

---

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation

---

5-2021

## Heteronormativity and Teacher Effectiveness: Parent's Perspectives of Importance

Ryan Marcus Asprion

Xavier University of Louisiana, [rasprion@xula.edu](mailto:rasprion@xula.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.xula.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Asprion, Ryan Marcus, "Heteronormativity and Teacher Effectiveness: Parent's Perspectives of Importance" (2021). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation*. 51.  
<https://digitalcommons.xula.edu/etd/51>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by XULA Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation by an authorized administrator of XULA Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [vbarraza@xula.edu](mailto:vbarraza@xula.edu), [dthimons@xula.edu](mailto:dthimons@xula.edu), [kmair1@xula.edu](mailto:kmair1@xula.edu).

HETERONORMATIVITY AND TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS: PARENT'S PERSPECTIVES  
OF IMPORTANCE

by

Ryan Marcus Asprion

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

Division of Education and Counseling

MAY 2021

© Copyright by RYAN MARCUS ASPRION, 2021

All Rights Reserved  
Xavier University of Louisiana

New Orleans, Louisiana

Xavier University of Louisiana

New Orleans, Louisiana

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

---

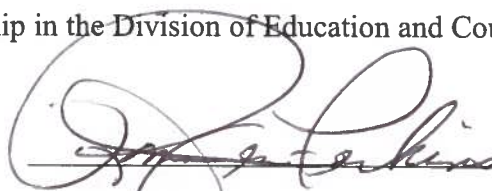
DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

---

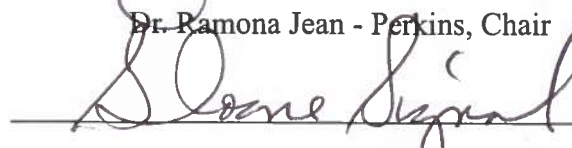
This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

RYAN MARCUS ASPRION

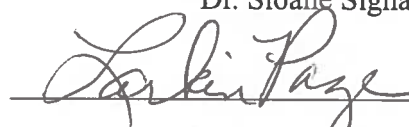
Has been approved by the examination committee for the dissertation requirement for the  
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership in the Division of Education and Counseling,  
May 2021.



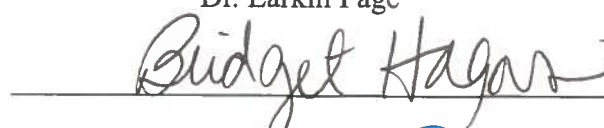
Dr. Ramona Jean - Perkins, Chair



Dr. Sloane Signal



Dr. Larkin Page



Dr. Bridget Hagan



Associate Dean of Graduate Programs

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This dissertation is dedicated to so many people who supported me throughout my educational career. To start, I sincerely thank all of my professors and committee members who contributed and tamed my interest. Dr. Perkin's was one of the first professors I met during the application process and has educated me as my teacher, advisor, and committee chair since. Dr. Signal was a solid rock of reality throughout my doctoral journey that always kept me on track to make the finish line. Dr. Page and Dr. Hagan have provided their professional expertise and interest, as well as mentorship that enabled me to complete this study.

I would also like to thank my entire family and best friends for their continuous support when I felt like I could not take on another life challenge. From the moment that I applied to this program, I had natural group of cheerleaders and supporters that helped advance each semester.

Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to my Mom and Dad, who always taught me that I could do and be whatever I wanted with unconditional love and support. Thank you for not expecting me to be like everyone else!

# HETERONORMATIVITY AND TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS: PARENT’S PERSPECTIVES OF IMPORTANCE

by Ryan Marcus Asprion, Ed.D.

Xavier University of Louisiana

May 2021

Chair: Ramona Jean – Perkins, Ph.D.

## **Abstract**

Heteronormativity is the presumed acceptance of culturally determined gender roles about heterosexuality and what expectations society considers as “natural” or “normal” (Habarth, 2015). United States schools are primarily heteronormative (Dinkins & Englert, 2015). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required school districts to employ “highly qualified” teachers in all core subject areas by the 2005-06 school year. Defining “highly qualified” relates to the quality of the teachers training and certifications, never mentioning sexuality or lifestyle as a component. Using a critical queer theory approach and narrative research study analysis, this study sought perspective from parents of K-12 students on their view of heteronormativity as it relates to teacher effectiveness. The researcher collected surveys from (n=30) participants seeking demographics, Likert-scale responses, and descriptive narrative responses. The researcher made the following discoveries from the coding process: a) teacher effectiveness is paramount to parent’s concern over their lifestyle outside of school, b) parents support the acknowledgment of non-heteronormative lifestyles as a means to promote diversity, c) most

parents are unaware of Lifestyle Policies and those familiar do not support it, d) effectiveness is essential but there are exceptions. Finding results of this research can inform school administrators and policymakers of what teacher and school expectations parents' value more in their child's education: the educators effective or lifestyle choices.

*Keywords: Education, Heteronormativity, Lifestyle Policy, Parent Perspectives, Narrative research*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	iv
Abstract .....	v
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Problem .....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study .....	7
Research Questions.....	8
Significance of Study.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	9
Overview of Methodology .....	10
Conclusion.....	11
CHAPTER TWO.....	12
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Theoretical Framework.....	12
No Child Left Behind.....	14
Heteronormativity.....	15
Employment Practices in Education that promote Heteronormativity.....	16
Lifestyle Policy.....	17
Limitations of Law.....	18
“No Promo Homo” State Laws and “Inclusive Curriculums”.....	21



Opposing Views.....	23
Parent Perspectives.....	23
CHAPTER THREE.....	25
METHODOLOGY.....	25
Introduction/Overview of Study/Organization of Chapter .....	25
Research Questions.....	26
Population and Sample.....	26
Data Collection Procedures .....	27
Data Analysis... ..	30
Convergent-Parallel Design.....	31
Trustworthiness.....	31
Conclusion.....	33
CHAPTER FOUR.....	34
RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	34
Introduction.....	34
Methods and Procedures.....	35
Description of Population.....	36
Demographics.....	36
Likert-scale Responses .....	38
Open-ended Narratives.....	40
Themes from Coding.....	41
Effectiveness.....	41
Acknowledgment.....	42

Awareness.....	42
Exceptions.....	43
Research Question Findings.....	44
Research Question 1 Findings.....	44
Research Question 2 Findings.....	46
Research Question 3 Findings.....	47
Research Question 4 Findings.....	48
Conclusion.....	49
CHAPTER FIVE .....	51
CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Summary of Findings.....	52
Discussion.....	52
Effectiveness.....	53
Acknowledgement.....	53
Awareness.....	54
Exceptions.....	55
Suggestions for Future Research.....	56
Broader Outreach.....	56
Faith-based School Study.....	57
Further Interpretation of ‘Exceptions’.....	57
Implications for Practice and Study.....	58
Conclusion.....	58

References.....	60
APPENDIX A Sample Lifestyle Policy.....	71
APPENDIX B IRB Approval.....	73
APPENDIX C IRB Survey.....	78

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1- Interview Protocol Crosswalk.....	28
Table 2- Convergent-Parallel Design.....	31

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1- Demographics.....	36
Figure 1a Gender.....	36
Figure 1b Ethnicity.....	37
Figure 1c Political Preference.....	37
Figure 1d Age.....	37
Figure 1e Classification.....	38
Figure 1f Policy Awareness.....	38
Figure 2- Likert-scale Responses.....	38
Figure 2a Question 1.....	39
Figure 2b Question 2.....	39
Figure 2c Question 3.....	39
Figure 2d Question 4.....	40
Figure 3- Descriptive Narrative Questions.....	40

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Extra, extra! Read all about it! “Civil Rights Law Protects Gay and Transgender Workers, Supreme Court Rules” (Liptak, 2020) and “Conservative Christians See ‘Seismic Implications’ in Supreme Court Ruling” (Dias, 2020). While these headlines may seem outdated, they are part of the political narrative shaping the future of educators with non-heteronormative lifestyles today in the United States. The 2020 Supreme Court’s recent decision, *Bostock vs. Clayton County*, set the precedent that it was illegal to terminate a public employee based on discrimination of their sexual orientation (Liptak, 2020). For homosexuals in public education, this decision challenged the expectation that they conceal their personal lifestyles to maintain a career in the field; however, faith-based organizations’ protections are still allowed and considered legal discrimination.

In 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant called for a constitutional amendment that prohibited public funding of faith-based organizations (Russo, 2009). As a result, faith-based educational institutions legally assumed exemption from federal anti-discrimination laws that protected civil rights of everyday Americans. President Grant’s decision led to the freedom for faith-based organizations, mostly Roman Catholic schools, to operate without much government oversight with the exception of health and safety concerns. Since clergy, nuns, and priests initially occupied roles in these Catholic schools, there were very few lay members of society employed. However, today, 97.4% of faculty in Catholic school education are lay members of society, and only 2.6% are clergy, nuns or priests (*Catholic School Data*, n.d.). Since the church must rely on lay educators to continue their mission as a religious school, a Lifestyle Policy was created with the expectation of ensuring that the teachers and administrators educating students in Catholic

schools also live a lifestyle that reflects the lifestyle prescribed by Catholic social teachings (Krason, 2018).

These organizations continue to terminate employees who violate Lifestyle Policy agreements based on the expression of religious convictions and the organization's faith (Russo, 2009). Though Pope Francis recently signaled that the Catholic church is moving towards further inclusion of homosexuality (Horowitz, 2020), Lifestyle Policies mandate expectations for all educators, regardless of their personal lifestyles or teaching effectiveness.

The threat of termination or discrimination leads many marginalized educators to adopt behaviors allowing them to blend into the heteronormative environment that pervades the school system. Yep (2003) defines heteronormative expectations as "the assumption that heterosexuality is the only valid sexual orientation, and therefore anyone who is not heterosexual is abnormal, marginalized, and/or made invisible". Social scientists who study the construct of heteronormativity connect this emphasis to the binary of normality where rigid and static social roles for both boys/men and girls/women are the norm (Yep, 2003).

In 2001, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) into law to close the achievement gap between students poor, underprivileged students and their more advantaged peers by providing them with additional federal support and mandating that all schools employ highly qualified teachers in every core subject classroom by the 2005-06 school year (Klein, 2015). NCLB's success emanated from the collaboration of Democrats, Republicans, civil rights leaders, and business interests. Its bipartisan support has advanced educational initiatives and evolved into today's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2015. The implementation of these mandates are further analyzed in the literature review; however, it is essential to note that "highly qualified" teachers are not

defined in terms of sexuality or lifestyle anywhere in the law. School administrators are left to determine which educators are deemed “highly qualified,” and their success is limited by personal lifestyle choices (Bergin, 2015; Bollinger, 2019). Despite the progressive acceptance of LGBTQ citizens in society, strong resistance persists in the school system (Berrien, 2015; Devine, 2015; LaBarbera, 2016; Meyerhofer, 2018).

### **Background of the Problem**

At the heart of this debate is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII focuses specifically on anti-discrimination in public employment. Title VII states:

It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer:

- (1) To fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; or
- (2) To limit, segregate, or classify his employees or applicants for employment in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Russo, 2009).

Despite this nationally recognized federal law protecting American’s civil rights, Title VII grants an exemption to churches, synagogues, and mosques, religiously affiliated schools and organizations from having to abide by the law. I.e., Title VII offers protection to Catholic school employers as they “seem to ensure the viability of their religious traditions and values in what many perceive as an increasingly secular, and often hostile educational environment, since it permits officials to set Bona Fide Occupational Qualifications (BFOQs): allowing them to limit hiring in key positions to members of their respective faiths” (Russo, 2009, p. 261). These are personal lifestyle expectations for all employees that reflect the institution's values.

This exemption allows religious organizations to mandate lifestyle expectations for their employees outside of their contracted daily responsibilities. In the following example, employees signing the “Lifestyle Policy” contract, are agreeing to not participate in or provide:

- (1) Public support of positions contrary to Roman Catholic Church teaching including, but not limited to, abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, embryonic stem-cell research, in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, surrogate parenthood, direct sterilization, or so-called homosexual or same-sex marriage or unions;
- (2) [s]upport for sexual relations outside of marriage recognized as valid by the Roman Catholic Church, where marriage is understood as being the marriage between one man and woman (*Lifestyle Policy for Archdiocese of xxx Educators*, n.d.) (see Appendix A)

The limitations and consequences are not only placed on teachers but also fellow educators who support them. “All educators employed by the Archdiocese and/or its parishes should be aware that words, conduct or action contrary to or at variance with this policy may result in discipline, including but not limited to termination” (*Lifestyle Policy for Archdiocese of xxx Educators*, n.d.; Tovey, 2013).

The Supreme Court recently declared that Title VII's protected class of "sex" extends to protecting sexual orientation (Liptak, 2020); however, the court can only uphold precedent, not create law. It is up to Congress to amend the language of Title VII to extend protection to all sexual orientations.

The Equality Act, also known as H.R.5, needs to pass through Congress and then the President’s desk to amend the language of Title VII in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to define what classes are covered by ‘sex’ (Cicilline, 2019). If passed, the definition of ‘sex’ would explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics. Essentially it would strengthen protections for everyone, especially the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) community. On March 13, 2019, The Equality Act passed the

House of Representatives and currently awaits a Senate vote. If passed and the President finally signs the bill, it would amend the definition of ‘sex’ in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include protection for all sexual orientations. History demonstrates that civil rights laws effectively decrease discrimination because they provide strong federal remedies targeted to specific vulnerable groups (Cicilline, 2019). By expanding the definition of ‘sex’ to include sexual orientation and gender identity in these fundamental laws, all Americans, including the LGBTQ community, would experience consistent, non-discrimination protections across all aspects of life.

The Equality Act also clarifies that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) cannot be used in civil rights contexts, prohibiting religious liberty from being used as a license to discriminate (Cicilline, 2019). The Equality Act threatens the exemptions that many religious organizations use as an excuse to discriminate because of religious and moral conflicts. Meaning, not only would public schools have to recognize LGBTQ as a protected class, private and religious organizations would also no longer be able to use the RFRA as a means for legal discrimination.

### **Statement of the Problem**

“Schools have been, and still are seen as bastions of the inculcation of traditional knowledge and social values” (Niesche, 2003, p. 943). Classrooms are spaces that inoculate rules and expectations that result from student and teacher interactions (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000) while making ways to support students and bring about social change (Preston, 2016). Parents do not control the school’s daily operations, but they do dictate what educational environment is best for their child. However, empirical research neglects to include a parent’s perspective on what is most important for their child’s education: the teacher’s ability or personal lifestyle.



The heteronormative expectation that all teachers are heterosexual limits the potential for homosexual educators and the benefit of students receiving the best education available. While some parents feel that “exposure to multiple perspectives that gives young people the strongest start in life and the ability to make their own choices” (Hobby, 2019), not every parent is equally liberal.

Even where protections are available, some states still deny acceptance of non-heterosexual individuals by supporting No homo promo (NPH) laws that “forbid teachers of health/sexuality education from discussing lesbian, gay, or bisexual people or topics in a positive light (Barrett & Bound, 2015). While schools are allowed to host after-school LGBTQ groups and events, state legislation in Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah either restricts or prohibits the discussion of homosexuality within the school’s curriculum. Not only does this potentially violate the teacher’s first amendment rights to freedom of speech, but these laws also create a fallacy that teaching or positively acknowledging homosexuality will encourage students to become gay and disrupt school operations (Dawson, 2019). These limitations directly interfere with teacher effectiveness by not allowing educators to combat stereotypes and educate students in an honest and unbiased environment.

The lack of empirical evidence studying parents' perspectives on teacher effectiveness leaves researchers to rely on individual state laws to gauge the social climate of their jurisdictions. While the nine states previously mentioned support laws that restrict the mentioning of homosexuality in education, which supports the complacency of heteronormativity, several other states mandate Inclusive Curriculum (IC) laws to include the positive portrayal of LGBTQ history and lifestyles, thus welcoming a diversity of sexualities in

the classroom (Zalaznick, 2019). Those states include California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, and New Jersey. Though No Promo Homo and Inclusive Curriculum laws are directly related to curriculum choices, it sets a precedent for the school climate's atmosphere and the expectations of which community representation is welcome. These themes will be further explored in the literature review.

Essentially, several states in the United States support laws that contribute to more inclusive school communities and states with strong denial. Others are left with an ambiguity that causes teachers to feel unsure about the limits of their teaching responsibilities and often ignore the acknowledgment of LGBTQ individuals and topics (Ingram, 2019). This realization inspires the rationale for this study. Reliance on federal and state government mandates will never yield a result that satisfies the array of cultures and viewpoints that make up the country. However, parents of various socioeconomic statuses, ages, race, and cultural backgrounds can provide a basis for understanding what they feel is essential for best educating their children. Current research neglects to include parent perspectives.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The federal government continues to dispute the definition of 'sex' in civil rights cases. Despite the Supreme Court or Senate ruling regarding LGBTQ employment rights, gay educators and students will continue to exist in the education system.

The purpose of this study is to by-pass the distraction of laws for a moment and examine the parent's perspective of educators with non-heteronormative lifestyles because they are the primary stakeholders in the child's education. As explained in the literature review, discrimination continues to exist despite laws, Supreme Court decisions, and progressive acceptance of homosexuality in society. Regardless of the school's public or private mission,

parents are the primary stakeholders in debating what is best for their child's future. Courts will continue to litigate for decades to come; however, a perspective of expectation from the parents of K-12 students can serve as a reference for future educational policymakers on what parents perceive as most important: the heteronormative assumption that pervades the school system or the effectiveness of the educators leading the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions for this study will be answered through surveys completed by parents of K-12 students participating in the study. This study seeks perspectives on the priority of teacher effectiveness from parents of private and public school students, while also considering their socioeconomic status, political preference, race, and age. The parent participants will provide insight into the importance of teacher effectiveness regarding their child's educational experience.

#### **Research Questions:**

(RQ1): Is there any difference between the perspectives of parents in public versus private schools in the prioritization of heteronormative lifestyle expectations and teacher effectiveness?

(RQ2): Does race, age, and political preferences account for differences in perspectives on heteronormativity in the education of their child?

(RQ3): From the parent's perspective, is the lifestyle of the student's classroom teacher important to the outcome of their education?

(RQ4): Does heteronormativity and lifestyle matter in determining teacher effectiveness as perceived by parents of public and private school students?

## **Significance of the Study**

Despite what the Supreme Court and Senate decide in 2020, educators with alternative lifestyles will continue to exist in the United States school system, and legislators will continue to fight battles on both sides of this aisle. While many studies have focused on LGBTQ issues in education, none have examined the parent perspectives on teacher effectiveness though districts across the country use sexuality as a means for termination of marginalized educators. By conducting a narrative research study, policymakers and school administrators can use this study to look beyond the law to understand how to meet the needs of their educational community with perspective from those they serve, the parents of K-12 students.

The parent's perspective is chosen for this study because they are the primary stakeholders in their child's development and education. This study aims to highlight the current state of homosexual educator's rights in the United States and examine the perspective of parents of K-12 students to understand the influence, if any, that heteronormativity plays in the parent's perspective of teacher effectiveness in their child's education. School districts can use the results of this study to guide future policy making decisions based on the parent's perspective.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

Heteronormative- the assumption that heterosexuality is the only valid sexual orientation, and therefore anyone who is not heterosexual is abnormal, marginalized, and/or made invisible (Yep, 2003)

Homosexual- an alternative term for anyone who identifies as part of the LGBTQ community

Lay members- people who work in faith-based organizations but are not members of clergy

LGBTQ- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, and Queer citizens. Refers to sexual identity, gender identity, and gender non-conforming

Lifestyle Policy- a binding policy between faith-based organizations and lay members of their institution to ensure compliance with their faith (Appendix A)

Queer- includes a move to highlight the existence of and interrupt silent assumptions about heterosexuality as normal and homosexuality as Other (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004)

### **Overview of Methodology**

Narrative research is chosen for this study because it provides a forum for parents from public, private, religious, and charter schools to express their opinion as parents of the students attending these various school classifications. The literature review explains the various ways that current policies are also viewed as legal discrimination. While litigation continues in the Supreme Court and Congress, the parents of K-12 students, the primary stakeholder in their child's education, are missing in research.

To understand the parent's perspective of heteronormativity and teacher effectiveness, it is also essential to acknowledge the underpinnings of those perspectives. Moen (2006) suggests that human beings' perspectives are 'multivoiced' and organized by their past and present experiences depending on their values and how they are connected to their circumstances. The participants' narrative shapes their perspectives and those experiences provide insight for answering the research questions.

Narrative research provides the space for participants to tell their story. Polkinghorne (1988) and Bruner (1986) suggest that storytelling is the oldest form of influence in human history (cited in Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 215). Arguably, no one can tell a story about their child's development better than their parents. Human knowledge and identities, like policy

and law, are continually revised and reconstructed (Moen, 2006). Using a narrative research approach, the researcher will expand the understanding of this phenomena while gathering rich, meaningful perspectives from parents regarding what is most important to educate their students: their teacher's effectiveness or their sexuality. Though the study is primarily qualitative, it does incorporate quantitative qualities when analyzing demographic and background information. Participants provided information through SurveyLab.com, a research platform that allows the collection of data with options to ask demographic, background, Likert-scale, and open ended descriptive questions.

The researcher then utilized a Convergent-Parallel Design (SITE), a research approach that involves the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data, followed by the combination and comparisons of these multiple data sources. This approach involves the collection of different but complementary data on the same phenomena. Thus, it is used for the converging and subsequent interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data that will answer the research questions shaping my study.

## **Conclusion**

Providing a parent perspective on issues typically silenced by heteronormative assumptions will inform policymakers with insight free from political and administrative influence.

Chapter 1 concludes with the purpose and significance followed by an overview of how the researcher approached the study. Chapter 2 serves as a literature review examining previous studies on heteronormativity, laws the support Lifestyle Policy and legal discrimination, and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Chapter 3 explains the rationale behind the research design and methodology used to conduct the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study dissects heteronormative roots in the educational setting and perspectives from surveyed parents. The literature review sources empirical research findings from published peer-reviewed journal articles, reliable news sources, and pending legal disputes.

Extensive literature focused on attitudes toward marginalized communities exists, but how these attitudes evolved is vague. However, several events throughout history suggest how opinions, bias, and discrimination led gay educational leaders to adapt to heteronormative expectations. I.e., until 1973, the American Psychological Association listed homosexuality as a mental disorder (Hans et al., 2012).

This literature review researches the underpinnings that contribute to the sustainability of heteronormative expectations in today's K-12 schools in a thematic format. Following justification for the theoretical framework chosen for the study, the literature explores heteronormativity and how it pervades the school system while limiting the potential for marginalized educators. The review continues by examining laws that serve as the underpinnings of heteronormativity on the school campus, beginning with employment practices and culminates with an overview of NPH laws that hinder teacher effectiveness and IC mandates that support diversity inclusion.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

Queer theory explores the “myriad complexities of the construct, identity, and how identities reproduce and perform in social forums” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 30). This theoretical framework brings voice to the marginalized communities silenced by the heteronormative society in which they coexist. “They focus on how it is culturally and

historically constituted, is linked to discourse, and overlaps gender and sexuality” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 30). The discourse is society’s willingness to accept heteronormativity and assume that gender is binary. Challenges against these expectations, the discourse, are seen when individuals stand up for their rights, e.g., a high school same-sex couple attending prom (Bollinger, 2019) or a transgender student demanding the right to use the bathroom (Porta et al., 2017). The same examples can be seen in headline news when gay individuals stand up for employment rights (Bergin, 2015; Candiotti & Welch, 2014; Devine, 2015; Milz, 2018; Morris-Young, 2014). Queer theory is all-encompassing of the LGBTQ community and used concerning “race, class, age, and anything else” (Turner, 2000, cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). This challenges the findings of Butler's (1999) heterosexual matrix of gender and sexuality that strictly classifies males born with male bodies and desire women; females are born with female bodies and desire men. Queer theory is a tool to disrupt these heteronormative expectations.

Ultimately, queer theory gives voice to the voiceless. {Citation}Plummer (2011) provides multiple descriptions that drive the motivation of queer theorists. The traits most closely related to this research include “both the heterosexual/homosexual binary and the sex/gender split are challenged, there is a decentering of identity, academic work may become ironic and often comical and paradoxical” (Plummer, 2011 cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Queer theory is the product of critical race theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995) because it is similar to earlier theories based on law, education, and politics that offer possibilities for marginalized communities. Studies of heteronormativity are the product of these understandings. Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh (2004), argue that CRT informs the context of queer theory and queer theory is influenced by queer theorists. In this way, researchers have better



understanding of marginalized communities who are considered as ‘others’ within the discourses of citizenship, curriculum, and educational research (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004).

### **No Child Left Behind**

President George W. Bush signed NCLB into law in 2001 as an updated version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) enacted by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 (Klein, 2015). As part of Johnson’s Great Society program, he granted money to support disadvantaged students’ public education. The law has expanded several times to further employ the role of the federal government in public education.

Following decades of challenges, ESEA was replaced by NCLB in 2001 with more mandates for public education and districts to continue receiving Title 1 funding from the federal government. The specific mandate that relates directly to this study requires that all schools ensure their teachers are “highly qualified”, which generally means that they have a bachelor’s degree in the subject they are teaching and state certification (Klein, 2015). As previously stated, these mandates focus on the expectation of teacher certification and preparedness; however, none include requirements for the educator’s personal lifestyle or sexuality.

The latest change to ESEA came in 2015 when President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law as its replacement. This act gives states more control over decisions made for their school district. The clause mandating that schools employ only “highly qualified” teachers is no longer part of the plan and was replaced with Teacher and School Leader Innovation programs that grant money to districts that provide continuing education opportunities, particularly in literacy and STEM subjects (Klein, 2016). Again, none of the provisions mention teacher effectiveness regarding their sexuality or lifestyle outside of the school system.

## **Heteronormativity**

Social theorist popularized the term ‘heteronormativity’ in accordance with feminist social theory and queer theory studies (Warner, 1991). Feminist social theory conceptualizes opposing home, economy, political, and personal presupposed ideals that are classic male positions. As stated, queer theory gives voice to the voiceless and challenges heteronormativity with discourse (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Warner (1991) recognized the notion that homosexuality, in postmodern rationale, suggests that if everyone were queer, then the whole world would become extinct; thus, being queer was abnormal. In the same way, feminist social theory conceptualizes binary gender roles where male and female behaviors are specific suggesting societal disruption when these roles are disturbed (Warner, 1991).

Heteronormativity is also closely associated with queer theory, also serving as the theoretical framework for this study. Queer theory challenges the traditional male and female roles, thus creating a voice for non-conforming gender expressions. Henry (2018) describes the ontological understanding of heteronormativity as the acceptance of social, cultural, and economic imaginaries that is the accepted way of living.

In defining heteronormativity, Yep (2003) included more than just sexual minorities. He expanded the definition to include men and women. This study challenged heteronormative behaviors suggesting that women serve the interest of men and motherhood, while men are rigid examples of hegemonic masculinity; reinforcing the assumption that heterosexuality is ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ (Yep, 2003). The term ‘normal’ or ‘normative’ also assumed to be superior to others, thus creating marginalized communities in the process (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004).

Heteronormativity is also closely associated with heterosexism, the presumption that anything but heterosexual is abnormal or wrong (Habarth, 2015; Petrovic, 2013). Attitudes and

cultural understandings of heterosexism target non-heterosexual people and define heteronormativity's boundaries in socially acceptable relationships and identities.

Heteronormativity is present on every school campus, from the books used to educate students to the social functions celebrated each year (Chesir-Teran, 2003; Clark & Blackburn, 2009; Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004). These assumptions are limiting for marginalized groups. "When a heteronormative environment dominates school culture, students are positioned as straight; binary gender performances and heterosexual identities are empowered while LGBTQ students and non-heterosexual gender behaviors are marginalized" (Dinkins & Englert, 2015, p. 394). The current school system's culture is based on the systematic privileging of heterosexuals, a system called heteronormativity (Chesir-Teran, 2003).

### **Employment Practices in Education that promote Heteronormativity**

Employment discrimination is less prevalent in the public school system than private and faith-based schools (Bergin, 2015; Devine, 2015; Holland, 2012). However, as of 2019, twenty-nine of fifty states offered no legal protections for gay public educators, indicating significant risk for employees who are "out" in the workplace ("Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Workplace Issues," 2019).

"Where the religion-based claims of religious educational institutions are not protected by state nondiscrimination statutes, the ultimate question is whether the institutions are entitled to project their religious beliefs under federal constitutional provisions" (Mawdsley, 2011, p. 290). It was not until June 15, 2020, that the Supreme Court rendered its decision in *Bostock vs. Clayton County, GA* (2020), making it unlawful to terminate public employees based on their sexual orientation. While this is a win for LGBTQ advocates, real protections in federal laws, specifically Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, will not be guaranteed for all until the

United States Senate passes The Equality Act, also known as H.R.5, to amend the language of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 focuses explicitly on employment discrimination and contains four exemptions applicable to faith-based institutions by allowing organizations to create Bona Fide Occupational Qualifications (BFOQs) (Mawdsley, 2011; Russo, 2009). These are personal qualifications expected of all employees to fill the role that the organization is seeking. The most significant exemption is the first: where "religion is a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ) of that particular business or enterprise" (Russo, 2009, p. 263). Meaning, employees can be terminated for violating an institutional standard. I.e., *Geary v. Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish School, 1993* ended in favor of the school who terminated employment with a woman who married a man who was divorced (Russo, 2009). Concerning this study, such laws serve as a reminder that living a lifestyle that challenges heteronormative expectations can result in termination. The fear of termination and discrimination are the key factors that marginalize gay education leaders in the school system (Guernsey & Donohue, 2015; McGough, 2013; Morris-Young, 2014). This fear leads gay educators to remain silent and adapt to heteronormative behaviors to blend into the community (Niesche, 2003).

### ***Lifestyle Policy***

“The lifeblood of religious educational institutions is their doctrinal statements and codes of conduct that set standards for employee and student life” (Mawdsley, 2011, p. 279). Church leaders created the Lifestyle Policy to ensure that the teachers and administrators educating students in Catholic schools also live a lifestyle that reflects the lifestyle prescribed by Catholic social teachings (Krason, 2018). Some critics feel that the policy creates the expectation that

Catholic educators must be perfect and free of sin to work in the school system (Reimar-Barry, 2013). While most critics agree that the expectation that educators live their personal lives like clergy is an exaggeration to the policy, many also agree that the policy “is so broad that any violation of Church teaching could be named as justification for termination of employment” (Reimar-Barry, 2013, p. 2). Accusations of discrimination and terminations stemming from the Lifestyle Policy are well documented in media (O’Loughlin, 2019; Roewe, 2019; Ryan, 2017; Schoenberg, 2018) and has affected more than just marginalized groups of educators, but also heterosexual colleagues those who support them (Tovey, 2013).

When Catholic school teachers are faced with divorce, alternative methods for pregnancy, being open about sexuality, and many other life-changing experiences, they also face retribution from their employers (Reimar-Barry, 2013). Critics who view the mandates of the Lifestyle Policy as hypocrisy have reached the attention of the Pope (Bergin, 2015; Flaherty, 2013; Mirus, 2014). He has called for church leaders to focus on more important issues, leaving supporters of marginalized Catholics to feel that the Pope is making more room for inclusion.

### **Limitations of Law**

Hamilton et al. (2019) and Lee & Carpenter (2015) found that legal issues and human resource policies hinder gay educators from leading open lives within their school community. This is observed when gay educators respond to colleagues and students regarding their personal lives and conversations in the classroom (Lee & Carpenter, 2015). I.e., a gay educator asked about their spouse may be guarded in their response instead of the response of a heterosexual colleague, who would typically answer without reservation. In other studies, gay teachers have avoided correcting students when they overhear them use a derogatory slur about a perceived gay student to protect their own identity (Hamilton et al., 2019). Others avoid LGBTQ issues by

removing themselves from the responsibility of teaching or acknowledging its existence.

Educators simply state, “they’re just not mature right now” (Preston, 2016, p. 22).

Orlov & Allen (2014) found that gay educators adopt heteronormative behaviors to avoid stereotyping and discrimination for various reasons, but most often fear the risk of being labeled as inappropriate and unprofessional (p. 2016). Becoming the *token* faculty member among otherwise straight peers can lead educators to remain hidden (LaSala et al., 2008). *Tokenism* is a label used when a small number that represents less than twenty percent of a community is different in some way, which highlights their visibility in a negative way (LaSala et al., 2008). This is where societal views and responsibilities as educators collide. Research into conservative families found that a teacher's disclosure of their sexuality to students is considered inappropriate (Berrien, 2015; Freind, 2018a, 2018b). However, other studies have shown that a teacher's disclosure of their sexuality is a powerful tool to combat stereotypes and bias (Orlov & Allen, 2014; White et al., 2018).

Some advocates argue that disclosure is more about the right to free speech (Dawson, 2019; Orlov & Allen, 2014; Rofes, 2000). I.e., most heterosexual teachers feel free to share about their family and significant others with students openly. Yet; homosexual faculty are likely to either lie or suggest that it is an inappropriate question to protect themselves from discrimination, stereotyping, and potential termination (Andu, 2020; Bigham, 2020).

History demonstrates that civil rights laws effectively decrease discrimination because they provide strong federal remedies targeted to specific vulnerable groups (Cicilline, 2019). By expanding the definition of “sex” to include sexual orientation and gender identity in these fundamental laws, all Americans, including the LGBTQ community, would experience

consistent, non-discrimination protections across all aspects of life (Eisenmenger, 2002; Mawdsley, 2011). However, these protections are still limited.

In 2014, Brett Bigham, a two-time recipient of Oregon's Teacher of the Year award, was terminated shortly after receiving this recognition for using his notoriety to openly discuss gay rights, bullying, and suicide prevention with students (Moore, 2015). His effectiveness as an educator was twice rewarded; however, his school district saw his attempt to reach out to LGBTQ youth as an "act of war" and "did not add value to the students in their district" (Moore, 2015). He has since collected \$140,000 from a lawsuit against the district while also refusing to sign a nondisclosure agreement and sees the recent Supreme Court decision *Bostock vs. Clayton County* as an apology for his treatment. He reflected, "now it can't happen to anyone else" (Bigham, 2020).

In a similar case, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas recently awarded Stacy Bailey, another two-time Teacher of the Year recipient, \$100,000 for wrongful dismissal after being placed on administrative leave for showing students a picture of her same-sex partner (Andu, 2020). Parents complained that she was "promoting a homosexual agenda"; however, teachers in heterosexual relationships are allowed to display their partners' photos and attend school events with them. Like Bigham, Bailey was a public school teacher where federal law protects teachers from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

If LGBTQ educators did not fear retribution for disclosing their sexuality, this could destigmatize stereotypes by promoting the "greater good and advance... a free and democratic society" (Orlov & Allen, 2014, p. 1027). LGBTQ teachers and students will continue to be a part of the education system and deserve the same rights granted in the Civil Rights Act as any other citizen, thus further consideration for their representation should be considered.

### ***“No Promo Homo” State Laws and “Inclusive Curriculum”***

Research suggests that school administrators and teachers are responsible for the lack of representation of alternative lifestyles in the classroom (Dinkins & Englert, 2015; Hans et al., 2012); however, the challenges associated with a positive portrayal of homosexuality leads most to avoid its existence (Donahue, 2014; Hall & Rodgers, 2019). Despite NPH and IC laws, “hidden curriculums” manifest the existence of heteronormativity and limit teacher effectiveness (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004). The debate between identity recognition and suppression is at the core of understanding heteronormative valuation. Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh (2004) argue that the lack of representation leads to marginalized communities' continued suppression in and outside school systems. In pursuit of answering the research questions, insight into the polar opposite ideals from the liberal left and conservative rights should be considered. America in 2020 is the best example of how divided the United States views conflicting ideologies despite the recent Supreme Court ruling in *Bostock vs. Clayton County*. In terms of education, state laws mandating Inclusive Curriculum (IC) contrast with “No Promo Homo” (NPH) laws. Rosky (2017), a leading expert in analyzing state laws concerning LGBTQ classroom inclusion, simply defines these as “Anti-Gay Curriculum Laws.” These states have four fundamental interests: (1) promoting moral disapproval of homosexual conduct; (2) promoting children’s heterosexual development; (3) preventing sexually transmitted infections; and (4) recognizing that States have broad authority to prescribe the curriculum of public schools (Rosky, 2017). The recognition of these conflicting laws is important to understand because studies up to this point have neglected to include any other perspective for consideration. Though the laws are polar opposites for IC and NPH states, considering the parents' perspectives is remiss in both mandates. Educators are



left to interpret these laws with state guidelines, and inconsistency can lead to termination, despite the teacher's sexual orientation.

As of 2020, Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah support NPH laws (Barrett & Bound, 2015; Rodriguez, 2013). NPH state laws prohibit health or sexual education teachers from teaching or discussing LGBTQ lifestyles positively or at all. Consistent with the findings of the GLSEN, researchers outline specific mandates which are compatible with the joining states across the country. Ultimately, school districts restrict the positive portrayal of homosexuality because they fear it will encourage students to become gay and disrupt the school environment (Dawson, 2019).

In attempt to understand how educators can engage with the discussion of controversial issues, such as homosexuality, Kelly (1986) outlined four perspectives on how teachers can engage with students. They include: exclusive neutrality- ignore the subject and suggest they go home and ask their parents, exclusive partiality- taking on a position and ignore opposing views, neutral impartiality- remaining neutral and presenting perspectives from various points of view, and committed impartiality- similar to neutral impartiality, however, the teachers state their view as they also educate on the opposing view (Kelly, 1986). These perspectives offer insight into the response options teachers face when confronted with sensitive conversations. What Kelly does not consider is the type of school where these engagements occur, the moral persuasion of the teacher, or the parent perspectives within that community. Regardless of the school's classification, e.g., private or public, it is important for students to learn an unbiased truth. Though Kelly identified these perspectives in the 1980s, neutral impartiality allows educators in NPH and IC states to satisfy both critics and opponents in the 21st century. Petrovic (2013)

suggests that accepting neutral impartiality as a mindset accepts homosexuality as “morally legitimate” and allows students to shape their own perspectives (p. 539).

### **Opposing Views**

Critics suggest that being open about sexuality in the classroom is inappropriate and unprofessional; however, advocates argue that it is more about the right of free speech (Orlov & Allen, 2014; Rofes, 2000). I.e., most heterosexual teachers feel free to share their family and significant others openly with students. However, gay faculty are likely to either lie or suggest that it is an inappropriate question to protect themselves from discrimination, stereotyping, and potential termination (LaSala et al., 2008). Instead of using their sexual orientation to educate students about differences in society and allowing them to practice rational thought, critics are often quick to suggest this is an attempt to indoctrinate (Petrovic, 2013).

If LGBTQ educators did not fear retribution for disclosing their sexuality, this could destigmatize stereotypes by promoting “greater good and advance... a free and democratic society” (Orlov & Allen, 2014, p. 1027). LGBTQ teachers will continue to be a part of the education system and deserve the same rights granted in the Civil Rights Act as any other citizen. “The Constitution allows the government to intervene and punish private organizations that advocate racist views; logically, the government should also be able to do the same for those who discriminate against LGBTQ citizens” (Thro, 2011, p. 585).

### **Parent Perspectives**

Throughout the literature review, empirical findings demonstrate the views of politics and policies shaping the heteronormative culture of the school system. However, a parent’s perspective is lacking in research and reflection of this environment. As the primary stakeholders in their child's education, this perspective is essential for future education policy decisions. In

studies where parent perspectives examine teacher effectiveness, researchers found that parents judge teachers' competence based on their expectations, beliefs, and concepts (Dozza & Cavrini, 2012). However, what makes up those understandings is unclear. “In the best interest of young people and family harmony, it is suggested that policymakers solicit and carefully take into consideration the views and voices of parents exploring policy development in related areas” (Leung Ling & Chen, 2017, p. 1580).

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

Some of America's closest allies have adopted policies that strictly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (*State-Sponsored Homophobia Report*, 2017). The literature review explained why the Supreme Court and Congress continue to battle over policies that would provide permanent protection for all LGBTQ citizens and stronger protections for everyone. Politicians and policymakers mandate these directives through school administrators; however, a study on parent perspectives lacks in consideration. "There is no single, dominant, or static reality but, rather, a number of realities that are constructed in the process of interactions and dialogues" (Moen, 2006, p. 60). This study incorporates parents' voices from various socio-demographics and school systems, allowing insight into their perception of heteronormative expectations within the school community.

This chapter presents the methods and exploratory research design used for data collection and analysis to gain the parent's perspective of K-12 students. The researcher designed a survey with a critical queer theory lens to interpret the perspectives of heteronormativity and its relationship to teacher effectiveness.

As stated in the purpose of the study, this research is essential for determining the parent's perspectives on lifestyle expectations in regard to their effectiveness. Parent's perspective is chosen in this study because they are the primary stakeholders in their child's development and education. Previous studies examining heteronormativity within the school system highlight policy making decisions and assumptions made by politicians and school administrators; however, they neglect to consider the parent's voice.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study will be answered by K-12 parents participating in the study.

RQ1: Is there any difference between the perspectives of parents in public versus private schools in the prioritization of heteronormative lifestyle expectations and teacher effectiveness?

RQ2: Does race, age, and political preferences account for differences in perspectives on heteronormativity in the education of their child?

RQ3: From the parent's perspective, is the lifestyle of the student's classroom teacher important to the outcome of their education?

RQ4: Does heteronormativity and lifestyle matter in determining teacher effectiveness as perceived by parents of public and private school students?

## **Population and Sample**

To understand parent perspectives on heteronormativity and teacher effectiveness, the researcher used voluntary response and purposive sampling techniques to survey (n=30) parents of K-12 students who attend public and private schools. Public schools include charters and tuition-free institutions. Private schools include faith-based organizations, independent schools, and tuition funded institutions. The primary criteria for selecting parents in the study consisted of those parents with at least one child in a K-12 school. The researcher sought a cross section of parents from public and private schools. Purposeful sampling for selecting participants among race, gender, ethnicity, and marital status take precedence in this study as the researcher seeks to identify differences between socio-demographic perspectives. More specifically, maximal variation sampling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) is used because the researcher is interested in

collecting a diverse collection of data focused on perspectives from parents of students currently enrolled in private and public schools. This heterogeneous technique allows the researcher to gain perspectives from various angles to identify themes with contrasting opinions.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Narrative research, as a method, allows the researcher to engage with parents to justify their perspectives regarding heteronormativity and teacher effectiveness. Their lived experiences and stories shape their understanding of what is essential for their child's education. Clandinin (2013) validates this approach in research because it allows for an insight into the social and cultural interactions that shape the participant's perspectives (cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 68). The study's questions will serve as a guide for creating survey questions answered by the participants in lieu of in-person interviews. The researcher used this approach because of the sensitive nature of the study and the necessity to solicit honest, unbiased responses. It is assumed that participants may respond differently in the interview process in order to avoid judgment or possibly offend the researcher. "Narratives are not produced in a vacuum...they are shaped by the social and cultural context in which the narrator lives...for the purpose of making sense of both the narrative and its social and cultural context" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 224). With this understanding, the researcher must also bracket personal bias and analyze data through a critical lens that focuses on the parents' perspective.

The researcher will administer an informed consent agreement (See Appendix X) with the online questionnaire, allowing participants to understand the nature of the study and guaranteeing their anonymity. The researcher collected response data by requesting that participants complete the entire online questionnaire. The researcher relied on narrated responses as the primary source of information that explains the parent's perspective. The questions are

focused on the parent's perspective but also allow stories and outlying circumstances that influence their opinions to arise. This is essential because some narratives may result from a sequence of events, and unexpected experiences that seem unrelated (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Therefore, the researcher relies on both chronological and non-chronological narrative formats.

The researcher developed an interview protocol crosswalk (Castillo-Montoya, 2016) as an instrument that adapts survey questions with specific research question to ultimately inform each of their results. The survey is divided into three sections: demographics, Likert-scale response, open-ended narrative. The following table describes the intended use of the survey to answer the research questions.

**Table 1**

**Interview Protocol Crosswalk**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Survey question used to answer</b>	<b>Anticipated result</b>
1- Is there any difference between the perspectives of parents in public versus private schools in the prioritization of heteronormative lifestyle expectations and teacher effectiveness?	<p><b>Demographics-</b> Which classification of schooling best describes your child/ children's enrollment? <b>Likert-scale Responses-</b> (1) I chose my child's schooling based on the expectation that heteronormative lifestyle practices of their teacher would guide their educational experience. (2) The perception of a teacher's lifestyle outside of the classroom is important to the student's educational experience.</p> <p><b>Open-ended Narrative-</b> (1) Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, how has a teacher's lifestyle had a positive or negative effect on your child's educational experience? (2) Without identifying any</p>	The demographics on the classification of schooling will give the researcher a percentage of public and private school responses. The researcher will then use the Likert-scale responses to determine if there is any significant difference. The open-ended narrative questions will provide further explanation of these perspectives.

	individual with whom you may have encountered, are you aware of any circumstance where a teacher was dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy?	
2- Does race, age, and political preferences account for differences in perspectives on heteronormativity in the education of their child?	<p><b>Demographics-</b> Race, Age, Political Preference</p> <p><b>Likert-scale Responses-</b> (4) The lifestyle of my child's educator outside of school is less important than that teacher's effectiveness. (3) Acknowledgement of alternative lifestyles by a professional educator is important to my child's overall educational development.</p> <p><b>Open-ended Narrative-</b> (2) Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, are you aware of any circumstance where a teacher was dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy?</p>	The demographic results regarding race, age, and political preference will provide a range of perspectives from the participants. Using the Likert-scale responses, the researcher can use the results from those questions to determine if any difference in the perspectives exists. The open-ended narrative will provide additional insights into the perspectives from these demographics.
3. From the parent's perspective, is the lifestyle of the student's classroom teacher important to the outcome of their education?	<p><b>Demographics-</b> Gender, Ethnicity</p> <p><b>Likert-scale Responses-</b> (2) The perception of a teacher's lifestyle outside of the classroom is important to the student's educational experience. (4) The lifestyle of my child's educator outside of school is less important than that teacher's effectiveness.</p> <p><b>Open-ended Narrative-</b> (2) Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, are you aware of any circumstance where a teacher was dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy? (3) When it comes to your child's education, what is more important: the teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom or their lifestyle choices outside of school?</p>	The demographic results from gender and ethnicity will provide an overall perspective from the participants using the Likert-scale responses to the questions. Using the open-ended narrative questions allow the participants to discuss their feelings toward situations where lifestyle choices were used to terminate an educator.



4- Does heteronormativity and lifestyle matter in determining teacher effectiveness as perceived by parents of public and private school students?	<b>Demographics-</b> Public or Private School. <b>Likert-scale Responses-</b> (1) I chose my child's schooling based on the expectation that heteronormative lifestyle practices of their teacher would guide their educational experience. <b>Open-ended Narrative-</b> (3) When it comes to your child's education, what is more important: the teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom or their lifestyle choices outside of school?	The combination of demographic questions will be used to answer the overarching question about heteronormativity and teacher effectiveness. The Likert-scale and open-ended narrative results provide direct responses to the research question.
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

*Note.* This is a survey protocol crosswalk that connects each research question to the corresponding survey questions followed by the anticipated information the researcher hopes to collect.

## Data Analysis

During the data-analysis phase, the researcher transcribed the participants responses to identify themes, patterns and outliers not previously considered in the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used Delve Qualitative Analysis software to code and analyze the data produced from the questionnaires. Narrative analysis allows the researcher deeper understanding of the parent's perspective by gathering data from past experiences, political preferences, and moral opinions. The themes of the participant narratives are shaped by the chronology of their experiences and interactions with significant influences throughout their life. Creswell & Poth (2018) describe the template for these themes as a result of the "chronology, plot, three-dimensional space" in which the narrative occurs (p. 216).

The researcher will use both inductive and deductive analysis to interpret the results from the questionnaires (Thomas, 2006). The inductive analysis will use the raw data collected to produce themes, concepts, and models for understanding the results. A deductive analysis will be

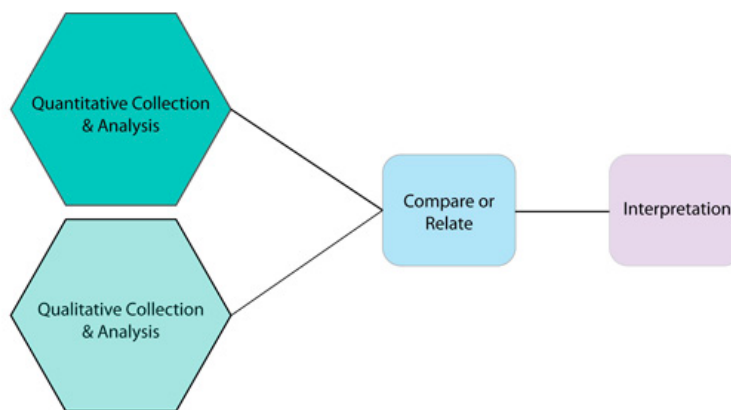
used to compare and contrast the results to preconceived assumptions and theories related to previous studies and policies on heteronormativity and teacher effectiveness.

### **Convergent-Parallel Design**

The qualitative data within the study was gained through descriptive, open ended questions that allows participants to express their opinions anonymously. The quantitative data was collected from Likert-scale questions and demographic information. The research questions direct the analysis of the results by examining comparisons between public vs. private school parents, perspectives from different races and political preferences, and the participant's personal thoughts when answering the descriptive narrative questions. The convergent-parallel design (see Table 2) allows the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data, followed by the combination and comparisons of these multiple data sources (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

**Table 2**

### **Convergent-Parallel Design**



(*MeasuringU*, n.d.)

### **Trustworthiness**

The researcher employed protocols provided by the Xavier University of Louisiana IRB. The Xavier of Louisiana IRB mitigated potential ethical issues through the review and approval

process and granted approval to complete the study (see Appendix B). Furthermore, the data in this study will mask names and other identifiers from the researcher, further protecting each participant's identity in this study. This is important for the researcher to avoid response bias when the responses are limited and reflect a narrow sample of the population (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The researcher sought out “response sets” that occur when participants respond consistently throughout the questionnaire and survey, suggesting that the results do not truly represent their opinions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Participants agreed to an informed consent before participating in this study (see Appendix C). The researcher granted each participant the right to withdraw their participation at any time, resulting the omission of their submission. Further, the final data in this study masked names and other identifiers, further protecting the identity of each participant in this study.

Bracketing, as mentioned in the data collection, is necessary for most qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and will be essential for this study because of the researcher's career as a gay educator. While the underpinnings center around the expectation that researchers need to examine their prejudice in light of the research they are studying (Dowling, 2007), the idea of dual bracketing (Fischer, 2009) works best for this research study. Fischer (2009) believes that authentic bracketing occurs when two simultaneous engagements between the researcher and the participant occur. First, the researcher will identify personal biases to set aside in the blinded questionnaires, i.e., that he is a gay educator. By removing this bias, the researcher can determine emerging themes that are true to the parent's perceptions and assure that data is not misinterpreted through a biased lens. The second engagement enables the researcher to compare the hermeneutic understanding of the participant's responses to his preconceived assumptions. Bracketing out bias is necessary to collect the data representing the participant's perspective and

not tainted by the researcher's presence. This confirmability assures the researcher's neutral stance during the interview process.

## **Conclusion**

The researcher collected data through a narrative research approach that explores the parent perspectives of heteronormativity and what factors are important for meeting the needs of their child's education: the lifestyle of the educator or the quality of the education they receive. Using a questionnaire instrument created on *SurveyLab.com*, the researcher employed a set of questions and protocol approved through the Xavier University of Louisiana IRB (Appendix C). The researcher clustered the themes to generalize the essence of the parent's perspectives. In the following chapters, the researcher will provide detailed reporting on the findings from the study's data collection and analysis of responses.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Research Findings**

Despite advances in civil rights, heteronormative environments continue to dominate school campuses. While employment discrimination is less prevalent in the public school system than private, faith-based schools (Bergin, 2015; Devine, 2015; Holland, 2012), discrimination still affects marginalized educators because of personal lifestyle choices. As stated earlier, the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act simply mandates that all schools ensure their teachers are “highly qualified”, which generally means that they have a bachelor’s degree in the subject they are teaching and state certification (Klein, 2015). These mandates focus on the expectation of teacher certification and preparedness; however, none include requirements for the educator's personal lifestyle or sexuality.

The purpose of this study is to gain the parent’s perspective of what is most important to their child’s education: the effectiveness or lifestyle of the teacher. The researcher initially received (n=32) completed surveys; however, two response sets were removed where participants responded consistently throughout the questionnaire and survey, suggesting that the results do not truly represent their opinions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). SurveyLab.com collects anonymous survey responses while also allowing the investigator to see how long each participant spent responding to the survey. The average participant spent 15-17 minutes responding to the survey. The two response sets removed spent between three and four minutes and answered first choice options in all responses.

The sample population used to conduct the study consisted of (n=30) parents of K-12 students from an area in southern Louisiana. The researcher collected data focused on

demographics, Likert scale perspectives, and open-ended descriptive narrative responses. This chapter is focused on the results of that inquiry.

## **Methods and Procedures**

The researcher conducted a narrative research study to gain perspective from parents of K-12 students on heteronormative lifestyle expectations and teacher effectiveness. Following approval from the Xavier University of Louisiana IRB (Appendix A), the researcher created a survey instrument on SurveyLab.com (Appendix B) collected data from (n=30) participants on demographics, Likert-scale responses, and descriptive narratives of their perspectives.

Participants consent to being parents of a K-12 student from the southern part of Louisiana and that their participation is completely voluntary. The researcher sent the survey link to participants willing to distribute it to their collective communities to reach parents of public and private school students from various demographics. Data was collected until the results began to reach saturation. Mason (2010) found that the most common sample sizes for qualitative research was between twenty to thirty participants. Once the study results reached saturation, the researcher ended survey distribution and began analysis of (n=30) surveys.

Survey results were analyzed using Survey Lab Analytics and Delve Qualitative Analysis software to create survey statistics and code responses into corresponding themes.

The following research questions guided the survey design to gain perspectives from a variety of socio-economic demographics:

Is there any difference between the perspectives of parents in public versus private schools in the prioritization of heteronormative lifestyle expectations and teacher effectiveness?

Does race, age, and political preferences account for differences in perspectives on heteronormativity in the education of their child?

From the parent's perspective, is the lifestyle of the student's classroom teacher important to the outcome of their education?

Does heteronormativity and lifestyle matter in determining teacher effectiveness as perceived by parents of public and private school students?

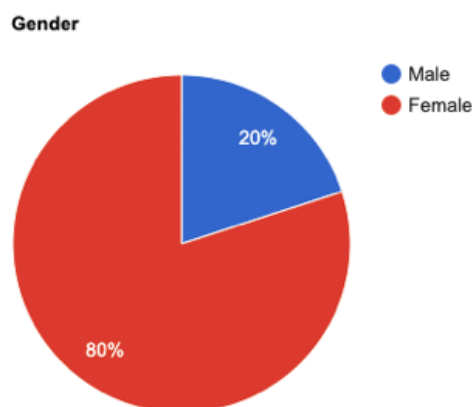
### **Description of Population**

The researcher collected surveys from (n=30) parents of public and private school students utilizing an instrument created on SurveyLab.com (See Appendix B). Participation was voluntary and 100% of the participants consented and completed the entire survey. Representing the (n=30) participants, 80% were female, 20% were male. The following tables describe the demographics regarding gender, race, political preference, age, and school classification of the (n=30) participants.

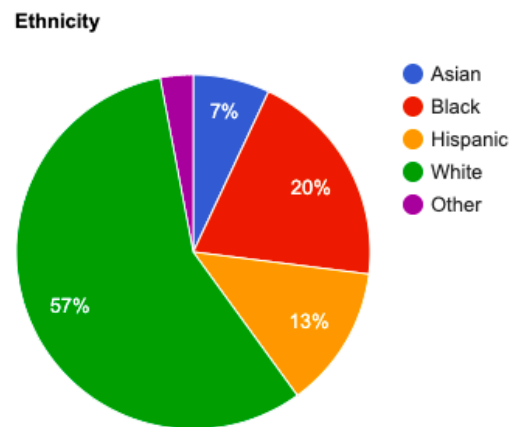
### **Figure 1**

#### **Demographics (n=30)**

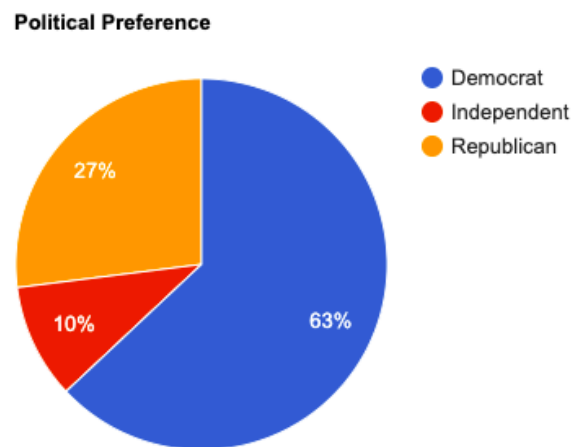
*Figure 1a*



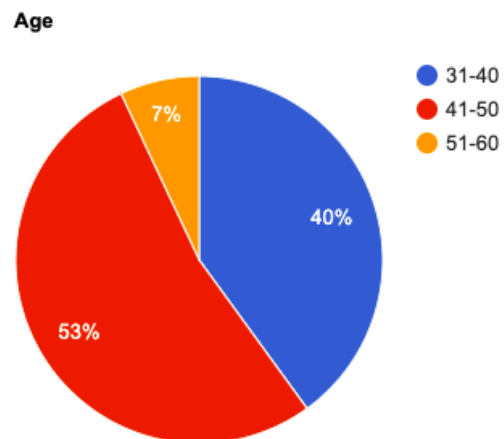
**Figure 1b**



**Figure 1c**



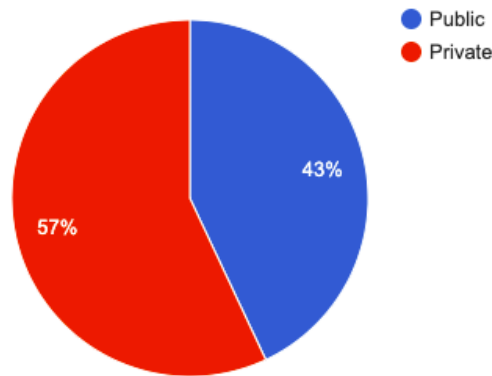
**Figure 1d**





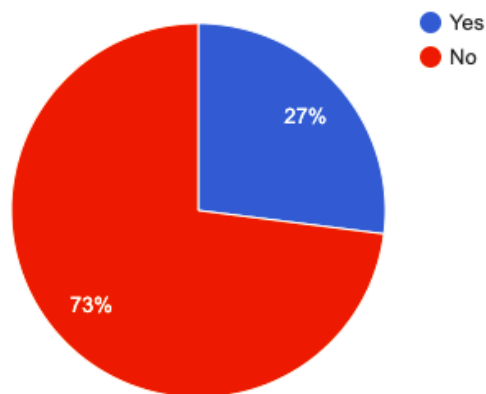
**Figure 1e**

**Which classification of schooling best describes your child/children's enrollment:**



**Figure 1f**

**Are you aware if your child's/children's school has a Lifestyle Policy for recruiting or retaining teachers?**

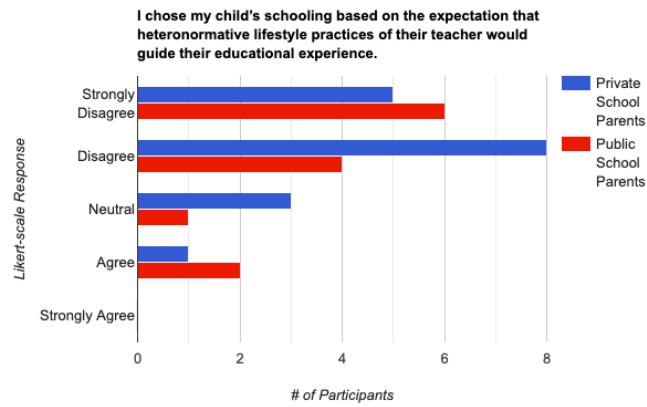


**Figure 2**

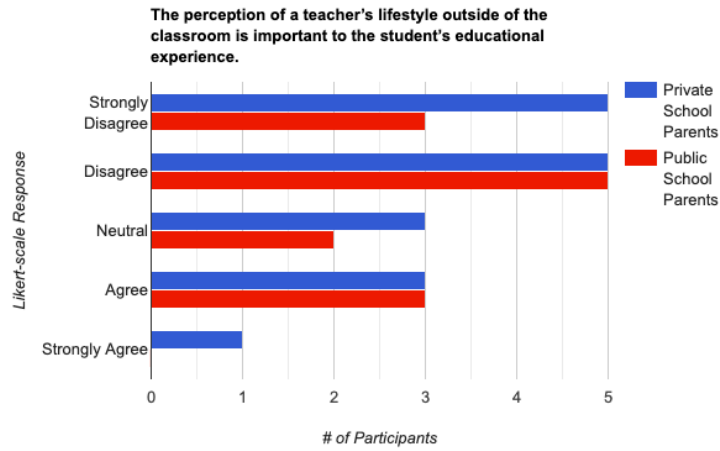
### **Likert-scale Responses (n=30)**

The Likert-scale questions are used to gauge perspectives of parents from K-12 students by allowing them to respond with a variety of convictions: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly disagree. The questions gauged participant perspectives and relate to further insight when responding to the descriptive narrative questions in the next section. The (n=30) participants responded to the following Likert-scale questions:

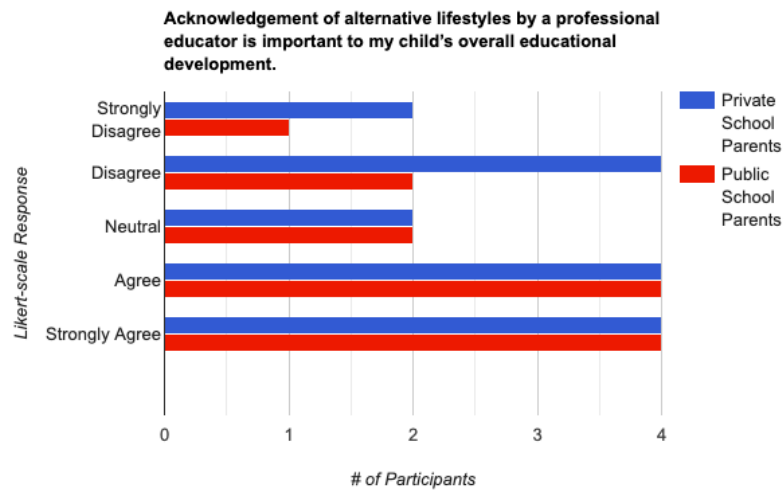
**Figure 2a**



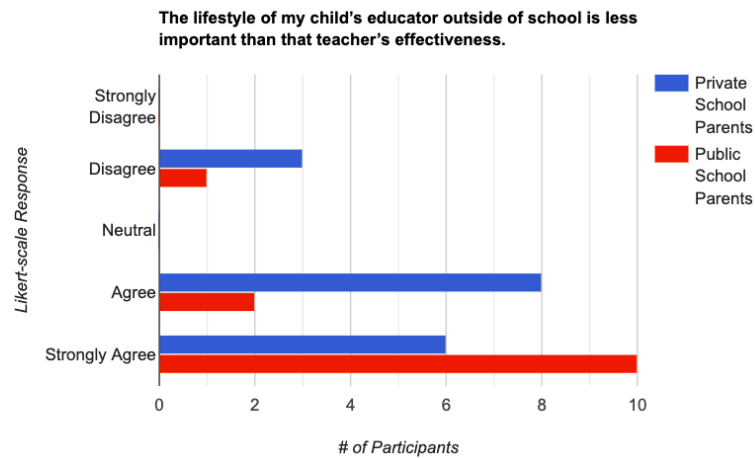
**Figure 2b**



**Figure 2c**



**Figure 2d**



## Open-ended Narratives

The open-ended questions are designed for the participants to express their perspectives through an anonymous platform. In place of in-person interviews, the participants answered questions as descriptive narratives because of the Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing limitations. The answers to these survey questions will be used in combination with demographic and Likert-scale results to answer the research questions.

## Figure 3

### Descriptive Narrative Questions (n=30)

**Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, how has a teacher's lifestyle had a positive or negative effect on your child's educational experience?**

---

Answered questions 30

**Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, are you aware of any circumstance where a teacher was dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy?**

---

Answered questions 30

**When it comes to your child's education, what is more important: the teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom or their lifestyle choices outside of school?**

---

Answered questions 30

## **Themes from Coding**

The researcher employed Delve Qualitative Analysis software to code survey results and develop themes based on the descriptive narrative questions. The following discoveries were used to develop themes from the coding process: a) teacher effectiveness is paramount to parent's concern over their lifestyle outside of school, b) parents support the acknowledgment of non-heteronormative lifestyles as a means to promote diversity, c) most parents are unaware of Lifestyle Policies and those familiar do not support it, d) effectiveness is essential but there are exceptions. These key findings led the researcher to code the following categories into themes to answer the research questions: a) effectiveness, b) acknowledgment, c) awareness, d) exceptions.

### ***Effectiveness***

Teacher effectiveness appeared in twenty-five of the thirty survey responses. When asked if "The lifestyle of my child's educator outside of school is less important than that teacher's effectiveness", 53% strongly agree, 33% agree, and 13% disagree (Figure 2d). The following responses also support effectiveness over lifestyle:

"One hundred percent the effectiveness of the educator. Lifestyle choices should have no bearing".

"Being an effective communicator to all of your students is the most important attribute a teacher can possess. Some are better than others but that has nothing to do with their lifestyle just as it has nothing to do with race or gender. I want my children to learn and want to learn. I don't care who does it".

## ***Acknowledgement***

When asked if a teacher's lifestyle had a positive or negative effect on your child's educational experience, parents overwhelmingly supported the acknowledgement of alternative lifestyles as a way to talk about diversity.

"Generally speaking, the more diverse the background and lifestyle, the more accepting the teacher is. Also, the greater the chance that the educator has a more well rounded view point".

"I do appreciate my child encountering healthy adult instructors with diverse lifestyles. I think understanding positive role models with differences promote empathy and understanding of other cultures and backgrounds".

"I believe it is important for a school to employ people from varying backgrounds because a school is a small community. This community should have representation from as many different races and cultures as possible".

"We had a teacher with a different family arrangement. Our family was able to discuss openly about the differences and similarities, and learn how to be accepting".

## ***Awareness***

The Lifestyle Policy was unfamiliar to 73% of participants, while 27% were aware that their child's school required their use for employment (Figure 1f). Most participants were not aware of a Lifestyle Policy but participants noted:

"I can't think of any specific stories, but I am appalled at the notion of 'lifestyle policies'".

"I do not know of anyone that has been dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy, but I would say if I did, I would strongly disagree with that. At this day and age we are taught

to all be open minded and accepting of all regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation”.

However, some participants aware of the policy also commented:

“Yes, I have known teachers who have been dismissed from their job in a Catholic school because of their sexual orientation”.

“Yes, the PE Coach was dismissed from his former Catholic school due to having a baby with his girlfriend”.

### ***Exceptions***

The researcher noted a common theme in the responses to open-ended descriptive narrative questions that addressed parents’ top priority when addressing teacher effectiveness over their personal lifestyle. The phrase “as long as” and “however” appeared in several descriptive narratives:

“The effectiveness of a teacher in the classroom is a major aspect that determines a child’s education. In my opinion, what a teacher does in his/her personal life is no one’s business but their own. However, if they blast their personal lifestyle, political opinions, partying pics, tik toks, etc on social media where my child can view it, then it potentially could becomes an issue. I find it undermines their professionalism”.

“An educator’s lifestyle and personal choices are not of my concern if they are being effective in the classroom; and, it does not directly affect the health and safety of my child while learning”.

“Classroom effectiveness as long as their personal view are not pushed onto the students to change their minds”.

“A teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom matters to me more than their lifestyle choices outside of school as long as it does not impact their ability to reach all students in a meaningful way”.

The previous narrative responses are consistent with Likert-scale results when asked if the acknowledgement of alternative lifestyles by a professional educator is important to their child's overall educational development: 10% strongly disagree, 23% disagree, 20% neutral, 27% agree, 20% strongly agree. The triangulation of this data reflects the exceptions described by the participants.

### **Research Question Findings**

The researcher sought to answer four research questions to gain perspective into what the parents of K-12 students' value more: the effectiveness or lifestyle or their child's educator. The key findings from the survey overlap between research questions and provide support for answering each question. An analysis of demographics, Likert-scale responses, and descriptive narratives allowed the researcher to provide perspectives from the participants to answer the following research questions.

#### ***Research Question 1 Findings***

Is there any difference between the perspectives of parents in public versus private schools in the prioritization of heteronormative lifestyle expectations and teacher effectiveness?

Of the (n=30) participants, 53% represented private school and 47% from public schools (Figure 1e). Based on the Likert-scale responses to questions regarding the prioritization of heteronormative lifestyle expectations and teacher effectiveness, the survey results indicate that 37% strongly disagree and 40% disagree that they chose their child's schooling based on the expectation that heteronormative lifestyle practices of their teacher would guide their educational

experience, 13% remained neutral and 10% agree (Figure 2a). However, when asked if the perception of a teacher's lifestyle outside of the classroom is important to the student's educational experience, the results leaned more neutral. Those responses indicated that 23% strongly disagree, 37% disagree, 17% of the responses were neutral while 20% agreed and 3% strongly agreed that the teacher's lifestyle outside of the classroom was important to the student's educational experience (Figure 2b).

The researcher used responses from the open-ended descriptive narratives to gain further insight into the perspectives supporting the participants Likert-scale responses. When asked if a teacher's lifestyle had a positive or negative effect on your child's educational experience, participants provided perspective on the prioritization of heteronormativity over teacher effectiveness:

"We had a teacher with a different family arrangement. Our family was able to discuss openly about the differences and similarities, and learn how to be accepting".

"I believe it is important for a school to employ people from varying backgrounds because a school is a small community. This community should have representation from as many different races and cultures as possible. It is reasonable for a school to hire teachers who are not all heterosexual, because not every person in a child's city, state or country is strictly heterosexual. A school's faculty and student population should represent the world at large as much as it possibly can. Having teachers with non-heterosexual backgrounds will act as a positive role model for a child who may feel as if he or she might have similar feelings/orientation. If a teacher acts professionally, it does not matter what their lifestyle choices are outside of school. I do think teachers and school staff have to be more discreet in general, however. People who work at schools



are generally held to a higher moral standard than those who do not work directly with children whether they teach at public, religious, or private schools”.

“My student's school teaches race issues, inclusion, and diversity. Both gay and lesbian taught it. It clearly gave them an advantage in relating to the subjects and communicate more effectively with their students”.

Furthermore, the researcher asked if participants were aware of any circumstances where a teacher was dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy and they reported the following:

“Yes, I have known teachers who have been dismissed from their job in a Catholic school because of their sexual orientation”.

“Yes, the PE Coach was dismissed from his former Catholic school due to having a baby with his girlfriend”.

“Yes, such a situation happened when I was in high school and I was very upset about it.

“The teacher was extremely experienced and knowledgeable but was dismissed due to their sexual orientation”.

### ***Research Question 2 Findings***

Does race, age, and political preferences account for differences in perspectives on heteronormativity in the education of their child?

The breakdown of race, age, and political preferences of the (n=30) participants can be found in Figures 1b, 1c, 1d. The participants were of the following representations: 7% Asian, 20% Black/ African American, 13% Hispanic/ Latino, 57% White/ Caucasian, and 3% other. Their political preferences were 63% Democrat, 27% Republican, and 10% Independent. Their ages range from 31-60 years.

When asked if the lifestyle of their child's educator outside of school is less important than that teacher's effectiveness, 53% strongly agree and 33% agree that the educator's lifestyle is less important than their effectiveness while only 13% disagreed. This is supported by the following descriptive narrative responses.

One participant, a white, female Democrat between 31-40 with a child enrolled in a public school noted, "The teacher's ability to be effective! I am so sorry this even has to be a question. And I hope that these types of discriminatory policies will someday be a thing of the past".

Another participant, a white, female Republican between 41-50 with a child enrolled in private school noted, "Teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom is priority in relation to a child's education. If that teacher's lifestyle choices aide in their effectiveness as a teacher by way of experiences, etc then of course that is welcomed".

Lastly, a white, female Democrat between 31-40 responded, "Many teachers with alternative lifestyles can embrace a multicultural approach to education because the teacher isn't conforming to the dominant culture. This is needed for children to embrace their differences and not feel inferior to others".

### ***Research Question 3 Findings***

From the parent's perspective, is the lifestyle of the student's classroom teacher important to the outcome of their education?

The researcher used demographic information provided by the participants gender and ethnicity to begin analyzing this question. Of the (n=30) sample population, 80% were female, 20% male. Ethnicity of participants are reported as: 7% Asian, 20% Black/ African American, 13% Hispanic/ Latino, 57% White/ Caucasian, and 3% other.

Effectiveness supersedes lifestyle preference; however, when asked if the acknowledgement of alternative lifestyles by a professional educator is important to my child's overall educational development, participants were more divided: 10% strongly disagree, 23% disagree, 20% neutral, 27 % agree, 20% strongly agree. This finding directed the researcher to look further into the descriptive narrative responses to understand the varying responses.

These implications are further discussed in Chapter Five; however, key findings from the descriptive narrative responses gives insight into this query:

“A teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom matters to me more than their lifestyle choices outside of school as long as it does not impact their ability to reach all students in a meaningful way.

“Classroom effectiveness as long as their personal view are not pushed onto the students to change their minds”.

“The effectiveness of a teacher in the classroom is a major aspect that determines a child's education. In my opinion, what a teacher does in his/her personal life is no one's business but their own. However, if they blast their personal lifestyle, political opinions, partying pics, tik toks, etc on social media where my child can view it, then it potentially could becomes an issue. I find it undermines their professionalism”.

#### ***Research Question 4 Findings***

Does heteronormativity and lifestyle matter in determining teacher effectiveness as perceived by parents of public and private school students?

The demographics of parents from private and public school students (Figure 1e) are used to examine the findings for this research question. Parents from private schools represented 57% of the sample and 43% from public schools.

When asked if the participants chose their child's schooling based on the expectation that heteronormative lifestyle practices of their teacher would guide their educational experience on a Likert-scale, parents reported the following: 37% strongly disagree, 40% disagree, 13% neutral, and 10% agree.

"I have never gotten into a teacher's personal lifestyle as long as my child education is important to them I don't bother with anything else petty".

"My student's school teaches race issues, inclusion, and diversity. Both gay and lesbian taught it. It clearly gave them an advantage in relating to the subjects and communicate more effectively with their students".

"An effective teacher who can draw from and share personal experiences and be relatable to their students is an asset".

"Their effectiveness in the classroom because it directly affects my child on a day to day basis because the level of interaction between teacher and student".

"My children's teachers have always been positive role models regardless of their lifestyles. Their teachers have always encouraged my children to work hard, try their best, and always be open minded to listen to opinions as well as express their own opinions".

## **Conclusion**

The Convergent Parallel Design described in Chapter Three allowed the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously and compare results through an analysis to answers the research questions. Using the Likert-scale responses in comparison with the descriptive narratives and demographic statistics, the researcher was able to triangulate data between sets of information for validity. This chapter identified four coded findings associated

with the research questions: a) effectiveness, b) acknowledgment, c) awareness, d) exceptions.

The findings give a perspective from parents of K-12 students that is absent in current empirical research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study surveyed parents of K-12 students on their perspectives of heteronormativity and teacher effectiveness. The researcher surveyed (n=30) parents from both public and private schools. The researcher found that: a) teacher effectiveness is paramount to parent's concern over their lifestyle outside of school, b) parents support the acknowledgment of non-heteronormative lifestyles as a means to promote diversity, c) most parents are unaware of Lifestyle Policies and those familiar do not support it, d) effectiveness is essential but there are exceptions.

This chapter begins with a review of the research questions, a summary of findings, followed by the data collection and analysis process. Next, a discussion of key findings organized by the four major themes derived during coding analysis will highlight results from the participant surveys. The chapter culminates with recommendations for future research, policy development, and implications for school administrators.

The following research question guided this study and are discussed as part of the Discussion section in this chapter:

(RQ1): Is there any difference between the perspectives of parents in public versus private schools in the prioritization of heteronormative lifestyle expectations and teacher effectiveness?

(RQ): Does race, age, and political preferences account for differences in perspectives on heteronormativity in the education of their child?

(RQ3): From the parent's perspective, is the lifestyle of the student's classroom teacher important to the outcome of their education?

(RQ4): Does heteronormativity and lifestyle matter in determining teacher effectiveness as perceived by parents of public and private school students?

### **Summary of Findings**

The Likert-scale and descriptive narrative responses provided the information necessary for coding the survey results (Figure 2). The resulting analysis concluded: a) teacher effectiveness is paramount to parent's concern over their lifestyle outside of school, b) parents support the acknowledgment of non-heteronormative lifestyles as a means to promote diversity, c) most parents are unaware of Lifestyle Policies and those familiar do not support it, d) effectiveness is essential but there are exceptions. This analysis and supporting research findings developed the corresponding themes: a) effectiveness, b) acknowledgment, c) awareness, and d) exceptions.

### **Discussion (organized by findings)**

The key findings of this study gain a perspective from parents of K-12 students lacking in empirical research regarding heteronormativity and teacher effectiveness. After surveying (n=30) participants, the researcher set aside mandates created by school administrators and policy makers and asked parents for their perspective on policies that favor lifestyle requirements over teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

Participants completed a survey that included demographics, Likert-scale questions, and descriptive narrative responses. The researcher used the themes from coding analysis to organize the discussion of results to develop a deeper understanding of the parent's perspective and organize themes for discussing the results.

## ***Effectiveness***

Teacher effectiveness was consistently mentioned in twenty-five of the (n=30) surveys. Participants held teacher effectiveness in highest regard to their child's educational development. When asked if the lifestyle of the child's educator outside of school is less important than that teacher's effectiveness, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, while only 13% disagreed (Figure 2d). Similarly, when asked if parents chose their child's schooling based on the expectation that heteronormative lifestyle practices of their teacher would guide their educational experience, the majority agreed or strongly agreed and 10% disagreed (Figure 2a).

Since 1965, the federal government of the United States has mandated that all schools ensure their teachers are "highly qualified" (Klein, 2016). This generally meant that educators were required to earn at least a bachelor's degree in their teaching area or state certification. The latest change to these educational mandates came in 2015 when President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law as its replacement. The latest clause regarding teachers no longer requires schools to employ only "highly qualified" teachers but was replaced with Teacher and School Leader Innovation programs that grant money to districts that provide continuing education opportunities, particularly in literacy and STEM subjects (Klein, 2016). Again, none of the provisions mention teacher effectiveness regarding their sexuality or lifestyle outside of the school system.

## ***Acknowledgment***

Parents welcomed the acknowledgment of non-heteronormative lifestyles as part of their child's educational development. Research suggests that school administrators and teachers are responsible for the lack of representation of alternative lifestyles in the classroom (Dinkins & Englert, 2015; Hans et al., 2012). Not a single participant responded negatively when asked if an



educator's lifestyle ever had a positive or negative effect of their child's education. From the parent's perspective, representation and acknowledgement are beneficial.

Rather, the descriptive narrative responses were positive:

“Generally speaking, the more diverse the background and lifestyle, the more accepting the teacher is. Also, the greater the chance that the educator has a more well rounded view point”.

“We had a teacher with a different family arrangement. Our family was able to discuss openly about the differences and similarities, and learn how to be accepting”.

This challenges critics who suggest being open about sexuality or lifestyle in the classroom is inappropriate or unprofessional (Rofes, 2000) or suggest that educators are trying to indoctrinate students (Petrovic, 2013). Instead, acknowledgment of alternative lifestyles support studies similar to Orlov & Allen's (2014) study on the disclosure of educator sexuality which found that destigmatizing stereotypes that promoted a “greater good and advance... free and democratic society” (p. 1027). These approaches are also noted for combating stereotypes and bias by acknowledging all in rebuke of prejudice (White et al., 2018). History demonstrates that civil rights laws effectively decrease discrimination because they provide strong federal remedies targeted to specific vulnerable groups (Cicilline, 2019).

### ***Awareness***

The majority (57%) of participants represented the parents of private school students and the remaining 43% from public schools. When asked if parents were aware if their child's school has a Lifestyle Policy for recruiting or retaining teachers, 73% were unaware and only 27% aware. Employment discrimination is less prevalent in the public school system than private and faith-based schools (Bergin, 2015; Devine, 2015; Holland, 2012). However, this is important

when realizing that a majority of private school parents are unaware that a Lifestyle Policy exists.

One participant, a female, white, Republican parent of a private school student who was unaware if her child's student had a Lifestyle Policy agreement for educators noted:

"I do not know of anyone that has been dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy, but I would say if I did, I would strongly disagree with that. At this day and age we are taught to all be open minded and accepting of all regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation".

### ***Exception***

Participants were overwhelmingly accepting of teacher effectiveness over their personal lifestyle choice; however, the researcher noticed a trend of phrases that stated participant opinions with a caveat. The implications of 'however' and 'as long as' stuck out to the researcher in the following statements:

"In my opinion, what a teacher does in his/her personal life is no one's business but their own. However, if they blast their personal lifestyle, political opinions, partying pics, tik toks, etc on social media where my child can view it, then it potentially could become an issue. I find it undermines their professionalism".

"A teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom matters to me more than their lifestyle choices outside of school as long as it does not impact their ability to reach all students in a meaningful way".

"Classroom effectiveness as long as their personal view are not pushed onto the student to change their minds".

Though society seems to accept and support progressive inclusion, this evidence supports hesitation that continues to create headlines for social debate. I.e., in 2014, Brett Bigham, a two-time recipient of Oregon's Teacher of the Year award was terminated for discussing his sexuality with students as a way to discuss gay rights, bullying, and suicide prevention (Moore, 2015). Similarly, another two-time Teacher of the Year recipient, Stacy Bailey, was dismissed for displaying a picture of her same-sex partner in her office (Andu, 2020). Both cases ended with rewards for Bigham and Bailey; however, their acceptance with exceptions was necessary to support the need for exploring why these events occur.

These implications are addressed in suggestions for future research but appropriate to explore in this study because though the majority of participants expressed effectiveness over lifestyle choices, the responses varied when asked if the acknowledgement of alternative lifestyles by a professional educator is important to my child's overall educational development: 10% strongly disagree, 23% disagree, 20% neutral, 27% agree, and 20% strongly agree (Figure 2c). In these instances, it seems that society and the education system are accepting of alternative lifestyles as long as it does not interfere with authoritative sensitivities.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

### ***Broader Outreach***

The results of the study are limited to the sample population of (n=30) participants. Future studies could include larger samples of the populations with more diversity. Though the Asian, Black, and Hispanic communities were represented in this study, 57% of the participants were White (Figure 1b). Future research could include more diversity.

This study was conducted in a southern state of the United States. The state primarily votes Republican; however, the general area used in the study is known to lean more Democrat.

Future studies in other regions of the country where populations are similar or different would add to the studies validity. 63% of study participants identified as Democrat, 27% Republican, and 10% Independent (Figure 1c). The results were consistently liberal; however, a study with equal representation of race and political preference could present deeper perspective into a diverse group of the parent population.

### ***Faith-based School Study***

Lifestyle Policies and employment discrimination effect private, faith-based educators primarily. Church leaders created the Lifestyle Policy to ensure that the teachers and administrators educating students in Catholic schools also live a lifestyle that reflects the lifestyle prescribed by Catholic social teachings (Krason, 2018). A similar study on heteronormativity and teacher effectiveness that focused primarily on faith-based organizations and the perspectives of their parent population would add insight to the effectiveness of these policies and what they mean to the parents of K-12 students.

### ***Further Interpretation of ‘Exceptions’***

The caveats, ‘however’ and ‘as long as’, stuck out to the researcher when participants were asked about teacher effectiveness over their personal lifestyle choices. The responses to these questions were open-ended, thus the researcher was unable to dig further into the question and explore what participants meant by these statements. These phrases include:

“However, if they blast their personal lifestyle, political opinions, partying pics, tik toks, etc. on social media where my child can view it, then it potentially could become an issue. I find it undermines their professionalism”.

“...as long as it does not impact their ability to reach all students in a meaningful way”.

“...as long as their personal view are not pushed onto the student to change their minds”.

Future research could further explore these opinions and understand what hesitation parents encounter when asked about these perspectives.

### **Implication for Practice and Study**

“Schools have been, and still are seen as bastions of the inculcation of traditional knowledge and social values” (Niesche, 2003, p. 943). Classrooms are spaces that inoculate rules and expectations that result from student and teacher interactions (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000) while making ways to support students and bring about social change (Preston, 2016).

School administrators could use the results of this study while creating human resource policies and developing curriculums as a perspective from a sample population of parents. Heteronormative environments are being challenged in schools around the country (O’Kane, 2018; Perez, 2014). Studies show that non-heterosexual faculty are likely to either lie or suggest that questions about their personal lives is inappropriate to protect themselves from discrimination, stereotyping, and potential termination (Andu, 2020; Bigham, 2020).

### **Conclusions**

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was created to close the achievement gap between students poor, underprivileged students and their more advantaged peers by providing them with additional federal support and also mandating that all schools employ highly qualified teachers in every core subject classroom by the 2005-06 school year (Klein, 2015). The success of this bill came from the collaboration of Democrats, Republicans, civil rights leaders, and business interests. Its bipartisan support has advanced educational initiatives and evolved into today’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2015. It is essential to note that “highly qualified” teachers are not defined in terms of sexuality or lifestyle anywhere in the law. School administrators are left to determine which educators are

deemed “highly qualified,” and in some instances, their success is limited by personal lifestyle choices.

The results of this study indicate an overall acceptance of non-heteronormative lifestyles by parents of K-12 students. Parents value teacher effectiveness over the educator’s lifestyle choices. This study can provide perspectives and priorities to education administrators and policy makers when addressing human resource initiatives and creating opportunity to expand efforts for more diversity and inclusion among educators.

Results also indicate that many parents were not aware that such a policy existed, therefore implying that there is no transparency in the execution of a lifestyle personnel change at the possible expense of a quality education. The mechanism available to some, primarily, private schools theoretically can be applied in ways that maximize the potential educational outcomes of educators, to a narrow value system of a few. Results of this study indicates that this is not what parents want out of schools.

## References

- Andu, N. (2020, February 25). *After penalizing gay teacher, Mansfield ISD awards her \$100,000, plans vote to ban sexual orientation discrimination*. The Texas Tribune. <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/02/25/texas-teacher-who-was-penalized-being-gay-wins-100000-settlement/>
- Barrett, B., & Bound, A. M. (2015). A Critical Discourse Analysis of *No Promo Homo* Policies in US Schools. *Educational Studies*, 51(4), 267–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2015.1052445>
- Bergin, N. (2015, April 18). *Supporters say teacher losing job because he's gay*. JournalStar.Com. [https://journalstar.com/news/local/education/supporters-say-teacher-losing-job-because-he-s-gay/article\\_e3188885-7839-5745-b7ff-29844223e850.html](https://journalstar.com/news/local/education/supporters-say-teacher-losing-job-because-he-s-gay/article_e3188885-7839-5745-b7ff-29844223e850.html)
- Berrien, H. (2015, December 2). *Another gay man sues Catholic school for not paying for his homosexuality*. Daily Wire. <https://www.dailywire.com/news/1550/another-gay-man-sues-catholic-school-not-paying-hank-berrien>
- Bigham, B. (2020, June 23). *Teacher: I Was Fired for Being Gay. Now It Can't Happen to Anyone Else - Education Week*. *Teacher*. <https://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2020/06/23/teacher-i-was-fired-for-being-gay.html>
- Bollinger, A. (2019, March 11). *This high school prom bans same-sex guests, even after a lawsuit about it*. LGBTQ Nation. <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2019/03/high-school-prom-bans-sex-guests-even-years-lawsuit/>
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble- Femininism and the Subversion of Identity* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

- Candiotti, S., & Welch, C. (2014, May 31). "Thou shalt not": Catholic teachers challenge morality clause. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2014/05/30/living/catholic-teachers-morality/>
- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for Interview Research: The Interview Protocol Refinement Framework. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(5), 811–831.
- Catholic School Data. (n.d.). Retrieved March 29, 2019, from [https://www.ncea.org/NCEA/Proclaim/Catholic\\_School\\_Data/Catholic\\_School\\_Data.aspx](https://www.ncea.org/NCEA/Proclaim/Catholic_School_Data/Catholic_School_Data.aspx)
- Chesir-Teran, D. (2003). Conceptualizing and Assessing Heterosexism in High Schools: A Setting-Level Approach. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 31(3), 267–279. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023910820994>
- Cicilline, D. N. (2019, May 1). *H.R.5 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Equality Act* [Webpage]. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5>
- Clark, C., & Blackburn, M. (2009). Reading LGBT-Themed Literature with Young People: What's Possible? *The English Journal*, 98(4), 25–32.
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th Edition). Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th Edition). SAGE Publications.
- Dawson, K. (2019). *TEACHING TO THE TEST*. 13(2), 25.
- Devine, D. J. (2015, August 12). *Catholic school settles with band director fired over gay marriage*. [https://world.wng.org/2015/08/catholic\\_school\\_settles\\_with\\_band\\_director\\_fired\\_over\\_gay\\_marriage](https://world.wng.org/2015/08/catholic_school_settles_with_band_director_fired_over_gay_marriage)



- Dias, E. (2020, June 15). Conservative Christians See ‘Seismic Implications’ in Supreme Court Ruling. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/15/us/lgbtq-supreme-court-religious-freedom.html>
- Dinkins, E. G., & Englert, P. (2015). LGBTQ literature in middle school classrooms: Possibilities for challenging heteronormative environments. *Sex Education, 15*(4), 392–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2015.1030012>
- Donahue, D. M. (2014). Learning from Harvey Milk: The Limits and Opportunities of One Hero to Teach About LGBTQ People and Issues. *The Social Studies, 105*(1), 36–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00377996.2013.788474>
- Dowling, M. (2007). From Husserl to van Manen. A review of different phenomenological approaches. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 44*(1), 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2005.11.026>
- Dozza, L., & Cavrini, G. (2012). Perceptions of Competence: How Parents View Teachers. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 46*, 4050–4055. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.195>
- Eisenmenger, M. (2002). Sexual orientation discrimination: Teachers as positive role models for tolerance. *Journal of Law & Education, 31*(2), 235–244.
- Eriksson, P., & Kovalainen. (2016). *Qualitative Methods in Business Research* (2nd Edition). SAGE Publications.
- Fischer, ConstanceT. (2009). Bracketing in qualitative research: Conceptual and practical matters. *Psychotherapy Research, 19*(4/5), 583–590. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503300902798375>

- Flaherty, C. (2013, October 23). *Some professors fear Catholic colleges are ignoring call by the Pope to focus less on abortion and homosexuality*.  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/10/23/some-professors-fear-catholic-colleges-are-ignoring-call-pope-focus-less-abortion>
- Freind, C. (2018a, August 16). *Chris Freind: Fired for being gay at Catholic school? Check the contract*. The Reporter Online. [https://www.thereporteronline.com/opinion/chris-freind-fired-for-being-gay-at-catholic-school-check/article\\_eb9414a7-2d8a-5ba6-bb5c-995225f4ed69.html](https://www.thereporteronline.com/opinion/chris-freind-fired-for-being-gay-at-catholic-school-check/article_eb9414a7-2d8a-5ba6-bb5c-995225f4ed69.html)
- Freind, C. (2018b, August 23). *Catholic teachers fired for being in same-sex marriages are not victims*. Newsmax. <https://www.newsmax.com/freind/catholic-same-sex-marriage-lgbt-employment/2018/08/23/id/878388/>
- Guernsey, D., & Donohue, D. (2015, June 26). *Faith and morals language in Catholic school teacher employment documents*. Cardinal Newman Society.  
<https://newmansociety.org/faith-morals-language-catholic-school-teacher-employment-documents/>
- Habarth, J. M. (2015). Development of the heteronormative attitudes and beliefs scale. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 6(2), 166–188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2013.876444>
- Hall, W. J., & Rodgers, G. K. (2019). Teachers’ attitudes toward homosexuality and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer community in the United States. *Social Psychology of Education*, 22(1), 23–41. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-018-9463-9>
- Hamilton, K. M., Park, L. S., Carsey, T. A., & Martinez, L. R. (2019). “Lez be honest”: Gender expression impacts workplace disclosure decisions. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 23(2), 144–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2019.1520540>

- Hans, J. D., Kersey, M., & Kimberly, C. (2012). Self-Perceived Origins of Attitudes Toward Homosexuality. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59(1), 4–17.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2012.638547>
- Henry, S. (2018). Education, queer theology, and spiritual development: Disrupting heteronormativity for inclusion in Jewish, Muslim and Christian faith schools. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 23(1), 3–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2017.1410697>
- Hobby, R. (2019, June 9). Teaching children about LGBT issues is not brainwashing – it equips them for life | Russell Hobby. *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jun/09/teaching-children-lgbt-issues-parents-teachers-government>
- Holland, E. (2012, March 2). *Catholic school teacher fired for Gay wedding plans*. Sojourners.  
<https://sojo.net/articles/catholic-school-teacher-fired-gay-wedding-plans>
- Horowitz, J. (2020, October 21). *In Shift for Church, Pope Francis Voices Support for Same-Sex Civil Unions—The New York Times*. New York Times.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/21/world/europe/pope-francis-same-sex-civil-unions.html>
- Ingram, N. (2019, June 11). *The State of LGBTQ Curriculum: Tide Is Turning as Some States Opt for Inclusion, Others Lift Outright Restrictions* [The 74].  
<https://www.the74million.org/the-state-of-lgbtq-curriculum-tide-is-turning-as-some-states-opt-for-inclusion-others-lift-outright-restrictions/>
- Kelly, T. E. (1986). Discussing Controversial Issues: Four Perspectives on the Teacher's Role. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 14(2), 113–138.

- Klein, A. (2015, April 10). No Child Left Behind Overview: Definitions, Requirements, Criticisms, and More - Education Week. *Education Week*.  
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/no-child-left-behind-overview-definition-summary.html>
- Klein, A. (2016, March 31). *The Every Student Succeeds Act: An ESSA Overview*. Education Week. <https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/every-student-succeeds-act/index.html?cmp=SOC-SHR-FB>
- Krason, S. M. (2018). Conservatism, economics, social welfare, and Catholic social teaching. *Catholic Social Science Review*, 23, 375–379.
- LaBarbera, P. (2016, August 19). *Media myths of the homosexual-transgender agenda*. Homosexuality and the Clergy.  
[https://traditioninaction.org/HotTopics/N027\\_Myths\\_1.htm](https://traditioninaction.org/HotTopics/N027_Myths_1.htm)
- LaSala, M. C., Jenkins, D. A., Wheeler, D. P., & Fredriksen-Goldsen, K. I. (2008). LGBT Faculty, Research, and Researchers: Risks and Rewards. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 20(3), 253–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720802235351>
- Lee, D., & Carpenter, V. M. (2015). “What would you like me to do? Lie to you?” Teacher education responsibilities to LGBTI students. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(2), 169–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2014.932331>
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Workplace Issues: Quick Take. (2019, June 17). *Catalyst*. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-workplace-issues/>

- Leung Ling, M. T. W., & Chen, H. F. (2017). Hong Kong's Parents' Views on Sex, Marriage, and Homosexuality. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 26(6), 1573–1582.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0672-1>
- Lifestyle Policy for Archdiocese of New Orleans Educators*. (n.d.). Archdiocese of New Orleans.
- Liptak, A. (2020, June 16). Civil Rights Law Protects Gay and Transgender Workers, Supreme Court Rules. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/15/us/gay-transgender-workers-supreme-court.html>
- Loutzenheiser, L. W., & MacIntosh, L. B. (2004). Citizenships, Sexualities, and Education. *Theory Into Practice*, 43(2), 151–158. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4302\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4302_9)
- Mason, M. (2010). Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3).
- Mawdsley, R. D. (2011). Employment, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs: Do religious educational institutions have a protected right to discriminate in the selection and discharge of employees? *B.Y.U. Education and Law Journal*, 279–302.
- McGough, M. (2013, August 5). Gay teacher fired: Does discrimination law trump theological conviction? *Los Angeles Times*. <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/aug/05/news/la-ol-gay-teacher-fired-20130805>
- MeasuringU: 3 Ways to Combine Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 6, 2021, from <https://measuringu.com/mixing-methods/>
- Meyerhofer, K. (2018, May 25). “This is discrimination.” *Hilton Head Catholic school rejected same-sex couple’s kids*. The Island Packet.  
<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/education/article211817424.html>

- Milz, M. (2018, August 20). *Fired for being gay, educator finds help from Catholic school*. 13 WTHR Indianapolis. <https://www.wthr.com/article/fired-being-gay-educator-finds-help-catholic-school>
- Mirus, J. (2014, March 28). *Homosexuality, divorce and remarriage: Will a Catholic school in North Carolina set the tone for the Church?* Catholic Culture. <http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/otc.cfm?id=1174>
- Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the Narrative Research Approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(4), 56–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500405>
- Moore, S. K. (2015, April 7). *Why was Oregon's Teacher of the Year Brett Bigham fired?* Https://Joomlakave.Com. <https://pamplinmedia.com/pt/9-news/255987-126232-why-was-oregons-teacher-of-the-year-brett-bigham-fired>
- Morris-Young, D. (2014, May 23). *Court greenlights fired gay teacher's lawsuit against Catholic school*. National Catholic Reporter. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/parish/court-greenlights-fired-gay-teachers-lawsuit-against-catholic-school>
- Niesche, R. (2003). Power and homosexuality in the teaching workplace. *Social Alternatives*, 22(2), 43–47.
- O'Kane, C. (2018, May 28). *High school bans valedictorian's speech, so he uses a megaphone*. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/holy-cross-high-school-kentucky-valedictorian-christian-bales-barred-graduation-speech/>
- O'Loughlin, M. (2019, June 20). *Archdiocese pulls 'Catholic' label from Jesuit school for refusing to fire teacher in same-sex marriage*. America Magazine.

- <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/06/20/indianapolis-archdiocese-catholic-jesuit-refusing-fire-teacher-same-sex-marriage>
- Orlov, J. M., & Allen, K. R. (2014). Being Who I Am: Effective Teaching, Learning, Student Support, and Societal Change Through LGBTQ Faculty Freedom. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 61(7), 1025–1052. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.870850>
- Packer, M. J., & Goicoechea, J. (2000). Sociocultural and Constructivist Theories of Learning: Ontology, Not Just Epistemology. *Educational Psychologist*, 35(4), 227–241. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3504\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3504_02)
- Perez, C. (2014). Zero tolerance: Why Catholics must condemn anti-gay violence. *America*, 16–19.
- Petrovic, J. E. (2013). Reason, Liberalism, and Democratic Education: A Deweyan Approach to Teaching About Homosexuality: Reason, Liberalism, and Democratic Education. *Educational Theory*, 63(5), 525–541. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12039>
- Porta, C. M., Gower, A. L., Mehus, C. J., Yu, X., Saewyc, E. M., & Eisenberg, M. E. (2017). “Kicked out”: LGBTQ youths’ bathroom experiences and preferences. *Journal of Adolescence*, 56, 107–112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2017.02.005>
- Preston, M. J. (2016). ‘They’re just not mature right now’: Teachers’ complicated perceptions of gender and anti-queer bullying. *Sex Education*, 16(1), 22–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2015.1019665>
- Reimar-Barry, E. (2013, June 18). How to be fired from your job at a Catholic institution: It is easier than you think! *Catholic Moral Theology*. <https://catholicmoraltheology.com/how-to-be-fired-from-your-job-at-a-catholic-institution-it-is-easier-than-you-think/>

- Rodriguez, M. (2013). *See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil; Stemming the Tide of No Promo Homo Laws in American Schools*. 21.
- Roewe, B. (2019, June 21). *Archdiocese severs ties to Jesuit school after refusal to fire gay teacher*. National Catholic Reporter. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/archdiocese-severs-ties-jesuit-school-after-refusal-fire-gay-teacher>
- Rofes, E. (2000). Bound and Gagged: Sexual Silences, Gender Conformity and the Gay Male Teacher. *Sexualities*, 3(4), 439–462. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136346000003004005>
- Rosky, C. J. (2017). Anti-Gay Curriculum Laws. *Utah Law Faculty Scholarship*, 13, 61.
- Russo, C. J. (2009). The law and hiring practices in faith-based schools. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 18(3), 256–271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656210903345248>
- Ryan, A. (2017, August 30). *Inside the “glass closet” of a gay Catholic teacher*. Eureka Street. <https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/inside-the--glass-closet--of-a-gay-catholic-teacher>
- Schoenberg, N. (2018, April 22). “*Your entire career can be derailed*”: For gay teachers, coming out remains risky. Chicago Tribune. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ct-life-gay-teachers-coming-out-0418-story.html>
- State-Sponsored Homophobia report*. (2017, September 14). ILGA. <https://ilga.org/state-sponsored-homophobia-report>
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>



- Thro, W. E. (2011). The heart of the constitutional enterprise: Affirming equality and freedom in public education. *Brigham Young University Education & Law Journal*, 571, 22.
- Tovey, J. (2013, January 24). *Gay teachers in Catholic schools hide sexuality*. The Sydney Morning Herald. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/gay-teachers-in-catholic-schools-hide-sexuality-20130124-2d9oa.html>
- Warner, M. (1991). Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet. *Social Text*, 29, 3–17.
- White, A. J., Magrath, R., & Thomas, B. (2018). The experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual students and staff at a Further Education college in South East England. *British Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), 480–495. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3443>
- Yep, G. A. (2003). The Violence of Heteronormativity in Communication Studies: Notes on Injury, Healing, and Queer World-Making. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45(2–4), 11–59. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_02)
- Zalaznick, M. (2019, August 23). *More states add LGBT-inclusive curriculum*. District Administration. <https://districtadministration.com/states-require-lgbt-inclusive-curriculum-history/>

## APPENDIX A



## Lifestyle Policy for Archdiocese of Educators

### Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church has a ministry of educating the faithful. "The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ and at the same time do all she can to promote for all peoples the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human." Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, #3.

One of the primary means of fulfilling this ministry is through Catholic schools. "The duty and right of educating belongs in a special way to the Church, to which has been divinely entrusted the mission of assisting persons so that they are able to reach the fullness of Christian Life." Canon 794, § 1, 1983 Code of Canon Law. "The instruction and education in a Catholic School must be grounded in the principles of Catholic doctrine; teachers are to be outstanding in correct doctrine and integrity of life." Canon 803, § 2, 1983 Code of Canon Law.

St. John Paul described the nature and purpose of Catholic schools in his 1979 message to the National Catholic Education Association:


[N]o Catholic school can be effective without dedicated teachers, convinced of the great ideal of Catholic education. The Church needs men and women who are intent on teaching by word and example – intent on helping to permeate the whole educational milieu with the spirit of Christ.

\*\*\*


Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others.


### Lifestyle Considerations

In view of the Church's teaching ministry, we become acutely aware of the importance of the Catholic school teacher's witness to the students and to the total parish and school community. It is essential that all Catholic School educators model the Gospel values and agree to teach, advocate, encourage, counsel, and witness in keeping with the beliefs and practices of the Catholic faith and teachings. "Lay persons are bound by the obligation and possess the right to acquire knowledge of Christian doctrine appropriate to the capacity and condition of each in order for them to be able to live according to this doctrine, announce it themselves, defend it if necessary, and take their part in exercising the apostolate." Canon 229, §1, 1983 Code of Canon Law. Catholic School educators are not merely performing a "job function" of teaching academic subjects but are an integral part of the mission and ministry of the Church such that they are Teacher-Ministers.



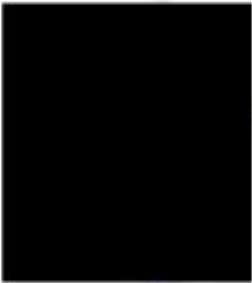
## APPENDIX A (continued)



All Catholics in the education ministry in the Archdiocese of  must be in good standing with the Catholic Church and be aware that support of the mission statement of the Church is to be reflected in their public behavior. Non-Catholics who teach in Catholic schools, although they do not necessarily have a commitment to Catholicism, must uphold in their teaching and lifestyle basic Catholic teachings and practices, so as not to misdirect their students.

Rejection of Church teaching -- whether by lifestyle, advocating or speaking publicly, or engaging in certain activities -- has serious consequences, in view of the impact made on the students by the teacher. Should any situation arise that is contrary to or at variance with this policy, a pastoral approach will first be taken to ensure the best possible benefit to the children and to foster the spiritual well-being of the individual in question. However, all educators employed by the Archdiocese of New Orleans and/or its parishes should be aware that words, conduct or action contrary to or at variance with this policy may result in discipline, including but not limited to termination.

Each educator must uphold Church teaching and doctrine and should be careful to refrain from actions or speech that are considered by the Roman Catholic Church to be immoral or evil or which might cause scandal, as such term is understood by the Roman Catholic Church, i.e. an attitude or behavior which leads or tempts another to do that which the Roman Catholic Church considers evil or immoral. This would include refraining from:

- Public support of positions contrary to Roman Catholic Church teaching including, but not limited to, abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, embryonic stem-cell research, in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, surrogate parenthood, direct sterilization, or so-called homosexual or same-sex marriage or unions;
  - Engaging in or publicly supporting sexual relations outside of marriage recognized as valid by the Roman Catholic Church, where marriage is understood as being the marriage between one man and woman;
  - Belonging to any organization that is anti-Catholic or whose philosophy or mission is in any way contrary to the ethical or moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church;
  - Engaging in dishonesty of consequence;
  - Use of social media or electronic means of communication (e.g., email and texting) in an improper, immoral, or "scandalous" manner, as that term is understood by the Roman Catholic Church
- 

## APPENDIX B



Dissertation Survey

### 1. Welcome Message

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate at the Xavier University of Louisiana. As part of my graduation requirements, I will be conducting a research project titled "Heteronormativity and Teacher Effectiveness: Parent's Perspectives of Importance". This study has been approved and accepted by Institutional Review Board (IRB) process at Xavier University of Louisiana (IRB Study#822). The purpose of this research is to gain perspectives from parents of K-12 students on institutional policies that emphasize the importance of lifestyle expectations over teacher effectiveness. I am asking for your participation by completing the attached anonymous survey.

Any risks to you are minimal; your anonymity will be respected throughout the research and results process. There is no compensation of any kind available for your voluntary participation. You may withdraw your participation at any point.

As mentioned above, I will use your responses as resource material for my research. At your request, I will provide you with a copy of the final draft. Your answers will be reported in the study, but your identity is held confidential and Survey Monkey does not report any identifiers. Though this survey was emailed to you, your email is not connected to the results. No identifying information about you will be available in any draft or final presentation.

If you have any questions about this project or your participation in it, you can call me at 504-444-2948. My email address is [rasprion@xula.edu](mailto:rasprion@xula.edu). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a human participant in research, you may contact Dr. Charles Gramlich, chair of the Xavier University IRB, at (504) 520-7397. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,  
Ryan Asprion

>>



The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required school districts to employ "highly qualified" teachers in all core subject areas by the 2005-06 school year. Defining "highly qualified" relates to the quality of the teacher's training and certifications, never mentioning the educator's lifestyle as a component for consideration. This leads to the question of why the quality of a teacher's effectiveness can be ignored if their personal lifestyle does not meet the expectations of the institution.

Private, faith-based schools can require employees to sign a Lifestyle Policy that requires their lifestyle practices outside of the school to be congruent with the identity of the school's mission. Failure to do so can result in termination. Religious organizations are allowed to terminate employment if a teacher engages in a lifestyle not reflective of that religion's values. For example, a Catholic school can terminate a "highly qualified" teacher for having a child out of wedlock, living with a partner outside of marriage, or supporting/ engagement in non-heterosexual relationships.

Lifestyle policies create a heteronormative environment defined by what society considers the "natural" or "normal" way for male and female educators to live. Such policies and laws have resulted in the loss of "highly qualified", effective teachers because of their personal lifestyle choices.

Key definitions:

Heteronormativity- is the presumed acceptance of culturally determined gender roles about heterosexuality and what expectations society considers as "natural" or "normal".

Lifestyle Policy- a binding agreement between an employee and the institution that the employee will maintain a lifestyle congruent with the school's mission and identity.

Teacher effectiveness- refers to the result of an educator's ability to utilize their talents to teach their specialized subject area.

1 | Consent \*

I understand that I am agreeing to participate in the study "Heteronormativity and Teacher Effectiveness: Parent's Perspective of Importance". The completion of this online survey will take approximately 10- 15 minutes to complete. Please note that your contribution to this study is solely voluntary. At any given time, participants may decide to withdraw from the study without penalty and bias. By accepting the role of a participant in this study, participants are agreeing to complete an online, researcher-developed demographic and perspectives survey.

- I attest that I am a parent of a K-12 student and at least 18 years of age or older in the southern part of Louisiana.
- I attest that I am acknowledging that my participation in this study is voluntary.

☐ Yes

☐ No

<<

>>



Please answer the following questions:

2 | Gender \*

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

3 | Ethnicity \*

- ☐ Asian/ Pacific American
- ☐ Black/ African American
- ☐ Hispanic/ Latino
- ☐ White/ Caucasian
- ☐ Other

4 | Political Preference \*

- ☐ Democrat
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Republican
- ☐ Other

5 | Age \*

- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 61 or older

6 | Which classification of schooling best describes your child/ children's enrollment: \*

- ☐ Public School (government-funded)
- ☐ Private School (independent, non-public funded, religious affiliation)

<<

>>



Please answer the following questions using Likert Scale values:  
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

7 | I chose my child's schooling based on the expectation that heteronormative lifestyle practices of their teacher would guide their educational experience. \*

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

8 | The perception of a teacher's lifestyle outside of the classroom is important to the student's educational experience. \*

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

9 | Acknowledgement of alternative lifestyles by a professional educator is important to my child's overall educational development. \*

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

10 | The lifestyle of my child's educator outside of school is less important than that teacher's effectiveness. \*

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

<<

>>



Dissertation Survey  
5. Open Ended Discussion

Please provide as much information regarding your perspectives.

- 11 Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, how has a teacher's lifestyle had a positive or negative effect on your child's educational experience? \*

Please share any stories.

Enter answer

---

- 12 Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, are you aware of any circumstance where a teacher was dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy? \*

If yes, how did you feel about that?

Enter answer

---

- 13 When it comes to your child's education, what is more important: the teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom or their lifestyle choices outside of school? \*

Why do you think this?

Enter answer

---



## APPENDIX C



### XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

1 Drexel Drive Suite 217C – Box 68  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70125-1098  
(504) 520-5444 (office) – (504) 520-7901 (fax)

TO: **Ryan Asprion, Master of Music, Principal Investigator**

FROM: **Charles Granich, PhD, Chair of Institutional Review Board  
Xavier University of Louisiana IRB**

DATE: **January 23, 2021**

RE: **"Heteronormativity and Teacher Effectiveness: Parents Perspectives  
of Importance"**

The above-named study poses no more than minimal risk to the participants and is eligible for expedited review. The following actions have been taken regarding this study.

1. The proposed study is approved.
2. The survey is approved.
3. The Email Solicitation Script is approved.

This study is approved for one year from the date of this memo. To extend this study for more than one year, a request must be made in writing to the Xavier University IRB at least two weeks prior to January 23, 2022. Any changes to the proposal that might affect the wellbeing of participants must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please inform the Chair of the IRB when all data collection has been completed.

This project is assigned study number **#822** in the IRB files. It is *very* important that you refer to this project number in future correspondence regarding the study.

Reviewed and Approved

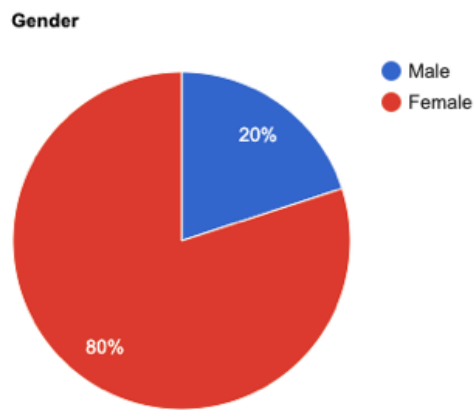
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Granich".

**Charles Granich, PhD, Chair of Institutional Review Board  
Xavier University of Louisiana IRB**

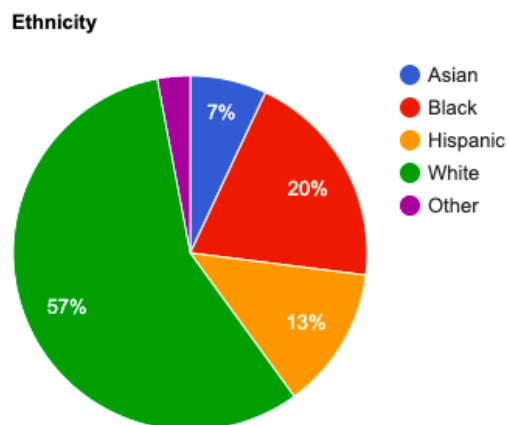
cc. Kaneisha Akinpelumi, Associate V.P. for Research and Sponsored Programs

**Figure 1**

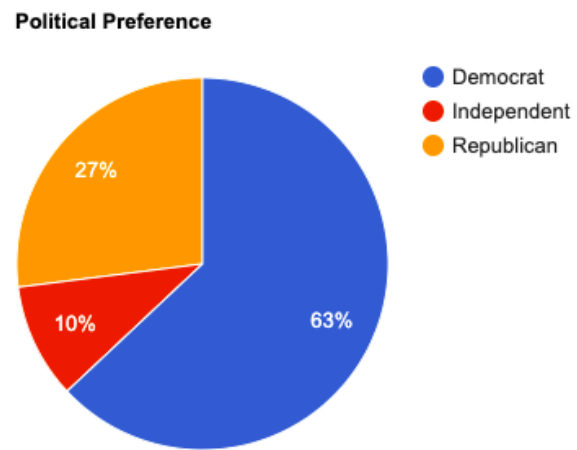
***Figure 1a***



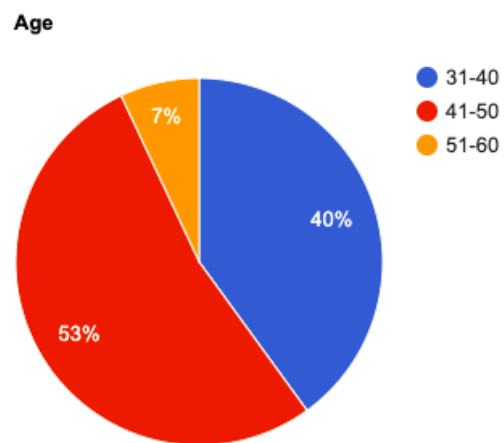
***Figure 1b***



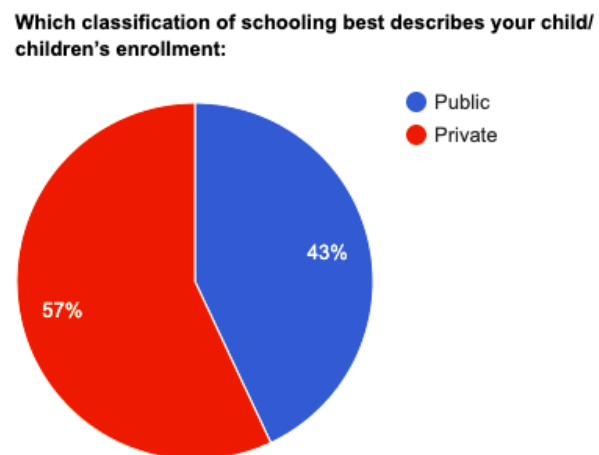
**Figure 1c**



**Figure 1d**

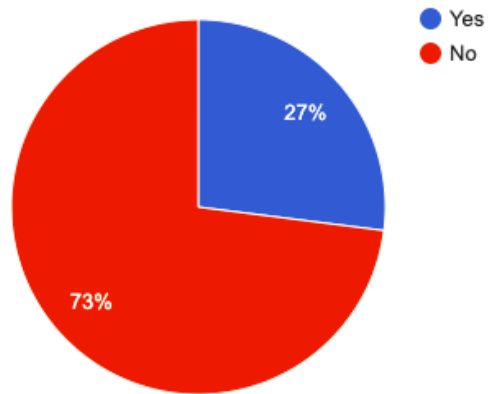


**Figure 1e**



***Figure 1f***

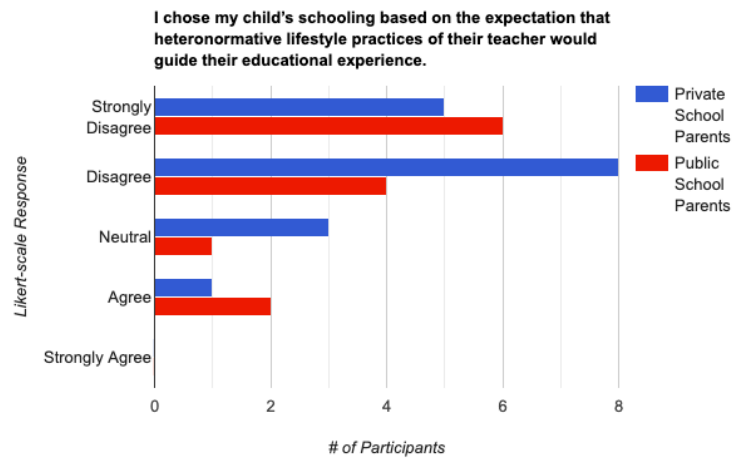
**Are you aware if your child's/children's school has a Lifestyle Policy for recruiting or retaining teachers?**



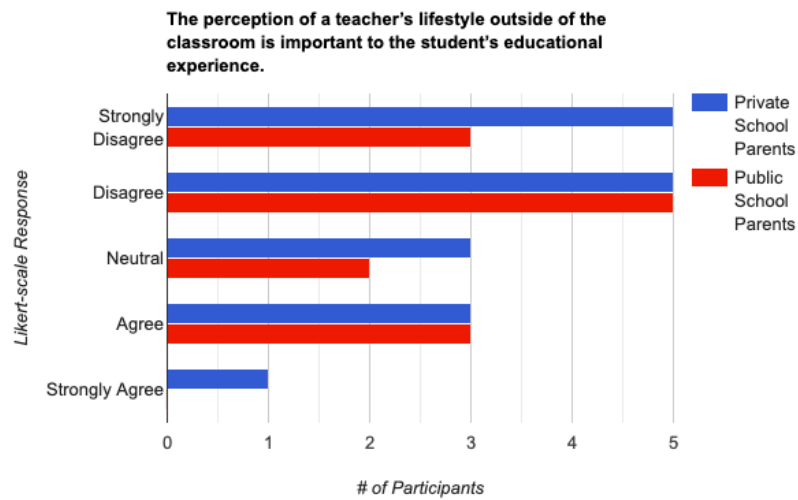
**Figure 2**

*Likert-scale Responses (n=30)*

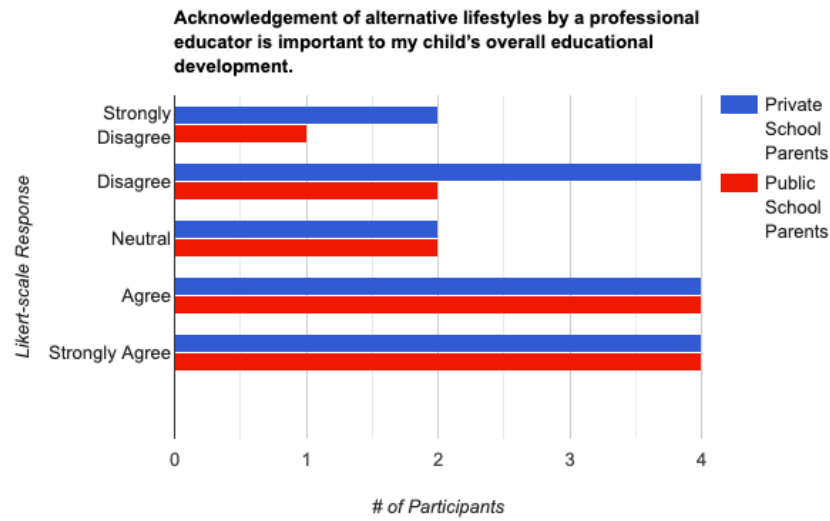
*Figure 2a*



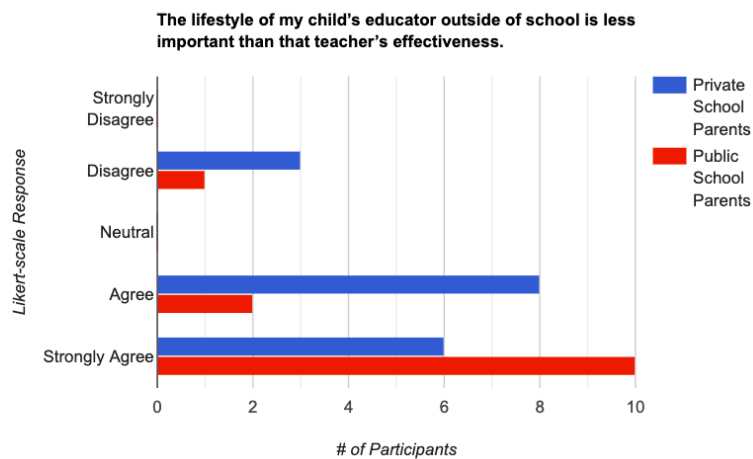
*Figure 2b*



**Figure 2c**



**Figure 2d**



**Figure 3**

***Descriptive Narrative Questions (n=30)***

**Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, how has a teacher's lifestyle had a positive or negative effect on your child's educational experience?**

Answered questions

30

**Without identifying any individual with whom you may have encountered, are you aware of any circumstance where a teacher was dismissed for violating a lifestyle policy?**

---

Answered questions	30
--------------------	----

**When it comes to your child's education, what is more important: the teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom or their lifestyle choices outside of school?**

---

Answered questions	30
--------------------	----