
“I mean, kids call me Zesty” (p. 38).

Subtheme 3.3: Assumptions of Mental illness

Some children speak about LGBTQ+ mental illness.
“The other kid said, well, isn’t that a mental illness?” (p. 29).

Personal Experiential Theme 4: Distress

Subtheme 4.1: Falsehoods

I’m not indoctrinating anyone.
“I don’t know like teaching kids things that they shouldn’t know yet” (p. 25).

I don’t talk about trans with children.
“I don’t tell them that I’m trans…” (p. 25).

I’m not mentally ill.
“I don’t have any real mental illness” (p. 27).

Subtheme 4.2: Silenced

I can’t voice my opinion, because it will make things worse.
“If like a parent or somebody sees me giving any kind of opinion on anything that’ll be an issue as opposed to if another teacher did it” (p. 15).

If I voice my opinion about LGBTQ+ stuff, then people might use it to hurt me.
“That gives the parents more of a reason to complain” (p. 9).

Subtheme 4.3: Solitude

I’m the only trans educator. I’m not a predator.
“I feel like me in particular, being the only trans person in the building…” (p. 24).

They don’t know me.
“But they’re not from people who really know me” (online comments; p. 28).

Subtheme 4.4: Fear

Fear of getting fired.
"They could get us fired…" (p. 9 FINAL).

I'm considering leaving because of that one teacher.
"I might consider transferring buildings just not to deal with her" (p. 35).

I avoid the staff lunchroom to avoid that one teacher.
"I don't eat it in the staff room" (p. 30).

I have to work harder because I'm trans. I need to prove myself.
"I feel like I have to work harder to prove that I can be a good teacher" (p. 22).

Subtheme 4.5: Stress

That one teacher.
"I might consider transferring" (p. 35).

Personal Experiential Theme 5: Countering Harm

Subtheme 5.1: Addressing Students' Behavior

I mentor LGBTQ+ youth when I can.
"I actually had a kid who was trans" (p. 32)

I set limits of acceptable behavior with children.
"If you don't believe it, that's fine with me, but you're going to learn about it" (p. 9).

Jacob clarifies students' behavior.
"I do the seeking clarification with students a lot" (p. 8 TRAINING B).

Subtheme 5.2: Addressing Adults' Behavior

The father spoke up for me.
"My dad knew about it before I did, and he got mad" (p. 16).

Jacob uses facial expressions when colleagues misgender him.
"I'll sometimes give them a look like that" (p. 12 TRAINING B).

Personal Experiential Theme 6: Kindness

Some teachers are really nice to me.
"Then I have lunch with teachers who are very..." (p. 30).

I discussed the insult with a trusted coworker, who is a lesbian.
“She’s a lesbian… I just talked about the child” (p. 12 FINAL).

They asked how I was doing. It was nice.
“She said, How are you feeling with all of this political stuff?” (p. 16).
A student corrected a teacher who misgendered me.
“You have to call him Mr. Jacob. He’s transgender, so we use Mr.” (p. 14).

Some of the people who hated me love me now.
“But now I’m like her son’s favorite teacher.” (p. 18).

APPENDIX I: GROUP EXPERIENTIAL THEMES

Group Experiential Theme 1: Genderism

Subtheme 1.1: Misgendering by Students

Jacob: "One student actually calls me Miss" (p. 4).
"Gender confusion" (p. 4).

Subtheme 1.2: Misgendering by Colleagues

Jacob: "Some of them will say she, which is weird" (p. 12).
"See, the pronouns are a mixed bag" (p. 11).

Subtheme 1.3: Misgendering by Authority Figures

Jacob: "Administrators 3 out of 5, consistently gendered me correctly" (p. 20).
"The superintendent did consistently misgender me" (p. 19).

Participants Who Experienced Genderism but Have no Sub-Themes

George: "He had like referred to me, using a name they don't know me by" (p. 4).
"I was at a very sensitive point in my transition and in my life" (p. 16).
"Not something that I felt totally comfortable coming to her with" (p. 5).
"Being referred to… as ladies" (p. 14).
Asher: "Elementary students that misgendered me" (p. 11).
"When I'm up there, I don't get gendered correctly" (p. 23).
"He doesn't really correct students" (p. 7).
Veronica: "If people refer to me using she and her pronouns" (p. 20).
Kathy: "You know, they get me the idiot in the middle" (p. 15).
"You're the resident husband" (p. 21).
Chris: "Somebody said Mrs. Webster" (p. 4).

Group Experiential Theme 2: The Harm

Subtheme 2.1: Slurs

Jacob: "People called me like I got called dyke a lot" (p. 41).
"I've heard kids say slurs" (p. 4).
"I've heard them call them the f-slur behind [their backs]" (p. 38).
"But they're not from people who really know me" (p. 28).
Veronica: "I definitely hear students using just the word gay as a slur" (p. 3).

Subtheme 2.2: Insults

Jacob:	"I mean, kids call me Zesty" (p. 38).
	"I would hear it was mostly about people being gay" (p. 8).
	"The truth" (p. 4, 7 FINAL).
	"She had a bunch of like anti-trans stuff" (p. 10).
Asher:	"I regret not calling that out" (p. 24).
	"Students who, they said, some out of pocket stuff" (p. 23).
	"Like queer people are gonna touch kids" (p. 18).
	"Act more like a man. I'm gonna treat you more like a man" (p. 21).
	"Why is the government hating me?" (p. 15).
Kathy:	"Let's make America straight again" (p. 3).
	"My mother's side is extremely evangelical" (p. 16).
	"We still love you, but we don't think that this is right for you" (p. 7).
Veronica:	"Just kind of like seeing the kind of like wincing response" (p. 9).
	"Big religious community…they feel about the queer community" (p. 6).
	"Well, that's my opinion. I don't think it's appropriate" (p. 17).

Subtheme 2.3: Bullying

Jacob:	"She was very rude in our communication" (p. 14).
	"I'll say… have a good rest of your day…She doesn't talk to me" (p. 13).
	"The superintendent said she reported me" (p. 9).
Kathy:	"They have called him [repeatedly turned his name into a slur]" (p. 5).
Chris:	"He started bullying me…he especially had it out for me" (p. 21).
	"They were bullying me" (p. 11 FINAL).

Subtheme 2.4: Aggression

Jacob:	"There was a parent who went off at me" (p. 32).

Subtheme 2.5: Assumptions of Indoctrination

Jacob:	"I don't like teaching kids things that they shouldn't know yet" (p. 25).
	"How I was going to indoctrinate their kids" (p. 16).
	"Just like saying like untrue things like saying he's a drug addict" (p. 16).
	"People want to go cut off their boobs and pretend to be a man" (p. 15).
	"I don't tell them that I'm trans…" (p. 25).
Chris:	"He did not want me to take your class because" (p. 14).

Subtheme 2.6: Assumptions of Mental Illness

Jacob:	"The other kid said, well, isn't that a mental illness?" (p. 29).
	"I don't have any real mental illness" (p. 27).

Chris: "We're going to send you to therapy tomorrow" (p. 7).
"They basically just said, I'm mentally ill" (p. 28).

Participants Who Experienced Harm but Have no Sub-Themes

George: "I liked your hair better when it was long" (p. 16).

Group Experiential Theme 3: Distress

Subtheme 3.1: Fear

Jacob: "They could get us fired" (p. 9 FINAL).
"That gives the parents more of a reason to complain" (p. 9).
"That'll be an issue as opposed to if another teacher did it" (p. 15).
George: "That would be like material to use against me" (p. 8).
"It's going to be used against me" (p. 23).
"They would refer to me differently or think of me differently" (p. 8).
"Things that other [transgender] teachers say" (p. 22).
Asher: "I felt scared and really just kind of unsettled there" (p. 10).
"That definitely makes me feel less safe" (p. 21).
"Thrown into the water just kind of learning how to navigate" (p. 8).
"I still have that fear [of not getting hired because I'm queer]" (p. 16).
"You're gonna talk poorly about people behind their back" (p. 17)
"There's a very specific like way that I look" (p. 19)
Veronica: "I don't want that to be misinterpreted as… attracted to children" (p. 11).
Kathy: "I started a relationship…and I didn't say anything" (p. 8).
"What message does that send to our LGBTQ students?" (p. 19).
Chris: "I went into the room scared to death" (p. 12 FINAL).
"Being a young teacher, not feeling empowered to say stuff" (p. 5).

Subtheme 3.2: Emotional Pain

Jacob: "I might consider transferring buildings, just not to deal with her" (p. 35).
George: "That was difficult and embarrassing" (p. 6).
Asher: "I kind of feel sad when they don't gender me correctly" (p. 9).
Veronica: "It just doesn't feel good, you know" (p. 14).
"Brings up really like tense body feelings" (p. 63 TRAINING A).
Kathy: "My mother's side is extremely evangelical" (p. 16).
"Kathy could go there and…be accepted" (p. 18).
"It's it's a it's a sore subject" (p. 15).
Chris: "Pushed away things that…were probably blatantly homophobic" (p. 8).
"Lit a fire under my ass that still burns" (p. 7).
"This man who was my father could turn his love off for me" (p. 9).

Subtheme 3.3: Avoidance

Jacob:	"I don't eat it in the staff room" (p. 30).
	"I might consider transferring buildings just not to deal with her" (p. 35).
George:	"Definitely like, avoid, like, being in a group of male coworkers" (p. 16).
	"The parents who knew me… I would use my previous name" (p. 12).
Asher:	"[I avoid] anything that resembles like the alt right pipeline" (p. 15).
	"I kind of would not want to accept that because of the pipe" (p. 4).
Veronica:	"Because I don't really talk about my own…queerness" (p. 11).
	"People are uncomfortable if I talk about it" (p. 9).
	"Considering whether or not I'll be staying in the classroom" (p. 23).
Kathy:	"We're a big enough staff that I can kinda just not" (p. 9).
	"Just kind of keep that side repressed" (p. 6 FINAL).

Group Experiential Theme 4: Challenging Harm

Jacob:	"I do the seeking clarification with students a lot" (p. 8 TRAINING B).
	"He gave me resources to report it" (p. 19).
	"If you don't believe it, that's fine with me" (p. 9).
	"I'll sometimes give them a look like that" (p. 12 TRAINING B).
George:	"I had like debriefed with him after" (p. 6).
Asher:	"Individual that I get to talk to, that gets paid on an hourly basis" (p. 25).
Veronica:	"I kind of stuck to my guns about it" (p. 8).
	"I'll say, do you understand what you're just saying?" (p. 4).
	"Setting that really firm boundary" (p. 7).
	"I asked a couple of other colleagues" (p. 8).
Kathy:	"My father came to me…I want to try to understand" (p. 6).
Chris:	"My way in the classroom was always circular respect" (p. 11).
	"I just tell them, and the words the song just mean more" (p. 18).
	"I went to my supervisor" (p. 22).
	"I go to my principal" (p. 22).
	"I'll face the bully" (p. 11).

Group Experiential Theme 5: Kindness

Jacob:	"Then I have lunch with the friendlier teachers" (p. 30).
	"I actually had a kid who was trans" (p. 32).
	"My dad knew about it before I did, and he got mad" (p. 16).
	"She's a lesbian… I just talked about the child" (p. 12 FINAL).
	"She said, how are you feeling with all of this political stuff?" (p. 16).
	"Call him Mr. Smith. He's transgender, so we use Mr." (p. 14).
George:	"I have coworkers that I do trust" (p. 11).
Asher:	"She knows how to talk with them" (p. 22).
	"Nothing really stopping me from being my most authentic self" (p. 23).

	"Wow, surprising like, you actually read my email signature" (p. 6).
	"She is, trying her best, gendering me correctly" (p. 6).
	"My professors did their best to gender me correctly" (p. 10).
Veronica:	"If I'm in a space that's really practicing radical acceptance" (p. 20).
	"Fluent in the language of understanding" (p. 21).
Kathy:	"If this is happening, then this needs to be brought forward" (p. 5).
Chris:	"That's when things really turned [for the best]" (p. 25).
	"She said, would you like to be here?" (p. 22 FINAL).
	"We have to accept and love all the kids, whatever they're feeling at the moment, what they may not be in two years, and what they may be in five. Whatever! That's what we're supposed to do!" (p. 72 FINAL).

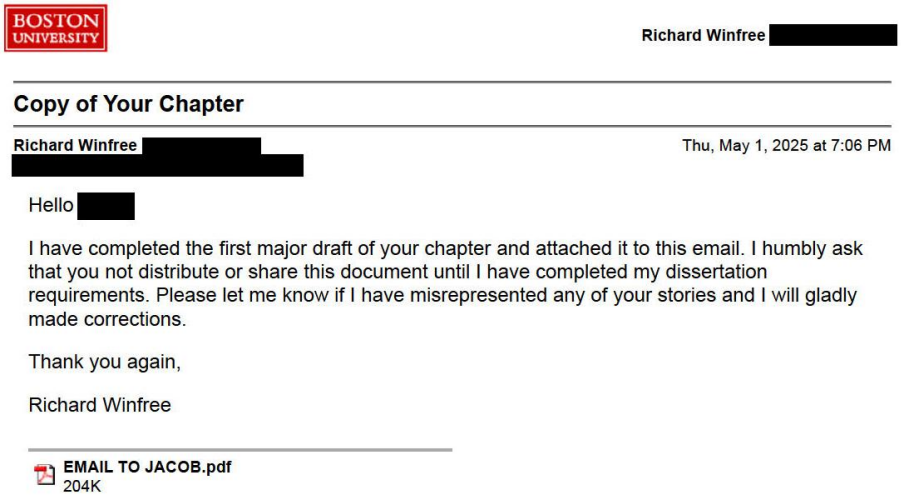
Group Experiential Theme 6: Changing Distress

Jacob:	"She gendered me correctly. That was good" (p. 19).
	"I'll try to do better with that" (p. 14 FINAL).
George:	"I feel like a little bit better going into it now" (p. 11 INT 4).
Asher:	"I'm glad they did that, they have gendered me correctly" (p. 10).
Veronica:	"Having that conversation gives them a frame of reference" (p. 6).
Kathy:	"Because of that, our relationship has grown, which is awesome" (p. 7).
Chris:	"I'm glad I did it. I'm glad he did it with me" (p. 9).

APPENDIX J: MEMBER CHECK EMAILS

Figure J1

Jacob's Member Check Email



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Thank you again,

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EMAIL TO JACOB.pdf
204K

Figure J2

George's Member Check Email

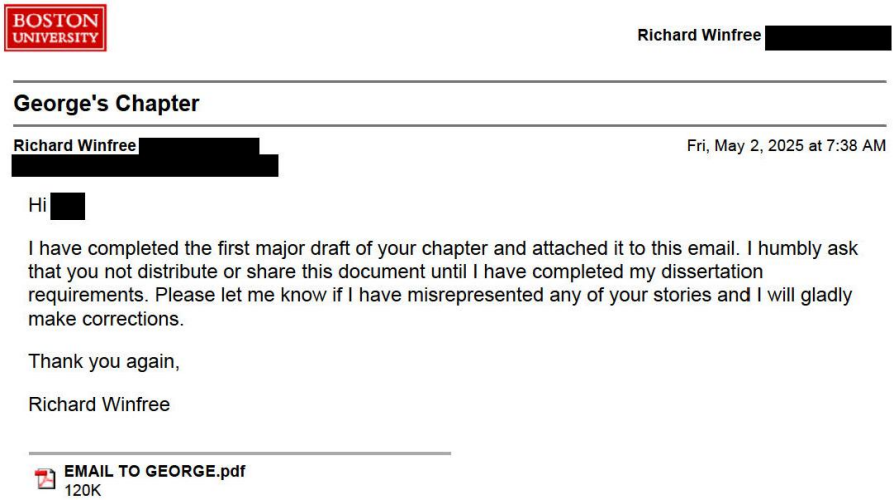

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Figure J3

Asher's Member Check Email

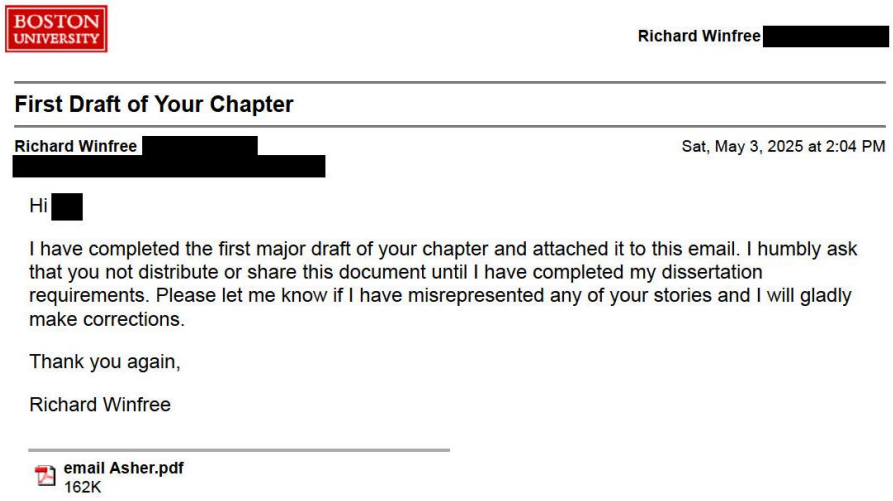

Figure J4

Veronica's Member Check Email

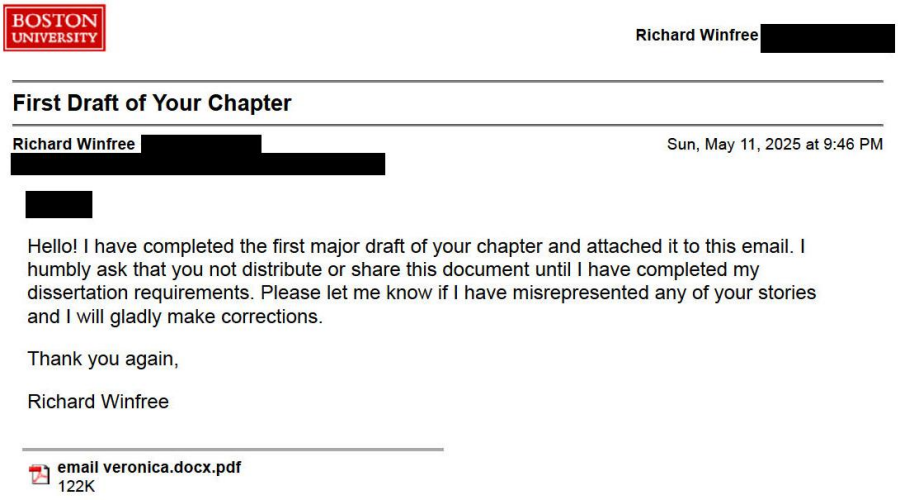

Figure J5

Kathy's Member Check Email

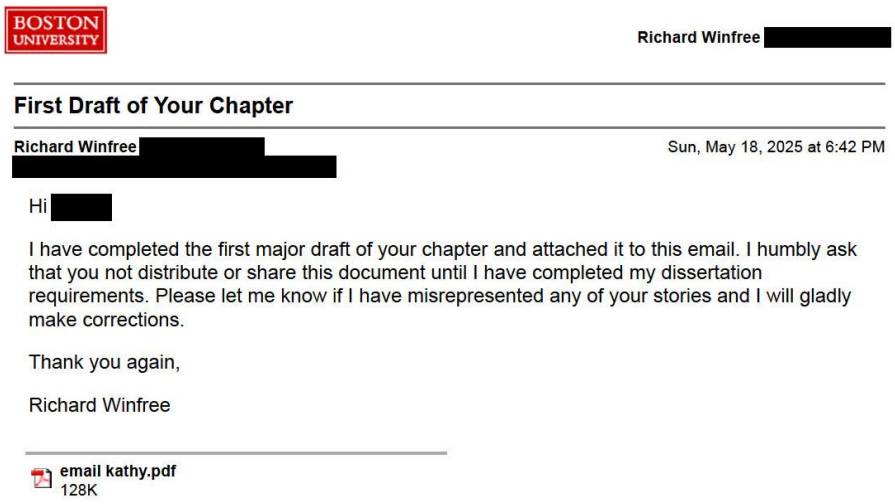

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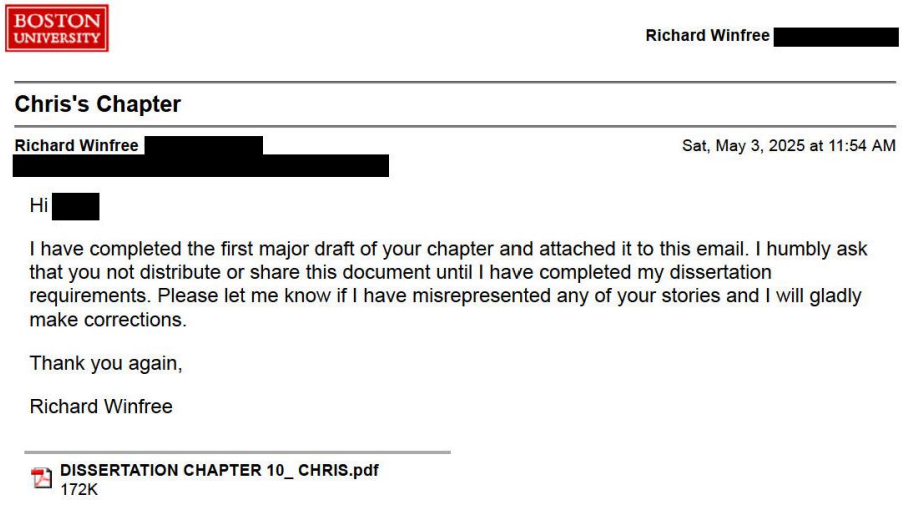
Figure J6

Chris's Member Check Email



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Chris's Chapter

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172K

APPENDIX K: ANIMAZE WRITTEN PERMISSION

From: Animaze Support support@animaze.us
Subject: Re: Contact Form
Date: February 26, 2025 at 2:52:18 PM
To: [redacted]

You have our blessing to use these videos for your dissertation, no need to worry about anything else. It would indeed be best if you would mention in the material credits animaze.us as the tool used to generate the videos. If you're happy with the outcome of the dissertation, maybe give us a shout out on our socials, for how easy we are making this process :) Cheers and best of luck with the dissertation!

On Wed, Feb 26, 2025 at 1:08 PM Animaze <support@animaze.us> wrote:

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>
> **Email**
> **Topic** Animaze iPhone
> **Subject** Permissions? [redacted]
>
> **Message**
>
> Hello! I've created 7 avatar videos of about 23 seconds each using the iphone app. I am planning on using these in my dissertation research for my college degree. I will not make any money off of this document; however, the process of creating a dissertation requires that I comply with all legal and ethical considerations. May I use these 7 seven videos as I described? Also, would you like for me to include any information about where and how I create the videos with your app? Do you want any statement of copyright attribution for the videos?

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