LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Communities’ Transformation through the Arts

By

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ABSTRACT

The Arts bring potential benefits for students (Bowen, Greene, & Kisida, 2014), especially LGBTQ2+ ones because it can help develop creativity, empathy, and self-expression, which is enormously important to LGBTQ2+ students. For the purpose of the research, LGBTQ2+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, queer, or questioning and intersex people who face mental and physical barriers to success in school communities. Therefore, creating LGBTQ2+ inclusive communities is paramount in order to connect these students with the schools in which they learn and give educators an insight into the LGBTQ2+ community. A qualitative data collection was done through semi-structured interviews. Two Canadian and three Vietnamese educators were recruited and participated in the study. Thematic data analysis of the transcribed interviews framed five key themes associated with LGBTQ2+ inclusive community and the Arts: i) professional experience in an LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum, ii) definition of a LGBTQ2+ inclusive community or classroom, iii) the powers of the arts, iv) art forms, and v) applying the arts to teaching practices. This study demonstrated how the transformational power of the arts in school communities and classroom curricula, and the uses of the arts in teaching practices, could embrace the idea of inclusiveness. The study supports the roles of the arts in social justice and the need for continuing support of LGBTQ2+ policies and practices in school communities.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Framing the Issue

In my home country, Vietnam, LGBTQ2+ is still a very sensitive and concerning topic. From personal observation, even though LGBTQ2+ is not a new phenomenon, there is still prejudice and discrimination against LGBTQ2+ people, especially LGBTQ2+ students. In this study, LGBTQ2+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, queer, or questioning and intersex people. Being born and raised in Vietnam, I have witnessed a number of LGBTQ2+ teenage students being educated in educational settings in which there are only two accepted gender categories in this society, male and female. With this traditional conception of gender, LGBTQ2+ students suffer great personal embarrassment and anguish after being taught that “male” and “female” are the only right and accepted genders. I grew up wondering about those students who did not belong to either of these two categories (i.e. when lining up by boys or girls in classes) and who would be responsible for letting them know that there is nothing wrong with being different from the traditional foundation of social gender orders. Gender exclusive, parenting practices and social expectations cause LGBTQ2+ juveniles to conceal their true identities from their teachers, family, friends, and even from themselves, because they do not receive psychological and/or physical supports.

A 2009 survey of more than 3,200 LGBTQ2+ individuals in Vietnam by the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy, and the Environment reported that 4.5% affirmed they were victims of physical assault and abuse by homophobic people and 6.5% reported that they were unable to find or have lost their jobs because of their sexual orientation (Human Rights Reports: Vietnam, 2011). Furthermore, most Vietnamese LGBTQ2+ choose not to tell their families of their sexual identity for fear of being disowned and rejected, and a 2011 online survey -
conducted by the Information Sharing and Connecting Group with more than one thousand LGBTQ2+ participants - reported that more than 20 percent of them had to live by their parents’ traditional preference (Human Rights Reports: Vietnam, 2011). Moreover, studies done by iSEE from 2009 to 2012 revealed that social stigma and discrimination have caused most LGBTQ2+ individuals to remain closeted (Nguyen, 2009). For instance, in 2009, only 2.5% gay men came out completely and only 5% were mostly open. 32.5% of gays were closet and 35% were somewhat closeted (Nguyen, 2009). Vietnamese LGBTQ2+ have to hide their sexual orientation and identity so as to not upset parents or be subjected to negative responses from parents, families, friends, and colleagues (Nguyen, 2009). What is more, a joint study on the situation of LGBTQ2+ street children in Ho Chi Minh City by Save the Children in Vietnam (2012) found that LGBTQ2+ children leave home because of their parents’ rejection of their sexual orientation and gender identity, or psychological pressure from the lack of understanding and support from their family and school communities. Close to half reported that their parents would feel or are ashamed or embarrassed by whom they are (38.4%-47.1%), and approximately a third of Vietnamese LGBTQ2+ young people said they felt mentally (34.8%) and physically (26.8%) abused by their own families (Save the children, 2012).

In the USA, Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, and Danischewski’s (2016) study - which focused on a sense of school belonging - revealed that 57.6% of LGBTQ2+ students do not feel safe at their school community on account of their sexual orientation and 43.3% on account of their sexual expression. In Australia, there are higher rates of suicide and health concerns among LGBTQ2+ students who have been undergoing homophobia, as proved in McCallum and McLaren’s (2010) study. The rates are also high in Canadian school communities. It is reported that 64% of LGBTQ2+ students find themselves unsafe at schools, according to the 2011 "Egale
National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Thus, it is fundamentally important for educators to address the issue of homophobia and include gender - inclusive teaching in traditional school communities, especially in Vietnam, because - from the researcher’s personal experience - LGBTQ2+ students in Vietnam have not received any supports from public schools and social communities.

While the traditional Vietnamese society acknowledges only two gender categories, male and female, there is also gender inequality in which men are given more privileges and attention over women, especially in education (Mai, 2015). The feminist movement in Vietnam has been addressing the inequity of these traditionally cultural gender roles, and after decades of fighting for sexual equality, women and men are no longer restricted to the clothes that are culturally available for them (Mai, 2015). Therefore, there is hope for the movement of LGBTQ2+ in Vietnamese commonly gender-exclusive society. Moving toward a fairer and more egalitarian society, LGBTQ2+ cannot be excluded from the list; the way that a boy identifies himself as a gay, bisexual, or a transgender or a girl identifies herself as a lesbian, bisexual, or transgender is as natural as the fact that the sun rises in the east. As Brill and Pepper (2008) noted “a fundamental understanding of gender is important to raising gender-nonconforming children and teens in a supportive manner” (p. 6); moreover, what is a boy? What is a girl? How does one know whether one is a boy, a girl, or something else? These questions of identity can only be explored based on the cultural expectations of any given society (Brill & Pepper, 2008).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the present study is twofold. The first purpose is to explore the perspectives of Vietnamese teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ exclusive curriculum, and Canadian teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum, to find out how
teachers can support the roles of the Arts in creating a LGBTQ2+ friendly learning environment. The second purpose is to raise awareness of Vietnamese educators that all students are in need of an equal and safe community and how the Arts could help to create inclusive classrooms and school communities for LGBTQ2+ students. The study focuses on emphasizing the important role of educators in supporting the Arts and how the Arts could transform school communities into LGBTQ2+ inclusive environments from Canadian and Vietnamese educators’ perspectives.

Educational institutions, like other social institutions, can be very oppressive communities. According to Connell (1996), there are two controversial forms of injustice in schools: “Oppression, which restricts the capacity for self-expression; and domination, which restricts participation in social decision-making… Harassment, homophobic abuse, the hierarchy of masculinities, bullying, racial vilification are examples” (pp. 223-224). The practices of domination and oppression turn school communities into exclusive places, where they are supposed to be open to anyone. This also leads to the marginalization of LGBTQ2+ students, which encroaches on their self-identity, self-expression, and participation in schools (Kearns, Mitton-Kukner, & Tompkins, 2014).

Educators’ recognition and awareness of LGBTQ2+ students play fundamental roles in supporting these students’ physical and psychological well-being and helping students feel a sense of self-identity and connectedness to their school communities. Research has clearly proved that greater awareness and training for educators about LGBTQ2+ students can challenge heterosexual privilege and address homophobic harassment and violence in school zones (Adams, Cox, & Dunstan, 2004; Chaub, Laub, & Wall, 2004; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; Walton, 2004). Allen (1995) and Campbell (2012) ascertained that educators who lack knowledge about, or are uncomfortable with, LGBTQ2+ issues might marginalize them in the classrooms or school
communities. Moreover, the National Higher Education Survey of the USA found that, only slightly more than 50% of participants felt that classrooms were welcoming and accepting of LGBTQ2+ people, and only 22% reported that course curriculum adequately represented the positive contributions of LGBTQ2+ students (Rankin, 2003). More importantly, LGBTQ2+ students cannot learn best in school communities where they do not feel respected and safe (Armstrong, 2011). Thus, creating LGBTQ2+ inclusive communities is paramount in order to connect these students with the schools in which they learn and give educators an insight into the LGBTQ2+ community. This study will demonstrate how these goals can be utilized through the transforming power of the Arts (Bowen, Greene, & Kisida, 2014).

The Arts bring potential benefits for students (Bowen et al., 2014), especially LGBTQ2+ ones because it can help develop creativity, empathy, and self-expression, which is enormously important to LGBTQ2+ students. Even though Arts advocates and researchers have attempted to prove and strengthen the positive role of the Arts in education, and how the Arts can lead to optimistic outcomes for students (Baker, 2012; Hetland & Winner, 2001; Deasy, 2002), there has been limited research that isolates the profound influence of the Arts for LGBTQ2+ students’ well-being, upon homophobia’s perspectives on LGBTQ2+, and on educators’ knowledge about this subject. Borrup (2001) found how the Arts can help improve struggling communities, which includes promoting the interactions in public spaces, increasing civic participations through celebrations, engaging youths in the community, and so on. Additionally, it is evident that “art has the power to lift a person beyond limitation of body, health and situation” (Kropf, 2009, p.778). This indicates how the Arts are useful in psychologically supporting LGBTQ2+ students to get along well with the school communities and their friends, and for helping educators create inclusive curriculums and classrooms. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will help to bridge
the knowledge gap, and will encourage educators and school administrators to make use of the role of the Arts in addressing homophobia and becoming more gender - inclusive for all students.

**Research Questions**

“Community arts, especially for youth, have the power to potentially transform even the most conflicted societies” (Power, 2012, p.5) and play fundamental roles in transitioning communities (Power, 2012). Educators also play vital roles in supporting the Arts and LGBTQ2+ students in educational zones, which can be as oppressive and unfair as other social institutions (Connell, 1996, p.7). Therefore, the following research questions were framed and developed:

1. How can the Arts help to create inclusive communities for LGBTQ2+ students?
2. What are educators’ roles in supporting the use of the Arts in the LGBTQ2+ communities?
3. What art piece will best reflect the result of this study?

Having studied in Canada at Vancouver Island University (VIU), I as the researcher of this study have noted that VIU has non-gendered washrooms and rainbow flags displayed in public areas around campus. Therefore, VIU educators have (at the very least) basic knowledge about the LGBTQ2+ community. Vietnamese educators, however, teach in a gender - exclusive environment – notably Ho Chi Minh University of Education (HCMUE), where there are no inclusive washroom or Art representatives and gender inequity and issues are high (Mai, 2015). Hence Vietnamese educators at HCMUE might have less knowledge about - or are not comfortable with - LGBTQ2+ inclusivity. Through this research educators are able to identify reasons why the Arts are important for transforming communities, recognizing LGBTQ2+ abuse and neglect, and/or reporting to school boards requesting supports. Similarly, with school boards’
supports, educators could provide active supports to the uses of the Arts in school zones, curriculums, and instructions that could relate and address gender issues, and serve as a bridge between LGBTQ2+ and school communities. This study helps to discover the transforming power of the Arts, and how that power can transform educators’ teaching methodologies, which include LGBTQ2+ themes, new information, and ways to support LGBTQ2+ students.

**Definition of Terms**

This paper uses plural pronouns “they”, “them”, and “their” instead of singular pronouns “he” or “she” as a way to respect LGBTQ2+ people and not to label them as boys or girls. This practice is also found in much of the literature review written about LGBTQ2+ subjects. LGBTQ2+ has been used as the standard acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning people, which includes other identities such as intersex or asexual (Taylor, Peter, Edkins, Campbell, Émond, & Saewyc, 2016). As the “umbrella term for the sexual and gender minorities” has been continually evolving (Taylor et al., 2016, p.10), the addition “+” to LGBTQ is meant to be inclusive of other gender minorities that have not been recognized and named yet, and 2 for 2-spirited.

Gender has been defined as a system that functions in a social and cultural context to identify people based on their assigned sex (Taylor et al., 2016). Moreover, gender is considered a wide spectrum rather than a binary theory of sex that consists of only two categories, male and female (Slesaransky-Poe, 2013).

Sexual orientation, in this study, means an individual’s potential for physical, romantic, emotional, intellectual, and/or other forms of attraction to others (Taylor et al., 2016). Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. In this paper, gender identity has been defined as “their deep inner feeling of gender, regardless of anatomy” (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 13), which
“is not a conscious decision and it is most likely determined before we are born” (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 14), and it could include a sense of being male, female, both of these, neither, or some other gender (Taylor et al., 2016). It might be confused with gender expression which Taylor et al. (2016) have clarified as “the way a person presents and communicates gender” through style of behaviors, which is explained as “the natural inclinations and expressions” of a person (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 13).

With a focus on LGBTQ2+ students and transforming communities, there must be conventional communities in which the heteronormative idea achieves a dominant position in education. *Heteromonative* is the belief that only sexual orientation and attraction from the opposite sex is normal and accepted by society and norms (Habarth, 2008).

Heteromonative communities form a system of privilege that obviously lead to marginalization. *Marginalized* means anyone who finds themselves less important, neglected and outside of a dominant group in a community. In every school community, there must be a social gap between LGBTQ2+ students and dominant heterosexual ones.

*An inclusive school community* in this study means an educational place where each individual is welcomed, respected, and responsible to share expectations, norms, and values regardless of their sexual identities, orientations, and attractions. Other terms also used in the current study, are *school connectedness* and *belonging*. *School connectedness* has been defined by students that their learning processes and themselves as individuals are cared about by the educators and school administrators (Blum & Libbey, 2004); and *belonging* means students feel they are respected, valued, and important in a school community (Goodenow & Grady, 1993).
According to Van Camp (1997), the United States Congress (n. d.) defines “The arts” as “painting, sculpture, music, theatre, literature, etc., considered as a group of activities done by people with skill and imagination.” The Arts in this study include, but are not limited to, “music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, all those traditional arts practiced by the diverse peoples of this country and the study and application of the arts to the human environment” (Van Camp, 1997).

**Brief Overview of the Study – Research Methods**

This study is a qualitative research approach that explores the transforming power of the Arts on school communities, how educators perceive themselves in that inclusive community, and their roles in supporting the uses of the Arts in those communities. Participants, who might be interested in this study, were recruited via email invitations by the researcher. Assent and consent forms were then given or sent to the interested participants. Once the assent and consent forms were signed, the researcher sent out interview prompts to the participants who wanted to do the written component.

The researcher also scheduled individual interviews with the participants who were comfortable and convenient to contribute orally to the study. The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions based on survey questions (see Appendix C). The interviews allowed the participants to explain and describe their experiences of the Arts and the inclusive communities. Participants were able to add to their own definitions or new terms. The responses
to the interview questions were audio recorded and then transcribed. Moreover, the written responses allowed the participants to reflect and expound their answers in detail.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

LGBTQ2+ issues have been increasingly focused in research and how school communities are not welcoming and supporting places for LGBTQ2+ students (Diaz, Kosciw, & Greytak, 2010; Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2011). However, it was difficult to find studies on school community transformation through artworks and educators’ roles in supporting the LGBTQ2+ curriculum and the Arts. As searching for key words such as, school transformation, inclusive community and the Arts, the results showed studies focused on individual areas, such as, impacts of health factors on LGBTQ2+ students or data of LGBTQ2+ students being bullied and harassed. Much of the literature review has not focused on how the Arts can transform the school communities from LGBTQ2+ exclusive to more supportive and inclusive ones.

This literature review first looks at the importance of the Arts in social justice to justify that the Arts play a vital role in transforming societies and connecting human beings together in such societies. Then the review explores LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum; the importance of belonging & identity to school community, and the impacts of the arts on students’ learning.

Role of the Arts in Social Justice

According to Power’s (2012) study, a community art project was successful in transforming and pulling the community together, especially in a social conflict society. Furthermore, an art community helps to boost self-confidence and build positive identity, and the arts have been used as a tool for addressing challenging times. Power (2012) came to the conclusion that the arts had the power to unify a conflicting community and allow groups of people to work together. An art community, as defined by the Ontario Art Councils (2002) provides a way for communities to express themselves; allows artists to participate in creative activities or events with communities; and is collaborative (the creative processes are as
important as the imaginative outcomes). Community art programs often involve people who are socially disadvantaged in some way such as ethnic minorities and at-risk youth, which includes mostly LGBTQ2+ students and people. Community arts were also said to build social capital by increasing individuals’ ability and encouragement to be engaged civilly, and building organizational roles successful actions (Power, 2012). According to Baldacchino (2009), “Greene’s is a philosophy of hope” (p. 10) and Greene’s answer to the very foundations of community is unambiguous: “Passion, then, engagements, and imagining. I want to find a way of speaking of community, an expanding community, that will take shape when diverse people, speaking as who and not what they are, come together in speech and actions, as Arendt puts it, to constitute something in common among themselves” (Greene, 1992, p. 250).

The arts allow for communities to cooperate, learn from each other, become aware, take responsibility and ownership, and above all, build with one another. Zelizer, (2003) talked about the ways community peace-building work can be used both during and post conflict, focusing on the performing arts such as theater and music. Zelizer’s article connected closely with the theme of unifying a community through arts and allowing groups of people to work together, to learn about each other, and to find commonalities that helped them to see the others not as enemies, but as human beings (Zelizer, 2003). The arts can also reclaim the meaning of a “possible world” if one is willing to go beyond the usual limit of “a being other than myself” (Marx, 1977, p.75). If one agrees with Greene when she says “it may sound paradoxical to say that the lived world can be illuminated and enlarged through engagement with imaginary worlds,” (1979, p.133) then it would be able to appreciate what she means by “possible worlds”: “if we are to deal with literacy works as works of art, we must recognize that they create alternative realities – what we have called ‘possible worlds’. These are worlds that can only be entered by persons willing to
break with the ordinary and the mundane. In some sense they have to risk uncoupling themselves from the routine, from what we think of a common-sense reality” (1979, p.133).

According to Power (2012), the arts could be a powerful tool in assisting communities to address social issues that may be otherwise challenging to address. The findings of Power’s (2012) study revealed that the arts were able to actively contribute to community cooperation, increase self-confidence in abilities, and raise awareness and education of other cultures. Kay (2000) showed that arts had a transforming role in regenerating communities at the local level, and that art could be used as an effective tool within a wider community for a development program. Moreover, Kay (2000) described one of the main points in the study: “there is an evidence to show that the art, as a medium, can enable individuals and groups to become more employable, more involved, more confident, and more active in contributing to development of their local communities” (p. 415). Lowe’s (2000) study shared some similar findings with Kay (2000), that the arts could help to build a strong relationship in a community, gather the awareness and learn about different cultures in a community.

Greene’s reflection on her reading of Moby Dick emphasized how the work of art allowed us to “experience – while we anticipate – what we could take into the present from a presumed past” (cited in Baldacchino, 2009, p. 101).

“As my present reading of Moby Dick is assimilated to past readings and past experiences, it somehow makes me rewrite my own life story, makes me see what I have never seen, recognize what I have never noticed in the themes of my own life. If it did not defamiliarize in that fashion, if my present reading only confirmed what I have always known, the resulted experience would have been routine and mechanical. My imagination would not have gone to work; I would not be wondering, questioning, re-experiencing
even now, reaching beyond where I am. Realizing how much the novel (even a paragraph I read) have made me see, I can only deeply agree that a work of art operates imaginatively by concentrating and enlarging immediate experience, by expressing the meanings imaginatively evoked. Powdering this, I think again about making works of art accessible in such a fashion to diverse young persons of different ages and with different biographies – and about the ventures into the unknown we can encourage as we provoke them to learn to learn.” (Greene, 1987, pp. 19-20)

A number of studies indicate that participation in the arts improves physical and psychological well-being (Baklien, 2000; Bygren, Konlaan & Johansson, 1996; Tunner & Peter, 2000). Guetzknow’s (2002) findings revealed the arts improved individual health. Either engaging in creative activities or attending artistic events or workshops appears to improve physical health (Guetzknow, 2002). Moreover, the arts had the ability to relieve stress and pressure (Turner & Peter, 2000). According to Tunner and Peter (2000), art engagement could help to widen and strengthen social bonds and solve a great number of social evils and issues. According to Guetzknow’s (2002) study, the arts also improved psychological well-being. Passively participating in art events offered a stimulating, stress-relieving environment which led to improved happiness and life satisfaction, while actively participating in the arts led to improved self-concept and a sense of control over one’s life (Guetzknow, 2002). On the whole, educational studies showed that kids who engaged in arts classes would do better in other subjects and an arts-integrated curriculum improves school performance (Albert, 1995; Fiske, 1999). Art is a compelling vehicle for self-awareness and self-declaration because community-based art works allow people to bring all they are, and all they value, to the work they create:
Their minds, their bodies, their histories, their relationships, their deepest meaning and beliefs (Goldbard, 2006).

Chappell and Chappell’s (2016) study showed that critical arts-based pedagogies in university classroom could build classroom communities and social inclusion in higher education, particularly through collaborative counter-narrative and problem-posing research and performance practices about minoritization in historical and contemporary society. The increasing use of arts-based pedagogies invited students to take stances, express their personalities and preferences, and ask challenging questions (Chappell & Chappell, 2016). It was suggested that classrooms need multiple models of presenting content, multiple means of expressing knowledge, and multiple ways to engage learners (Chappell & Chappell, 2016). This art-based research can be related to LGBTQ2+ inclusive classrooms and how educators can make use of the arts-based pedagogies to address these complicated gender issues in school communities or classroom communities. As Lave and Wenger (1991) defined, a classroom was a community of practice, yet it was not including all forms of knowledge and ways of learning and being. Moreover, Chappell and Chappell’s (2016) study also mentioned the roles of educators in supporting the uses of the arts by encouraging students to listen to each other and ask questions about each other’s processes and ideas. By doing this, students could construct the meaning about the curriculum through social interactions with peers, and this process allowed students to experience the curriculum from the inside (Chappell & Chappell, 2016). Through the arts, students are able to train their habits of mind that support academic depth and complexity, as well as self and relational knowledge (Chappell & Chappell, 2016).
LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Curriculum

Why does LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum matter? Because, according to Snapp, McGuire, Sinclair, Gabrion, and Russell (2015), there is a growing attention to LGBTQ2+ issues in schools, including the effort to address these issues through curriculum (as they surveyed 1232 LGBTQ2+ and straight students from 154 different California middle and high schools). Snapp et al.’s (2015) study revealed that students felt safer in general, less afraid to go to school, and experienced less incidents of harassment in an LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum compared to less supportive schools. However, in supportive curricula, mathematics, arts, drama, music, and PE were least likely classes to include LGBTQ2+ themes in lessons, as reported by participants (Snapp et al., 2015).

Snapp, Burdge, Licona, Moody, and Russell’s (2015) study learned about students’ experience of LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, which were from 26 high schools with diverse backgrounds in California. Data revealed that LGBTQ2+-inclusive curriculum was most likely to be taught in social sciences and humanities courses as stand-alone lessons. LGBTQ2+-inclusive curriculum rarely met standards of social justice education. For instance, even though students were taught about LGBTQ2+ issues in classes, teachers often failed to intervene in homophobic or transphobic bullying and harassment, and missed opportunities to teach inclusive curriculum (Snapp et al., 2015). Therefore, educators’ roles in supporting the curriculum and bringing it to practice are fundamentally important. Some students learned positive LGBTQ2+ lessons and highlighted the ways such curriculum reflected their identities and created a supportive school climate. The participants discussed that “learning about LGBTQ2+ issues in my school helps stop bullying; bullying and harassment may improve as people in my class became more aware of things ... were simply more educated afterwards, and had a little bit of an easier time talking
about LGBTQ issues” (cited in Snapp et al., 2015, p. 257). Moreover, supportive curricula “gave them a place to talk about things they might otherwise avoid talking about. What had the greatest effect was the history videos. “Seeing that LGBTQ people have been present and fighting for rights and visibility as long as any other group helped my classmates accept and understand them” (Snapp et al., 2015, p. 257).

Burdge, Snapp, Laub, Russell, and Moody (2013) asked youth focus groups about their academic experiences with LGBTQ2+-inclusive curriculum and their perceptions of the impact of such curriculum. It was reported that after LGBTQ2+-inclusive curriculum was implemented at their schools; they felt safer (as they heard less anti-LGBTQ2+ insults and experienced less LGBTQ2+-related physical harassment and bullying). There was also a positive impact on achievement and on their dreams for the future, as perceived by the student participants. Their rationale for improved achievement was that when curriculum had direct connections to their personal experiences, students developed a better sense of belonging to schools and a better understanding of the subject matter. Representation of successful LGBTQ2+ individuals in a wide range of professions and historical examples of the achievements of LGBTQ2+ individuals had an optimistic influence on these students. Many of the focus group participants shared that LGBTQ2+ lessons were not prevalent in their schools and were often limited to certain lessons in subjects such as history or English. Those lessons were taught habitually due to the efforts of individual teachers rather than a school-wide initiative to include LGBTQ2+ themes (Burdge et al., 2013).

As Douglass (2014) pointed out, many education faculties were uncomfortable with - or had lack of knowledge about - LGBTQ2+ topics. Therefore the author wanted to gather data from 279 deans of schools of education in a US-wide survey, and the findings showed that many
education faculties are continuing to be undertrained in LGBTQ2+ issues, with few institutional supports to provide them training. This study also found that many schools of education are continuing to be ill-prepared to teach potential teachers about LGBTQ2+ issues. This study also found that some deans did not know if they offered LGBTQ2+ training to their faculty staff and did not know whether they had openly LGBTQ2+ students or not. It is vitally important for such schools of education to receive this gender related training because if these schools are not well-prepared for LGBTQ2+ knowledge, how can professors or educators be open and ready to train pre-service teachers, who have the potential power to influence and change the education system in the future, to teach in a LGBTQ2+ supportive curricula?

The Toronto District School Board policy guidelines for transgender and gender non-conforming students administered staff to include positive LGBTQ2+ material in all subjects (Bowers, Hayes, Jeffers, Davila, & Wallace, 2011). As Brill and Pepper (2008) indicated children between the ages of four and six are able to adapt their ideas about tolerance of gender differences if they are taught with enough examples of gender variance stories, books, and interactions with real people in real contexts. Batchelor, Ramos, and Neiswander’s (2018) study discussed that:

“the LGBTQ2+ discussion is just as much a part of the discussion of diversity as our discussion of race or our discussion of feminism; we’re all still learning and figuring out ways to address these conversations; teaching people to be open is the number one thing you can leave a high school student with… more than, can they read a book? Or can they write a paper?...It’s about teaching them to be open, heartfelt citizens” (p.34).

Lessons using active learning techniques have proved to be effective in teaching children how to challenge others’ teasing or deal with harassing remarks about peers who are expressing
gender variance (Lamb, Bigler, Liben, & Green, 2009). Kennedy and Hellen (2010) suggested that, schools should at least introduce students to the concept of LGBTQ2+ in general, and transgender students to be specific, so that these students had a better sense of belonging to the contexts and they were recognized and able to be proud of who they were. More importantly, Swartz (2003) identified that LGBTQ2+-inclusive curriculum should not only teach tolerance and sympathy but should also encourage students to learn about the complexity, and humanity of all people, and appreciate the differences. These studies are important for students to understand and accept their LGBTQ2+ peers as their classmates not only in educational contexts but also in real life.

In discussing LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum, it is essential to study whether educational leaders or educators have the biggest influence on the actual inclusive curriculum. Frohard-Dourlent (2016) conducted detailed qualitative interviews of staff in British Columbia schools and reported that individual teachers had the power to decide how much LGBTQ2+-inclusive content was included in the various subjects being taught. The teachers interviewed often cited bullying, as the main concern for LGBTQ2+ students and the teachers spent time solving that issue rather than issues of gender stereotypes or gender conformity. Educators surveyed by Taylor et al. (2016) also identified that teachers had the biggest impact on what was taught in classes, as 59% of them stated that teachers held leadership in LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum; only 17% believed that the Ministry of Education had leadership in this area and 18% of them believed that their local school board trustees showed leadership. Educators played a number of important roles in this inclusive community. As Greene (1987) believed, educators were true artists:
“Artists are for disclosing the extraordinary in the ordinary. They are for transfiguring the commonplace, as they embody their perceptions and feelings and understandings in a range of languages, in formed substance of many kinds. They are for affirming the work of imagination – the cognitive capacity that summons up the ‘as if,’ the possible, the what is not and yet might be. They are for doing all this in such a way as to enable those who open themselves to what they create to see more, to hear more, to feel more, to attend to more facets of the experienced worlds.” (p.14)

Taylor and Peter (2011) studied Canadian high school student experiences with transphobia and homophobia in LGBTQ2+ content classes. Out of the 3,607 respondents, 42.8% stated that they had not had LGBTQ2+ content in any of their classes. Only 32.7% of respondents had experienced LBGTQ2+ content in only one class, while 13.8% had LGBTQ2+ inclusive themes in two classes. The students who reported LGBTQ2+ content were included in at least one of their classes, and 20% of them indicated that the topic was taught and included in a negative way. Furthermore, in Greytak, Kosciw, and Diaz’s (2009) study, 16% of the transgender participants reported that LGBTQ2+ related topics were included in their textbooks, reading, assignments and only a tenth of them had an opportunity to expose in an LGBTQ2+ supported curriculum that presented positive portrayals of LGBTQ2+ people, history, and events.

According to BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (2017), 19% of BC high schools students identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or not exclusively heterosexual, and 42% of BC LGBTQ2+ K-12 students reported being victims of bullying and harassment compared to 14% of non LGBTQ2+ students. In the past 12 months, LGBTQ2+ youth were seven times more likely than heterosexual youth to attempt suicide. Therefore, there appears to be a discrepancy in what the new BC curriculum values (i.e. diversity, respect of differences, human rights, etc.) and
how a great number of students feel within a given school community. More specifically, the British Columbia Ministry of Education’s new curriculum overview (2018) states:

“British Columbia’s schools include young people of varied backgrounds, interests, and abilities. The Kindergarten to grade 12 school system focuses on meeting the needs of all students. When selecting specific topics, activities, and resources to support the implementation of the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to ensure that these choices support inclusion, equity, and accessibility for all students. In particular, teachers should ensure that classroom instruction, assessment, and resources reflect sensitivity to diversity and incorporate positive role portrayals, relevant issues, and themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance. This includes diversity in family compositions and gender orientation.”

The Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia handbook named *Challenge Homophobia in Schools*, has been sent to every school in British Columbia as a resource, and, those lessons have been included formally in an accredited course. Nevertheless, critics who were from Catholic parents’ groups and parents representing Hindu and Chinese Canadian communities opposed the idea of LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum in this Social Justice elective course. This controversy and discrepancy demonstrates how it has never been easy to include LGBTQ2+ themes in public education, especially in Vietnam, where Confucianism still emphasizes traditional gender roles, sexual dimorphism, and the continuation of the family lineages (Blanc, 2005; Feng, Lou, Gao, Tu, Cheng, Emerson, & Zabin, 2012). The key point of the teaching of Confucianism (and Chinese philosophy as a whole) is the theory of Yin and Yang, the idea that life is created from two opposing complementary forces. Seeking the union between yin and yang is, thus, believed to lead to happiness and to the rightful and natural order of the
world. As men and women are represented as the two opposing forces in this philosophy, it gives rise to the cultural expectation for heterosexuality, while at the same time stigmatizing and marginalizing same-sex relationships as “unnatural” (Zhan, 2002). Moreover, same-sex marriage began to be prohibited starting from 2000 in Vietnam, and homosexuality was criminalized by the state media in 2002, which was labeled as a social evil and placed in the same category with drug use, prostitution, and gambling (Blanc, 1999; Horton, 2014; Rydstrom, 2006).

In Vietnam, there are counseling services or supporting centers for LGBTQ2+ people, however, those services were not known and used publicly. The report from Save the children in Vietnam (2012) showed that only 5.1% of LGBTQ2+ people used those services out of 53.1% people who wanted to use those services. More importantly, approximately 89.9% of LGBTQ2+ youth dropped out of schools in Vietnam, only 44.4% of them wanted to return to schools, and 10.2% of them did not have a valid identity card, hence they basically could not go to school, find a regular job, and even use medical services. These findings indicate that supports are needed for LGBTQ2+ young Vietnamese people to go back to schools as nearly half of the participants had a career goal for their futures (44.5%) and many of them (19%) had a desire to be in a position of economic stability in the future (Save the children, 2012). Despite the increasing prevalence of events such as Viet pride or The Tiffany show for LGBTQ2+ nowadays, little academic study has been done and published to support Vietnamese LGBTQ2+ youth students in school communities and heighten the awareness and understandings of Vietnamese educators about LGBTQ2+ students and issues. Therefore, there has been a gap in the literature review about LGBTQ2+ topics in educational contexts and inclusive curriculum in Vietnam.
Importance of Belonging – Identity to School Community

Most previous research on LGBTQ2+ adolescents’ experiences at school has studied their social relationships; the findings in USA consistently revealed that these youth underwent more bullying and victimization than non-LGBTQ2+ students (White, Moeller, Ivcevic, Brackett, & Stern, 2018). The findings of this study were consistent with previous research that LGBTQ2+ adolescents had negative feelings and emotions in school communities. The analyses of gender and sexual identity in this study showed that heterosexual male students experienced more frequent positive emotions and school experiences, and fewer negative emotions and bullying compared to all other groups. Student school engagement between a student and the student's school has received increasing attention in psychology literature in recent years (Seelman, Forge, Walls, & Bridges, 2015). However, little research has studied this among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ2+) students or examined whether elements such as access to safe adults, the presence of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), characteristics of a GSA, or personal involvement in a GSA might connect to school engagement (Seelman, Forge, Walls, & Bridges, 2015). The study utilized sequential multiple regression to study data from a sample of 152 LGBTQ2+ high school students from Colorado and found that the greater the number of types of safe adults that a student had access to at school, the higher sense of belonging the student had. GSA presence was not significantly associated with student school engagement. Nevertheless, those students whose schools had a larger, more active, and more supported GSA had a stronger sense of belonging to school.

Maslow, (1954), developed a theory of motivation and psychological well-being. In this theory, a person is inspired in their actions to meet a hierarchy of needs: The psychological needs, the safety needs, the belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs, and the needs for self-
actualization (Maslow, 1954). This theory can be useful for looking at LGBTQ2+ students’ motivation in a school community. The basic needs such as psychological, safety, belongingness, and love needs are not met in a school community, which might have a negative influence on at-risk groups of LGBTQ2+ students or even on heterosexual ones. According to Kosciw et al. (2016) approximately 57.6% of LGBTQ2+ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 43.3% because of their gender expression. Almost all of LGBTQ2+ students (98.1%) students heard “gay” used in a negative and offensive way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) at school; 67.4% heard these comments frequently or often, and 93.4% reported that they felt anxious and upset because of this language. What is more, 95.8% of LGBTQ2+ students heard other types of anti-LGBTQ2+ remarks (e.g., “dyke” or “faggot”), and 58.8% heard this type of language frequently or often. With lower degrees of mental and physical supports at school LGBTQ2+ students are “prone to experiences of isolation, alienation, stress, and stigmatization” (Konishi & Saewyc, 2014, p. 91), which could negatively affect LGBTQ2+ students’ motivation for education and a sense of belonging to school community even in a safe place where GSA is provided. In relation to Vietnam, this will lead to many more social evils or issues created by LGBTQ2+ people as they do not have the right and supports to go to schools like heterosexual students, and they have no alternative but to do “sex work” as a means of living in Vietnam (Save the Children, 2012, p.25).

Impacts on Students’ Learning

According to Diaz, Kosciw, and Greytak, (2010), a strong sense of school connectedness is related to students’ better psychological health and academic results. Furthermore, students who have a feeling of being valued and appreciated at a school community tend to have lower degrees of inner stress, issues, suicide attempts, and drug use (Blum & Libbey, 2004). Even
though LGBTQ2+ students are victimized and marginalized, with school and educator supports, they will perform well and have a better connection to their learning communities (Saewyc, Poon, Kovaleva, Tourand, & Smith, 2016; Diaz et al., 2010). Kosciw et al.’s (2016) and McLaren, Schurmann, and Jenkins’s (2015) studies have proved that LGBTQ2+ students who have a close sense of connection to their schools are prone to have better grades, mental health and healthier rapports with their peers. Although GSA presence was not significantly associated with student school engagement (Seelman et al., 2015), Mayberry, Chenneville, and Currie, (2011) have tried to improve LGBTQ2+ students’ sense of connection through GSAs, and they related that GSAs provided safe places that offered a sense of connectedness to the community and diminished harassment and bullying.

In summary of the various research highlighted in this literature review, the arts have a transformational power over the conflict communities and embraced marginalized groups of people (LGBTQ2+). It addition, the arts could be a creative outlet for LGBTQ2+ youth to express themselves and be a powerful tool to deliver meaningful messages of LGBTQ2+ community to the world. Moreover, the arts had the ability to offer stress-relieving environments and improved human’s psychological wellbeing. The arts also had a positive impact on students’ performances and the arts-integrated curriculum improves school performance in general. Inclusive curricula is necessarily needed for our students today as LGBTQ2+ inclusive themes have not really included and taught in classrooms. Because these inclusive curricula would bring better impacts on LGBTQ2+ students’ learning journeys and futures as they all deserve to have.
Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

Description of the Research Design

An eleven-question interview was designed to study the perspectives of Vietnamese teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ exclusive curriculum and Canadian teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum to find out how teachers can support the roles of the Arts in creating a LGBTQ2+ friendly learning environment, and how the Arts could help to create inclusive classrooms or communities for LGBTQ2+ students. The researcher made use of the features of the qualitative research methods, especially in-depth and personal interviews. The eleven-question form was used as a tool to collect data about educators’ ideas of the power of the Arts, how the Arts can transform the community, and the roles of the educators within it.

The participants were invited and participated in a one-on-one interview at a place where there was no noise distraction and the interviewees felt comfortable. Participants were asked to respond to the interview questions based on their own professional teaching experiences and personal perspectives.

Eleven interview questions were designed to explore educators’ opinions of their learning community, LGBTQ2+ inclusive community, the power of the Arts, and the educators’ roles in supporting the uses of the Arts in teaching practices. Then further personal or professional stories or ideas about the Arts for building an inclusive community were shared by the participants.

Description of the Sample

The population for this study consisted of a minimum of two Canadian educators and two Vietnamese ones who were interested in being a part of this study. There was two educator from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (HCMUE) and one from Ho Chi Minh University of
Foreign Languages and Information Technology (HUFLIT) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and two from Vancouver Island University (VIU) in British Columbia (BC), Canada.

HCMUE is one of the two largest pedagogical universities in South Vietnam, playing a leading role in teacher and lecturer training, with more than 1000 undergraduates. HUFLIT is a private university in South Vietnam which is developed from the basis of former Saigon Foreign Languages and Information Technology School, established in 1994. VIU is a Canadian public university located on Vancouver Island and coastal British Columbia, which was established in 1969. VIU plays a fundamental role in the educational, cultural, and economic life of the city of Nanaimo, British Columbia. Three universities have a wide range of faculties, flexible programs, and students from diverse backgrounds.

The criteria of the participants for this study required that the educators had at least two years of teaching experience. The participants were willing to answer the questions critically, and complete the questions form.

**Description of the Instruments Used**

Participants were asked to respond to open questions that were designed in regard to educators’ perception of an LGBTQ2+ inclusive community and how educators can make use of the Arts to create a better inclusive community for LGBTQ2+ students. The interview form consisted of eleven key questions and prompts that guided the participants to respond critically and explore various aspects of educators’ viewpoints about an inclusive community, curriculum and the power of the Arts. The interview questions started exploring the participants’ experience of teaching in an inclusive community and how they felt about that learning community. Each educator’s definition of an LGBTQ2+ inclusive community or classroom was shared. Then their opinions of the power of the Arts and whether gender issues could be explored and understood
through the Arts or not were explored. The participants were asked to choose one Art form to
make a change in their teaching styles and community and how the educators would apply those
Art forms to their teaching practices in order to support the power of the Arts in building a
community where LGBTQ2+ students were welcoming. Together with key interview questions,
there were some prompts that helped the participants expand their answers critically and vividly
not being led by the interviewer. Full details about the interview questions and prompts are given
in Appendix C.

The questions that were prepared for educators were:

1) Do you have any experience in teaching in an LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum or
   community? If yes, how do you feel about that learning community?

2) In your opinion, how do you define a LGBTQ2+ inclusive community or classroom?

3) What do you think of the powers of the Arts in general?

4) Do you think that gender issues can be explored and understood through the Arts?
   How?

5) Do you think that the Arts can help to create a more inclusive community or
   classroom for LGBTQ2+ students? How?

6) If you could choose one Art form to use to make a positive change in your community
   for your LGBT+ students, what would you choose?

7) What subject do you teach at your school/university?

8) Do you think that you could support LGBTQ2+ students through different forms of
   the Arts to your teaching practice? How might you do so? Why are Art forms
   important for supporting LGBTQ2+ students?
9) In your opinion, what are the educators’ roles in supporting the uses of the Arts in the LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum or community?

10) Do you have any further stories or ideas about the Arts for building an inclusive community that you would like to share?

11) Do you have any questions for me?

**Explanation of the Procedures Followed**

In order to select the potential participants for this study, the researcher sent recruitment emails to educators who might be interested in this study. Whoever was interested in being a part of the study sent an email back to the author expressing their interests and schedules of where and when they would like to meet for one-on-one interviews with Canadian participants. To Vietnamese educators, the interviews were arranged and recorded through Skype with interviewees’ permissions.

Participants completed the interview questions during the month of December, 2018 and January, 2019. Prior to conducting the interview, the potential participants were given a brief summary of the study and the researcher set up a recorder, papers and pens so as to be ready to record the whole conversations and take notes of important key words and what the participants placed emphasis on. Their participation was voluntary and anonymous. The participants were informed about the criteria for participation and asked to read and sign the consent form.

The participants were informed that they were not required to complete the interview and could choose not to answer and discontinue participation if the questions were not relevant and appropriate. The idea was that study data would be gathered from the interviews with a manner of being respectful to the flow of each participant's thought process and expression. The
interview processes were conducted in a quiet place or a spare classroom. Participants were asked to answer the questions sincerely and critically with a clear and loud voice.

The researcher strategically chose the time to send the recruitment emails and the brief summary of the study to VIU educators and Vietnamese ones in order not to interfere with their class time and recruit potential participants from different backgrounds and interests. Then participants were invited to conduct the interview if they were interested in the study. Two Canadian participants were interviewed individually on different days. During December 2018 and January 2019, the researcher used Skype to interview the two Vietnamese participants. Each interview was completed in approximately 15 to 30 minutes.

**Discussion of Validity**

The interview questions were specifically designed to measure educators’ perspectives on the power of the Arts and inclusive community. The questions were designed as a story told by educators’ educational experiences and perspectives from the past to the present with respect and encouragement from the researcher. Besides asking key and follow-up questions, the researcher did not give any hint to the participants before and during the interview processes so as not to influence the participants’ answers and produce a biased study. Moreover, the subjects were asked to speak slowly, loudly and clearly so that the conversations would be recorded vividly and Vietnamese educators were asked to respond to the questions in English in order to provide valid findings, which were not translated by the researcher.

In order to be certain that subjects would give reliable answers, the researcher instructed the subjects that their ideas would be kept confidential, and that their truthful answers would make the research work valid, and hence would contribute a part to enhancing the transforming power of the Arts and improving the school communities for future LGBTQ2+ students.
**Description and Justification of the Statistical Techniques Used**

The data collected was examined by using qualitative procedures. Besides written notes, the researcher transcribed everything that was shared by the participants into files in Word documents. Then the author of the study used categorization techniques to describe and differentiate the differences and similarities from the responses of Canadian and Vietnamese educators to the interview questions. The researcher had a blank sheet of paper, called a comparison report, which was divided into two parts by a line in the middle of the paper. One side was Canadian educators’ responses and the other side was Vietnamese educators’ ones. The responses were classified into themes A, B, C, or D according to the main ideas found in the transcript of the interview; for instance, theme A, B, C, or D represented school nature, teachers’ roles, students’ roles, curriculum fit, school traditions, and so on, respectively. How many responses were found as sharing the common idea for the school nature would be counted and grouped into theme A written down onto the comparison report on the Vietnamese side if the findings were from Vietnamese participants or vice versa. The process of categorizing and grouping was accomplished until all responses were included into the comparison report. After categorizing the data, the researcher compared the themes in answering for the question of how the Arts could help to build inclusive school communities for LGBTQ2+ students, the roles of educators in supporting the uses of the Arts, and gave suggestions for a better classroom or curriculum design that fitted LGBTQ2+ students’ physical and mental needs based on the participants’ educational stories and suggestions.

The study examined the perspectives of Vietnamese teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ exclusive curriculum and Canadian teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum to find out how teachers can support the roles of the Arts in creating a
LGBTQ2+ friendly learning environment, and raised the awareness of Vietnamese educators that all students are in need of an equal and safe community and how the Arts could help to create inclusive classrooms or communities for Vietnamese LGBTQ2+ students. The categorization techniques and thematic analysis were made use of for this study and determined the strength of qualitative research designs.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Description of Findings

This current study used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) ideas of six phases of thematic analysis. The researcher started to read, immerse in and become intimately familiar with the data. Important features of data that came out from the transcripts and captured both semantic and conceptual reading of the data were coded and put into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, writing-up involved weaving the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell the readers a logical and persuasive story about the data, and contextualizing it in relation to current literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When the notes were complete, the researcher looked for commonalities across the topics and framed five key themes associated with LGBTQ2+ inclusive community and the Arts: i) professional experience in an LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum, ii) definition of a LGBTQ2+ inclusive community or classroom, iii) the powers of the arts, iv) art forms, and v) applying the arts to teaching practices. These themes that emerged were connected to the line of the interview questions. There were total five educators interviewed, three from Vietnam and two from Canada.

Professional Experience in an LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Curriculum

When being asked about teaching experience, two Vietnamese educators experienced teaching in an LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum and one did not. As one Vietnamese educator responded “I actually do not have any experience in teaching an LGBTQ2+ curriculum since the LGBTQ2+ community is not widely accepted in Vietnam. However, some of my students are lesbians or gays. In my opinion, learning attitudes or outcomes of someone are not affected by their sexuality. My students, who are lesbians or gays, are tops of class like anyone else. Not to mention, some of them are quite talented, especially in art and extra curriculum activities.”
While the other two Vietnamese educators stated, “Certainly, I have not experienced LGBTQ2+ learning community in my country, Vietnam. From my point of view, this community is the same as the others” and “Yes, I do. The learning community, from my experience is similar to any normal classrooms and student groups I have taught so far, in terms of motivation, psychology and learning styles. However, there is a visible mutual understanding among students when it comes to teamwork or problem solving, which appears clearer than the other normal groups I have been teaching.”

As supported by the literature review, it was hypothesized that the Canadian participants might have greater experience teaching in a LGBTQ2+ supporting curriculum. Surprisingly, however, one teacher did not have hands-on teaching experience in this specific curriculum:

“I don’t think we have a specific curriculum, I think it’s a very liberal community here and for that reason while we are not focusing on only one group I feel like all my colleagues here and all of the resources and curricula that we are using are meant to be inclusive for all. So regardless of background, sexual orientation, and ability, I personally support that 100%. I have certainly worked with students who are gay, and I try to make it a warm community for everybody. I think that as a teacher, you kind of set standards to your classrooms, if you treat everybody well, everyone will mostly treat everyone well, I find, that is kind of my philosophy. I am really proud to be in this environment and to know that all the teachers around me and the whole community are very very much supportive of all people.”
The other Canadian educator expressed experience in teaching in this specific curriculum, and he expounded what constituted this community and the importance of teaching this specific curriculum to student teachers:

“It depends on what you mean a learning community, I certainly taught about LGBTQ2+ issues before and I am sure some of my students would identify as one of those groups so that’s what constitutes a community, then yes I had. It’s a really important curriculum to teach, especially to future teachers, so they have an understanding of what is going on and fully support it.”

Although a number of Vietnamese educators still adhered to the two traditional sexual identities, male and female Mai (2015), the findings from Vietnamese educators showed that they not only had no grudge to LGBTQ2+ students but also recognized their talents, abilities and considered them “normal” students. The Canadian participants also shared the same perspective that there were no students who were “abnormal” due to their sexual orientations and if an educator treated everyone well, their students would treat everyone well. Sometimes, youth students’ behaviors or attitudes were influenced by their teachers’ behaviors; hence, it is fundamentally important for educators to understand that everyone is equal and deserves to be in a safe and supporting learning community.

**Definition of a LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Community or Classroom**

As being asked about the definition of a LGBTQ2+ inclusive community or classroom, all the participants had their own interpretations:
“Does everything that it can to respect all its citizens, gives them full access to resources, and promotes equal treatment and opportunity,
Works to eliminate all forms of discrimination,
Engages all its citizens in decision-making processes that affect their lives,
Values diversity and responds quickly to racist and other discriminating incidents.”

“From my perspectives, LGBTQ2+ community or classroom is a group of people who are desirable to live with their own gender physically and mentally as well as the equal acceptance in the eyes of society.”

“From my point of view, an LGBTQ2+ inclusive community or classroom is a diverse population like any multicultural communities or classrooms.”

“A basic level, it is a place where everyone is welcome, no explicit discrimination, and people are not marginalized at all for their gender identities, sexual orientations, even deeper than that. Different assumptions, and different kind of values are often normalized in society, so it requires the teachers to help students to question different kind of fundamental assumptions and to question their beliefs about certain kind of things and just to shake up the assumption that they had around what is normal and what is not.”

In general, the participants’ understandings of a LGBTQ2+ inclusive community or classroom were similar to Della Rovere Proia (2016). The educators talked about a non-discriminatory community which supported the great diversity of genders and sexual orientations
and questioned students’ perspectives of what genders were socially acceptable, what were not and why. Most educators believed that LGBTQ2+ community was basically not dissimilar to non-LGBTQ2+ community; hence these students should not be treated differently from heterosexual ones and positive discrimination should be encouraged and put into practice.

The Powers of the Arts

All of the participants agreed that the arts play an important role in human’s lives in general in answer to the third question: what do you think about the power of the arts? The Vietnamese participants talked about how the arts had a healthy influence on people’s wellbeing.

“The art has a positive impact on our sense of hope, self-worth, and well-being, improves our sense of connectedness and widens our social networks, decreases depression and anxiety and reduces stress. The art also has positive impacts on human’s physical health.”

Another Vietnamese educator stated that the arts were useful in learning and teaching social science subjects:

“There is no doubt that the powers of the Arts in general play an important role in teaching and learning. For instance, I am an English teacher and I always have my students apply Arts into their learning to help them remember new words and their usages better by drawing pictures, doing role-play, singing songs, ect… Arts make everything better in positive ways.”
“I think the art is wonderful because they can really help to communicate in a successful way for all kind of people. It does not have to be the language based communication and I also think the arts can really teach empathy. Even though, I am not gay but by engaging in the art from someone who is in the community may help me get a glimpse of their perspectives and hope to understand that perspective a little bit more.”

Other educators, who were from Vietnam and Canada, interpreted the power of the arts in a very refreshing perspective:

“The Arts are the most powerful mean for cultural and historical preservation, entertainment, education, cognition improvement, and social connection because everybody can create an art and the arts can touch everybody's heart regardless of their nationality, religion, gender or age.”

“It can have a lot of power for some people. The number of people needs some kind of creative outlet to express themselves and they can find that through various kinds of art forms. Some people for whom it is not as important to have that kind of creative outlet. But the art can still inform and shape who they are, they can be touched by other people’s arts. If you are not directly engaging in doing the art yourself, you can still experience and grow from it.

Most of the educators agreed that gender issues could be explored and understood through the magical power of the arts:
“Absolutely yes, these things have already been discovered and understood in many countries, there is no reason to hide these in a “secret place”. Arts are magical enough to make these things happen, for examples we usually know that LGBTQ2+ people always have difficulties in expressing their own true feelings in their own ways because they are afraid of others’ vilification in society, so there is a way for them to do such a tough thing like this that they could base on other characters or images in some imaginable contexts that are made in some plays, stories, films to show their true colors in public and spread them out to make society understand and sympathize with LGBTQ2+ people’s sadness and suffering under society’s preconception.”

“I do, I think that you know things like films, short stories, novels, poetry. We are in an ESL community so it is really a language base art, drama, for example, can really demonstrate and show a depth of emotion and a depth of perspectives from another person which can really help to broaden people’s worldview and their perspectives on being inclusive and; conversely, writing some of those things can also help a person, who is gay, to communicate their feelings and to demonstrate part of their identities which are difficult for many people. So that sharing is huge and arts are a great way to do it. If a student gets a sense to see what is going in a person’s head and struggles that they go through then I think they can really help them to understand that person and understand that perspective.”
“I do think for sure, the arts have the capability to review those assumptions that I was
talking about to help to shake those foundations and hold the mirror up to us to really
point out what kind of things that are going on in society that we are not usually aware
of. For the art himself or herself, there are real benefits to be able to explore one’s
identity and through the art whatever medium it is those fundamental aspects of one’
identity can come forth and for some people that can be an expression of gender or
questioning in different kind of gender assumptions how they fit and how they don’t fit
with social construct.”

“Yes, I do. The LGBTQ2+ community can show the struggles in mind, the concerns, and
longing for happiness through the Arts. Besides, through the Arts, other people can show
their sympathy or support to the LGBTQ2+ community.”

These findings supported the studies of (Guetzkow, (2002); Power (2012); and Kay
(2000); Lowe (2000) who have similarly noted the benefits of engaging actively or passively in
the art activities and the importance of the art in social justice and school transformation. This
data also supports the role of the arts as a catalyst for empathy and transformational change in
relation to marginalized students (i.e. LGBTQ2+), and dominant groups of students (i.e.
heterosexual).

**Art Forms**

When it came to choosing an art form, the participants were interested to talk and share
the art forms that they wanted to use to make a positive change in their own learning and
teaching communities:
“Music. It can help learners develop understanding and emotional sympathy for human beings’ stories in general and LGBTQ’s life. Arts of all forms trigger students’ ability to imagine their feelings in someone else’s condition, to listen patiently, to compassionate and to cooperate with mutual respect.”

This participant shared that music or songs are important for supporting LGBTQ2+ students because they can help them open up their feelings, motivate mutual sharing and develop understanding as well as behavior towards LGBTQ2+ community. Other educators offered the role of film, theater, novels, and painting as key art forms for inclusivity:

“Movies, especially acting. I choose this because this is one of the most common art forms nowadays and there are so many people who are accessible to it easily through means of communications. This will be a big advantage for LGBTQ2+ to let others know more about themselves.”

“Novel and film. That perspective can be more common in films, I think it is hard to find that in literature; but film will be a good way, I can think of several examples of films that demonstrate this perspective and film is visual linguistic, and can present this perspective in a meaningful way and very accessible. Sometimes, novels are not accessible hard to read, sometimes we don’t understand this word or this sentence but a film, you know, if you can get into the language and a little bit see a visual of it, it can be
really assessable. That would be a useful way. Again, I would love to use drama in the class. People can explore how it feels to be someone while to be in their shoes.”

Another Canadian educator also mentioned about film and novel, however, he preferred to choose whatever medium that his students felt most comfortable with to express themselves the most:

“Novel and film. If it was me teaching and I had to pick one, I would be much more comfortable with something like film or novel that can tell a liberal kind of story and if I had to pick one to teach with, it would be probably novel. But in terms of students expressing or exploring their own identity and sexual orientation, I would really hesitate to choose for them.”

“Painting. I would choose painting since it is the most suitable art form for all of my students.”

The educators found it challenging when being asked to choose one art form that they could use to make a transformational change in their communities. Movies and drama were the art form chosen by most participants because it could help to deliver the meaning of the LGBTQ2+ themes in a powerful and meaningful way. Novels sometimes are hard for the global readers or audiences to understand because it is a linguistic base; nevertheless, LGBTQ2+ themes can be broadly understood or interpreted through the lively and natural ‘language’ of music, movie, and painting.
Applying the Arts to Teaching Practices

Every individual educator has his or her own philosophy of learning and teaching. An English language educator expressed that melodies and songs could strengthen the relationship between students regardless of their sexual orientations and educators.

“By using music and plays as additional teaching materials in English language classroom to develop topics for speaking and writing activities, the teacher can understand learners’ feelings and interests about the themes or target topics and students and teachers can also share their ideas/perspective about the characters/theme relating LGBTQ2+ issues.”

Natural science subjects are normally challenging for both educators and students to study and teach, and it is especially harder to include a sensitive theme of LGBTQ2+ into it. A Vietnamese general science educator indicated that:

“When I teach some topics related to gender issues, I might ask my students to show their understandings and attitudes to the LGBTQ2+ community through any forms of Art. As a result, I might know whether my students have poor knowledge about the LGBTQ2+ community or show their sexual discrimination against the LGBTQ2+ students. Then, I might ask my students to do some projects which can support the LGBTQ2+ community such as design a poster, make a film, etc.”
There are various ways to include social themes into an English language classroom through different art forms (Muciaccia, 2012). Another Vietnamese English language instructor revealed that:

“I think I can support my LGBTQ2+ students through different Art Forms by applying some techniques like drawing, singing, doing role-play in teaching. They are so necessary simply because they can indicate something that they want to tell others with a picture, a gesture or a posture when they are acting, maybe with a lyrics of a song they like without using their own words in some special situations.”

A Canadian philosophy educator shared that he did not have an opportunity to apply the art into his teaching practices yet:

“I think I could certainly do more. I tend not to incorporate any art based kind of things in my classes. Partly due to the nature of subject matter, and my understanding of how the discipline work. I am sure other people with the same discipline find more place for art but, it is something I thought from time to time but I have not really made a lot of efforts to incorporate.”

Educators’ Roles

According to Simpson, Aycock, and Jackson (2005), teacher is as an artist, a wise mother, a navigator, a gardener, an educational pioneer, a servant, a social engineer, a composer, a wise physician, a builder, a leader, a classroom teacher. Teachers play a fundamentally important role
in building welcoming learning communities. As an English language educator said educators should be “advisers and supporters in the LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum or community.”

The participant talked more about challenges that today’s educators encounter. It is not only about teaching methodologies or styles but more for how to educate a student to be a good person:

“Educators need to be a pioneer towards eradicating the double standard and vilifications regarding LGBTQ2+ students, always remember this thing, no matter who they are, they are still my students. Educators themselves must become people who have the ability to inspire their students to open their mind to various things in this world and at the same time always make an opportunity for every student show their own talents to prove themselves in front of others. Be the person who can fade the border named ‘gender’ away.”

The Canadian educator talked about the passion for the art of a teacher and the moral leadership in a classroom. To her philosophy, they were the two most important roles in an inclusive classroom:

“Well, in Canada, the teacher is meant to create the safe environment for everyone. As far as the art goes, any art that the teacher is passionate about can be useful. I mean I am not a visual artist. A painting or a song writer, they can bring a bit of that in, if they are passionate about that, they can get their students passionate about that too. That leadership between moral leadership and artistically passionate direction as leadership are the two roles that are most significant in the classrooms.”
Another Canadian educator held a practical viewpoint that educators, in general, were not individually responsible for supporting the uses of the arts in the LGBTQ2+ community; however, supporting and protecting marginalized students and creating safe spaces for the arts in school communities were essentially important:

“I think teachers don’t have that responsibility; I think teachers have a responsibility to support all students, and especially students who are marginalized in various different kinds of ways. I don’t think there is a responsibility necessarily to do that through the art, I think the art can be valuable and if the teachers choose to use that path then that is great but I don’t think all the teachers have to use the art to support LGBTQ2+.

Making sure there are spaces in school where people who want to do art can do formal classes or extra curricula, kind of thing. I think it is important for all teachers to create spaces in school where that can happen when it is possible.”

These findings supported the roles of the educators and revealed that not only one individual educator is responsible for the change; it is impossible for a single person to make a change. The transformational change of curriculum and school communities is in need of supports, understanding, and acknowledgment not only from educators but also students, school administrators, and parents.

In summary, all of the educators who participated in this study were aware of the LGBTQ2+ students in their own classrooms or communities and they acknowledged the presence of those talented students. All Vietnamese and Canadian participants agreed that an
inclusive community was not too much different from a “normal” community as fairness, inclusiveness, and liberation were on the list of priorities. There was a growing consensus among Canadian and Vietnamese educators about the need for greater gender diversity in schools, inclusion of different art forms to teaching methodologies and practices, and the power of the arts in transforming the communities.

Nevertheless, Canadian and Vietnamese participants tended to hold different perspectives on LGBTQ2+ people and community, and the passion for embracing and supporting this community, as Vietnamese educators do not have professional training for this sensitive subject during teacher education program in universities or at workplaces. Moreover, in Vietnam, inclusive curricula are still very new ideas and Vietnamese educators mostly address this based on their little personal experience and societal understanding about LGBTQ2+ related issues. While in Canada, inclusive curricula are part of the national curriculum and pre-service educators are actually trained to study and teach in these curricula. Most importantly, perhaps, human rights are not the main focus of attention in the Vietnam education system. That might lead to the ignorance and hesitancy for teaching inclusive curriculum and supporting LGBTQ2+ students and community over the past years.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Lily Briscoe, an unmarried woman painter, sees the sea-surrounded Hebrides world quite differently than does the analytical Professor Ramsay. Both viewpoints are at odds with those of the various children, the aged poet, or the lighthouse keeper. When the characters are seen to view things differently, this phenomenon may make the readers conscious of the inadequacy of some of the patterns or interpretations they themselves have produced along the way. They may become self-reflective.

Greene (2000, p. 97)

Reflection on What I have Learned

As I started working on this project, I believed that I could provide a source to help educators and others learn about the LGBTQ2+ community and how the arts could impact the social mainstream, learning community and inclusive curricula. In addition, I have come a long way to open myself to the world and to this topic as I obtained a great deal of support from my colleagues and my professors. Even though I have a strong passion and increasing awareness for this topic and for this community, I have not categorized myself as an expert in the subject of LGBTQ2+ and art education; there is still a lot for me to learn and relearn. During hours of reading and researching about this study, I have come to love this subject more as it connected to my past personal and professional experience with LGBTQ2+ youth students and people. “Making more and more connections in their own experience, reflecting on their shared lives, taking heed of the consequences of the actions they performed [men and women] would become aware of more and more alternatives, more and more experimental possibilities; and this meant an increased likelihood of achieving freedom” (Greene, 1988, pp. 42-43).
My journey to Canada for higher education broadened a new horizon for the concept of gender diversity. As I reflected back to my schooling in Vietnam, I was greatly impacted by the heteronormativity belief from Vietnamese educators and educational leaders, and the concept of gender binary influenced many policies, practices and curricula that has been existing in schools; hence I have never spared a thought for gender issues for more than twenty years of attending and working in schools. I did recognize that some simple things, such as, lining up as boys or girls in PE classes or activities specifically designed for boys or girls might make some students feel unwelcoming, and I did not like the idea of being arranged or assigned according to our biological sexes. Brill and Pepper (2008) talked about the distinction between a person’s biological sex (an individual’s reproductive system) and gender characteristics (an individual’s personal identification). These are two totally different things, for example, “you probably know a male (gender identity) who is gentle and emotional (style of behavior) and who is heterosexual (sexual orientation); or you may know a person you perceive to be female, but who actually perceives herself as androgynous (gender identity), who has long hair, wears miniskirts, is a high power executive (style of behavior) and who is bisexual (sexual orientation)” (Brill and Pepper, 2008, p.13). Therefore, it is not a great idea to judge and assign a person’s gender identity by his or her biological sex or presentation.

The literature and data of the current study reflects the important role of the Arts in social justice, and how effectively the LGBTQ2+ curricula worked when implemented in many schools in Canada; however, not a lot of LGBTQ2+ curricula have been put into practice in Vietnamese school contexts. Moreover, there has been a gap in the current literature about how the arts could be used to support LGBTQ2+ inclusive learning and teaching environments and how powerful the arts are to transform a learning community. This study explored Canadian and Vietnamese
educators’ perspectives on LGBTQ2+ inclusive community and curricula, how the arts could help to create inclusive classrooms or communities for LGBTQ2+ students, and their roles within it. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How can the Arts help to create inclusive communities for LGBTQ2+ students?
2. What are the educators’ roles in supporting the roles of the Arts in the LGBTQ2+ communities?
3. What art piece will best reflect the result of this study?

Limitations

During the transcribing and reflecting period, I have come to realize that the interview questions were missing some important points that I had not thought of before. For example, educators’ suggestions for a more inclusive community within his or her own contexts, and what actions educators might take to create or protect an inclusive community and curricula for these students, was not included and may have added some important data to this research.

One of the main challenges of this study was to recruit and interview the total of three Vietnamese participants via Skype, as the researcher was in Canada. It was difficult to get more participants from different learning communities. There might have been more interested educators whom I did not have an opportunity to talk to. This led to a small sample of participants for the study. Therefore, the results could not be comprehensive enough for a full generalization to a wide variety of contexts. Moreover, all of the conversations between the researcher and Vietnamese participants were through the internet. This also led to a distinct lack of enthusiasm and interest in the subject and interview questions and processes.

Another limitation was, as mentioned earlier, the interview questions that were conducted within a short period of time with only 11 questions, which might not have covered enough
necessary areas for the researcher to get more accurate results. Furthermore, the researcher has limited experience in conducting interview questions and in collecting the data for a research paper. As a result, this study may contribute a modest view of the importance of the art in social justice and how the arts can help to create a LGBTQ2+ inclusive community.

Suggestions for educators and parents

Parents’ Acceptance Really Matters

According to Save the children (2012), most participants reported that they had to leave home because of unhappy family situations such as, divorced parents, lacking parent cares, and/or living under custody of grandparents. By studying children’s motives in leaving home, the data revealed that no parent wanted to abandon their child because of their sexual orientation; only one participant reported being expelled due to sexual identity and orientation. As a parent of a twenty three years old transwoman shared, “it breaks my heart when I think of the dark and lonely nights that he spent wondering and worrying how to deal with it all. For nearly 10 years my child traveled down this emotionally painful journey alone. And I, the mother, could not see!” (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 48)

Parents always want the best things for their child; nevertheless, due to the pressure of traditional grandparents and relatives, parents often feel that they have no alternative but to force their children to follow social norms and expectations. LGBTQ2+ teenagers were prone to feel empty and their emotional life thrown into turmoil during the puberty period by having no one to share and understand their different sexual identity and orientation, especially in rural areas in Vietnam, where information of sexual studies were hard to find (Save the children, 2012). As a gay youth shared that “in the beginning I was very worried about my sexual orientation, thinking only me having this inclination; but when I arrived in SaiGon, I met so many friends just like me.
Why couldn’t I live just like them? So I have lived true to myself since then.” (Save the children, 2012, p. 24)

Brill and Pepper’s (2008) words shone a light to the current study that “there is no greater possible source of love in your life than your children. Your children base their world upon your love and acceptance to them.” (p. 49). During the post-interview reflection process, the researcher realized an important parental factor that may have been missed in supporting the uses of the art in school communities. The two questions suggested by Brill and Pepper (2008, p. 49) could be used as a parental focus: “How do I need to grow to allow me to unconditionally love my child, even when my child is not as I expected they would be?” and “what needs to change in me so that my focus can be on helping to smooth the way for my child, to minimize the trauma they experience, to make their life as easy and as joyful as possible?”

Your Child’s Happiness Matters

Brill and Pepper’s (2008) findings revealed that improvement was astonishing when LGBTQ2+ children were allowed to express themselves in the ways that they felt most natural and comfortable, and lived as who they truly were by their own parents. A parent of a 12-year-old transgirl shared that:

“I did not know what to do. Our son asked us over and over again to call him she. I just could not bring myself to do it. Finally, our family therapist asked - is it making him happy for you to insist on calling him a boy? Of course the answer was no. but then when he asked me if it would make my son happy if I called him she – the answer was a clear yes. He then asked me what was more important to me than my child’s happiness. That was a tough one. I started to cry. I realized that my fear of ridicule coupled with my fear of ridicule he would suffer was causing me to deny him true happiness.” (p.51)
Schools’ Supports

As inspired by Brill and Pepper’s (2008) a step-by-step guide, there are a number of simple things that every school around the world can do to make a dramatic change in transforming a learning institution to become more inclusive and welcoming to all students. This concluding chapter offers a summary of this guide to enhance the work of this present research:

Creating a Supportive School Culture

It is challenging to create an inclusive school culture. A school must understand the core values of inclusiveness and consistently reinforce this message at all levels. All the staff members, from teacher, administrator, coach, bus driver, parent, security, food service to parents and students, should acknowledge and understand the school’s commitment to nondiscrimination policies on “treating every one with respect, valuing and affirming differences, and confronting harassment and discrimination of any kind.” (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 163). Moreover, as this research highlights, LGBTQ2+ students’ artworks, logo, paintings and/or rainbow flags could be decorated in the school communities so as to create a friendlier and more inclusive zone for marginalized groups of LGBTQ2+ students.

Accepting Zero Tolerance for Discrimination

Schools could make a persuasive and powerful announcement of nondiscrimination policy. It should be guaranteed that all educators, families, and students are acutely conscious of the school’s policy of inclusiveness:

- “Including a copy of the policy in the staff training and orientation for every new employee, contractor, and teacher. This includes specialists, substitutes, bus drivers, and before- and after-school staff.”
• Discussing the implementation of the policy to help all the employees understand what it means to provide safety to gender-variant and transgender students.

• Including the policy in all written handbook or orientation materials provided to each family in the school.

• Discussing the policy each school year with every child as part of the curriculum and introduction to the school year.

• Posting the policy in strategic locations around the school.”

(Brill and Pepper, 2008, p. 164)

**Updating Policies and Forms**

Updating all written forms to reflect gender inclusive language is a simple task performed by administrators but it would make a dramatic change in enforcing the new policies. For example: a form that allows students to name their own gender identities.

**Washrooms**

Washrooms could be the scariest place to LGBTQ2+ students as they only say male or female use only. A parent of a 10-year-old transboy shared that

“Our son has a huge fear of bathrooms. This came from his stepmom. She kept scaring him about going into the men’s bathrooms when he was young. Now he won’t go into them on his own. He passes fully as male – but he will risk not going rather than go into a men’s room. Everywhere we go he looks for single-stall bathrooms that do not say male or female. This can actually be a very big deal if we are out without his dad to escort him into the men’s room.”

(Brill and Pepper, 2008, p. 100)
This issue is very complex and hard to address as it requires financial supports and agreements of the whole school community. As the researcher personally experienced at VIU non-gender washrooms with a logo of a rainbow of the LGBTQ2+ community, can make students feel safer and more welcome to the campus. In fact, it does not require much effort to create these inclusive washrooms; instead of saying male or female, they could be named as ‘non-gender washroom’ or ‘everyone is welcome’ or a LGBTQ2+ artwork or logo or rainbow flag can be hung in the washroom for the sake of our students and child’s safety and identity.

**Genders in the Classrooms**

A parent of a 6-year-old gender-variant boy stated that “all the assumptions of school-age kids are so hard for my child – that pink is for girls blue is for boys, etc. (Brill and Pepper, 2008, p. 178). In addition, Frohard-Dourlent’s (2016) study proved that teachers hold the power in classrooms to decide how much LGBTQ2+ themes could be included in the actual curriculum. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to understand the core values of a gender inclusive classroom and community and in order for educators to feel comfortable with this idea. Teacher training, inclusive artworks, and art-based teaching methodologies should be established and included in the school curriculum. There are a number of options for teachers to incorporate “gender-aware language and curriculum” into teacher training materials as inspired by Brill and Pepper (2008):

- “Using gender-neutral language as much as possible. This usually creates awkwardness at first, saying “children” instead of “boys and girls”; “what is that person doing?” instead of “what is that woman doing?”; “That belongs to Catherine” rather than to “him” or “her”. With practice, using gender-neutral
language becomes less awkward. Take care not to specify the gender of animals, as well.

• Respect the privacy of your students. Follow their lead. If you are ever in doubt about a student’s gender, clarify it with them in private. Remember that it is a student’s prerogative not to disclose their transgender status to you or the class.

• Ask the class to create new pronouns and language to use in speech and writing. Examples of current usage in the transgender community are nongendered pronouns such as hir, s/he, and ze.

• Create a lesson plan called “In the classroom we support gender variance by…” and put it up on the wall.”

(pp. 179-181)

**Recommendation for Further Research**

One of the purposes of this study was to explore educators’ perspectives on LGBTQ2+ themes and the roles of the arts in transforming school communities. Much of the literature review focused on how to increase the sense of belonging in schools and how important the arts are to social justice. In this study, educators’ voices were heard and the data showed that educators cared about LGBTQ2+ students and this community. Similar research and interviews could be done with LGBTQ2+ students to expand the definitions of inclusive communities and examine how the arts could affect this community through their own voices. In addition, it would be compelling to follow up with the participants and the communities, where art forms were used to make a change, to see the positive impacts of the arts on those specific contexts.

It would also be interesting to have parents’ voices and perspectives on this topic. This is especially important to empower LGBTQ2+ students and community through parents’ lens and
supports. A subsequent research question could be: how can the arts transform Vietnamese parents’ negative prejudice and perspectives of LGBTQ2+ community?

Art-based research and four focus groups - parents, LGBTQ2+ students, heterosexual students, and educators - could be another interesting research to study.

Conclusion

The data from this study reveals that LGBTQ2+ students and communities have come to educators’ attention and has the potential to inform the natures of school communities in both contexts - Canada and Vietnam. Hopefully, after the interviews, the educators, from the two countries - along with other viewers of this research - will have some refreshing ideas for their own teaching practices to support LGBTQ2+ inclusive communities and curricula and the uses of the arts in such contexts.,

The research has made the author realize how important the arts are in our professional and personal lives. This is not only for LGBTQ2+ students but also for everyone. The data that came out from the interviews with Vietnamese educators has also shifted the researcher’s previous hypothesis that Vietnamese participants had not spared a thought for LGBTQ2+ students and the positive power of the arts. However, inclusive curriculum is still a new concept to Vietnamese educators and, hopefully, through this research and many others that follow, LGBTQ2+ inclusiveness in education will no longer be a restricting new notion to Vietnamese educators or the education system in the near future.

In the end, I, as the researcher for this study, have learned a living lesson that as an educator, we should constantly reflect on the actions that we take, decisions that we make, ask questions that we doubt. We must also be willing to challenge and fight against injustice and discrimination.
After hours of reflection upon the data and the researcher’s personal experiences, a sunflower with colors of the traditional scheme of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet was designed based on the rainbow colors, which represent the LGBTQ2+ community. This artwork was personally-designed by the researcher to reflect the result of this study. A seven-colored sunflower - that is always looking toward the bright light of the sun and has a stiff upright stalk - represents the LGBTQ2+ community looking towards the equal light of rights and justice, and who stands tall and proud of who they are. The current literature review showed that LGBTQ2+ youth faced many barriers in school communities; however, the data revealed a hope that this sensitive issue has been receiving attention from educators and educational leaders as they study and adapt the policies and curricula to become more inclusive. In summary, as reported by the participants, the educators are advisors, pioneers, supporters, and moral leaders in creating and supporting the uses of the arts in LBGTQ2+ communities. Furthermore, by applying the art forms, such as, music, plays, posters, films, drawing, role-play acting, singing, and pictures to teaching practices and curriculum, the educators can help to create inclusive classrooms and/or learning institutions through different art forms. Music, movies – acting, novels, films, and paintings were art forms chosen by the participants to make a positive change in their communities. The researcher of the current study uses music and painting as artistic mediums for creating, encouraging, and supporting an LGBTQ2+ inclusive community and curriculum. Overall, the results supported the literature, but some terms were used differently for expression; and, all the participants agreed that the arts could bring a transformational power and change to many different learning communities, and that the building of a liberal and inclusive community is not anyone’s individual responsibility, clearly, it is everyone’s duty.
The artwork that reflects the essence of the study
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Appendix A

Teacher Recruitment Letter

LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Communities’ Transformation through the Arts

Cong Duc Pham

Principle Investigator
Cong Duc Pham,
Master of Education Student
Vancouver Island University

Student Supervisor
Nadine Cruickshanks, Ph.D.
Department of Education
Vancouver Island University

The City of Nanaimo, Canada

Dear .........,

I am Cong Duc Pham and am currently a graduate student at Vancouver Island University, Canada. I am writing this email with regards to the invitation to participate in a research study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Leadership in 2019. My study’s aims, entitled “LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Communities’ Transformation through the Arts,” are twofold: i) to explore the perspectives of Vietnamese teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ exclusive curriculum and Canadian teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum to find out how teachers can support the roles of the Arts in creating a LGBTQ2+ friendly learning environment, and ii) raise the awareness of Vietnamese educators that all students are in need of an equal and safe community and how the Arts could help to create inclusive classrooms or communities for LGBTQ2+ students. My hope is that my research will make a valuable contribution towards the role of the Arts to support LGBTQ2+ students.
With your approval, I would like to conduct a short interview with you about your opinions of how educators could make positive impacts on their inclusive university/school communities through the role of the Arts.

I will host the interview with you at a mutually agreed upon time and location. This will likely be at your office or quiet areas at VIU library, Nanaimo, Canada during a time that is convenient for you, or we can conduct a Skype interview if this is more desirable or applicable to you (i.e. you are living in Vietnam). I will ask you to create a pseudonym rather than using your real name in my study. I will also refrain from using any identifying information about you or your university/school. The information that is shared by you will be kept private and only the author and the supervisor of this study will have access to this information.

I am contacting you for this study because I think your teaching and living experience as an educator can be of great contribution to the findings of my research topic. If you are interested in this topic, please let me know if we can schedule a phone call to discuss the interview process in greater detail. The interview consists of responding to 11 questions and should last for approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

If you would like additional information about this study, please reply to this email or phone me. Agreement to be contacted or request for more information does not obligate you to participate in the interview process.

Thank you for considering taking time to participate in this study. Your response is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Cong Duc Pham
MEDL Student
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
Appendix B

Consent Form for Interview Research

LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Communities’ Transformation through the Arts

Cong Duc Pham

Principle Investigator
Cong Duc Pham, Master of Education Student
Vancouver Island University

Student Supervisor
Nadine Cruickshanks, Ph.D.
Department of Education
Vancouver Island University

Purpose of the Study

I am a student in the Master of Education in Educational Leadership at Vancouver Island University (VIU). My study’s aims, entitled “LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Communities’ Transformation through the Arts,” are twofold: i) to explore the perspectives of Vietnamese teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ exclusive curriculum and Canadian teachers, who are teaching in a LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum to find out how teachers can support the roles of the Arts in creating a LGBTQ2+ friendly learning environment, and ii) raise the awareness of Vietnamese educators that all students are in need of an equal and safe community and how the Arts could help to create inclusive classrooms or communities for LGBTQ2+ students. My hope is that my research will make a valuable contribution towards the role of the Arts to support LGBTQ2+ students.

Study Procedures

Research participants are asked to complete a face-to-face or Skype research interview. If you agree, you would be asked questions concerning your teaching experiences. The questions will focus on your perspectives of the power of the Arts in terms of creating LGBTQ2+ inclusive communities, the roles of educators in supporting the roles of the Arts, your suggestions of what
forms of the Arts would bring more success, and how to enhance the roles of educators in helping LGBTQ2+ students. With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded. Your participation in the interview would require approximately 20-30 minutes of your time.

- By returning this consent form to Cong Duc Pham, you consent to participate in the study.
- During the interview, I will read a scripted introduction outlining the purpose of the study and then ask you some questions concerning your experiences and perspectives on the roles of the Arts for supporting a LGBTQ+ inclusive community.
- The interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location – it can be at your office, quite areas at VIU library, Nanaimo, Canada or Skype interview.
- You will be asked to create a pseudonym and will be referred to by this name in the study.
- The information you share will be recorded and transcribed for analysis, and the results will be presented in my thesis paper.
- You will receive a copy of your transcribed response, and you can revise or remove content before your responses are published in my thesis paper.

**Potential Risks**

Although I assure that I will keep your identifying information confidential, there is a possibility that people may know who you are through your quotes. Sexuality and gender could be considered sensitive topics, therefore, there is also a possibility of being anxious, uncomfortable, or stressed while participating in this study.

Because of the small sample size, some participants may know the other participants if they are from the same faculty. However, the author of the present study will try to select participants from different faculty to gather more valid findings.

**Potential Benefits**

As a participant, you have an opportunity to contemplate how important the Arts are to your profession, and your students, especially LGBTQ2+ students.

After engaging in conversation through this interview, you may find more fulfilment in your role as an instructor and discover more creative teaching methods relating to the Arts to
support vulnerable LGBTQ2+ students. This interview process may also further validate and/or expand your contributions in this regard.

Confidentiality

All records of your participation would be kept confidential. Individual names will not be recorded, and pseudonyms will be used in place of real names. Only my supervisor and I will have access to information in which you are identified. With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded and later transcribed into writing. At your request, you will be provided a copy of the transcript and invited to make changes to the transcript as you wish (e.g. if you would like to withdraw - or add to - a particular statement you made during an interview). Electronic data will be stored on a password-protected USB. Signed consent forms and paper copies of interview transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home. The research data will be stored in a password-protected USB driver and only the author and the supervisor will have access to the data. Data will be deleted and shredded after one year of the completion of this study, around April 20, 2020.

For Skype interviews, with your permission, iFree Skype Recorder will be used to record participants’ responses. This is a tool governed by the laws of the State of New York, so privacy and confidentiality are ensured. For face-to-face interviews, with your permission, the data will be recorded and saved on the researcher’s recording app, called voice memo, in his phone, where the data is not connected to the icloud. Then the data will be moved and stored in a password-protected USB driver. After being moved, the data will be deleted permanently from the phone.

Results

The results of this study will be published in my Master’s thesis which may be published online in VIU library’s VIUSpace. The findings may also be presented at the annual Master of Education research conference in March 2019.

Contact for Information about the study

If you have any questions or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me, Cong Duc Pham by telephone or my email
Consent

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the interview at any time where practicable, for any reason, and without explanation. If you choose to withdraw from the study after the interview, you may withdraw up until two weeks after you have viewed the transcript. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provided during the interview would be withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

I have read and understand the information provided above, and hereby consent to participate in this research under the following conditions:

I consent to participate in this research.  

I consent to be identified by a pseudonym in the products of the research.  

I consent to the interview being audio recorded.  

I consent to be quoted in the products of the research.  

Participant Name ______________________________________________________________

Participant Signature ____________________________________________________________

Date _________________________________________________________________________

I, Cong Duc Pham, promise to adhere to the procedures described in this consent form.

Principle Investigator Signature __________________________ Date _______________

Concerns about Your Treatment in the Research
If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Board by telephone at 250-740-6631 or by email at reb@viu.ca.
Appendix C

Interview Questions for Educators

12) Do you have any experience in teaching in an LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum or community? If yes, how do you feel about that learning community?
13) In your opinion, how do you define a LGBTQ2+ inclusive community or classroom?
14) What do you think of the powers of the Arts in general?
15) Do you think that gender issues can be explored and understood through the Arts? How?
16) Do you think that the Arts can help to create a more inclusive community or classroom for LGBTQ2+ students? How?
17) If you could choose one Art form to use to make a positive change in your community for your LGBT+ students, what would you choose?
18) What subject do you teach at your school/university?
19) Do you think that you could support LGBTQ2+ students through different forms of the Arts to your teaching practice? How might you do so? Why are Art forms important for supporting LGBTQ2+ students?
20) In your opinion, what are the educators’ roles in supporting the uses of the Arts in the LGBTQ2+ inclusive curriculum or community?
21) Do you have any further stories or ideas about the Arts for building an inclusive community that you would like to share?

22) Do you have any questions for me?

23) Prompts:
   – Can you tell me more about it?
   – Could you be more specific about it?
Appendix D

Interview Protocol – Introduction and Conclusion


LGBTQ2+ Inclusive Communities’ Transformation through the Arts

Cong Duc Pham

Principle Investigator
Cong Duc Pham,
Master of Education Student
Vancouver Island University

Student Supervisor
Nadine Cruickshanks, Ph.D.
Department of Education
Vancouver Island University

Scripted Interview Introduction

This is a voluntary interview and you may withdraw from the study at any point. If you feel uncomfortable answering a question, please feel free to skip it. With your permission, the information you share will be audio-recorded and be kept completely confidential. Your real name will never be used in the study. You will only be referred to by your chosen pseudonym in this study. I will not include any identifying information from you in my study.

Thank you for taking time to be interviewed. Your participation will help me to have a greater understanding of how LGBTQ2+ learning communities can be supported through the Arts. It is my hope that through this data we will be able to develop more supportive school communities for everyone.

Scripted Interview Conclusion

Thank you for taking time to answer the questions. I will be transcribing your answers and will provide a copy of your response. You can review, revise, or remove content as you see appropriate. The results of my study will be made available to you upon completion.
Please feel free to contact me at any time. Again, thank you for your precious time and your participation in my study.