

## THE CHALLENGES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE (IN)VISIBILITY OF THE HOMOSEXUAL TEACHER IN THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

In the current context of education, the (in)visibility of the homosexual teacher continues to be a complex and often neglected issue. The general objective of this study is to survey the representations of teachers of Professional Education from a renowned institution in the State of São Paulo about the homosexuality of teachers within the academic environment. The design of this research was carried out through a bibliographic research. This is a qualitative and descriptive research. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection, consisting of 03 open questions, applied through the Microsoft Forms form to teachers, structured in line with the theoretical framework and the objectives outlined for this investigation. To this end, 80 professionals working in professional education participated in this research, as follows: 80 teachers (called P01 to P80) in different hierarchical positions of 15 State Technical Schools contemplating two Regional Centers of the State of São Paulo. The first question asked to the participants was whether or not it is possible to identify a homosexual teacher who is not self-declared. For 36 (45%) of the participants, it is possible to identify a homosexual person, 23 (29%) say they cannot, 20 (25%) point out that they may be able to identify it, and only 1 (1%) say they do not know how to answer. The second question refers to the participants' representations of self-declared homosexual teachers in the school environment, in this sense, 58 participants defend that self-declared homosexual teachers are equal to heterosexual teachers in all senses, including deserving respect like any human being. The teacher's professional competence is considered the most important factor for nine people. When asked about the fact that a teacher is openly homosexual may cause some kind of discomfort, we found that the majority 67 (84%) say they do not cause any discomfort, 5 (6%) say they do, and 8 (10%) report that they maybe. In short, the main challenges and consequences of the (in)visibility of homosexual teachers in the academic context include veiled or explicit discrimination and prejudice on the part of colleagues, students, and even academic management, which can affect their emotional and professional well-being. In addition, invisibility can limit opportunities for career advancement for homosexual teachers, such as access to leadership positions, research funding, and academic recognition.

**Keywords:** Professional Education. Impersonation. (In)visibility. Homosexual teacher.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the academic sphere, visibility and representation are crucial aspects for the promotion of diversity and equality. However, even in environments that value the plurality of ideas and identities, the (in)visibility of the homosexual teacher remains a complex and often neglected issue. This research aims to address how the sexual orientation of homosexual teachers affects their visibility, perception and experience within the academic environment.

It should be noted that homosexuality, historically, has been a sensitive topic in many social contexts, including academia, where cultural norms and expectations can profoundly influence the way LGBTQIA+ individuals (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite/Transsexual, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual+) are perceived and treated. While academic institutions often declare their commitment to diversity and inclusion, the reality experienced by gay teachers can diverge significantly from stated policies (Costa, 2021).

(In)visibility can manifest itself in many ways, from representation in institutional materials to interpersonal dynamics in the workplace. Issues such as characteristics and stereotypes, veiled discrimination, opportunities for promotion, and even self-censorship are phenomena that can affect the performance of homosexual teachers.

The representation of homosexual teachers in educational curricula is often neglected, even in societies that advance the acceptance of sexual diversity. This scenario raises crucial questions about visibility and acceptance within educational institutions, as well as addressing how these professionals deal with implicit and explicit biases.

In view of the above, this study has as its general objective to survey the representations of teachers of Professional Education from a renowned institution in the State of São Paulo about the homosexuality of teachers within the academic environment. In order to achieve this intention, the specific objectives are: 1) to identify the perceptions of the participants regarding the possibility of identifying a homosexual teacher in the school environment; 2) to verify what the participants think about the presence of self-declared homosexual teachers in the school; and 3) to understand whether or not the existence of a homosexual professor can cause any discomfort to the academic community.

In view of this, it aims to present significant suggestions on how institutional policies and organizational culture can be adjusted to better support the inclusion of all members of the academic community. Through the representations provided by the participants, this research aims to contribute to a greater understanding of the complex dynamics of power, identity, and representation in the contemporary academic environment, as well as to a notion of the intersections between sexual identity and professionalism, encouraging



reflections on inclusive practices and promoting a more welcoming and diverse work environment for all educators.

## **TEACHER HOMOSEXUALITY AND ITS (IN)VISIBILITY IN THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT**

The study of teacher homosexuality and its (in)visibility in the academic context is part of an interdisciplinary field that combines sociological theories, gender and sexuality studies, and organizational analysis. For example, Queer Theory offers a critical lens for analyzing the gender and sexuality norms that structure academic institutions. It challenges the idea of fixed and normative identities, emphasizing the fluidity and multiplicity of sexual and gender experiences (Cooling, 2013). In the context of teacher homosexuality, this theory questions how heteronormative norms shape the visibility and acceptance of teachers who identify as LGBTQIA+. In addition to problematizing the institutional policies and daily practices that can marginalize or make these teachers invisible.

Another theoretical bias is Gender and Sexuality Studies, which offer a solid conceptual basis for understanding how sexual identities are socially constructed and how these constructions impact the professional and personal lives of teachers (Louro, 2019). The critical analysis of these studies allows us to investigate the ways in which LGBTQIA+ identities are perceived, represented, and valued within the academic environment, including examining the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in the experience of LGBTQIA+ teachers.

The theoretical framework on teacher homosexuality and its (in)visibility in the academic context reveals the complexity of the interactions between identity, institutions and society (Miskolci, 2007). To this end, integrating these different theoretical approaches allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ teachers and the potential strategies to promote a more inclusive and egalitarian academic environment. Thus, the bibliographic survey presented in this work seeks to explore the main theoretical and conceptual approaches relevant to understand this theme.

In view of this, the phenomenon of homosexuality is clearly outlined in the teaching profession, because when teachers go beyond the boundaries of sexuality and gender imposed by society, such factors can provoke, alienate, generate conflict, tension, rediscovery, restructuring and challenges in school environments. Thus, according to Louro (2014) it is possible to observe in the educational environment a professional, affective and social relationship based on insecurity, often interfering with the self-esteem of the homosexual teacher, since many prefer silence to confronting prejudice. But, in the face of so many challenges, the teacher finds in his or her profession the pleasure of sharing, which



is allowed to him/her, thus assuming the role of mediator, developing an integral sensitivity within the environment in which he/she works.

Corroborating this same line of reasoning, that many homosexual teachers silence their sexual orientation, both in the family and professional spheres, commonly called "closet". This concept, according to Seidman (2002) was coined after the Second World War, a time when Americans preached moral hygiene. The term "closet" is a metaphor that centers the dual tension in the social relationships of these people, becoming part of the collective imaginary about homosexuality. This conception instrumentalizes popular and scientific knowledge, because the lives of many homosexual people are organized in a dichotomous dynamic, of secrets and revelations, lies and truths, visibilities and concealments. The author also argues that the closet is central in the constitution of the subjectivity of homosexual individuals, directly influencing their socialization processes, as it establishes a state of isolation due to feelings, such as: fear and shame.

Also in this context, Miskolci (2014) warns about this problem, arguing that the process of *coming out* of homosexual people in the United States of America (USA) is different from Brazil. Because, "coming out" as homosexual in the US is part of a social configuration, which presupposes distancing from family ties in adult life, and these people tend to territorially centralize their experiences. And this does not happen in Brazil, although in large Brazilian cities there are 'ghettos', the LGBTQIA+ community is widely influenced and impacted by violence and discrimination in public spaces. Miskolci (2014) also makes a criticism directed at Sedgwick's (2007) conception of "closet", according to him, to live in the closet is to lead life in a condition of secrecy, as the subject is always in the imminence of threat and unwanted exposure. Therefore, the "closet" represents a regime that determines 'how', 'when' and 'what' homosexuality is enunciated and, above all, how 'who' can do it, configuring the negotiations for the (re)veiled existence of homosexual people, called 'visibility' by Miskolci (2014).

From this perspective, the study by Franco (2015) problematizes the aspects of the identity constitution of homosexual teachers, claiming that their presence in school raises questions regarding the restrictions to discuss sexual and gender diversity. In this study, it was understood what the participating teachers inferred in relation to the possible visibility of the sexuality of homosexual teachers in the school environment, generating significant reflections in various aspects that involve the field of sexuality, gender, in addition to the historical, social, political and cultural construction of the teaching profession. Based on this, according to Louro (2019), as the school institution became a privileged training space at the beginning of modern times, not only children and young people were the focus of



observation and discipline, but also teachers. Thus, the figure of the teacher, the religious, the masculine, gains representativeness in relation to the gender of teaching, and the teachers strictly followed religious instructions, in addition to being integrally molded under rules and behaviors that regulated their gestures, their way of walking, speaking and looking.

It is noteworthy that the second half of the nineteenth century is the beginning of the process of feminization of teaching. This process consolidates, in addition to teaching, the values of marriage and motherhood historically and socially established as fundamentally feminine tasks. In this way, the exercise of teaching is adequately expressed to women. In this regard, Louro (2013) highlights that it was orphaned women, widows and, especially, single women who initially exercised the teaching profession. Therefore, the personal life of the teachers should be impeccable, in addition to presenting a discreet and reserved behavior. Thus, according to Louro (2013), the image of the spinster teacher, of the sexually demure woman, awakens, establishing the belief that teachers are devoid of sexuality, so as not to influence the relationships with the students.

In a way, these representations and cultural meanings constructed throughout history remain in force to this day, as they structure the roles to be socially exercised by men and women in teaching. In other words, the image of the teacher, as a Jesuit, is directly related to authority and knowledge, while that of the teacher refers to submission, care, motherhood and teaching and learning, especially of children. In view of this, it is important to highlight that the homosexual teacher, when exercising the teaching profession, does not detach himself or herself from the marks of sexuality and gender inscribed on his or her body, for this and other reasons, that conflicts related to sexuality and gender are triggered in the school environment.

In this way of thinking, Britzman (1996) presents three myths about the relationship between homosexuality and heterosexuality. The first myth is related to the fear expressed by heterosexuals, in which openly homosexual people could encourage or influence young people to adopt this homosexual identity. The second myth, on the other hand, refers to the social belief that adolescents are too young to identify as homosexuals. And finally, the third myth is the belief in the separation and privatization of sexual identities, assuming that our behaviors in private life interfere little in our public life. Regarding the third myth, it is important to clarify that the forms and strategies used by schools in the mediation between private and public discourses encourage the invisibility and concealment of (homo)sexuality. And these myths are representations of the universe of common sense, adopted as truths.



The author also adds that this attitude of the school, referring to the third myth, imposes a strong barrier to the expansion of knowledge about sexuality, as it feeds the belief that sexuality should be confined to the private sphere. Such a belief can be identified in the investigation by Franco (2015) when the participants vehemently claimed that the homosexual teacher should not reveal his homosexuality with his students, arguing that the teacher should know how to separate his professional life from his sexual life, otherwise, he gives permission and freedom to students to make jokes of a prejudiced nature, losing respect for teachers. In this same reasoning, Lopes (2008) exposes some reflections based on the invisibility of the homosexual teacher, the author defends a homosexual posture based on subtlety and silence as a possibility of a peaceful and harmonious coexistence between heterosexuals and homosexuals.

On the other hand, opposing this invisibility, Vieira and Lage (2017) clarify that visibility is a key tool for the reconstruction of homosexuality as an identity as legitimate as any other, therefore, it has the right to be expressed. The authors emphasize the urgent need for society to break with the belief that being homosexual is synonymous with inferiority and add that the social exclusion of non-heteronormative identities is supported by the way they are seen in different spheres, such as the legal sphere, which punish them by curtailing their rights. Education through school has the arduous, but necessary task of promoting debates and discussions on this crucial theme, improving thinking and practices that can elevate our condition as human beings, in social, individual and collective spheres (Costa, 2021).

Similarly, Rofes (2007) contextualizes that it is essential for homosexual teachers to assume their identity in the school space and in their daily lives. Because in this environment dialogues are established. The study by França (2016) problematizes the ways in which teachers constitute themselves as homosexual teachers and promotes a discussion of how this teacher establishes relationships with others and, above all, how he or she relates to the school institution, because assuming oneself as a homosexual teacher requires negotiation with oneself and with the other.

In França's research (2016) it was found that one of the participants, a self-declared homosexual, emphasizes that the fact of expressing his homosexuality in the school environment does not mean that he does not take his work seriously, revealing that knowledge about the school and the teaching profession as places of seriousness and responsibilities and, at the same time, Their lifestyle is built during teaching, that is, the constitution of themselves also passes through the school environment, because it is in school that they create, socialize and produce themselves. Thus, this teacher assumes the



junction of homosexual identity with teacher identity, stating that there is no such separation between the two identities, while highlighting society's stereotyped view of homosexuality.

Still with regard to teacher homosexuality in the school environment, Carvalho (2018) discusses the conditions of visibility of lesbian teachers in schools in the education network of the State of São Paulo, as well as how these professionals negotiate their position as deviants of heterosexuality in the relationships they establish with their teaching colleagues and students. Such homosexual teachers seek visibility through pedagogical activities, that is, they must make more effort, pedagogically, than other teachers, to prove themselves competent, in order to guarantee legitimacy in lesbian existence. In this sense, these teachers seek, based on their own existences in schools, to deconstruct diverse notions already crystallized about gender, sexuality, lesbianism and sexual diversity.

In this sense, Santos (2017) addresses the hierarchy between bodies and teaching practices of transvestites and transsexuals (trans), in addition to investigating the conditions of possibilities for the common narrative that to be a teacher of Basic Education, the trans teacher must assume herself as a transsexual, because there is a belief that transvestite is only intended for prostitution, the streets, the clues and the scandals. Such a narrative, according to the author, produces a generalized representation of the teaching experiences of these trans teachers.

In view of the above, it can be seen that in parallel to all the problems related to homosexuality, there is another one that has been more complex, which is the homosexuality of teachers. Thus, professors who declare themselves homosexual in their work environment, that is, in the academic environment, are likely to suffer some type of prejudice, stereotype and social stigma. Due to this, many teachers who flee from heteronormativity live in an intense dilemma between the choice to express themselves or to hide in school spaces, with some choosing to cloister themselves in the "closet", reinforcing their invisibility as human beings and professionals, and others choose to "assume" their homosexual identity (Costa, 2021). Such a dilemma occurs at all levels of education, from Kindergarten to Higher Education and is experienced by teachers belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The design of this research was carried out through a bibliographic search in databases recognized by the academic and scientific universe, such as the Capes and Scielo journal portal. This is a qualitative and descriptive research. To this end, 80 teachers



(called P01 to P80) in different hierarchical positions of 15 State Technical Schools contemplating two Regional Centers of the State of São Paulo participated in this research.

## INSTRUMENT, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection, consisting of 03 open questions, applied through the *Microsoft Forms* form to teachers, structured in line with the theoretical framework and the objectives outlined for this investigation. For Gil (2008), the questionnaire is an investigation technique composed of a set of questions that are submitted to people with the purpose of obtaining information about knowledge, beliefs, feelings, values, interests, expectations, aspirations, fears, present or past behavior.

It is noteworthy that the present work followed scientific and ethical rigor, in accordance with Resolution 510/16, so it was directed to the Ethics Committee for Research on Human Beings (CEP) of the Institute of Biosciences - Unesp/Rio Claro Campus, with approval according to opinion number 3.255.918. Participants who expressed spontaneous agreement to participate in the research signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF). And then, the data were treated and analyzed using the content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (2016).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT IDENTIFY A HOMOSEXUAL TEACHER

Here are presented the representations of 80 teachers about teacher homosexuality in the environment of State Technical Schools.

The first question asked to the participants was whether or not it is possible to identify a homosexual teacher who is not self-declared. For 36 (45%) of the participants, it is possible to identify a homosexual person, 23 (29%) say they cannot, 20 (25%) point out that they may be able to identify it, and only 1 (1%) say they do not know how to answer. The reasons that lead the participants to say that it is possible to identify a homosexual teacher without being self-declared are exposed in Chart 01:

Chart 01: Characteristics that identify a homosexual teacher

Times mentioned	Characteristics	Testimonials from participants
19	Gestures, attitudes, posture and behavior in everyday life.	<p>"Yes with gestures and attitudes" (P01) "Through the teacher's posture" (P27)</p> <p>"Through Gestures, attitudes and the person's posture" (P28)</p> <p>"I can identify it by the person's behavior on a day-to-day basis" (P34)</p>
08	Tone of voice, way of speaking and effeminate or masculinized mannerisms.	<p>"Yes, because of the mannerisms of an effeminate homosexual or macho" (P14)</p> <p>"I understand it because of the mannerisms" (P58)</p> <p>"Yes for the thin voice, and the effeminate mannerisms" (P62)</p> <p>"I believe that the identification of a homosexual is by his mannerism" (P64)</p>
03	Way of dressing.	<p>"Yes, they are easily identified by the way they dress" (P13)</p> <p>"I identify by their clothes and style of dress, they usually dress very well" (P59)</p>
02	Posts and followers on social networks.	<p>"I identify through social networks" (P03)</p> <p>"By the posts and virtual friends that follow the person" (P39)</p>
01	They do not marry and have no children.	<p>"Homosexuals don't marry, they don't have children" (P24)</p>
01	Through dissatisfaction and low esteem.	<p>"Through the personal dissatisfaction and low esteem that homosexuals have due to society's prejudice" (P35)</p>
01	They are reserved.	<p>"Yes, I can identify it, because homosexuals are always very reserved in the environment school" (P42)</p>
01	A cultural issue.	<p>"It is a cultural issue, because homosexuals they always have the same taste for music, etc." (P48)</p>
<b>08 different features</b>		<b>36 (participants)</b>

Source: Research Data – Prepared by the authors.

In Chart 01, eight main characteristics were identified, we highlight the three main ones that lead people to be able to identify a homosexual teacher. For nineteen participants, identification occurs through gestures, attitudes, posture and behavior in the school routine. Eight people believe that they are by the tone of voice, way of speaking and effeminate or masculinized mannerisms and three people declare that they identify a homosexual by the way he dresses. Thus, it is verified that it is perpetuated in the social imaginary that the more effeminate the man, and the more masculinized the woman, the greater the probability



of these subjects suffering acts of intolerance and homophobia. Precisely because they subvert the crystallized and naturalized structure of being a man and a woman. In this way, it is the body, through gestures, voice, nuances that will give indications of the supposed homosexuality and how this person experiences his masculinity or femininity.

It can be seen that the mechanisms of heteronormativity guide the arguments, because if a teacher's voice is considered thin, or a teacher's voice is thick, does this characterize them as homosexual? Of course not, because we cannot determine or restrict a person's sexual orientation simply by the timbre of voice (whether high or low). Thus, we cannot say that sexuality is determined only by the bodily expression, gesture or even the way an individual dresses, known as gender expression.

In this sense, we know that homosexuals have characteristics considered peculiar, especially those mentioned above, but such characteristics alone are not enough to affirm whether or not they are homosexuals. Heteronormatization has mistakenly instilled in people's minds that the homosexual man, over time, will start to dress and behave like a woman, and the homosexual woman will do the same, cross-dressing as a man. Thus, we share with Louro's (2019) thought that it is necessary to be careful when demonstrating that it is not personal and sexual characteristics, but rather how these characteristics are represented by society, because what is said and what is thought about them will constitute what it is to be feminine or masculine.

Another aspect pointed out by the participants is the behavior of the homosexual individual. In this sense, for Moscovici (2005), social representations are dynamic sets and their characteristic is the production of behaviors and relationships with the social environment. If such behavior is considered deviant, that is, outside the normal standards imposed by heteronormativity, it is homosexual behavior. In turn, we again share the same feeling as Louro (2019), when he states that such behavior involves any and all acts of an erotic and/or sexual nature, genital or not, performed by people of the same biological sex, although, in their subjectivities, the actors involved in these situations may treat such occurrence, such acts and conducts, in different and varied ways, and even, at the limit, not to consider, for any reason, such behavior as homosexual behavior.

With regard to social networks, we understand that the availability, exchange and sharing of information over the internet have opened up our privacy in every way, because at all times we show our circles of contacts what our tastes are and express our opinions, even people who are outside social networks have no guarantee that they will not have their lives exposed and searched. In this context, this justification is related to the study undertaken by Garcia (2017) regarding the fact that people tend to connect with those who



are similar to them. Therefore, according to the author, if an individual has ten homosexual friends and one heterosexual, people inserted in the cybernetic world can infer that such a person is also homosexual.

Garcia (2017) also noted that homosexuals tend to connect with users of the same sexual orientation. Thus, although we believe that social interaction and the integration of data in the digital society can affect the control that individuals have over their privacy, including their sexual orientation, we cannot say that an individual is or is not homosexual based only on his circle of friends, especially digital contacts, as suggested by P03 and P39.

In relation to marital ties, it made us reflect on the following questions: is same-sex marriage a reality or not? A heterosexual couple who love each other can get married, and such a marriage does not generate controversy, why can't a homosexual couple, who also loves each other, get married? And when they get married, do they generate perplexity in heteronormative society? Such questions contradict the way of thinking of P24, because the popular denomination "gay marriage" has been authorized since 2013, that is, all civil registry offices in the Brazilian territory can celebrate civil marriage and convert the homoaffective stable union into marriage.

Such reflections can be ratified according to an article published in the online magazine "Isto é" in early 2020, which reports that 9,520 same-sex marriages were registered in 2019. Although this number in absolute terms is not high, it represents a significant growth of 61.7% in just one year. Such a considerable increase was possibly due to the fear of a setback in the civil rights of homosexuals due to the electoral victory of the president of the republic, Jair Messias Bolsonaro (term: 2019 to 2022). However, a homosexual individual can marry, as well as have children, through traditional ways, artificial insemination or adoption.

Another representation, which we consider curious, to say the least, refers to the position of P35 and P42, in which the first reports that homosexual people have the characteristics of personal dissatisfaction and low esteem due to the prejudice they suffer daily in society and the second says that homosexuals are reserved. Thus, we realize that there are several explanations for homosexuality and, in some way, such reasons come from the prejudiced construction suffered over the centuries, including taxing homosexuals as: unhappy, lonely and suffering, because they do not find space in heterosexual normality. We think oppositely, homosexual individuals can be cheerful, outgoing, secure people and have high esteem, even in the face of common discrimination, characteristics that we also identify in any heterosexual people.



With regard to musical style, it is known that the homosexual population, as well as the heterosexual population, appreciates a diversity of styles, and evidently, we cannot generalize, because musical genre is something very particular and subjective. However, there are some hits that are usually chosen in the most played playlists in gay clubs around the world. In fact, the LGBTQIA+ audience greatly honors its pop music "divas", among them: Madonna, Cher, Britney Spears, Lady Gaga, among others.

The artistic trajectory of the singer Madonna made her be considered the queen of "gays", as the artist has always acted strongly in favor of homosexual causes throughout her career, and many of her songs symbolically refer to the representation of homosexuality, for example the song "Vogue". Through her musical lyrics, the singer has always promoted the visibility and appreciation of *gay* culture. That said, and making a parallel, the representation of P48 shows that the *gay* population, although it has a very peculiar culture in all aspects, not only in terms of musical styles, however, we cannot consider that all homosexual individuals strictly follow such culture.

The participants who affirm that they cannot and/or may not be able to identify a homosexual teacher add up to 43 (54%), and the possible reasons for this occurrence are shown in Chart 02.

Chart 02: Possible reasons for not and/or perhaps being able to identify a homosexual teacher

Times mentioned	Reasons	Testimonials from participants
15	It is not possible to identify.	<p>"I can't identify it" (P14)</p> <p>"It is not possible to identify it, unless it is transsexual" (P21)</p> <p>"It is not possible to identify, although some have mannerisms, but that does not mean that they are" (P70)</p> <p>"I don't identify, because everyone has their own way" (P80)</p>
15	Nor always is possible to identify.	<p>"We are not always able to identify, because each one behaves in a peculiar way" (P02)</p> <p>"Not always, since not all homosexuals have the stereotype of the effeminate or the macho" (P23)</p> <p>"This identification is not always possible, since the discreet way of being increasingly prevails" (P41)</p> <p>"We don't always identify it, but the coexistence of years and years, it may be that something flourishes and understand" (P51)</p>



05 In some cases yes, but in most cases no.	"Maybe yes, but in some cases no. But I believe that it does not influence the quality of their work at school at all" (P04)
	"Maybe in some cases, because some details are very strong and because you have a little experience you get easier to understand" (P06)
04 It is not necessary for the homosexual to come out socially.	"I don't believe that homosexuals need to come out, because heterosexuals don't come out either" (P36)  "There is no need to come out, because sexuality only concerns the person himself" (P44)
03 Stereotypes do not define homosexuality.	"Since there are no rules for classifying people, we cannot rely on stereotypes to determine a person's sexual orientation, this is too risky" (P38)  "We cannot identify a person homosexual only because of their stereotypes" (P40)
01 It is not necessary to identify homosexuality in the workplace.	"We do not need to identify homosexuality, because I believe that this does not concern work activities, because in the work environment what matters is the professionalism of the person and not their sexual orientation" (P45)
<b>06 different motifs</b>	<b>43 (participants)</b>

Source: Research Data – Prepared by the authors.

Chart 02 reveals that 15 participants are unable to identify homosexual teachers, 15 point out that it is not always possible to make such identification, 5 say that in some cases yes, but in most cases they do not, 4 justify that there is no need to make this identification, while 3 participants state that the stereotype of a person cannot define their sexuality and one elucidates that it is not necessary to identify homosexuality in the workplace.

We know that there is confusion, in Brazil and in the world, regarding the understanding and interpretation of the various nomenclatures used to represent the LGBTQIA+ community. Such difficulty even occurs within the LGBTQIA+ population itself, as "each one" adopts an acronym to refer to this public. Therefore, we have commonly come across an alphabet soup, and we never know which term or acronym is more appropriate. Consequently, according to the representation of P21, it has been created in the popular imagination that when a man dresses as a woman, he is transsexual or a transvestite, adopting this stereotype to differentiate himself from *homosexual gays*.

Two other representations that deserve to be highlighted refer to the perceptions of P36 and P45, the first believes that homosexuals do not need to come out socially, and the



second elucidates that it is not necessary to identify homosexual people in the workplace. The results of Franco's (2015) research are similar to the first representation, in which the homosexual teacher should not reveal his homosexuality with his or her students, justifying that they should know how to separate their professional life from their sexual life, otherwise it gives permission and freedom to students to make prejudiced jokes. In relation to the second representation, we share this way of thinking, because in the work environment, that is, at school, the homosexual teacher should not be labeled as a result of his or her sexual orientation. We also agree with França (2014) that coming out as a homosexual teacher in the school environment can generate a continuous process of negotiation with the other and with oneself.

Still with regard to the visibility of homosexual teachers in the workplace, we believe that it is an intimate decision, because coming out as homosexual at school, or in any other living space, is not an easy decision. This way of thinking is similar to the positions of Lasser, Ryser and Price (2010), because revealing one's sexual identity in the workplace is a particular issue, considering that this decision may bring negative consequences such as: homophobia, social stigma and stereotypes. As we have already discussed, we live in a society regulated by compulsory heterosexuality, resulting from the interaction of representations of medical, legal, criminological, religious, and moral discourses. Thus, people who disagree with such "evidence", almost naturalized, are in doubt to expose themselves publicly, that is, to assume their "deviation" and their unfamiliarity as an imposed standard, and this implies bearing the bonuses and difficulties of their decision.

As already described, the stereotypes peculiar to homosexuals are not always enough to affirm an individual's homosexuality. Nor can we generalize these characteristics and associate them with all homosexuals. This means that a teacher may have some homosexual mannerisms, but not be, and on the other hand, a teacher considered discreet, may experience his or her sexual orientation outside the walls of the school.

Thus, for Moscovici (2010) we cannot affirm that we know and understand an individual, but we can point out that there was an attempt at recognition. That said, anchoring on an object, person or phenomenon occurs through two forms: generalization or particularization. The first form, generalization, is considered simpler, because we only categorize, for example, the characteristics of homosexuals. Thus, the characteristics of people are generalized, as if they were all exactly the same, and notoriously they are not. The second form, particularization, is the attempt to discover the characteristics, motivation or attitude that make people distinct.



Still in this direction, in relation to what managers think about teacher homosexuality, both present favorable positions. Thus, P80 reflects that it is a positive advance to have a team of teachers in the school, who experience sexual diversity on a daily basis. In view of this, it is important for teachers and students to understand the relevance of equality between sexual orientations. This participant also adds that any of us can be an excellent professional, successful, happy, being heterosexual or homosexual.

In this context, in P79's view, when a person declares himself or not homosexual in the professional environment is a private choice, as it is part of the regular exercise of personal and subjective rights. Therefore, he believes that when the teacher declares himself homosexual at school, it is because he or she already has a good perception of himself/herself, that is, he or she has good self-knowledge. And, with that, she has already acquired confidence and strength to come out before her family and the work environment. This position is similar to Rofes (2007) when he contextualizes that it is essential for homosexual teachers to assume their homo (sexuality) in the school space and in their daily lives.

According to Louro (2014), the school is committed to ensuring that boys and girls become men and women within the hegemonic norms of masculinity and femininity. Based on this, we agree with the author when she states that school is one of the most difficult environments for subjects to assume their sexual orientation. This difficulty lies in the prejudice present in institutionalized discourses, which authorize and subsidize exclusion. These exclusions, in Louro's (2014) view, can be reflected in playful activities such as the formation of queues, specific for boys and girls, with this, the school produces and reproduces the differences between the subjects, including those of gender.

Another relevant aspect, externalized by P35, is that every homosexual plays multiple roles in society, such as: professional, child, husband/wife, neighbor, father/mother, co-worker and sexual partner. In this way, when he has this perception of the integral human being that he is, and recognizes himself as homosexual, he knows how to deal with sexual discrimination in a more balanced way. Regarding the roles played by human beings, we believe that it does not depend on sexual orientation, as both homosexuals and heterosexuals assume different roles.

This statement is supported by the studies of Goffman (2009), clarifying that, when an individual plays a role, he implicitly requires his observers to represent his performance. In this author's perception, the term representation refers to all the activity of an individual that takes place in a period characterized by his continuous presence in front of a particular group of observers, and that has some influence on them. Such a concept fits perfectly, for



example, when a teacher does not assume his or her homosexual orientation, thus, at this moment, he or she is exercising the role of teacher. And not assuming oneself publicly, that is, "living in the closet", is called by Goffman (2009) "façade", which refers to the individual's form of expression, whether intentional or unintentional, generating several representations, which often do not match the individual's reality, but at that moment it is part of their performance.

Thus, with regard to such homosexual visibility, we agree in part with Miskolci (2014) who reveals the importance of the person assuming their homosexuality in all spectrums of their life. Therefore, we believe it is essential to mature the process of self-acceptance, so that there are no doubts about the legitimacy of their feelings, nor any guilt when it comes to assuming homosexuality to the family, to colleagues in the work environment and to society in general, but this is a decision of the individual.

Also, according to Miskolci (2014), this regime of visibility has been associated with a new sexual economy in which the desire for recognition is shaped by values based on the regime of heterosexual representation and its cult of binary and intransitive genderification. Even with some changes, the dominance of heterosexual masculinity tends to be preserved in symbolic, political, and economic terms.

## WHAT PARTICIPANTS THINK ABOUT SELF-DECLARED HOMOSEXUAL TEACHERS

Chart 03 presents, in a grouped way, the participants' representations about self-declared homosexual teachers in the school environment.



Chart 03: What the participants think about self-declared homosexual teachers

Times mentioned	Ways of thinking	Testimonials from participants
58	Homosexual teachers are equal to heterosexuals, who deserve respect:	<p>"They are teachers just like all of us" (P04)</p> <p>"I think they are just like me, and deserve all my respect" (P10)</p> <p>"For me they are normal individuals and equal to all of us" (P65)</p> <p>"I can't see them as different from the others, for me they are all the same" (P71)</p> <p>"They are people who deserve equal respect to everyone else" (P72)</p>
09	What matters is professional competence.	<p>"I don't see anything but professional competence, private life doesn't interest me" (P8)</p> <p>"The important thing is the teacher's professional competence, what he is or is not does not interfere with anything" (P28)</p> <p>"They are competent professionals" (P59)</p>
05	They are wonderful people and friends.	<p>"They are wonderful people and friends, and their presence at school is very pleasant" (P06)</p> <p>"Wonderful human beings who contribute a lot to respect for those who are different" (P07)</p> <p>"I think they are wonderful human beings and friends, who strive daily to conquer their space in the school environment" (P74)</p>
04	They are co-workers.	<p>"They are co-workers" (P01)</p> <p>"They are co-workers, who leave the work environment healthy" (P09)</p> <p>"They are good professional companions" (P13)</p>
03	They are brave people, due to prejudice.	<p>"They are brave because of the prejudice they suffer daily" (P27)</p> <p>"They are representatives of a very vulnerable group in the Brazilian context, and inside and outside schools they suffer a lot of prejudice from students and teachers" (P33)</p>
01	Healthy people than can cause conflicts at school.	<p>"They are people who can cause conflicts at school due to their sexual orientation" (P62)</p>
<b>06</b>	<b>Different Ways of Thinking</b>	<b>80 (participants)</b>
<b>06</b>	<b>Different Ways of Thinking</b>	<b>80 (participants)</b>

Source: Research Data – Prepared by the authors.



According to Table 03, 58 participants defend that self-declared homosexual teachers are equal to heterosexual teachers in all senses, including deserving respect like any human being. The teacher's professional competence is considered the most important factor for nine people. While five consider that homosexual teachers are wonderful people and friends. And four say they are good co-workers.

It is important to highlight that three participants emphasize that homosexual teachers are courageous people due to the prejudice experienced in daily life outside and inside the school. The mere fact that a teacher has a homosexual orientation expresses various representations of gender and sexuality. This statement is in line with the study by Rabelo (2013) who elucidates that there is a possibility of these representations being maintained or modified by teachers, mainly because they exercise a profession that produces representations from a know-how that is codified and transmitted, conferring a certain authority to those who have it. Thus, when representations are shared and produced, there is also the possibility of rebelling against the stagnations of power through the questioning of certain representations that he/she carries. According to the author, silence and prejudiced representations of gender and sexuality have been much more present in schools.

In addition, one participant states that self-declared homosexual teachers can cause conflicts at school. Such a statement subliminally implies that an individual's sexual orientation alone can cause discomfort. Although participant P62 did not specify the nature of the conflict, we believe that it is another representation of homosexuality indirectly anchored in the subtle prejudice that this public has suffered over time.

## REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT WHETHER THE PRESENCE OF THE TEACHER CAN CAUSE DISCOMFORT IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

When asked about the fact that a teacher is openly homosexual may cause some kind of discomfort, we found that the majority 67 (84%) say they do not cause any discomfort, 5 (6%) say they do, and 8 (10%) report that they maybe.

The 13 (16%) participants who answered yes or maybe, were asked to contextualize how such discomfort would be, according to Chart 04. Thus, we found that seven participants argue that it depends a lot on the ethical attitude of the teacher in living with co-workers, four point out that the homosexual teacher necessarily needs to be discreet. In this sense, we understand that if the teacher does not have such discretion, it may cause discomfort in people. And, two participants revealed that they are self-declared homosexuals in the school environment, and both affirm that when they get closer, both



students and teachers, they realize that the subject is finished, implying that the homosexual teacher was the "reason" for the conversation.

Chart 21 - Justifications of the participants who said yes or perhaps in relation to the discomfort caused by a teacher being homosexual

Times mentioned Justifications		Testimonials from participants
07	It depends on the ethical attitude of the teacher.	"It depends on the person's ethical attitude in living with other teachers" (P01)  "I consider it important for the homosexual teacher to present good ethical behavior, so that not cause discomfort" (P26)
04	The teacher has to be discreet.	"Discretion is fundamental for homosexual teachers" (P11)  "It depends on whether the teacher is gay and not discreet, it will cause discomfort" (P21)
02	As a homosexual teacher, I identify that some students and teachers change the subject when I get close.	"I experience this discomfort in practice, especially when I approach students and teachers, and the subject ends right away" (P24)  "I feel it on my skin every day, while they are making homophobic jokes, both in the classroom class and in the teachers' room" (P20)
<b>3 different justifications</b>		<b>13 (participants)</b>

Source: Research Data – Prepared by the authors.

In view of the justifications exposed, we found that the word "depends" appears in the participants' quotes, implying that such discomfort will only materialize if the homosexual teacher is exclusively the cause, for example, if the teacher is ethical it will not cause discomfort, as if the same situation did not occur with a heterosexual teacher. Another example is if the teacher is homosexual and is not discreet, it will certainly cause discomfort, such conduct leads us to the idea of abnormality, that is, if he is *gay*, but has a posture within the standards required by heteronormity, it is accepted, otherwise, it is not. In this way, once again blaming the homosexual individual for such discomfort and repressing his visibility before society, in this case the school community (Costa, 2021). Which is unacceptable, as such thinking and attitude are considered discrimination based on sexual orientation.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The visibility and acceptance of homosexual teachers in the academic context are crucial issues for the promotion of diversity and inclusion in educational institutions. In view of this, we found that some participants in this research identify homosexual teachers through some characteristics, such as: gestures, behavior, tone of voice, way of speaking,



effeminate or masculinized mannerisms and way of dressing. Regarding these representations, we infer that corporeality, that is, body language, is still impregnated with prejudiced remnants. Such discriminations were constructed and culturally determined through the signs and meanings imposed by society. We know that the body is delimited and regulated based on knowledge instituted by power, we consider it important to evoke Foucault (1998) to highlight that there is the establishment of the body when there is an exercise of knowledge-power in relation to other bodies.

In this case, the body is compared to an object on which repressions, punishments and punishments are exercised, for example, when we compare heterosexual subjects with homosexuals. Therefore, it makes us reflect in the sense that through bodies we can relate to people, in different social environments, including schools.

Another development of Foucault's (1998) knowledge-power is the process of docilization of bodies in/by society. In relation to this, we believe that this docilization of bodies needs to be avoided and fought, as it notably consists of a behavior and attitude that we consider prejudiced, as the body that "performs" according to the standards required by society will be considered adequate, for example, the existence of specific games for boys (soccer, stroller) and for girls (doll and house), and possibly, such games silence bodies that have sexuality considered deviant to heteronormative standards. Still on corporeality, we infer that sensations, emotions and feelings are connected and integrated into the body of human beings, so we consider that cultural factors influence the representations of the body, for example, the pleasure that people feel through body "touch", regardless of whether they are homosexual or heterosexual, because physical contact involves biological dimensions, psychological and social aspects.

It is salutary to present a pertinent reflection on the difficulties and challenges that homosexual teachers face daily to exercise the teaching profession. Initially, it is crucial to mention the professional's choice of whether or not to assume homosexuality in the school environment, because if such a professional brings aspects of his sexuality to the classroom, it can generate problems of a social, political and pedagogical nature. In view of this, a dilemma that frequently occurs with homosexual people is regarding self-declaration as homosexual in the various spectrums of life: social, family and professional. Thus, we consider that homosexual visibility or choosing to live in the "closet" is an intimate choice. We understand that one of the reasons that leads homosexual teachers not to come out in schools is the fear of reprisal, prejudice, discrimination, stigma and social exclusion due to their sexual orientation, leading them to imprison themselves in the "closet", enhancing their



invisibility as a human being and professional. Therefore, these teachers need to constantly negotiate their relationships, discourses and behaviors.

To further hinder the "acceptability" of homosexuality in contemporary times, specifically in Brazil, the recurrent discourse of the previous Bolsonaro government, with a notorious aversion to homosexuals, in our understanding, such a "denialist ideology" has been arousing the hatred of people who already silently presented a predisposition to homophobia and among other prejudices and discriminations, but who now feel represented by a "voice of command" that strengthens them and encourage them to take a stand against the legitimacy, hard-won, of the LGBTQIA+ population. In addition, several political actions have been carried out to make LGBTQIA+ achievements invisible in the educational context, such as suppressing the terms gender and sexual orientation from the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC) and other bills presented in the Legislative Chambers and the National Congress, in order to exclude the topic completely from the school universe, movements that go against human diversity.

Throughout the research, we identified that the (in)visibility of these teachers can result in veiled discrimination, emotional difficulties and even limitations in the progression of their careers. The lack of adequate representation can also negatively impact LGBTQIA+ students, who often seek role models and mentors who share their experiences and identities.

On the other hand, we highlight that inclusive institutional policies, awareness programs, and mutual support among colleagues can create a more welcoming and just environment for homosexual teachers. Visibility not only validates their identities but also enriches the diversity of perspectives within the academic environment, fostering a more inclusive and creative space for all involved.

The main challenges and consequences of the (in)visibility of homosexual teachers in the academic context include veiled or explicit discrimination and prejudice by colleagues, students, and even academic management, which can affect their emotional and professional well-being. In addition, invisibility can limit opportunities for career advancement for homosexual teachers, such as access to leadership positions, research funding, and academic recognition. Finally, the absence of inclusive institutional policies and specific support programs can perpetuate the marginalization of homosexual teachers and create barriers to their full participation and contribution in the academic environment.

In this context, it is imperative that academic institutions recognize and value sexual diversity among their members, promoting an environment where all professors can teach and research freely, without fear of discrimination or marginalization due to their sexual



orientation. Addressing these challenges requires an institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion, clear policies against discrimination and stigmatization, and the promotion of an environment that values and respects the sexual diversity of all members of the academic community.



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