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Charting the Course: Enlightening Perspectives in Research and Teaching from Insider and Outsider Standpoints

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Abstract

The identities individuals embody serve as multifaceted lenses through which researchers, educators, and participants navigate teaching and research contexts. Social relations, institutional dynamics, intersecting identities, and personal knowledge converge to shape decision-making processes in research and pedagogy. This article delves into the intricacies, connections, and educational insights derived from reflective, empathetic, participant, and student-centred approaches to research and teaching. Grounded in my experiences as a transgender and pansexual American postgraduate researcher and university educator, this discussion spans undergraduate and postgraduate psychology instruction on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as doctoral research on transgender and gender diverse individuals within the English education system.

The narrative underscores the significance of insider and outsider perspectives, emphasising their impact on research methodology and pedagogical design. It examines systemic and pedagogical interventions as essential considerations for fostering inclusivity and equity in educational endeavours such as interviews and participatory co-creative methods and student-centred co-designed classroom content. By reflecting on the challenges and opportunities inherent in negotiating insider and outsider positionality, this article offers insights for future research and teaching endeavours.

In sum, this paper provides a first-hand examination of the complexities involved in researching and teaching from diverse perspectives. It underscores the importance of reflexivity, empathy, and centring participants and students in educational practices. Through this exploration, it seeks to inform and inspire research scholars and educators to adopt more inclusive and equitable approaches in their work.

Introduction

Research and teaching are profoundly influenced by the identities and experiences of those involved (Morrison, 2013). As individuals navigate academic and pedagogical landscapes, their positionality—whether as insiders or outsiders—shape their perspectives and methodologies (Bukamal, 2022). These personal perspectives and insights have the power to bring forth dynamic intersections that may aid in understanding how to build and maintain relationships within these spaces between researchers and participants. Especially when it comes to occupying a positionality of marginalisation, as a researcher within a group of participants I could be a part of, makes me weary of power differentials, as previous lessons in history forewarn (Brandt, 1978; Turman and Schrodt, 2006; Tolich, 2014; Turban, 2020). It is in this notion of dynamic relationship building taking into account personal perspectives, power differentials and marginalised positionality that I, as a researcher, conceived of this work. This article, approached from an autoethnographic perspective explores the dual roles of my life as a transgender and pansexual American postgraduate researcher engaged in teaching in higher education and research with participants

who are transgender and gender diverse who attend(ed) school within the English education system. It examines how these identities impact approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion in psychology education and doctoral research on transgender and gender diverse individuals.

Methodology

The methodological framework of this article is situated in autoethnography. This method was chosen for several reasons, central of which was participant confidentiality and safety, but also due to the complex intersection I as a researcher hold in relation to the participants and students I work with. Autoethnography is a form of academic writing which utilises, investigates or deciphers the lived experiences of the author, in this case a transgender and pansexual American doctoral student, and links it to researcher insights into self-identity, cultural norms, communication practices, symbols, values, and broader issues. Adams and colleagues (2015) note that autoethnography is a qualitative method of research which:

1) uses a researcher's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences;

2) acknowledges and values a researcher's relationships with others;

3) uses deep and careful self-reflection—typically referred to as "reflexivity"—to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political;

4) Shows people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles;

5) balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion, and creativity; and

6) strives for social justice and to make life better. (p. 2)

As a researcher, I did not spend an overly extended time with the participants for my doctoral research and students within some of the psychology modules I teach. This article will not delve into as acute detail as other autoethnographic works may employ, but it does aim to share self-reflections on teaching and doctoral research work from a perspective centred on social justice, embracing of participants' and students' values and bringing meaning to their struggles which otherwise may be erased. This introspective method is complemented by my reflections as a researcher, and discussions of using participatory action research methods and student-driven pedagogy in my teaching practices in aim of co-creating knowledge. It is in this way that I chose, for this article, to share these reflections in an autoethnographic form as to discuss the impact of using participatory action and student-driven practices, while maintaining confidentiality, and other ethical considerations. In piecing together the autoethnographic components for this article, I looked back on numerous messages, correspondence and paperwork via several platforms (i.e. WhatsApp, email, Instagram, Microsoft Teams etc..) with participants, colleagues, students, and university systems to identify areas where insider and outsider status were apparent and an important consideration to my practice.

Within my doctoral work and my teaching practice, it should however be noted that all ethical considerations and practices were and are consistently followed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the respectful representation of doctoral research participants and students. To embark on this practice, within my doctoral research, I used restorative practices talking circles as a method of connecting participants and discussing our experiences through a very fluid format centred on building community. Within my teaching practice, my engagement with co-creation is a bit more multi-faceted in that I try to engage a range of tools like Padlet, and word cloud, but also use discussion and brainstorming methods like pair and share, small group discussion and flipped classrooms to get students interacting, critiquing and analysing current material, while also creating their own way of teaching and developing their own content.

Theoretical Framework

This paper employs a trans feminist theoretical perspective, concentrating the analysis through a lens of transgender and gender diverse embodiment while recognising the pervasive cisheteronormative ethos within which I as a researcher and educator and my doctoral participants and university students operate. This perspective underscores the reality that transgender and gender diverse individuals navigate societal systems and structures that were not designed with their identities and experiences in mind.

Transfeminist theory originated from the intersection of feminist and LGBTQ+ movements, gaining momentum in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Stryker and Bettcher, 2016). Influential figures like Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, who played pivotal roles in the Stonewall Riots, were foundational in integrating trans perspectives into feminist and queer activism (Stryker and Bettcher, 2016; Stryker, 2017). Their work laid the groundwork for an evolving theoretical framework that continues to be enriched by scholars, activists, and community leaders dedicated to a more inclusive approach to gender equality and justice (Stryker and Bettcher, 2016; Stryker, 2017).

Emi Koyama's (2003) work has been instrumental in shaping trans feminist theory by emphasising the intersection of transgender and feminist issues. Koyama's (2003) notion of "transfeminism" seeks to bridge the gap between feminist and trans struggles, highlighting the importance of solidarity and mutual understanding between these movements. Julia Serano's (2007; 2013) contributions further this discourse through her exploration of how sexism and cissexism are intertwined, particularly in her book Whipping Girl (2007). Serano (2007) introduces the concept of "oppositional sexism," which discriminates against those who defy gender norms, and "traditional sexism," which enforces the superiority of one sex over another. These concepts are crucial for understanding the unique challenges faced by transgender individuals in a patriarchal society.

Susan Stryker's (2017) historical and theoretical analyses provide a foundational understanding of trans experiences within the broader context of social justice movements. Stryker's work, particularly in Transgender History (2017), offers a comprehensive overview of the socio-political struggles of transgender people, reinforcing the importance of recognizing and challenging the systemic forces that perpetuate discrimination and marginalisation.

Today, transfeminist theory addresses several critical contemporary issues. Advocacy for anti-discrimination laws and policies that ensure the protection of transgender individuals is a central tenet of trans feminist activism (Mananzala and Spade, 2008). This includes lobbying for legal recognition of gender identity, equal employment opportunities, and protections in housing and public accommodations (Mananzala and Spade, 2008; Spade, 2015). Additionally, trans feminist theory emphasises the need for equitable healthcare access, encompassing not only gender-affirming medical procedures but also comprehensive mental health services tailored to the specific needs of transgender and gender diverse individuals (Vermeir, Jackson and Marshall, 2018). The goal is to dismantle the systemic barriers that hinder access to quality healthcare (Vermeir, Jackson and Marshall, 2018).

Promoting accurate and respectful representation of transgender individuals in media and popular culture is another critical focus of trans feminist theory (Billard and Zhang, 2022). This involves challenging stereotypical portrayals and advocating for the inclusion of diverse transgender voices in all forms of media to foster greater understanding and acceptance. Furthermore, addressing the high rates of violence and hate crimes against transgender people, particularly transgender women of colour, is a pressing issue (Ashley, 2018). Activists work to raise awareness about the severity of this violence, advocate for stronger legal protections, and develop community-based strategies to enhance safety and support for those at risk (Jordan, Mehrotra, and Fujkawa, 2020).

By integrating these perspectives, transfeminist theory not only enriches feminist discourse but also provides a vital framework for understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by transgender and gender non-conforming individuals (Hines, 2019). It emphasises the necessity of an intersectional approach to gender justice, one that considers the multifaceted and interlocking systems of oppression that affect individuals based on their gender identity, race, class, and other social factors (Dill and Kohlman, 2012). This theoretical framework thus guides the analysis and actions toward a more equitable and inclusive society.

Insider and Outsider Perspectives and Starting Points

Understanding the concepts of "insider" and "outsider" is crucial in examining the experiences of transgender and gender diverse students and educators in the English education system, as well as my role as a PhD student teaching in the psychology department of the same university where I am earning my PhD. Gair (2012) defines insider/outsider status as the extent to which a researcher is part of (inside) or outside the group being studied. Insiders usually possess intimate group knowledge, while outsiders lack such familiarity prior to their research involvement (Griffith, 1998).

Robert Merton (1972), an American sociologist, introduced a structural perspective on insider/outsider status. He defined insiders as "members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of specified social statuses" and outsiders as "the non-members" (p. 21). Banks (1998) utilised Merton's (1972) conceptualisations to develop a system of grouping researchers' positions along a spectrum ranging from "closeness to or distance from the Indigenous community" (Chavez, 2008, p. 476). According to this system of grouping, a researcher is an insider if they "share the same knowledge, values, and attitudes as the studied community" (Xu, 2016, p. 1), regardless of socialisation inside or outside the community they are working with.

The discussions around insider/outsider status raises some important questions about conducting research and educating others in and ethical but equitable manner. Is insider status an advantage, a bias, or a necessity? And does outsider status enable support a more objective or independent interpretation of experiences different from one's own, therefore, shielding from potential questions of research reliability? Scholars have long debated "whose knowledge is authentic, who can know what, and who speaks for whom" (Banks, 1998, p. 7).

In this debate, two contrasting views are the insider and the outsider doctrines (Merton, 1972). The strict version of the insider doctrine says that specific groups at certain times have exclusive access to specific types of knowledge (Merton, 1972). From this point of view, only individuals who are socialised within a group can genuinely grasp its symbols and "shared realities" (Merton, 1972, p. 15), while those outside the group are inherently unable to fully understand the group's culture and experiences (Merton, 1972, p. 15). This perspective implies that true understanding of a group's issues requires being a member of that group, such as only women understanding women's issues or only transgender individuals understanding transgender issues.

In this work, I occupy both roles in both instances within my doctoral research and in my teaching. This dual positionality presents unique challenges and opportunities, necessitating a nuanced approach to research and pedagogy.

Insider Researcher.

I am a PhD researcher who is also transgender and pansexual, a former school counsellor (educator) and living in the United Kingdom. I grew up under a system of education which was very conservative and structured with uniforms, gendered curriculum and a limited cisheteronormative sex and relationships education. The participants within my doctoral study are transgender and gender diverse students and or educators within a constrained and conservative education system with uniform restrictions, gendered curriculum and limited cisheteronormative sex and relationships education.

Insider Educator.

Another aspect to my positionality discussed within this article is my role as an educator completing my doctoral degree and teaching students at the same university. Also important to note is that I teach many students who are also transgender and pansexual as well as international students, just like me.

Outsider Researcher.

As a researcher I am an outsider to the participants in my doctoral study as I did not attend school or work within a school that is a part of the English education system. This meant that it was vital to come into the work with participants with a certain level of understanding regarding language, the system itself and its structure, as well as historical implications to it. These aspects obviously would not overshadow the participants' experiences, but as any informed researcher should be, provided a background to the study ensuring the stories could be more adequately comprehended and portrayed.

Outsider Educator.

My role as an educator and author of this work is a doctoral student who is teaching undergraduate and some postgraduate master's students. I obtained my undergraduate degree from a university in my home country in a system that is set up very differently. This meant that some of the challenges, experiences, and requirements my students go through when working with me are very different than what I faced during my undergraduate or master's degree.

Research Insights: Findings

Recruitment. When starting the recruitment process for fieldwork within my doctoral study, I was not initially sure how potential participants would respond and what would be the best method of recruiting. I decided to utilise my positionality as a transgender person who was also a student to reach out to other transgender and gender diverse students, especially doctoral students within the United Kingdom, who may be able to fit the confines of my thesis research sample. This was mainly done through networking with university staff, professional organisations, and even online social media inquiry. As a researcher, I was already a member of a number of organisations outside of my university, this supported my ability to share my recruitment call. I was able to promote my call with various student unions as well which helped in gaining potential transgender and gender diverse undergraduate students involved in LGBT+ societies or other organisations on campus. This is something I do not think a cisgender and heterosexual person could or would do necessarily.

Insider/Outsider Recruitment.

Besides these professional organisations, I, as a researcher also used my insider positionality to recruit from social media pages and via following others online who have similar interests to myself or were doing similar research. While this may come across as pinpointing particular individuals just for the study, it is assured that I also wanted to connect with these individuals outside of their potential contribution to my research. One of the large reasons for my desire as a researcher to connect was also due to my outsider status as an international doctoral student new to England with limited support systems around LGBT+ resources and friendships. It was through these varied means that word of mouth was able to disseminate further and engage a more diverse cohort of individuals across a variety of locations across England. There are potential research implications for this positionality as an insider/outsider. If I were not an international PhD student, there is the assumption or expectation that dual-insider members to a group (i.e. transgender and gender diverse people who attended school in England) would be able to connect with others in that group to participate in their research. Since I occupy an insider/outsider positionality I needed to seek out community in England of other transgender and gender diverse people. In other words, a researcher occupying a dual-insider positionality may be at an advantage within the research regarding recruitment.

Somewhat Insider Recruitment.

Although I am transgender, within any marginalised group, there is typically further hierarchy of marginalisation. A notable example of this is Crenshaw's (1979) example depicting her invaluable concept of intersectionality, which discusses a legal case with a Black woman and how only seeing one part of this individual denies the complex assortment of barriers and marginalisations imposed upon them. Keeping this notion of intersectionality and insider/outsider positionality in mind, I faced some barriers in connecting with individuals within the transgender and gender diverse community who occupy positions which face further marginalisation than I as a researcher do. Through this experience, I needed to do further introspection into how I could ethically recruit participants to fill this gap without explicitly tokenising these participants (Ellison and Langhout, 2017). In my opinion, the concept of tokenisation is an area within social sciences research that often gets unacknowledged and not as discussed as should be the case under ethical concerns.

Insider Location.

When it came to the fieldwork portion of the doctoral research, I found that my positionality played a vital role in organising the approach I took in my methodology and how that was enacted in practice. An example of this was seen in the selection of the location for the individual interviews that I did. With every location selected, I did ask participants prior to setting up their in-person individual interview if they had any spaces in mind, but when ultimately deciding on a location, time and date, the decision really was led by ensuring its safety as to avoid hostility to transgender and gender diverse individuals (as much as I could predict), it was a location that the participant could alter if they found another space more appropriate for them, the time and date were appropriate and safe for both myself and the participant, there were gender neutral toilets, it was quiet, they had my contact information, and knew they could

withdraw at any point. All these elements were things that I felt I would want if they were participating in research. I also tried to connect in some way with participants prior to their participation and send reminders because they knew, as a fellow transgender person, building rapport and trust is essential in trying to share authentic experiences of transgender and gender diverse embodiment.

Outsider Location.

While I aimed to include numerous points of consideration into selecting locations to meet with participants, ultimately, it was difficult to ensure this was the case in each location due to my outsider position as an international doctoral student living in one part of the country for a short amount of time. This meant that I needed to communicate and connect with local organisations, universities, coffee shops/businesses and more to safeguard and plan out interview locations. Participants were fantastic at collaborating with me on how to navigate certain locations they preferred the interview to be in and timing which could accommodate my travel schedule.

Following the data collection process, the writing now progresses to discuss insights gained from holding an insider and outsider educator positionality in undergraduate and postgraduate student experiences within the modules I teach. The doctoral research component of this work investigated the experiences of transgender and gender diverse individuals within the English education system. Some of the key highlights from the thesis data collection were focused on systemic barriers and opportunities.

Insider Education Policy.

While I was in compulsory education in America, I faced education policy that was not inclusive of LGBT+ people, mainly making my existence and coming to terms with this existence extremely difficult (Rosky, n.d.). At the time I was in school, my PhD thesis participants were also in school, as we were born around the same time. This meant that global life events and the general ethos of how education, bullying and social gender norms and anti-LGBT+ rhetoric were remarkably similar.

Insider Common Experiences.

I fulfilled an insider positionality with research participants when it came to issues such as: compulsory school uniforms, a lack of sex and relationships education, discussion or acknowledgement of mental health, the absence of gender-neutral bathrooms/toilets as well as very few LGBT+ societies/clubs and experiences of bullying. While I cannot speak for every transgender and gender diverse student in either country, the research out of both countries looking at many of these elements correlates with both my experiences and the experiences of my PhD participants within education (Griffin and Ouellet, 2003; Lugg, 2016; Stryker, 2017; Burns, 2018; Faye, 2021).

Outsider Education Policy.

Section 28 was one major policy that I as a researcher incorporated into my thesis. This legislation was not present or included in any capacity in the schools in America, and particularly those that I attended. Section 28 was legislation passed under then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher making "promoting the teaching of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Day, 2019, para. 2) by any local authorities illegal (Day, 2019). It was in effect in England from 1988 to 2003

and caused many LGBT+ organisations to close and limit their activities, and many individuals to self-censor (Day, 2019). Participants within my doctoral research shared their experiences of fear, worry, and isolation due to this legislation, something I would not be able to directly relate to. In addition to the existence of this policy was the thesis participants' experiences with teachers, media portrayals, protests and other cultural events surrounding the legislation. Participants discussed all these elements as central to their experiences in the English education system, and were outside of my experience as a researcher, making this a large distinction of insider and outsider position I occupied. As an outsider of personal experience on this topic, I really gleaned what participants shared and tried to encourage them to educate me on the legislation, how it played out personally for them, and what it might have been like to grow up experiencing this education policy. Something somewhat difficult to unpack around Section 28 was the "hidden curriculum" within schools that numerous participants were discussing as playing a role in their everyday navigation of the English education system (Rossouw and Frick, 2023). I could sort of identify with navigating a school environment with both overt and hidden exclusion of transgender and gender diverse identity, but not one where it was so directly written into law, making me more reliant and dependent on participants to tell me specific details and affects they experienced.

Outsider Common Experiences.

I was an outsider when it came to quite a few curricular elements of the English education system that differ from the United States. One of the large differences which made me very much an outsider to the experiences of the participants was involving physical education in England. Participants differed in that nearly every one of them experienced a physical education that was segregated by gender, included different activities or sports depending on gender classification and some even being split further into sets based on performance. This was something that was very different than what I had ever experienced. In addition to physical education, I was an outsider when it came to various organisational elements of the school year. This is most strongly seen in standardised testing and the school year schedule. In English schools students took GCSEs and A-level exams whereas I had to learn what these things were as this sort of testing is not in the curriculum in the United States, and in my home state in particular. The time in school also made me a large outsider to participants' experiences in the English education system. Participants shared that they would be in school starting around nine in the morning to around four in the evening and the school year would last from the first week in September to mid-July. Meanwhile, in the United States, I would begin school around seven in the morning and end at around half three in the evening and have about 3 months of summer vacation (June, July, August). This meant that I was very much an outsider in their positionality when it came to the organisation of the school year and the time in school.

Educator Insights: Findings

Introduction of Insider/Outsider Positionality. When the semester started and I, as a university educator, was getting to know which students would be in the modules I would be teaching, I felt it was necessary to include my pronouns on initial introductory communications with students and do a more formal introduction when I began the first class. In this introduction,

I shared parts about my identity which would indicate insider status, i.e. as a student at the university who studied psychology as well; Outsider status, i.e. a doctoral researcher; and potential insider and outsider cross-overs, i.e. a transgender person, studying LGBT+ issues, an educator, and is from the United States. I also wore my pronouns and other supportive badges on the lanyard I continue to wear while teaching. This practice of introduction and openness aimed to connect with students, especially those who would hold insider status with me to feel I was approachable and a safe person to connect with if needed. While I did and continue to experience some apprehension mainly regarding my safety when it comes to being so open, I remind myself how much I would have wanted an educator to be open, honest and visible with me and how I am doing my PhD and teaching to make a positive impact in the world, which all justify my decisions.

The teaching component of this article focuses on fostering an inclusive and equitable classroom environment. Drawing on my experiences in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, several strategies were employed to promote diversity and inclusion keeping in mind positionality:

Insider/Outsider Classroom, University and Content Design.

I noticed an interesting insider and outsider positionality when it came to the design of the classroom, whole university, and content. The insider elements made me feel a sense of ease and calm that I my skills and experiences in education are valid and can be employed in other places outside of the USA, giving me a sense of learning is learning no matter what. However, the outsider elements graced me with some feelings of apprehension about how strict I am with students, and my ability to support students in their aims of life after their degree and potential requirements surrounding career counselling.

Insider Classroom.

I was an insider regarding how classrooms are structured, and seating arrangements and technology are used. The same sort of devices, configurations and social norms were apparent for the students in the UK university as were present for me when I was completing my undergraduate psychology degree in the USA. The social norm of raising one's hand to answer, having lecture slides, taking notes with computers or by hand, as well as strategies like discussion, pre-reading, and examples remained in parallel.

Insider University and Student Position.

I was an insider when it came to student position and status at the same university as the students in their modules. This meant that they had very similar experiences with common services and university systems such as the library, student union, digital services, and housing and accommodation options in the city in which the university is located.

Insider Content. I was also an insider when it came to certain subject knowledge and content. The use of the DSM V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual or Mental Disorders – Volume 5) and the ICD -11 (International Classification of Diseases – Volume 11) is an example of content knowledge that positioned me as an insider with the students as I learned about and utilised these works in my psychology degree in the USA just the like UK students. In addition to the psychological classification and assessment documents, I was an insider in content knowledge of theories of psychology historically in the Western world as

the content knowledge in the field between the USA and the UK build on the same early works.

Outsider Organisation. As an educator I was an outsider when it came to certain university degree requirements, potential careers and even professional organisations to join. I attended a university in the USA and earned my degree in psychology and gender studies. In pursuit of that degree, I needed to take a number of other general education courses within other subject areas. This is something done in the USA but not in the UK. Students found this very absurd and were confused by this process when I shared this system and requirements. Additionally, I shared about completing my degree in four years which is becoming even more rare in the USA (Stewart, 2020) as opposed to UK students who typically finish in three (McCabe, 2024). Also positioning myself as an outsider while as an educator was in common language I used and were accustomed to within the USA higher education system versus the UK. Examples of this include 'classes' versus 'modules'; 'homework' versus 'coursework'; 'finals' versus 'assessments'; and 'major/minor' versus 'degree/course'. This element became an area that made my positionality as an outsider extremely noticeable to students, sometimes creating a disconnect.

Outsider Services and Student Position. As an educator I was an outsider in my student status and certain services available to me at the university. My experience as a doctoral researcher with no formal coursework, no 'classmates' and different levels of expectation upon my work was a noticeable distinction in my positionality in comparison to the students.

Outsider Next Steps. Careers open to students at the UK university are also different positioning me as an outsider to this perspective that students may take on. For example, I am a former school counsellor in America, this position is not a typical position in most UK schools and often means something quite different between the two countries. Finally, the actual professional organisations to be a member of and gain insight from presented me as an outsider educator compared to the students. I joined the American Psychological Association (APA) while I was studying my undergraduate degree, meanwhile, most English students join the British Psychological Society (BPS).

Ethics of Care

Within this work, regardless of researcher or educator, insider or outsider, an aspect of note is reflexivity and centring an ethics of care, particularly when working with marginalised and vulnerable populations such as transgender and gender diverse individuals (Henrickson et al., 2020). An ethics of care emphasises empathy, respect, and the importance of relationships, ensuring that the well-being of participants and students is prioritised throughout the research and educational learning journey. This approach involves actively listening to and validating the experiences of those involved, creating a supportive and inclusive environment that recognises and addresses power imbalances. By fostering trust and understanding, researchers and educators can better advocate for the needs and rights of their participants and students, facilitating more ethical and compassionate interactions. In this context, an ethics of care not only enhances the quality and integrity of research and teaching but also contributes to the liberation and resilience of marginalised communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research underscores the profound influence that identities and experiences exert on both research and teaching. The interplay of insider and outsider positionalities significantly shapes the perspectives and methodologies employed by individuals navigating academic and pedagogical landscapes. Personal insights and perspectives, especially those stemming from marginalised positions, are crucial in fostering dynamic relationships between researchers and participants, helping to address power differentials and build more inclusive environments.

Through an autoethnographic lens, this article highlights the dual roles of a transgender and pansexual American postgraduate researcher engaged in teaching and conducting research with transgender and gender diverse individuals within the English education system and students at the same university in which I as an educator, am earning my doctoral degree. The exploration of these identities reveals some of my considerations framing aspects of pedagogy in the psychology education I deliver and the critical impact on approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion in my doctoral research. Examples of pedagogic practice I employ demonstrating my insider and outsider position are things such as my introductions and correspondence with students including my pronouns to ensure, especially the transgender and gender diverse students could see me as an ally, bringing in some of my outsider experiences of schooling, professional organisations or job possibilities as to demonstrate how nationality does not need to necessarily confine our scope of thinking, and using methods or tools in class that are widely practiced as to show parts of my knowledge as an insider to the university teaching methods.

As a researcher keeping diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of my doctoral thesis, I use my insider positionality to genuinely reach out and connect with others in the transgender and gender diverse community to get to know them, make personal and professional friends but also use my outsider perspective to acknowledge that I do not know as many others as I might if I were from England and therefore use these connections to recruit participants and build further connections. This practice also extended to my choice of space and location to conduct research and in the consideration of safety to my doctoral research participants.

While this article is a starting point to acknowledge and demonstrate parts of reflexive practice as an insider and outsider in numerous capacities, it is my individual experience and ways of navigating this positionality and is not something to generalise. However, by integrating personal and professional experiences, this work contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances involved in researching and teaching within marginalised communities. Ultimately, it calls for a continued emphasis on recognising and valuing diverse perspectives, and a reflexive practice of positionality to enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of academic and educational approaches.

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