

LGBTQ+ networks as a space for **hope & resistance.**

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**what communities and
networks are you part of?**



context

“the field is dominated by stories that are complex, nuanced and often ‘unhappy’ in that they reveal systematic normativity and ongoing challenges around negotiating private and professional lives and making decisions around coming out or disclosing identities at work”

Gray et al., 2026, p. 11

joyful narratives of a refusal to align to hetero-cis-normativity

Gray et al., 2026

case studies of LGBTQ+ teacher resilience

Llywellyn, 2024

powerful visibility through queer capital

Brett, 2024

LGBTQ+ teachers often make exceptional leader

Lee, 2019

**in your experience, what
are the hopeful
narratives?**

minority stress

distal stressors

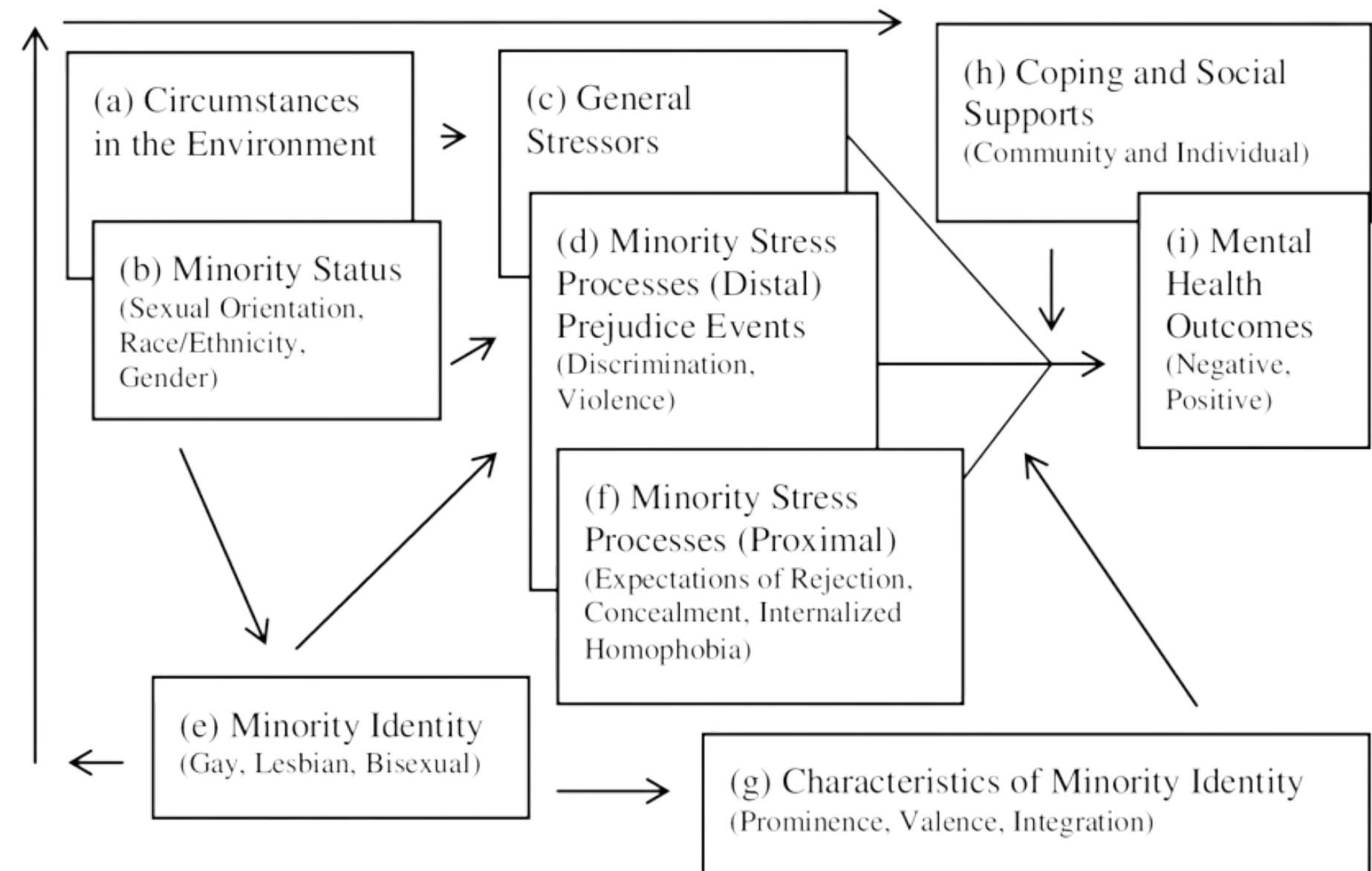
external experiences of prejudice and discrimination

- homophobia, transphobia, harassment
- institutional exclusion
- policy and legislative inequality
- workplace/school discrimination

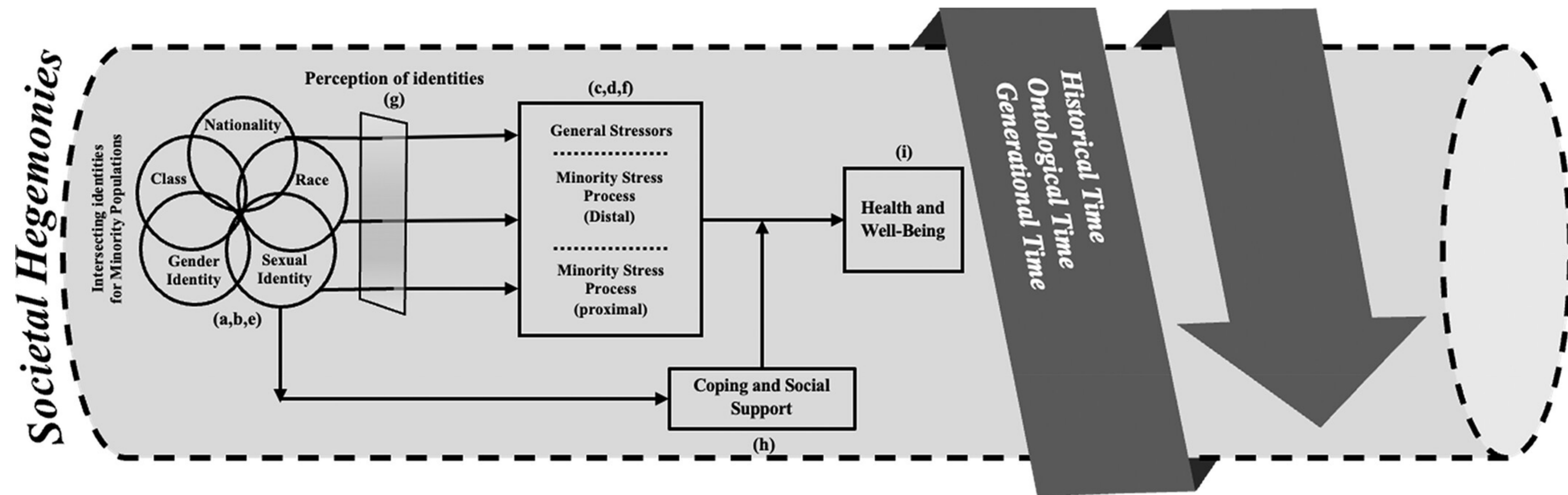
proximal stressors

internal and anticipatory stress processes

- concealment of identity
- fear of rejection
- hypervigilance
- internalised stigma and shame



minority stress



reframing

minority stress now increasingly understood as a **social and political issue** rather than an **individual pathology**

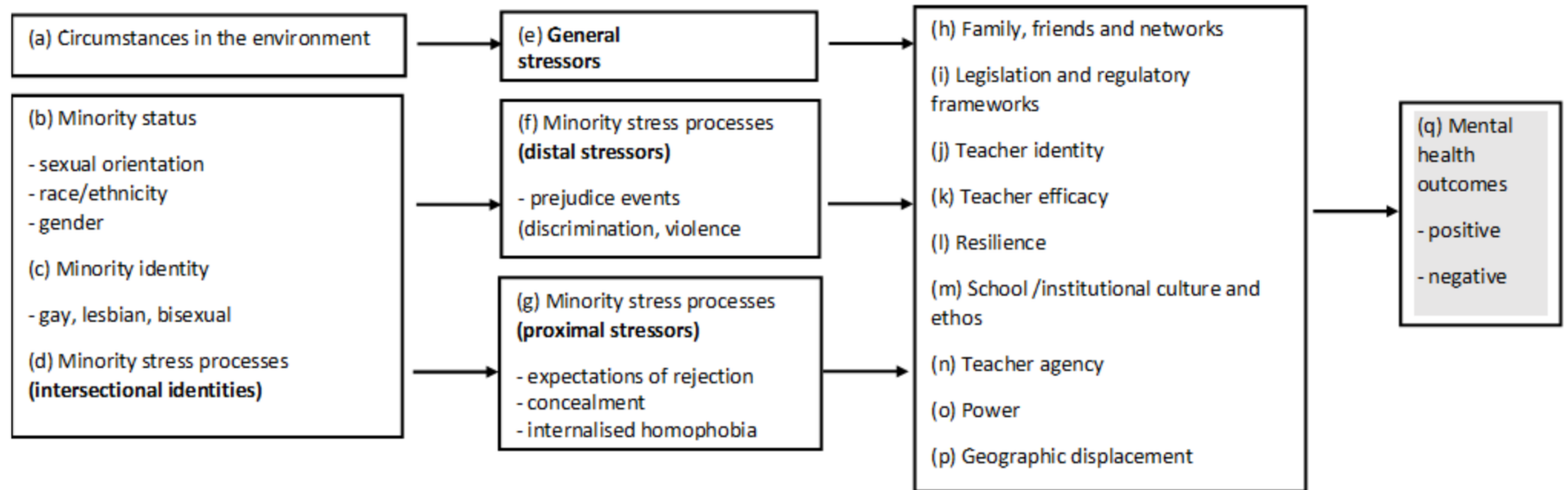
- agency
- resistance
- community
- identity affirmation
- collective care

ameliorating / protective factors

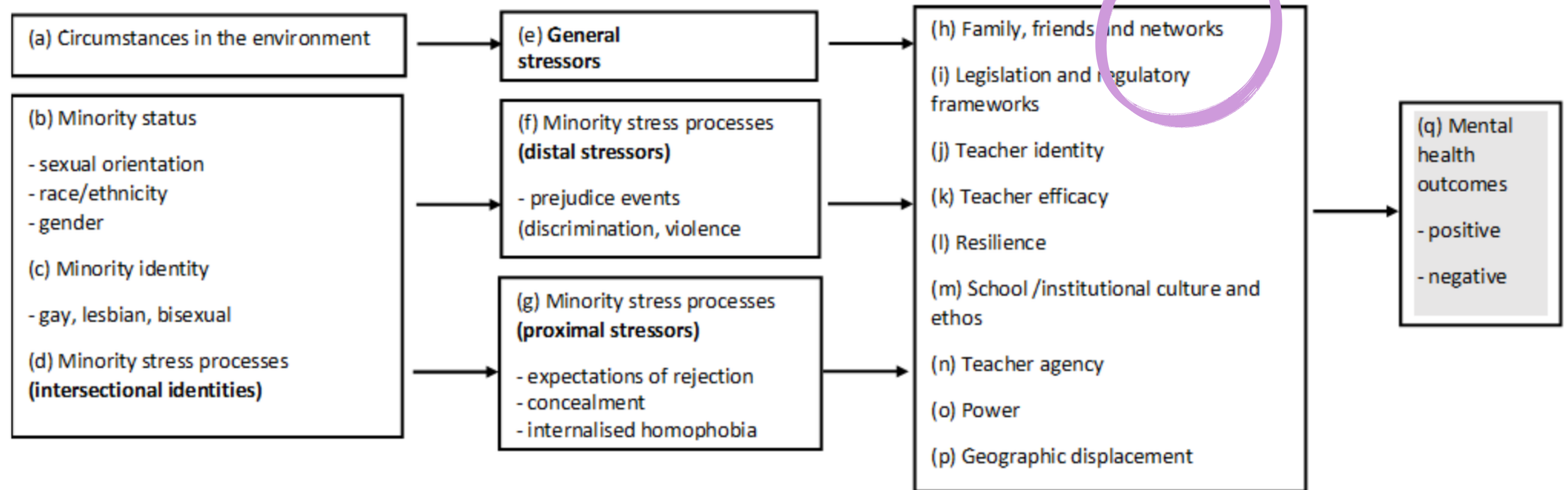
protective factors can buffer or reduce the impact of minority stress

- affirming institutional cultures
 - representation and visibility
 - access to supportive leadership
 - psychological safety
 - community and belonging
-

minority stress



minority stress





networks

networks as an **ameliorating / protective factor**

informal networks

school networks

MAT networks

union networks

community networks

intrapersonal support

interpersonal support

professional support

wider social support



intrapersonal support

Increased Self-Esteem
Improved Wellbeing
Greater Understand of Self
Personal Development

interpersonal support

Visibility & Representation
Community & Connection
Social Support
A Place to Share Concerns

professional support

Individual & Collective Voice
Advocate for Workplace Change
Professional Development
Leadership Development

wider social support

Empathy & Understanding
Shifting Overton Window
Mimetic Isomorphism

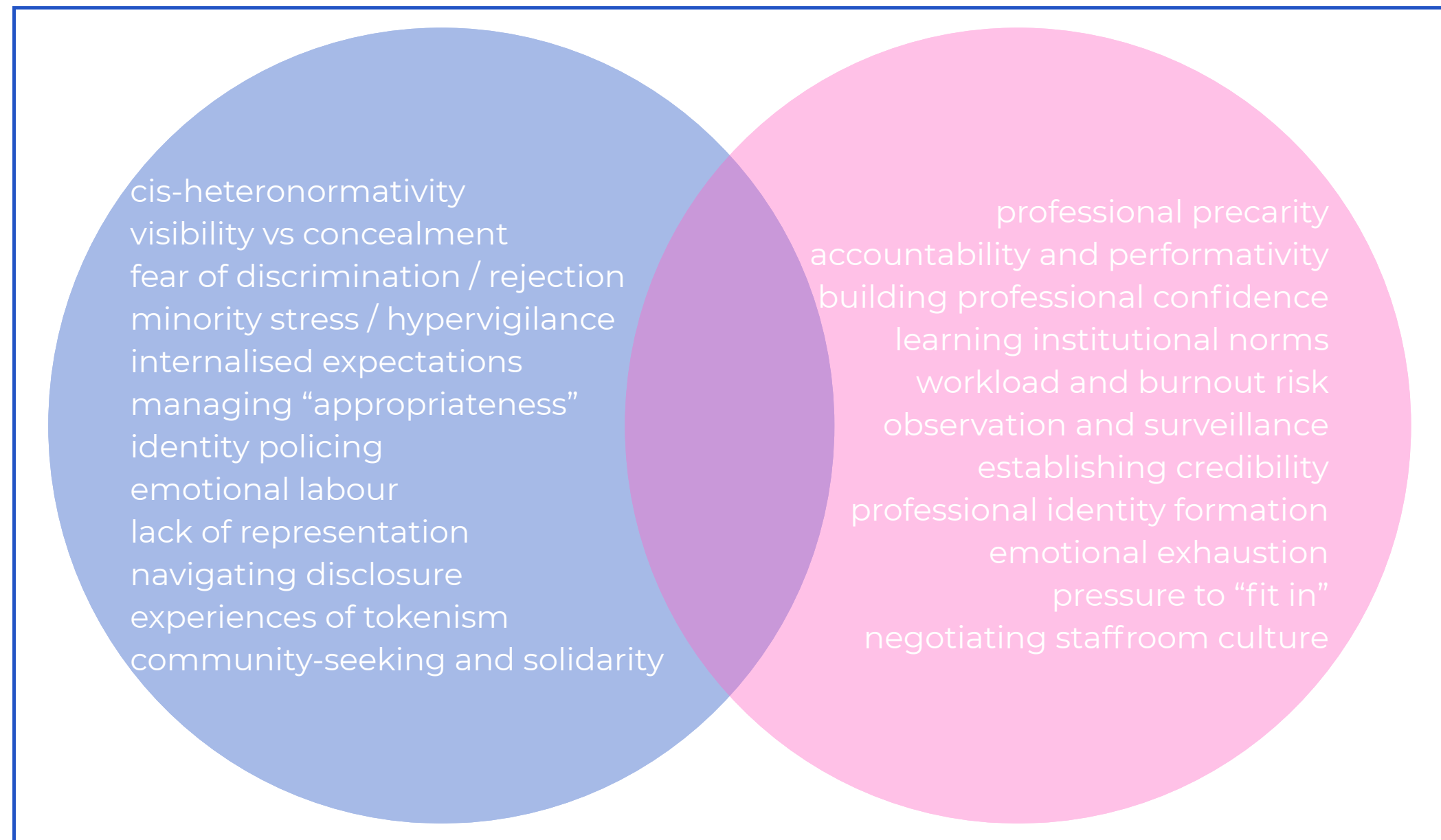
how have networks impacted your experience?

what networks have you been involved with?

how have those networks impacted your professional experience?

have they acted as a ameliorating factor for any minoirty stress you experience?

Queer & ECT



- neoliberal performativity and accountability cultures
- surveillance and professional scrutiny/regulations
- social and political discourses around gender and sexuality

central question:

how do queer early-career teachers construct and navigate their intersectional identity?

QECT experiences

QECT intersection

- negotiating authenticity and safety
- managing identity within “professional” expectations
- hypervisibility and invisibility simultaneously
- self-monitoring language, behaviour, relationships
- feeling pressure to be “acceptable”
- identity performance
- increased emotional labour
- need for validation and support
- resistance through community and connection

methodology

- qualitative narrative inquiry (n=3)
- written narratives and interviews
- conversations centred lived experience, storytelling, and meaning-making

key findings

themes	code examples
barriers	other people’s perceptions lack of visibility/representation socio-political context of educational spaces shame anticipated trauma discrimination (direct/indirect)
community	family / friends / partners queer community school (pupils, parents, colleagues) teacher training (peers, academic staff)
freedom	acceptance visibility authentic self

learning from narratives

many of the barriers are structural, not psychological

barriers linked to institutional norms - expectations of “professionalism” - visibility and safety - fear of judgement or scrutiny

- *this suggests QECTs are navigating systems of regulation rather than confidence issues.*

community is deeply significant

communities can offer validation, solidarity, and safety - allies can create spaces of affirmation - institutional cultures can reinforce silence and self-monitoring

- *community therefore functions as both a protective factor and a site where norms and expectations are reproduced.*

freedom is relational and conditional

freedom often depends on institutional context, leadership and colleagues, perceived safety, and access to supportive networks

- *QECTs are continually negotiating authenticity, visibility, legitimacy, and survival.*

emerging research...

these findings raise new questions:

- how do queer early-career teachers come to understand and narrate their **professional identity over time**?
- what role do **networks** and **institutional cultures** play in shaping whether queer professional life feels possible, sustainable, or safe for QECTs?



reflections & questions

missing & marginalised voices

Exploring LGBTQ+ teachers experiences of voice, silence, and their relationship with LGBTQ+ professional networks.



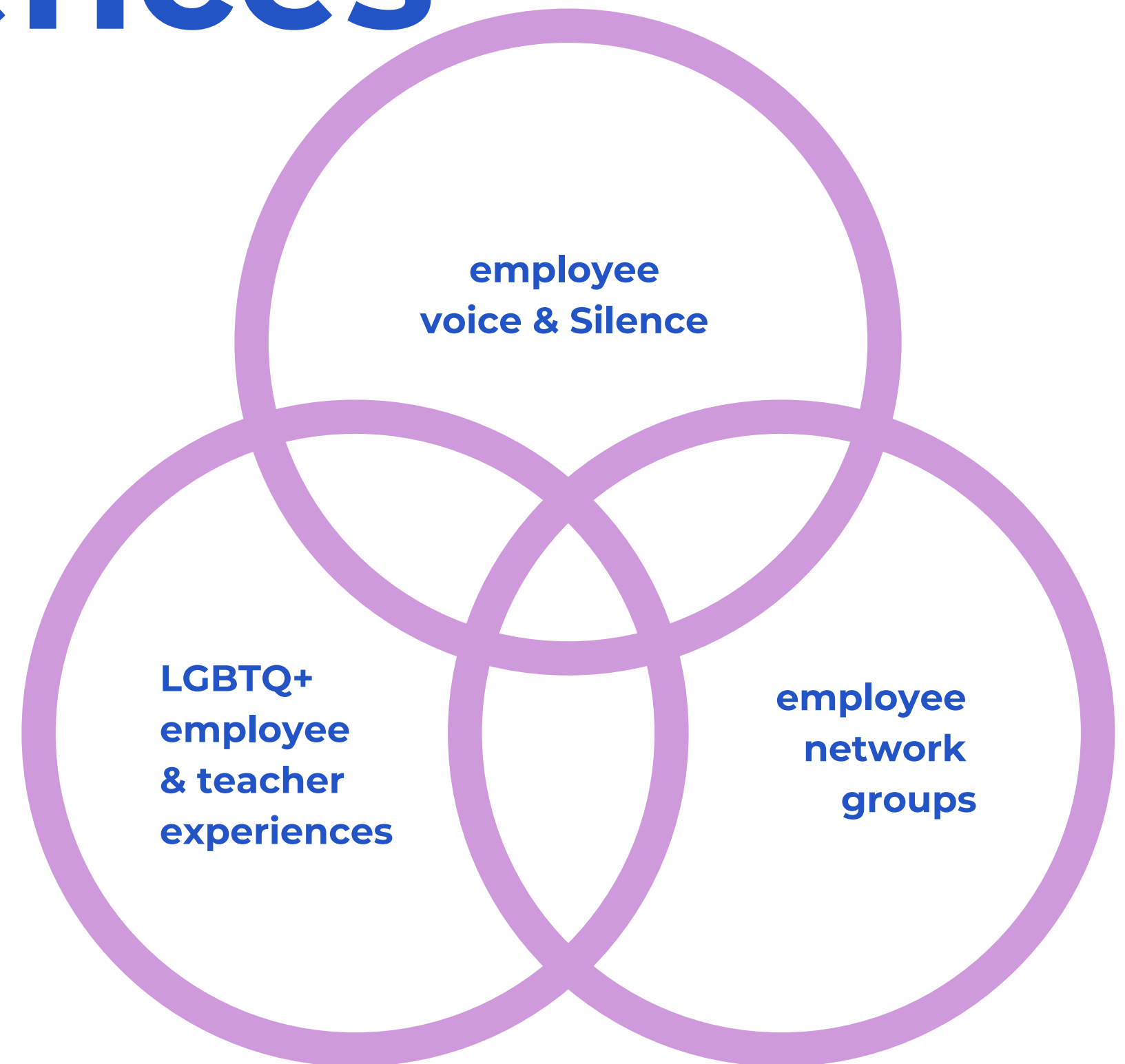
University of
Strathclyde
Business
School

existing literature



teacher experiences

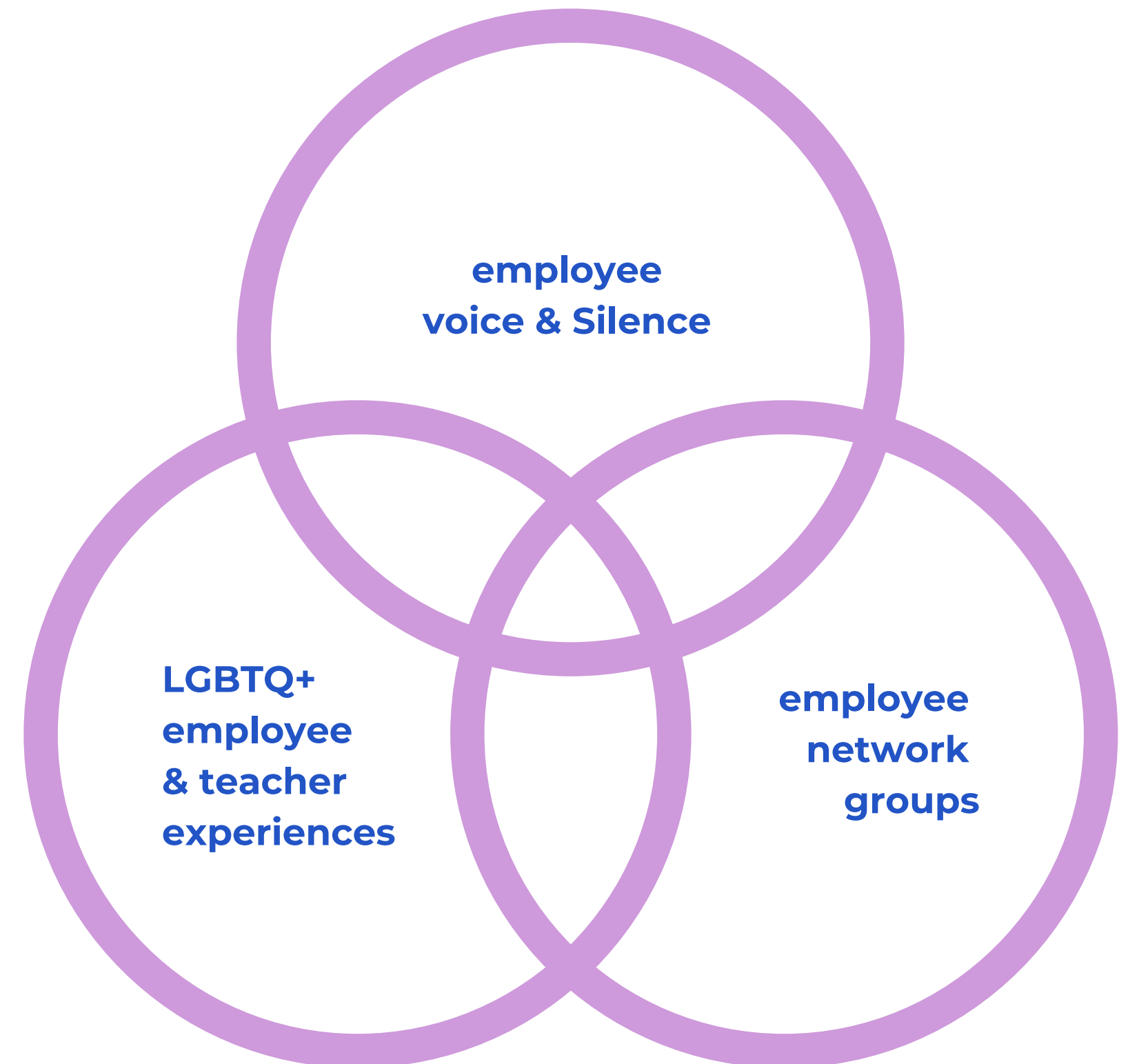
- although it is important not to take a wholly deficit approach to the experiences of LGBTQ+ educators
(Brett, 2024; Lee, 2019)
- much of the evidence demonstrates discriminatory experiences
(Gray *et al.*, 2026)
- within a hetero-cis-normative context
(Farrell *et al.*, 2025; Fox *et al.*, 2025)
- reflecting broader research into LGBTQ+ employee experiences
(Bell *et al.*, 2011; Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Ragins, 2004)
- such experiences of minority stress, although not explicitly named, may impact speech and create silence
(Farrell *et al.*, 2025; Johnson, 2024; Lee, 2019)



voice & silence

“the various formal mechanisms, or informal behaviours, both direct and indirect, through which employees are able to engage in two-way constructive communication (often up the organisational hierarchy) in the hope of enacting positive change in the workplace”

- voice is beneficial for employers, employees, and organisations broadly
(Morrison, 2014; Detert *et al.*, 2013; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2014)
- but it requires opportunity, trust and psychological safety
(Clarke & Manwaring 2011; Liang *et al.*, 2012)
- silence negatively impacts employees and employers
(Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Perlow & Williams, 2003)
- much of the voice literature assumes a homogenous workforce and does not take into account diversity
(Syed, 2014)



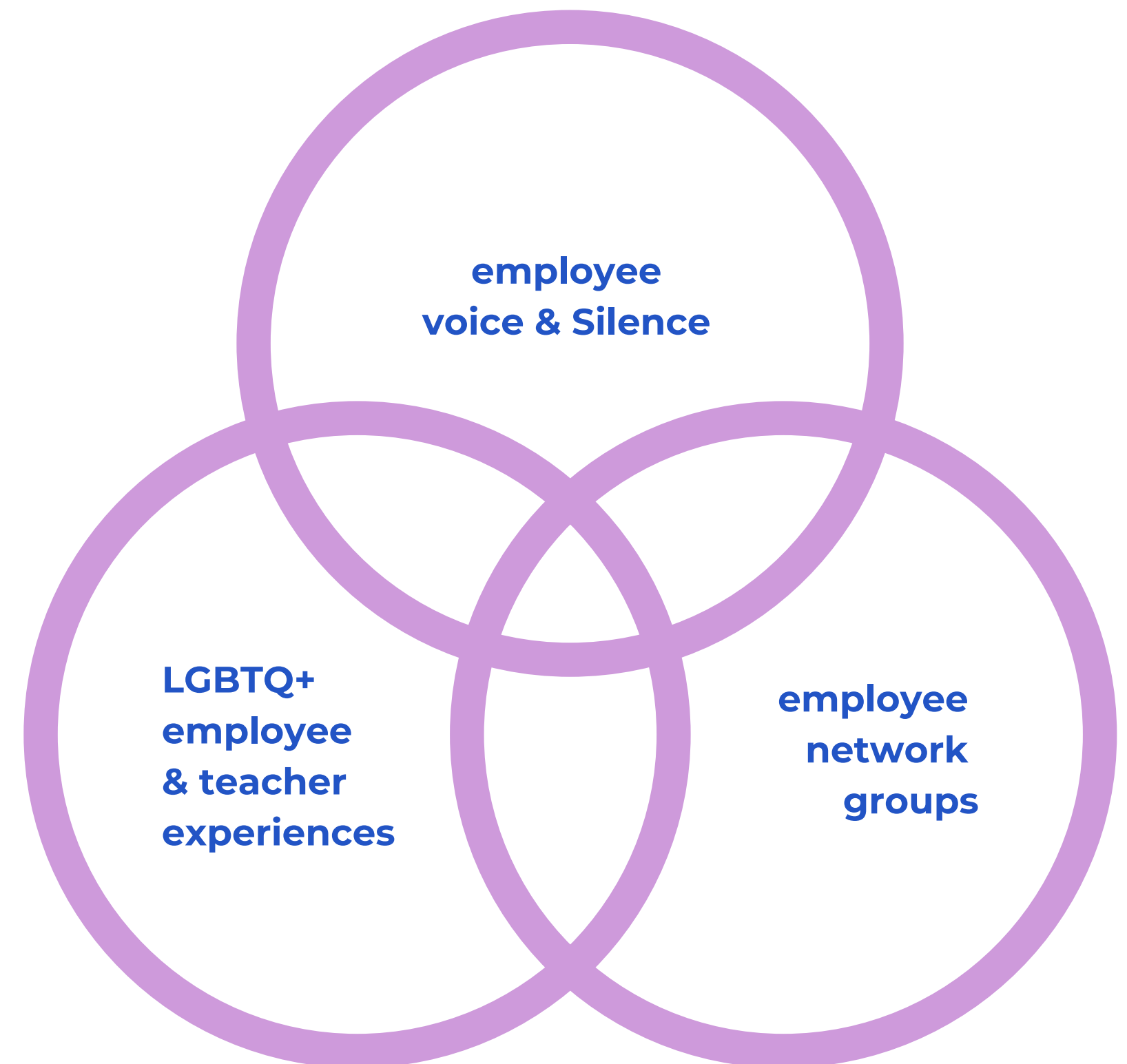
networks

- employee networks are seen as a more recent 'wave' of employee voice initiatives
(Marchington et al., 1993; McFadden & Crawley-Henry, 2017)

- originating as affinity groups based on ethnicity
(Douglas, 2008; Githens & Aragon, 2009)

“LGBTQ+ employees who work in the same workplace or profession coming together formally or semi-formally, often on a voluntary basis, to work towards improving their workplace or profession for LGBTQ+ people.”

- some studies have demonstrated that such groups support minority group employees, and can act as a mechanism for employee voice
(Einarsdottir et al., 2020; McFadden & Crawley-Henry, 2017)



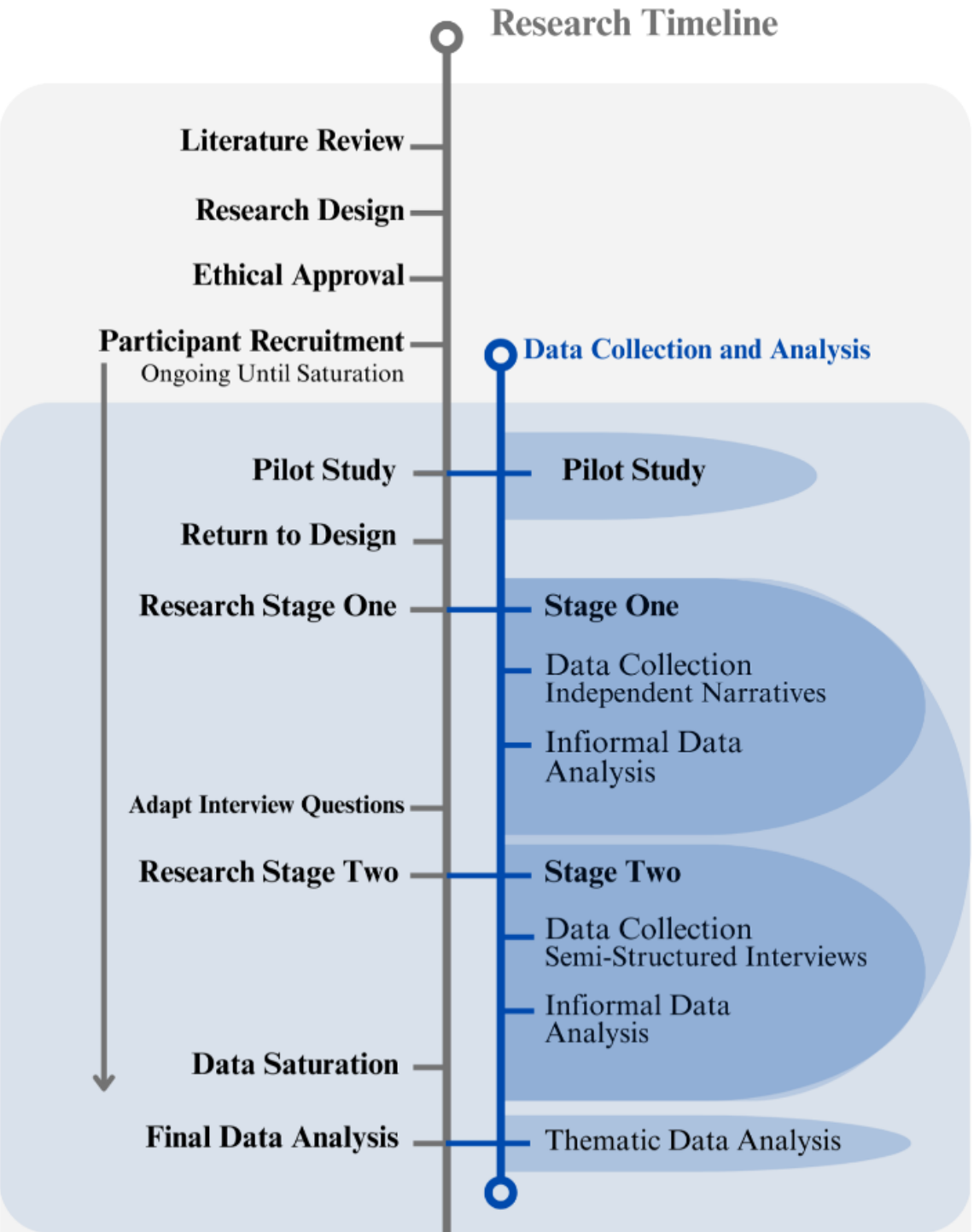
research questions

overarching research question

what are LGBTQ+ teachers' perceptions and experiences of voice and silence, and what role may involvement in an LGBTQ+ employee network play in shaping them?

specific research questions

- 1.how do LGBTQ+ teachers perceive and experience employee voice and silence in their professional lives?
- 2. how do LGBTQ+ teachers perceive and experience their involvement in LGBTQ+ employee networks?
- 3. how do LGBTQ+ teachers perceive the role involvement in an LGBTQ+ employee networks may play in shaping their experiences of employee voice and silence?
- 4. how does a teachers' SOGI or broader intersectional identity shape their perceptions and experiences of voice, silence, and involvement with employee networks?



field work

participants

32 participants who have completed both stages of data collection,
40 who have completed stage 1 and are expected to complete both

England, Scotland, Wales, & Northern Ireland

primary and secondary

variety of career experience

variety of network experience

representation of disability and neurodivergence

Lesbian	7
Gay	14
Bisexual &/or Pansexual	4
Queer / +	9
Cisgender Man	9
Cisgender Women	10
Transgender Man	2
Transgender Women	3
Non-Binary	3
Gender Queer	5
White	27
Global Majority	3
Mixed Ethnicity/Heritage	2

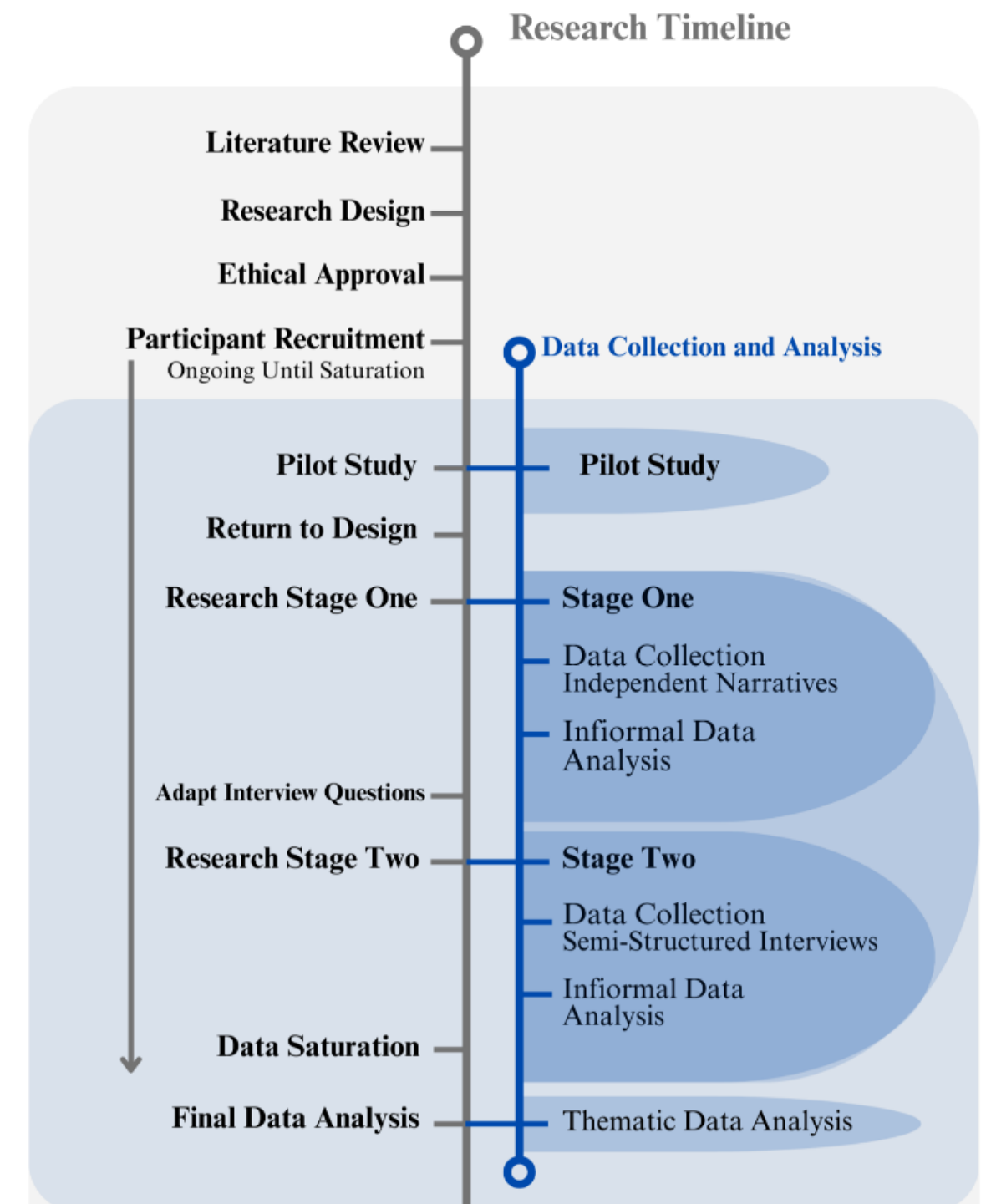
preliminary findings

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reflections & questions

**how can we contribute to
developing meaningful
networks?**



[Pride & Progress](#) [Podcast](#) [Platform](#) [Community](#) **[LGBTQ+ Research Network](#)** [Our Book](#) [Contact](#) 



LGBTQ+ Research Network

A safe space for LGBTQ+ researchers and academics.

The LGBTQ+ Research Network was formed in 2023 as a safe space for LGBTQ+ researchers and academics, or those researching LGBTQ+ communities, to find support, connection, and community. The network now has over 250 members, all conducting amazing LGBTQ+ research both in the UK and around the world.

The group meet regularly on Teams to share current ideas, thinking and research, and is a relaxed and informal way to get to know other researchers.

 Read this page to find out more about the LGBTQ+ Research Network, and how to get involved.

**LGBTQ+ Research Network
Read our Book**

**LGBTQ+ Research Network
Research Showcase**

**LGBTQ+ Research Network**



our message of hope

networks, community, and connection between LGBTQ+ educators can help affirm identity, overcome barriers like isolation, and empower voice

thank you.

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