

## **LGBTIQ+ Educators: Reflections from the Field**

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This paper reflects upon the author's research with LGBTIQ+ educators in schools and universities. This work has been carried out within Australia and internationally and is part of broader studies of gender, sexuality, and education. In this paper, I trace my work over time, focussing upon key issues that emerge from my research and the field writ large, including the negotiation of private and professional identities; disclosure and coming out; and the pressures of working in normative environments that can work to silence gender and sexual diversity. In doing this work, however, I also seek to think differently about the kinds of stories that are told by and about LGBTIQ+ educators, and frame what can appear a field dominated by stories of difficulty and trauma as part of what Sara Ahmed terms an 'unhappy queer archive'. To do this means to understand queer educator unhappiness as generative, as a lever that works to challenge cis-heteronormativity within compulsory and higher education, to ask how we can achieve 'happiness' within a system where queer existence is contingent upon acceptance by a sometimes reluctant majority.

The paper therefore locates LGBTIQ+ teacher educators' experiences within the current political milieu, where in Australia, gender and sexual diversity is repeatedly positioned as a threat to education and, in some places, to civilisation itself. At the same time there is increasing social and political acceptance of LGBTIQ+ identities, with recent national legislation legitimising same sex marriages, and in Victoria, recent reforms mean that transgender people can change their gender on birth certificates. The possibilities for existing as a LGBTIQ+ educator in contemporary times will be examined, and I will draw upon data from previous and current work with LGBTIQ+ educators that illustrates their frustrations, joys, resilience, hopes and fears as well as how educational institutions work to enable and constrain queer educator identities.