

1 **“Complicity, Trauma, Love: An exploration of the experiences of LGBTQIA+**
2 **members from physical education spaces”**

3 S. Lynch^{a*} L. Davies^b D. Ahmed^c and Laura McBean^a

4 *^aInitial Teacher Education, University of East London, England; ^bSchool of Sport, Health and*
5 *Applied Science, St Mary’s University, Twickenham, England; ^cUniversity of Brighton, England*

6 Shrehan Lynch slynch@uel.ac.uk

7 Laura Davies laura.davies@stmarys.ac.uk

8 Dylan Ahmed dylan171202@gmail.com

9 Laura McBean u1600604@uel.ac.uk

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12 The dearth of research with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex,
13 and asexual plus (LGBTQIA+) members within the physical education (PE) community, is
14 of great concern; to some degree members of this community are invisible in the profession.
15 The unfortunate reality is that PE is largely recognised as a heteronormative space with
16 deeply rooted gendered practices that often go unacknowledged. In PE, the high visibility of
17 one’s body, and the value placed on ‘select’ bodies, uncovers and reinforces society’s ‘isms’
18 such as ‘genderism’ and ‘heterosexism’. The constantly recycled dualistic understanding of
19 these social identities has made PE an ‘exclusive’ space. Drawing on feminism and
20 poststructuralism as our theoretical lens, this scholarly collaboration utilised a collaborative
21 autoethnography from intersectional voices who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+
22 community (a lesbian teacher, bi-sexual teacher educator, transgender student, and an ally),
23 to explore our experiences from the PE space. Data were generated by several qualitative
24 methods, initially from our individual narratives, which then ‘birthed’ poetry and visual
25 artefacts. Our findings highlighted how complicity helps to maintain the heteronormative
26 space, the never-ending nature of trauma, and the love that we experienced in various forms.
27 Moreover, we all expressed a love of PE, even if/when it conflicts with our ‘bodies’. We
28 leave this as an unfinished collaboration filled with hope and love; one that invites you to
29 join us in solidarity to create a safe, welcoming space for every member of our community.

30 Keywords: LGBTQIA+; heteronormativity; physical education; love; trauma; complicity;
31 collaborative autoethnography; intersectional feminism; poststructuralism

32 **Introduction**

33 This paper seeks to explore how four people who are a part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
34 Transgender, Queer/questioning, Intersex, and Asexual plus (LGBTQIA+¹) community from
35 Physical Education (PE) collaborated to create space and respond to heteronormative practices in
36 PE. It is driven by a desire to highlight how trauma has long-lasting effects and how teachers can
37 make a difference in young people's experiences within our subject area. Despite a wealth of
38 research centred on inclusivity within PE, some of the PE community remain marginalised and
39 continually 'left behind' (Clarke, 1996; Stride, 2014), and the voices of our LGBTQIA+
40 community (teachers and students) have been largely overlooked within the research literature.
41 The heteronormative and gendered practices, or 'straight pedagogies' (Fitzpatrick & McGlashan,
42 2016) that prevail throughout PE spaces may have contributed to the limited research within PE
43 that centres the voices of LGBTQIA+ members from England, as PE remains an unsafe space for
44 many individuals to 'come out' as part of the community, let alone to engage in academic
45 scholarship about it.

46 Although we agree that scholarship should not rest 'on the shoulders of a few individuals'
47 (Landi et al., 2020, p. 268), this scholarly collaboration is made up of LGBTQIA+ authors. We
48 have brought together voices from some of the 'village' who are committed to creating an
49 LGBTQIA+ inclusive PE community. We argue that achieving this goal requires us to work
50 collaboratively (including allyship – part of the + of LGBTQIA+ acronym), to be critical, and
51 above all, to draw upon the ways that we created space and responded to heteronormative practices
52 in PE. We share such findings by reliving our traumas to inform our position(s). As a creative

¹ LGBTQIA+ is an inclusive term used to represent several of the distinct identities and categories of people within the Queer community, including (but not limited to) Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and Ally. The plus (+) denotes all other identities that exist within the community.

53 collective, who have come together through the creation of PhysEquity², a social change
54 movement, we co-constructed data through poetry, visual artefacts, and conversations. This
55 collaboration utilises a collaborative autoethnography drawing upon intersectional feminism and
56 poststructuralism to inform our findings.

57 **Heteronormativity in PE**

58 Landi (2019a) contends that PE perpetuates ‘white, Western, gendered, and sexy views of health
59 based on heterosexuality’ (p. 144), in which a fit or healthy body is positioned as the desired
60 outcome. Such approaches serve to exclude queer bodies not only through their reinforcement of
61 dominant discourses on how ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ bodies should look but also through the
62 delivery of activities and use of pedagogies that are purposefully selected with the intention of
63 producing more ‘athletic bodies’ (p. 146). As well as attaching gender to specific skills and
64 activities, e.g., girls and dancing, boys and ball games, there also exists a gendering of behaviours,
65 in which boys are encouraged to take initiative, whilst girls are expected to ‘lie low’ (Larsson et
66 al., 2011, p. 79). PE teachers also fall victim to stereotypes, with female teachers particularly
67 associated with homosexuality and masculinity or ‘butchness’, whilst their male counterparts are
68 characterised as overly aggressive (McCullick et al., 2003). Perhaps because of such negative
69 associations, many teachers identifying as LGBTQIA+ choose to hide their sexuality when
70 teaching, thus, keeping a clear distinction between their private and professional lives (Ayvazo &
71 Sutherland, 2009).

72 PE teachers themselves have been identified as playing a key role in reinforcing gender
73 stereotypes and heteronormativity within PE lessons. Reproduction of these ‘norms’ may occur

² Formerly known as BAMEPE

74 during teacher education where genderism is ‘legitimated’ (Brown, 2005) or within schools and
75 departments that reinforce cultures of heteronormative practices. Of course, teacher education
76 programmes have a key role to play in preparing teachers to address issues of oppression and
77 inequality adequately and effectively in PE, however, this would rely on an acknowledgement of
78 the problem and a commitment to change (Lynch et al., 2022). Unfortunately, research suggests
79 the contrary, with many teachers failing to recognise or reflect on the ways in which their teaching
80 reinforces the status quo (Berg & Kokkonen, 2021).

81 Students are inadvertently taught socially accepted heteronormative norms through the
82 spaces they inhabit in school. As an example, in England children shift from experiencing PE
83 together in primary school (often changing all together in the classroom/changing rooms and at a
84 curriculum level) to then being separated by gender in secondary school; separate toilets, changing
85 rooms, PE kit, curricula, teachers and even different expectations are often observed. This socially
86 accepted practice of separation by gender is particularly problematic for students who identify as
87 LGBTQIA+ persons, in some cases forcing students to choose a ‘gender’ to identify with (Devís-
88 Devís et al., 2018). Trans students, in particular, are viewed as ‘dissidents’ of these existing
89 systems, reporting multiple forms of exclusion or rejection (Devís-Devís et al., 2018), that
90 ultimately serve to limit their participation (Caudwell, 2014).

91 In addition, the PE environment remains one in which students who identify as LGBTQIA+
92 continue to experience explicit acts of homophobia and discrimination (Sykes, 2011), which
93 teachers, whilst often aware of such behaviours, do little to actively prevent them (Gill et al., 2010;
94 Piedra et al., 2016). Homophobic or discriminatory acts including verbal & physical harassment,
95 discrimination, bullying and microaggressions, based on identity or assumed identity, mirror those
96 experienced by the LGBTQIA+ community across educational spaces, and in society more widely

97 (Milsom, 2021; Todd, 2018). Such violence towards LGBTQIA+ persons contribute to individual
98 and collective trauma. Trauma is an individual response to a hostile experience and ‘anyone, at
99 any age, from any neighbourhood or background can be impacted by trauma’ (Quarmby et al.,
100 2021, p. 4). Whether overt or subtle, any space that allows such acts to take place, and fails to
101 challenge these behaviours when they occur, can be considered complicit in the reinforcement and
102 reproduction of trauma for LGBTQIA+ students and teachers.

103 Whilst a growing body of research has begun to argue for teachers to develop trauma-
104 informed practices and strategies in PE in England (c.f. Quarmby et al., 2021, Lynch et al., 2022),
105 and the need to consider the trauma experienced by students outside of the PE space, and thus
106 brought into PE (Ellison et al., 2020; Walton-Fisette, 2020), there has been little acknowledgement
107 of the need to address negative experiences that might be considered specific to the identities of
108 LGBTQIA+ students and the trauma they have faced - this is what makes this paper novel. We
109 have shared some of our own trauma in the hope that this will provoke thought for those seeking
110 to become trauma-invested (Walton-Fisette, 2020) and wanting to act. Steps that have already been
111 suggested to become trauma-informed in the PE space (broadly speaking) include teachers
112 becoming aware of the trauma that has been inflicted on young people and employing restorative
113 practices (Lynch et al., 2022) and more specifically Quarmby et al., (2021, p. 8) have
114 recommended five principles for teachers to enact trauma-informed practices: ‘(1) ensuring safety
115 and wellbeing, (2) establishing routines and structures, (3) developing and sustaining positive
116 relationships that foster a sense of belonging, (4) facilitating and responding to youth voice and,
117 (5) promoting strengths and self-belief’. Both suggestions encourage PE teachers to do intense
118 identity work and become informed on the principles e.g., for students to feel safe and have a sense
119 of belonging and using correct pronouns would be essential. However, further research exploring

120 the successful effects of employing such trauma-informed practices in action within the discipline
121 is yet to be gathered.

122 Landi (2019b) identified that existing literature on LGBTQIA+ issues in PE has typically
123 focused on attitudes towards and perceptions of LGBTQIA+ persons within PE; LGBTQIA+
124 teacher experiences; teacher education and its effectiveness in addressing homophobia and
125 challenging heteronormative practices; and LGBTQIA+ student experiences of PE. He notes,
126 however, that there remains a lack of diversity in terms of participants' voices and argues that there
127 is a pressing need to further investigate the experiences of LGBTQIA+ (particularly transgender
128 and bi-sexual) students, and those from diverse racial backgrounds within PE. The inclusion of
129 students' voices and the active involvement of young people in challenging dominant and existing
130 practices have been identified as an essential requirement for moving the subject forward (Landi
131 et al., 2020). This scholarly collaborative aims to build on the aforementioned literature by
132 responding to heteronormative practices in PE and highlighting the voices of a lesbian teacher, bi-
133 sexual teacher educator, transgender student, and an ally, as they explore their intersectional
134 identities from the PE space. As we share evocative stories throughout this paper, we would like
135 to advise you that this may cause emotional distress and therefore have placed this statement here
136 as a **trauma warning**.

137 **A feminist and poststructural influence**

138 In an era where (re)thinking, (re)shaping, (re)organising, (re)envisioning our present reality is
139 essential (hooks, 2015b), critical feminist work in PE is an ongoing need (Scraton, 2018).
140 Feminism, most simply put, is a global movement to end violence and oppression of all kinds
141 (hooks, 2015b) including psychological, cultural, spiritual, physical violence and ending the
142 viciousness of social control. Feminism is a daily struggle and being oppressed in a patriarchal

143 society can be a perpetual site of trauma; our intention is to use feminist perspectives to critique
144 our traumas as a way to move forward and heal. Moreover, considering ‘we do not live single-
145 issue lives’ (p. 138) we took an intersectional feminist approach; the absence of discussing race,
146 sexuality, and class weakens any feminist discussion (Lorde, 2017). Our focus is to end the
147 discrimination directed towards historically marginalised sexual and/or gender non-conforming
148 identities.

149 This scholarly collaboration is overwhelmingly political and activist work. To help, we drew
150 on the works of Sara Ahmed’s (2017) feminist poststructural concepts of *heteronormativity* and
151 *trauma walls* and bell hooks’ radical feminism and the concept of *love* (hooks, 2001, 2015a,
152 2015b). We define for readers our understanding of the key concepts we draw upon in the paper
153 for transparency of understanding. *Heteronormativity* is the social standard by which people are
154 judged to deviate or conform to. The body becomes a norm, something that is inhabited (Ahmed,
155 2017), thus, certain elements of one’s body/identity are judged when meeting the norm. As a result,
156 some people may choose to hide elements of their body/identity (e.g., sexuality, gender) due to the
157 nature of the spaces and structures around them (e.g., schools, workplaces). This process is not
158 passive but an active approach to how we inhabit ourselves and live out our embodied, diverse
159 identities in different spaces. Ahmed (2017, p.96) refers to institutions as ‘brick walls’ for those
160 who do diversity work, and for us, embodied diversity workers, we use the brick wall as an
161 expression of trauma: ‘the feeling of coming up against something that does not move; something
162 solid and tangible... the wall... the sign of immobility’. Spaces such as schools can become places
163 of trauma for those that identify as LGBTQIA+, as they repetitively come up against allegorical
164 ‘walls’ that others do not see. Love is one way we can get over or through a brick wall, in solidarity
165 or communion with others. hooks (2001, p. 7-8) defines love as a participatory emotion combining

166 many elements such as ‘care, commitment, trust, knowledge, responsibility, and respect’. We use
167 the concept of love to show how heteronormativity and trauma walls can affect how and what we
168 love, but also how important love is for a future of hope.

169 **Method**

170 At the outset of this study, we knew that it would be collaborative and give room to each of our
171 voices; the voices that are often unheard. Similar to Lambert et al. (2021), we observed that there
172 is a lack of studies that utilise poetic presentation and collaborative autoethnography and sought
173 to build on research in this area. Autoethnography enables a study of self and cultural practices; as
174 a collaborative, this enabled us to ‘show up’ as a community and act as a support network to each
175 other as we engaged in this risky and vulnerable work (Adams et al., 2017; Chang et al., 2013).
176 For us, this work included the sharing of trauma which can be cathartic whilst creating an
177 opportunity to demonstrate love to one another (Chang et al., 2013). As hooks (2001, p. 129)
178 reminds us; ‘There is no better place to learn the art of loving than in community’.
179 Autoethnography provided us with an opportunity to offer an alternative narrative utilising our
180 everyday experiences in our own words and on our own terms, that otherwise may be difficult to
181 capture using ‘more traditional research methods’ (Adams et al., 2017, p. 4). We define the term
182 narrative in this paper as a form of autobiographical storytelling. The importance of this method
183 for our paper is twofold; it may engage readers to consider their role in the maintenance of
184 heteronormativity but also ‘reduce the barrier of Otherness’ that our bodies reside within (Carless,
185 2012, p. 609).

186 We recognise that this highly personal collaboration is entirely subjective, but we are also
187 humble to the fact that we are privileged to be the ‘vocal ones’ who are ‘out and proud’ (Sparkes,
188 2000). It is hoped that our ‘multivocality’ and ‘multiple sources’ uphold the trustworthiness that

189 may be questioned from highly subjective research (Hernandez et al., 2017). Although the authors
190 were also the participants in this study, we sought ethical permission; we were however advised
191 by the first author's institution that this would not be necessary due to the data being our own
192 reflections.

193 *Participants, positionality, and context*

194 The authors/collaborators of this paper are a collective who have been working together as
195 members of the PhysEquity social change movement to encourage more equitable PE
196 environments. As Co-founders of PhysEquity, Shrehan and Laura M have previously worked
197 together; Laura D and Dylan joined our community through our online network. We (Shrehan,
198 Laura D, Dylan, Laura M) joined in solidarity to write this paper to build on current LGBTQIA+
199 literature and support fellow members of the PhysEquity community; we identify differently and
200 acknowledge our differences below.

201 **Shrehan:** I am a mixed-race queer woman living in England; I 'came out' as bi-sexual
202 when I was 22-years old. My 'coming out' occurred while I was a student teacher on teaching
203 practice, I had been romantically involved with a fellow PE teacher in my school who identified
204 as a lesbian. I was emotionally and physically abused by school staff and members of my family
205 who considered it a rebelling 'phase'. Now, over a decade later, professionally, I am a teacher
206 educator in PE and personally, reside in a heterosexual relationship, however, I see sexuality and
207 gender as fluid concepts and my work as a form of social justice activism. My interest in writing
208 this paper stands as a form of politicking and solidarity with my comrades. We have been offered
209 the opportunity to share our voices and we hope to do so with conviction and as an act of becoming
210 something we were not when we started.

211 **Laura D:** I am a gay, married woman, and a PE teacher. I grew up in a religious (Christian)
212 family in a conservative area, where I had limited contact with LGBTQIA+ communities. At a
213 stage where I might have begun to explore my sexuality more openly, the experiences of others
214 around me taught me that it would be unsafe to do so. It was only once at university that I felt able
215 to come to terms with my identity in this regard – and where I met my future wife. I have been a
216 PE teacher for thirteen years, but only ‘came-out’ to students for the first time more recently. My
217 decision to not do so earlier was one mostly borne of fear; fear of how I would be perceived, fear
218 of being stereotyped as ‘that lesbian PE teacher’. I worried that this aspect of my identity would
219 be a problem for others and felt it would be easier to keep this hidden than to deal with the
220 discomfort, rejection, or even hate that this knowledge might incite in them. I have since come to
221 realise that to create an environment in which my students' identities are not only acknowledged
222 but celebrated, I must also be true to my own. It is an ongoing process, of which this paper now
223 forms a part.

224 **Dylan:** I am a 19-year-old, South Asian, bisexual, transgender male. I've grown up in a
225 very traditional Muslim family, which made coming out extremely hard. I first came out to friends
226 and teachers when I was 13, it was a terrifying thing to do in a school where there were so many
227 people that also knew my parents because I dreaded that they would find out through rumours. I
228 was lucky enough to have extremely supportive teachers; however, they did not always know how
229 to help me because my situation was something that they had never dealt with before. PE was an
230 escape for me. I became extremely close with the PE department and soon realised that I wanted
231 to pursue a career in teaching after seeing for myself the impact a teacher can have; I am currently
232 studying for an undergraduate PE degree. My own experience of being in constant fear as an
233 LGBTQIA+ student has urged me to look deeper into what it is that a student needs to feel safe in

234 their educational environment. This is a process of listening and learning from different people's
235 experiences and understanding what could be done to replicate the good and avoid the bad. I also
236 wanted to share my story so that I can show that it is possible to have positive experiences in PE
237 as a trans student and highlight what helped me.

238 **Laura M:** I identify as a heterosexual Black Woman. My participation in physical
239 activity/sport complicated gender and sexuality expectations; I did not understand why I could not
240 join the 'boys' or why the women's football team were presumed to be 'lesbians'. I now understand
241 that categories have done more harm than good to myself and my LGBTQIA+ family. It hurts me
242 as a PE teacher to observe these recycled expectations still dominating our community. As the
243 'ally' within this paper, I recognise that I have been complicit in the oppression of my LGBTQIA+
244 family. This is not acceptable - I am here to disrupt and relearn.

245 *Methods of data generation and analysis*

246 Our data generation was a messy, emergent, collaborative endeavour that sought to break away
247 from the binary logic of traditional manuscripts. Instead, we focused on deconstructing our
248 similarities as ultimately our agency was driven by our relations to our sameness. At the outset,
249 we had no idea what was going to come out of this scholarly collaboration, we just knew that 'a
250 creative and artistic sensibility would be invaluable in embodied ways of knowing' (Barbour,
251 2018, p. 222). Specifically, we knew that part of our personalities had to 'come out' in the paper,
252 and each of us identifies as an artist in some way or another – engaging in poetry, drawing,
253 creating, being expressive through tattoos, etc. Thus, we take the position that such embodied ways
254 in academic scholarship need to be 'non-traditional' to demonstrate alternative possibilities in
255 feminism and academia. We gathered data in four ways – written autobiographies, published

256 materials, reflections on each autobiography, and online conversations. These ideas were inspired
257 by the works of Lambert et al. (2021) who followed a similar process and highlighted that artistic
258 representation can take many messy yet valuable forms in PE.

259 The journey began with *written autobiographies* to support accounts from three of the
260 authors (Shrehan, Laura D, Dylan) detailing their experiences as LGBTQIA+ persons in a form of
261 their choosing; this involved written text, journal-style entries on a topic of their choosing in
262 relation to their identity. These stories were highly personal and often we told stories of our
263 ‘coming out’ in explicit details and the repercussions of that event. Frequently, we shared thoughts,
264 feelings, spaces of occurrence, and the outcomes of the events.

265 It also included *published materials* for Dylan including a professional article he had
266 recently written on trans inclusion and for Laura D a blog she had recently published on ‘coming
267 out’. These were read by the rest of the team to understand more of Dylan and Laura D’s stories
268 and experiences of LGBTQIA+ in PE. Individually, all four of us wrote our *reflections on each*
269 *other’s contributions* within a shared document prior to our first collaborative online meeting; see
270 Figure 1 for an excerpt of this document [*Insert Figure 1 near here*]. These reflections were free-
271 written exploratory writing pieces by each author. Consequently, each collaborator made links to
272 feminism and social justice as these theories informed the way they understood the experiences
273 they had read about. The reflections were also a space to share our learning from reading each
274 person’s autobiographies, e.g., ‘I found the term ‘gender euphoria’ so interesting. I’m embarrassed
275 to say I hadn’t heard of it before’ (See Figure 1).

276 We then took part in an *online conversation*, which was recorded and transcribed, we
277 discussed our feelings and interpretations of each person’s narrative and came to agreements about
278 certain similarities in our experiences of being LGBTQIA+ members from PE. We discussed

279 similarities across each of our reflections and it was within this element of the data generation that
280 we were provided an opportunity to collaboratively generate potential themes we wanted to discuss
281 in the manuscript. We did this by using Track Changes and Comments in Microsoft Word to
282 highlight commonalities across our individual reflections, and ultimately identifying three distinct
283 commonalities shared between our stories.

284 After the Online Conversation we started a WhatsApp group chat to support our collective
285 analysis through sharing ideas and questions as we grappled navigating the conclusions of the data.
286 The WhatsApp group became a space of audio and written notes for us to ‘think with each other’
287 as part of the data analysis process. This process ‘birthed’ our magic (Lorde, 2017); as it became
288 noticeably clear that we wanted our data to be represented through poetic/artistic representations,
289 which had deep, evocative connections to our narratives. For the analysis to become a formalised
290 collaborative process, there was a final online meeting to discuss the conclusions about the data’s
291 meaning and how to display the data beyond traditional forms. We then created individual artistic
292 artefacts such as poems, comics, and diagrams to communicate and express our data in evocative
293 ways, and as a way of analysing and sharing the data in the manuscript. The use of poetry was
294 generated from our stories and served to strengthen our method; like Fitzpatrick (2012, p.10) by
295 being open to engaging with poetry within our academic work, our voices expose the ‘cracks’ in
296 our spaces through expressing ‘the voices we usually edit out’. There is no closure to such work
297 or a single interpretation instead, we have ‘let the light in’ to offer readers room to ‘listen’, ‘feel’,
298 ‘care’ and ‘love’ (Carless, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2012). Thus, such forms of representations are fluid
299 entities and not static – they are open to interpretation, adaption, and question. Several prompts
300 were used during the creation of the poems linked to love (one of the themes) these prompts were
301 inspired by an LGBTQIA+ poetry class Shrehan took, specifically the LGBTQIA+ flag and the

302 colours of the rainbow and a ‘hand love poem’ (within a drawing of your hand, you write
303 everything that you associate with love/sexuality, see figure 4). After completing several poems
304 each and reflecting on them, we had a second online meeting, where we discussed which artistic
305 artefacts would be shared within the final manuscript. Our poems and data display were inspired
306 by poetic scholars such as Faulkner (2009, 2020, 2021) and within our discipline Safron & Landi
307 (2021) who have shared ways of poetic (re)representation with the data before now. The three
308 themes or as we like to know them: main commonalities are explored further in the findings
309 section.

310 **Findings and discussion**

311 In the findings section, we explore in detail three commonalities that were most highlighted
312 amongst our experiences as LGBTQIA+ PE members (heteronormativity, the trauma wall, love).
313 Through a collaborative analysis, we questioned, critiqued, empathised, and listened to narratives
314 that explored the topics in more detail. We chose to share our stories in arts-based forms such as
315 poetry, drawings and images that represent and allow readers to 'think with us' as we attempt to
316 create something new from our (re)search (self-explorations). In line with our theoretical
317 perspective, we view our findings as incomplete and, in some areas, leave interpretations down to
318 readers – reflection on our findings by others will be where the **real work** happens. Thus, our
319 findings are merely an extended hand in academic writing for continued dialogue, reflection, and
320 praxis.

321 **Heteronormativity: Complicity, Space**

322 Heteronormativity is pervasive and ‘so much is reproduced by not being noticed’ (Ahmed, 2017,
323 p. 40). The trauma of coming out, binary curriculum structures and in some cases, overt

324 homophobia and discrimination, create isolation for queer individuals, which seem to be
325 exemplified in PE spaces. The fabric of the rigid regimes in our societies uses isolation to break
326 people's spirits and make them conform (hooks, 2001). Dylan recalled that he had 'internalised
327 the idea of 'girl' sports and 'boy' sports', which affected his choice of participation in clubs at
328 school. These 'ideals' not only serve to create conflict but also leave no room for students to make
329 choices based on what they enjoy (Redelius & Larsson, 2020). All genders/sexualities become
330 complicit in maintaining structures that were assigned to us as children and reinforce patriarchal
331 gender roles and commonly assumed 'natural' ways of life (hooks, 2010). Ally, Laura M, reflected
332 on her complicity within the heteronormative regime both as a student and teacher in PE:

333 *C is for my childhood friends who courageously came out as gay*
334 *O is for my own insecurity when I thought I must stay away*
335 *M is for miseducation I truly believed being gay was a sin*
336 *P is for the people who laughed and joked I admit that I joined in*
337 *L is for the love that grew between you and me*
338 *I is for my ignorance that I have learned to see*
339 *C is for the courageous, caring, chef that you are*
340 *I is for ignorance that I no longer tolerate*
341 *T is who this poem is for you will always be my mate*
342 *(Laura M)*

343 During data analysis, Laura M drew upon her initial teacher education experience with
344 teacher educator Shrehan as a key moment in raising her consciousness of heteronormativity
345 within the PE space; a reality she thinks was overlooked due to being a 'valued' body in this space.
346 The normalisation of heteronormativity creates a sense of fear to maintain the status quo, the body
347 is used as an object of conformity for both hetero individuals to police and non-hetero individuals
348 to follow norms. 'A norm is something that can be inhabited... maintained through how those who

349 do not quite inhabit norms are treated' (Ahmed, 2017, p. 115). Our bodies as LGBTQIA+ persons
350 have been treated badly, vilified, and suffered to differing degrees. As an ally and 'valued' body
351 in PE Laura M expressed that she did not experience this.

352 A shared commonality we would like to highlight is the presumption that being non-
353 heterosexual was/is a choice. Dylan exemplifies the violence of such assumptions, sharing the pain
354 caused by using a chest binder, and questioning why anyone would 'choose' such pain;

355 *A choice.*

356 *They always say it's a choice.*

357 *But they don't understand how much I wish that were the case.*

358 *If it were a choice, I could have avoided all the ignorance,*

359 *But it's not, so I left myself an open target.*

360 *Relying on a chest binder for confidence?*

361 *Who would CHOOSE to be like that?*

362 *The bruises, the pain, the utter discomfort,*

363 *Just for a flat chest to fit into standards*

364 *Now please, tell me*

365 *Who would choose to hate their own being?*

366 *Because I can say for sure it's not me,*

367 *Because the choice I made wasn't between being trans or cis,*

368 *The choice I made was life or death.*

369 *(Dylan)*

370 Devís-Devís et al. (2018, pp. 105-106) suggest 'the hegemony of heteronormative turns binary
371 gendered bodies into embodied self-defined truths. In such context, male and female binarism
372 become an ideal and idealised model and, consequently, non-mannish men and non-womanish
373 women tend to be objectified and rejected.' This was exemplified through Laura D's reflection of
374 a PE experience with a female cover teacher with a 'masculine' appearance and 'loud' voice, who

375 students critically judged to be a ‘lesbian’, and then rejected on the basis of this assumption. We
376 suggest assumptions, binaries, and inflicted pain are violent acts, ‘words can be tools. Words can
377 be weapons’ (Ahmed, 2017, p. 72). Thus, we are entitled to rage about our upbringings and
378 patriarchal gendered ways – this is not love, it is years of reinforced discourses that have created
379 normative views – some bodies/identities matter more than others in society, especially in PE (c.f.
380 Lambert et al., 2021). We are very much hopeful, albeit cynical, that the violence caused by the
381 marriage in our society to patriarchy, complicity, and heteronormativity, will not last.

382 *Space*

383 Complicity has most been exemplified through the physicality of the spaces we have lived,
384 worked, and studied in. We each have complex identities: teacher, wife, student, friend, teacher
385 educator, partner, sister, daughter, son, head of department. In each of these roles, our ‘outness’
386 (or complicity) is shaped by the spaces we inhabit. Said another way, spaces have shaped the social
387 and cultural norms of our individual bodies, and the assumptions others have placed on our bodies
388 have had implications for us and dictated how ‘out’ we could be:

389 *Be out*

390 *But not too out*

391

392 *You don’t want to alienate people*

393

394 *You are already*

395 *Unfeminine*

396 *Unattractive*

397 *By most people’s standards*

398

399 *You don’t want to be known as*

400 *That lesbian PE teacher*
401
402 *Be yourself*
403 *But not too much*
404
405 *You already look like a dyke*
406
407 *You're not slim*
408 *You don't look like you work out*
409 *You're not even*
410 *That good of an athlete*
411
412 *You'd better be damn good at your job*
413 *To make up for*
414 *The other stuff*
415
416 *Be honest*
417 *But not too honest*
418
419 *Tread carefully*
420 *Tone it down*
421 *Don't shove it in people's faces*
422
423 *You don't want to give them*
424 *A reason to complain*
425
426 *The ability of people*
427 *To tolerate something, they hate*
428 *Can only go*
429 *So far*

430 *(Laura D)*

431 The very nature of coming in, coming out, feeling different, out of place, ostracised both physically
432 and psychologically is pervasive and has been exacerbated in PE spaces.

433 We recognise as teachers and students, there has been an element of challenging and
434 provoking the spaces we have been in by (1) being there, and (2) being ‘out’. Through our presence
435 and transparency of sexuality/gender, our bodies have acted as forms of deviance and non-
436 normative behaviours both physically, culturally, emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically.
437 Thus, while spaces can be unwelcoming, they can also be full of possibilities. Consequently, being
438 ‘out’ can be a space to transgress boundaries of normality. A common thread amongst our
439 narratives was the joy that we have all experienced within the PE space. However, we acknowledge
440 the difficulty in tasks ahead due to the complicity and authenticity being dictated by the physical
441 spaces we are held captive in. We are hopeful that the PE space, can lead the change and rather
442 than hold us captive, liberate us: ‘...and everyone started chanting my name’, an excerpt from
443 Dylan narrative, as he remembers a moment of gender euphoria when his preferred name was used
444 by his peers during a lesson, exemplifies our future hopes for the PE space.

445 **The trauma walls**

446 ‘A queer girl stretches the meaning of girl’ (Ahmed, 2017, p. 55)

447 *I’m a girl*

448 *They call me Shrehan*

449 *They said I like boys*

450

451 *22 years old*

452 *Do I?*

453

454 *Mum, I like girls*

455

456 *Thump*

457 *Punch*

458 *Bang*

459 *Crash*

460 *Bruises*

461

462 *Calm*

463 *Acceptance*

464 *Finally free*

465

466 *Gone back though to where I am comfy*

467 *(Shrehan)*

468 'to remember violence is to bring the sound of violence into the present' (Ahmed, 2017,

469 p. 61)

470 hooks (2010, p. 2) has shared that 'constant retelling might trigger post-traumatic stress;

471 the retelling was necessary to reinforce both the message and the remembered state of absolute

472 powerlessness.' As a collective, we found the (re)telling of our narratives to each other cathartic,

473 but it also meant that we (re)lived our trauma. We learnt that trauma had held us captive, and by

474 coming together we released emotional turmoil. However, we likened the violence that we have

475 suffered (coming out repeatedly, gendered PE, constantly having to teach others on LGBTQIA+

476 issues/experiences, transphobia, and discrimination in work/school places) to constantly coming

477 up against a brick wall. The wall also represents a defence system, created with the intention of

478 protecting ourselves, thus, our body too can become a wall (Ahmed, 2017). This analogy

479 powerfully illustrates how the wall can often feel as though it is constantly closing in, and our fears

480 about whether we will ever be able to break down the wall. See figure 2 for the visual
481 representation: *[Figure 2 near here]*

482 We discussed at length in various conversations engaging in this collaboration in our data
483 analysis meetings that whenever we attempt to remove bricks (the traumas we face) through
484 various means: counselling, story sharing, educating others, forming relationships, changing
485 curriculum in schools, creation of PhysEquity, etc., the smallest action can rebuild the brick wall
486 (ignorance, shame, bullying, discrimination, online harassment, hate crimes) and we begin
487 (re)living and working through our traumas once again. See figure 3 for a visual representation of
488 others putting the bricks back.

489 When we reflect on our narratives, the findings, and our work within the space of PE, our
490 ‘feminism is DIY: a form of self-assembly’ (Ahmed, 2017, p. 27) and the need to put ourselves
491 back together again when we are fragile can be exhausting. But we have been reminded of the
492 powerful words of Audre Lorde (2017, p. 123), ‘change means growth, and growth can be painful’.
493 Our anger, violence, complicity, and trauma is useful for others in our discipline to be aware of
494 and will hopefully create change within society and our curriculum area. Although our work is
495 risky, we need to tell stories of violence (individual, idiosyncratic) because violence is reproduced
496 and concealed (Ahmed, 2017). We hope that by sharing, we can encourage other minority groups
497 to share stories of violence to educate others, as a form of catharsis and to give voice to those that
498 have been unrepresented and marginalised in our field. Importantly, we remind readers, and those
499 whom we may evoke former trauma, that as LGBTQIA+ persons we need to learn to put our own
500 masks on before we help others; self-care is important socially just work. *[Figure 3 near here]*

501 **Love: Comradery**

502 *I was*
503
504 *And then*
505 *She was*
506
507 *And then*
508 *We were*
509
510 *And then*
511 *Love*
512 *Adventure*
513 *Laughter*
514 *Heartbreak*
515 *Grief*
516 *Healing*
517 *Love*
518
519 *Love*
520
521 *Love*
522 *(Laura D)*

523 *‘If I do not love the world—if I do not love life - if I do not love [human beings] - I*
524 *cannot enter into dialogue’ (Freire, 2007, p. 90).*

525 Love was a salient theme within our data, each collaborator described love of some kind. Along
526 with hooks, we view love as a verb, a doing word, and an action rather than a feeling, it is a
527 participatory emotion, ‘when we love we can let our hearts speak’ (hooks, 2001, p. xi). Laura M
528 conversed over the love towards her students and friends, Shrehan discussed parent and partner

529 love, Laura D shared narratives regarding her wife and family, and Dylan the love of his PE
530 teacher. In combination, we shared a love for our discipline, and we recognised that there was
531 something about PE that had drawn us all to it, whether it be the friends we made during our
532 education, the positive experiences in lessons that we remember as students, or the learning
533 community we have created through scholarship.

534 However, we cannot love and be dominating or dominated (hooks, 2010) and both Laura
535 D and Dylan discussed their family's love of religion and its dominating effects on their life. The
536 impact of one's socialisation developed during the discussion of this theme as much of the data
537 brought us back to what we experienced during our childhoods. As an example, when Laura D
538 shared that she was raised as a Christian and now holds an 'interesting relationship' with religion,
539 a common consensus was evident with responses such as 'nods', 'yes', 'I feel that' during the
540 group discussion. Religion is based on patriarchal thinking and is a barrier to feminist thought and
541 practice (hooks 2015a). Here Laura D shares her thoughts about being LGBTQIA+ in this religion
542 growing up:

543 *God is love*

544 *And where there is love*

545 *Is God*

546

547 *Is there?*

548

549 *Yes*

550

551 *But where is the love in you?*

552

553 *You profess to know God but*

554
555 *Where is the love?*
556 *In your sermons spewing intolerance*

557
558 *Where is the love?*
559 *In your eagerness to exclude*

560
561 *Where is the love?*
562 *In your hatred of 'other'*

563
564 *I cannot find it in you*

565
566 *But I can find it here*

567 *In me*
568 *The outcast*
569 *The sinner*

570
571 *The love is here*

572 *In me*
573 *(Laura D)*

574 When LGBTQIA+ people love their families, but their religious beliefs dictate that they
575 are sinners, a bond is broken. Unfortunately, family love of their religion means that they can 'use
576 religion to justify supporting imperialism, militarism, sexism, racism, and homophobia. They deny
577 the unifying message of love that is at the heart of every major religious tradition' (hooks, 2001,
578 p. 73). This situation puts many LGBTQIA+ people in a position where they must break a violent
579 bond, which can feel like snapping themselves (Ahmed, 2017). As LGBTQIA+ people we found
580 a shared sense of comradery and personhood between one another and hope that when the bond

581 must be snapped with friends, family, colleagues and others who are not accepting of our lives,
582 that our ‘chosen family’ might fill our lives with love and acceptance in their place. Dylan shares
583 through the visual of a hand poem and accompanying poem in figure 4. *[Figure 4 near here]*

584 We have a human need to belong, and certain individuals (Laura M in this instance) became
585 an ally; she was a person considered safe and trustworthy. Finding such people are of vital
586 importance on one’s journey to ‘coming out’, especially in the PE and the wider educational space
587 we embody and represent. Genuine allyship, demonstrating to LGBTQIA+ persons that they are
588 safe and loved, is one way that teachers can challenge the pervasive heteronormativity that exists
589 within PE spaces, and alleviate some of the trauma experienced by their students and colleagues.

590 Through this collaborative feminist scholarship, we have stood as feminists in a community of
591 writers, in itself, that is an act of love (hooks, 2010). We created an army, which involved loving
592 each other as a form of personhood but also serving and nurturing one another’s souls throughout
593 the collaboration (hooks, 2001). In political solidarity, our voices came together and allowed us to
594 rise (Ahmed, 2017). We became empowered the more we dialogued, wrote, and reflected. It is
595 only through such activist work a PE revolution may come! As educators, we concluded by
596 agreeing that love is rarely discussed in our PE spaces by teachers but is an incredibly powerful
597 tool in creating a more socially just society and curriculum for our students. Through living
598 consciously, being critical of our work and ourselves. As Luguetti et al. (2019) explain, loving
599 educators should draw upon dialogue and challenge inequities repeatedly utilising solidarity, hope,
600 and imagination. In an attempt to a loving pedagogical approach, we must abandon oppressive
601 practices in education (Lynch et al., 2022) and (re)consider that love is the ultimate goal of a
602 liberatory education (Freire, 2007), we must be patient and allow others to work towards love.

603 *To act on love means we must have felt, seen, touched love before*

604 *Love is an act*
605 *It runs deeper than emotion*
606 *When we remember everyone loves differently*
607 *We will open ourselves up to more loving*
608 *(Shrehan)*

609 **The future: Solidarity roll call**

610 We acknowledge that inquiries and acts towards social justice and ending oppression never
611 just end, hence why we do not have a traditional concluding paragraph. The pervasiveness of
612 heteronormativity in PE is not new, however, we hope that our findings expose the embodied
613 dangers that bodies such as ours, who deviate from the norm, experience. Despite this, it is not lost
614 on us that we have voluntarily positioned ourselves within the PE space, even when the potential
615 exists for our bodies to come up against multiple walls. It could be argued that this choice creates
616 a dangerous love; we chose what we love (PE), and the danger stems from the ‘isms’ (genderism,
617 heterosexism) that are embodied in this space through multiple ways. Trauma-informed work is
618 risky, painful, and tiresome work. It is cyclical in nature and at times seems like an endless
619 endeavour, yet it is work that we as a collaborative drew upon to communicate our anger,
620 frustration, and hopes for a safe, welcoming space. Our paper creation was messy and
621 unpredictable, but, through our messiness, our pain speaks; our poems allowed something new to
622 come out and from our work, we should rise empowered. The need for sharing is important and
623 part of our human needs (Lorde, 2017).

624 As members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and allies, we (the authors) aspire to act as
625 ‘trailblazers’ (Fink et al., 2012) within PE, to create better, safer spaces for those that follow. We
626 have attempted to do this through our individual and concerted efforts to challenge
627 heteronormative ideas and practices that have contributed to our pain and trauma, through the

628 sharing of our identities and experiences, and indeed, through our very existence. Individuals such
629 as Dylan who, despite their own trauma, remain passionate about PE and wish to enter this space
630 as an educator themselves in the future, ARE the future, and give us great hope. We welcome him,
631 and all of our LGBTQIA+ family, to join us in our efforts to move our profession forward. And
632 yet, we cannot do this work alone. The allyship of our non-queer colleagues is and will continue
633 to be essential in creating safe and welcoming spaces for present and future LGBTQIA+ teachers
634 and students within PE. There is no place for apathy. We need national organisations to ‘call out’
635 our profession; to lead the agenda by designing progressive policies with early-career-entrant
636 voices that leave no room for outdated (and unsafe) alternatives. We need school administrators,
637 teacher educators, and researchers to provide practical support and strategies for teachers so that
638 they are able to implement these successfully in their individual contexts. And finally, we need
639 teachers who are willing to embrace these ideas and create spaces for their students that are
640 purposefully and intentionally loving, celebratory, and identity-affirming.

641 With this in mind, we ask you to consider, whether love could be the antidote? We LOVE
642 our subject PE; we demonstrate love through our comradeship, and we have seen allyship come from
643 a place of love. We hope that this paper provides ideas, encourages collaborative research, and
644 stimulates creativity in manuscript creation. We have identified and tried to acknowledge just some
645 of the problems – take this as an invite to join us in solidarity, and love.

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Shre	Dylan	Laura D	Laura M READING ALL 3 - HOW COMPLICIT I HAVE BEEN AS TEACHER AND AS STUDENT - PART OF THE PROBLEM? - NOT SURPRISING READING THE NARRATIVES
<p>Thoughts on reading Dylan's</p> <p>Vocabulary – language = knowledge – where do we get this knowledge from?</p> <p>Certain individuals become allies and people you can trust – finding those people are important in one's journey to 'coming out'</p> <p>Chest – bind - pain – scar – emotional – physical – trauma</p> <p>Attacks – verbal – mean – fear</p> <p>Let me choose my name</p> <p>Poem – choice – so powerful > life or death = being out or closing out.</p>	<p>Reflection after doing own narrative/writing it down</p> <p>I found that it took a lot of deep thought to write about my more negative experiences; I would always try and move on as quick as possible and forget they happened but as much as I suppressed the memories the emotions they caused have always been present.</p> <p>Writing this has allowed me to really reflect on how much I have already been through as a young LGBTQIA person and how much more is yet to come.</p> <p>There is always a mixture of fear and optimism.</p> <p>SUPPRESSION – CATHERTIC – POEM ALLOWED A RELEASE OF EMOTIONAL TURMOIL CARRIED</p>	<p>Thoughts on reading Dylan's</p> <p>The gendering of 'girls' sports and 'boys' sports – and the associated fears/ stereotyping for students and impact in terms of their activity choices.</p> <p>'Potential backlash' - such a common fear for LGBTQIA community – fear plays such a large role in our choices to be out in different settings, and how we live our lives.</p> <p>I realise how much I lack knowledge of the trans experience, use of binders, etc. and the associated pain, risk.</p> <p>I found the term 'gender euphoria' so interesting. I'm embarrassed to say I hadn't heard of it before. Would love to explore that more – especially in terms of how PE/ sports provides that for you (when in an accepting space).</p> <p>The poem was <u>really powerful</u>, and the last two lines especially. I always think the concept of 'choice' is an interesting</p>	<p>Thoughts on reading Dylan's</p> <p>Pain</p> <p>*Neoliberalism – self policing, freedom to choose a façade?</p> <p>The human need to belong. How can we create a community within PE as a collective?</p> <p>Constriction (of identity) produces fiction. There also the physical constriction (using a binder).</p> <p>*Socialisation</p> <p>I have been complicit in oppression - this made me think of one of my friends who came out as gay and the responses of other students and then my</p>

Figure 1. Excerpt of individual reflections on narratives/poems



Figure 2. The brick wall allegory

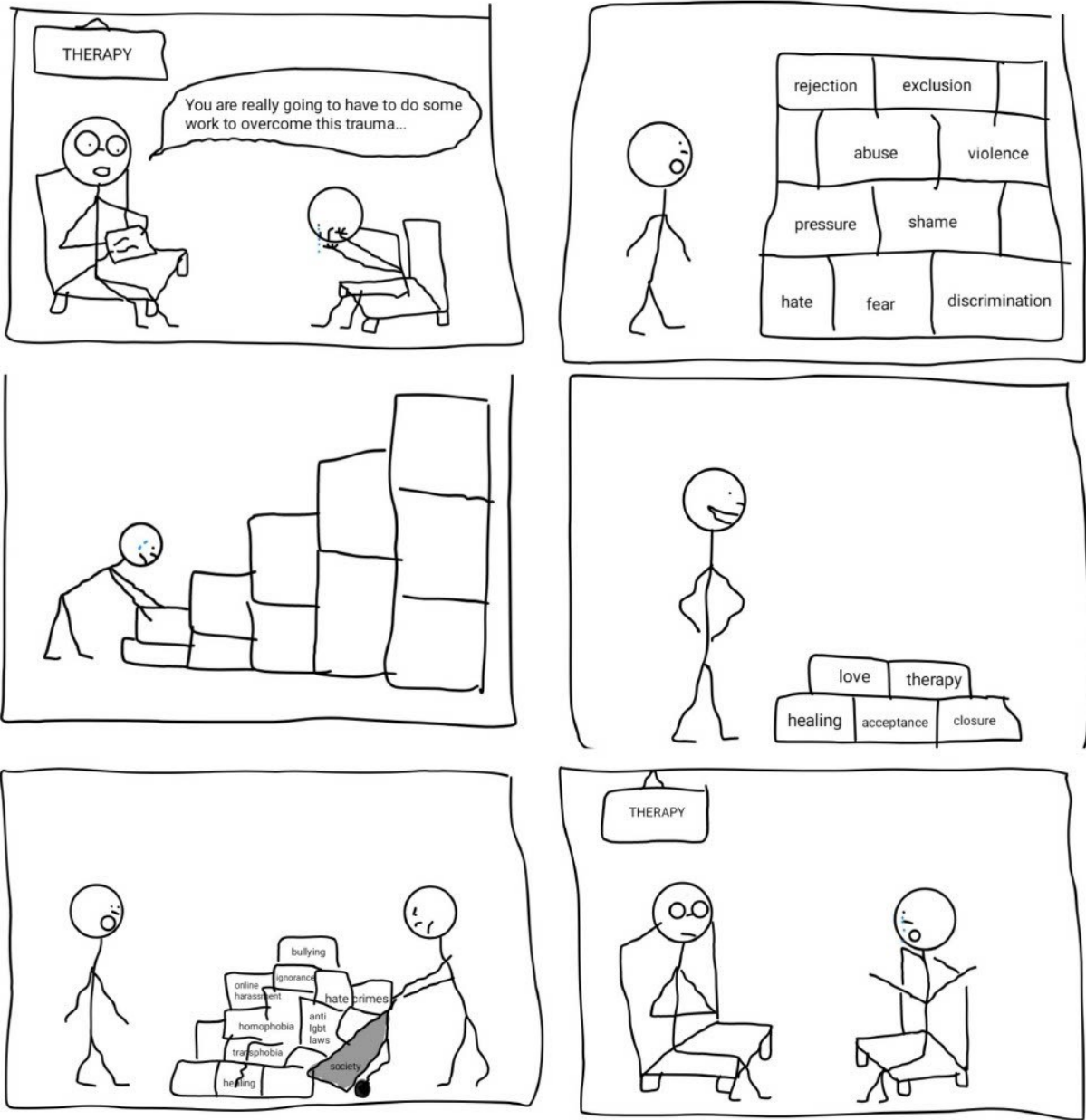


Figure 3. The never-ending brick wall visual

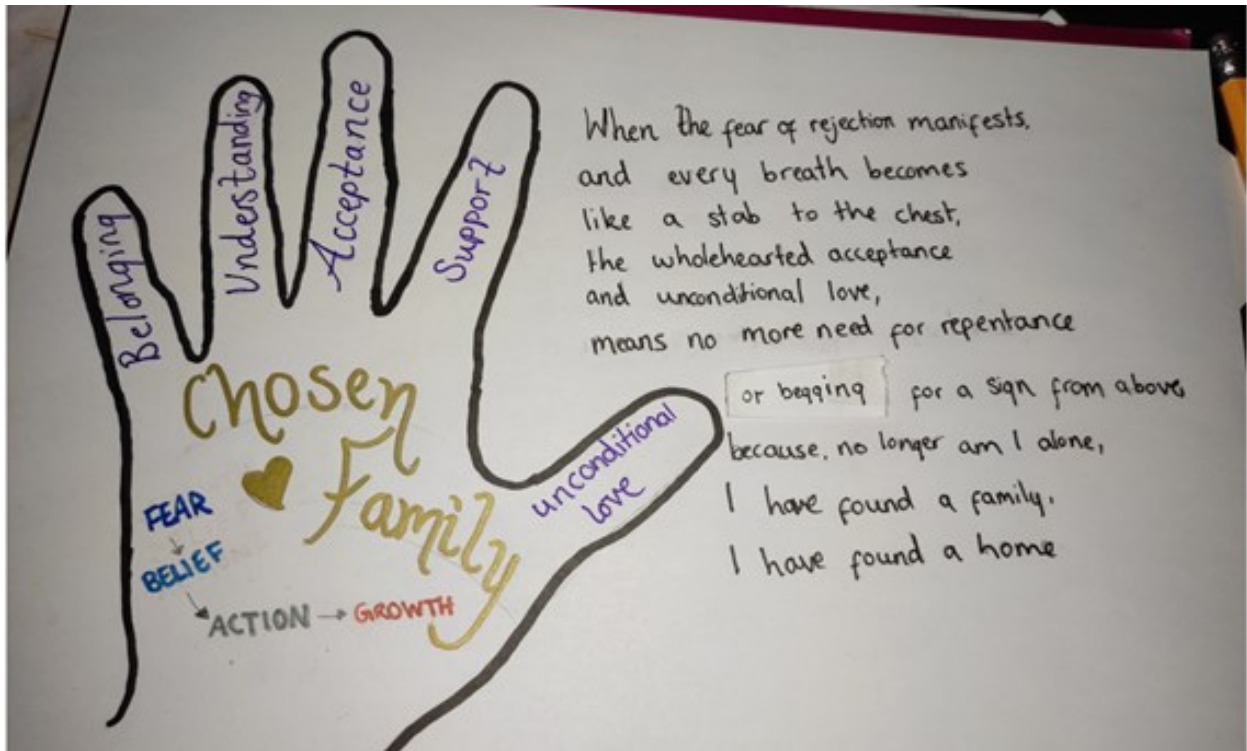


Figure 4. Our chosen family by Dylan