

**Unveiling inner emotions: Exploring the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity
and mental health in poetry**

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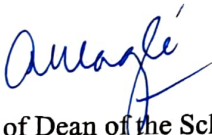
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ABBREVIATIONS USED

Entity	Abbreviation
Data analysis	DA
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others	LGBTQ+

ABSTRACT

This dissertation “Unveiling inner emotions: exploring the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health in poetry” delves into the profound and symbiotic connection between LGBTQ+ identity and mental health as portrayed in poetry. By immersing into the emotive realm of poetic expression, this study uncovers the internal landscapes of individuals navigating their sexual and gender identities alongside mental health struggles. The research explores how poetry serves as a poignant medium for LGBTQ+ individuals to articulate their innermost emotions about identity, gender dysphoria, trauma, alienation and also confront societal stigmas. Through an in-depth examination of a diverse selection of poems, this study aims to shed light on the intricate intersections between LGBTQ+ identity and their mental well-being. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between identity, mental health, and creative expression, offering insights that may inform therapeutic interventions through poetry and promote greater inclusivity, acceptance within society and advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights.

Keywords: LGBTQ+ identity, mental health, poetry, intersection, dysphoria, inclusivity

Chapter 1: LGBTQ literature and intersection

1.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, the multifaceted landscape of LGBTQ+ literature, its thematic concerns, literary innovations, and cultural impact will be explored. Through a comprehensive analysis of key texts and critical frameworks, the aim is to illuminate the ways in which LGBTQ+ literature both reflects and shapes the world around us, offering insights into the complexities of human experience and the ongoing struggle for equality and acceptance. By examining the evolving landscape of LGBTQ+ literature, tracing its historical development, analysing its thematic concerns, and exploring its cultural impact. Through close readings of key texts, engagement with critical theory, and consideration of broader socio-political contexts, the aim is to contribute to a deeper understanding of LGBTQ+ literature's role in shaping our perceptions of identity, community, and belonging in the modern world.

This research will specifically deal with poetry and the stories which are artistically infused in it. It would explore the Identity and mental health of the LGBTQ+ individual through the intersectional theory, also understanding how a factor like sexuality could alter one's personality from the manner of response of the society and have a great impact on one's mental health. A community that faces discrimination and also marginalised have a literature of their own that seeks to be read, heard and recognised. Those deprived voices in real life, have penned down their deepest emotions wish yearn to be appreciated and understood. Therefore, this study would strive to unveil and understand the inner emotions of these poets and their community. Also, this research

aspires to foster a deeper understanding of the mental state of the people of the LGBTQ+ community as showcased by them in their poetry

1.1.1 Introducing LGBTQ+ Literature

Over the past few decades, LGBTQ+ literature has emerged as a vibrant and essential part of the literary landscape, offering a rich tapestry of stories, voices, and experiences that challenge societal norms, confront stereotypes, and celebrate diverse identities. At its core, LGBTQ+ literature encompasses works created by and about individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other non-binary or non-conforming identities. While the roots of LGBTQ+ literature can be traced back through history, its modern incarnation gained prominence during the late 20th century with the rise of the gay rights movement and increased visibility of LGBTQ+ communities.

LGBTQ+ literature marks a significant intersection of literary exploration and social advocacy. One of the fundamental aspects of LGBTQ+ literature is its role in providing representation and validation to individuals whose identities have historically been marginalised or silenced. Through literature, LGBTQ+ authors have the opportunity to share their lived experiences, struggles, joys, and triumphs, offering readers a window into diverse perspectives and fostering empathy and understanding. Moreover, LGBTQ+ literature serves as a platform for exploring themes of identity, love, desire, family, and community in nuanced and multifaceted ways. These works not only reflect the complexities of LGBTQ+ lives but also challenge readers to interrogate their own beliefs and assumptions about gender and sexuality.

In addition to its cultural significance, LGBTQ+ literature holds immense academic value, inviting critical analysis and interpretation from various disciplines such as literary studies, gender studies, queer theory, and sociology. Scholars have examined how LGBTQ+ texts subvert literary conventions, deconstruct dominant narratives, and contribute to broader discussions surrounding representation, power dynamics, and social change. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ literature is not confined to a single genre or style but encompasses a diverse array of literary forms, including novels, poetry, plays, memoirs, graphic novels, and more. This diversity reflects the multifaceted nature of LGBTQ+ experiences and underscores the importance of recognizing the intersections of identity, race, class, and culture within LGBTQ+ communities. As the field of LGBTQ+ literature continues to evolve, it remains a dynamic and ever-expanding domain, shaped by ongoing social, political, and cultural shifts. By engaging with LGBTQ+ literature, readers are not only exposed to new perspectives and voices but also contribute to a broader dialogue on inclusion, representation, and social justice.

Throughout history, LGBTQ+ individuals have faced systemic discrimination, persecution, and invisibility, leading many to seek refuge and expression through literature. From the clandestine writings of queer authors in earlier centuries to the bold declarations of identity in contemporary works, LGBTQ+ literature has continually pushed boundaries, expanded horizons, and redefined what it means to be seen and heard. In exploring the historical roots of LGBTQ+ literature, it's crucial to acknowledge the subversive nature of early queer texts, which often existed on the margins of mainstream society. Writers such as Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, and Radclyffe Hall challenged

prevailing norms of gender and sexuality, laying the groundwork for future generations of LGBTQ+ authors to explore and assert their identities more openly.

The emergence of LGBTQ+ literature as a distinct genre gained momentum during the latter half of the 20th century, coinciding with pivotal moments in the gay rights movement and the broader struggle for LGBTQ+ rights. Works like James Baldwin's "Giovanni's Room," Audre Lorde's "Zami: A New Spelling of My Name," and Armistead Maupin's "Tales of the City" not only captured the zeitgeist of their respective eras but also paved the way for a more inclusive and diverse literary landscape. In recent years, LGBTQ+ literature has witnessed a proliferation of voices and perspectives, reflecting the growing visibility and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in society. Authors from marginalised communities, including queer people of colour, transgender individuals, and non-binary writers, have brought their unique experiences to the forefront, challenging the homogeneity of mainstream literary canon and enriching the tapestry of LGBTQ+ storytelling.

Furthermore, the digital age has democratised access to LGBTQ+ literature, with online platforms, digital publishing, and social media providing new avenues for queer writers to connect with audiences and share their work. This democratisation has fostered a vibrant online literary community, where writers and readers alike can engage in dialogue, exchange ideas, and celebrate LGBTQ+ creativity in all its forms. In addition to its cultural and artistic significance, LGBTQ+ literature continues to play a crucial role in education and advocacy, serving as a tool for raising awareness, challenging prejudice, and promoting social change. From LGBTQ+ youth seeking representation in young

adult fiction to activists using literature as a means of resistance and resilience, the power of storytelling to shape hearts and minds cannot be overstated.

1.1.2 Overview of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health

Recognizing the intricate relationship between LGBTQ+ identity and mental health is at the base of understanding the subtlety of the links contemplated between the LGBTQ+ poetry and the mental health. First of all, for many people LGBTQ+ community, the struggle that these people face in being accepted and seen in the world, which is mostly focused on heteronormative standards, is at the basis of the LGBTQ+ identity. It is well known that the phenomena of discrimination and prejudice against LGBTQ+ community could be one of the major reasons of the psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and of course; low self-esteem. Theorizing the stress experienced by members of non-dominant groups as the twelfth of the snowballing spectre of social marginalization perpetuates which widely accepted explanation for the increased mental health rates within the LGBTQ+ community.

Furthermore, self-disclosure which is often being out as a sexual minority or gender identity can be a further stressful and anxious factor for LGBTQ+ population. The fear of rejection from the family, friends, association, and society by large, coupled with the possible cases of discrimination and violence can adversely affect one mentally. On the dimension of an intersection between LGBTQ+ identity and other marginalized identities such as race, ethnicity, and social class, one can give an example of people who can also face intersecting discrimination and oppression like people who are of different race, people who are without social status and so on.

Even in the face of such obstacles, the LGBTQ+ community is greatly resilient and succeeds in finding various ways to get through their emotional ups and downs. Poetry, being a type of the advocacy of art, presents itself as a powerful tool, through which LGBTQ+ people can express their own feelings, thoughts, and events which they are going through. The writers now exaggerate their position using poetry and narrate their stories against societal norms, and ultimately, give a voice to the people and a measure of unity among them. Through the presentation of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health issues in poetry, a reader might get the impression that LGBTQ+ community deserves respect regardless of the struggle that the people from this community have to go through. Poetry, thus, offers the underrepresented people a chance to be heard and perceived as socially relevant actors, which further entails the feeling of belonging and togetherness. Through reflecting their experiences in their poetry, the LGBTQ+ members can liberate, bring the end to psychical pain and find justice in the sharing of personal truths with the world.

Besides, the artistic work of LGBTQ+ poets, act as to frequently defeat struggles and fight against biased norms of sexual identity. Beyond the beat of regular rhythms, poetry creates a complex world of realities from the LGBTQ+ lives, that promotes empathy, understanding and feelings of togetherness and inclusion among the readers. Still, we cannot overlook the fact that the attitude of LGBTQ+ poetry can also be described in terms of the struggle and the resilience somewhat exclusively. Through LGBTQ+ poetry, love, desire, all-encompassing joy, and identity is depicted in diverse modalities, drawing the audience or the readers into a shared and intimate experience of the feelings or emotions being presented. Through the incorporation of a number of

LGBTQ+ voices experiences that are weaved into the poetry it creates a beautiful cloth of human connections and emotions. Through a deeper examination of the inner life of LGBTQ+ individuals via poetry, readers may attain novel perspectives regarding identity, mental health and the human existence in general. By adopting this approach, it is more possible to build a sense of empathy and sympathy for the community. From expression to actualities, people in the LGBTQ+ community build so they can also affirm their existence as well as celebrate their identities.

1.1.3 Outlining the significance of exploring this intersection

The intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health in poetry holds profound significance, offering a unique lens through which to examine and understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals. This convergence illuminates the complexities of identity, community, and resilience while highlighting the critical role that artistic expression plays in mental well-being.

Firstly, the intersection of LGBTQ+ poetry and mental health serves as a testament to the power of storytelling in fostering healing and resilience. Poetry, with its ability to distil complex emotions into evocative language, provides a platform for LGBTQ+ individuals to articulate their experiences, struggles, and triumphs. By crafting narratives through poetry, individuals reclaim agency over their stories and find validation in sharing their truths with others. This process of self-expression can be profoundly therapeutic, offering a means of catharsis and self-discovery. Moreover, LGBTQ+ poetry serves as a form of cultural documentation, preserving and celebrating the diverse experiences of the LGBTQ+ community. Through poetry, marginalised

voices are amplified, and stories that have historically been silenced or marginalised are brought to the forefront. This documentation is essential for fostering understanding and empathy, as it allows readers to glimpse into the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and recognize the shared humanity that binds us all together.

Additionally, the intersection of LGBTQ+ poetry and mental health challenges societal norms and fosters dialogue about the systemic barriers and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. Poetry often confronts issues of homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of oppression, shining a light on the social injustices that contribute to mental health disparities within the LGBTQ+ community. By bearing witness to these narratives, readers are compelled to reflect on their own biases and privilege, paving the way for greater social awareness and advocacy. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ poetry serves as a source of empowerment and affirmation for individuals navigating their identities and mental health journeys. Through poetry, LGBTQ+ individuals find validation and validation in seeing their experiences reflected back to them, affirming the validity of their identities and emotions. This sense of affirmation can be transformative, bolstering self-esteem and resilience in the face of adversity.

Finally, the intersection of LGBTQ+ poetry and mental health underscores the importance of inclusive and affirming spaces within the arts community. By centring the voices and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, poetry fosters a sense of belonging and community, where individuals can find support, camaraderie, and solidarity. These spaces play a vital role in combating social isolation and loneliness, which are prevalent risk factors for mental health issues within the LGBTQ+ community. The intersection of LGBTQ+ poetry and mental health is a rich and multifaceted terrain that offers profound insights

into the human experience. Through poetry, LGBTQ+ individuals find solace, empowerment, and validation in sharing their stories with the world.

1.1.4 Importance and Reasons for the Proposed Research

In the domain of human experience, mental health is an essential part of existence, for it guides and controls the working of the whole human system. Understanding the impact of the surroundings on one's emotions leads to knowing about a person's mental state. There are various advertisements, news articles, general posts on social media and other platforms which tell about the importance of having and contributing to maintaining one's mental health and encouraging people to grant a voice to their suppressed thoughts. This research will focus only on one complex aspect from the social sphere, which is, the LGBTQ+ Identity and find its connection to the influence on mental health as represented in different poems by different LGBTQ+ poets. For a much more unique and concise comprehension, there will be various examples used in order to analyse the portrayal of intersection of LGBTQ+ Identity and mental health in poetry, which will reveal the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community to find acceptance, fight against the shackles of injustice and prejudices and mainly to raise awareness and to build empathetic bond with the people.

1.1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The scope of this research is to closely apprehend and analyse the intricacies in the lives of individuals from the LGBTQ+ community. It would delve into knowing how these poets use poetry for reflection, self- expression, to address stigma or to show the

intersectionality of their LGBTQ+ identity with other aspects of identity like race, gender, class, religion. It would throw a light on the manner of reception of society to the idea of LGBTQ and its hard effect on the mind of a person. Besides, the relation between the LGBTQ+ identity and their mental health will be evaluated with the help of the intersectional theory. An in- depth textual analysis of various poems by different poets would provide an insight into the emotional and mental health aspects of LGBTQ+ individuals as well as their community.

Limitations of the research

- Due to the diverse composition of poetry, it is quite challenging to analyse many poems at a time.
- The interpretation of poetry could vary, hence that could introduce subjectivity in the research with regards to understanding emotions and the experiences.
- In some cases, the poems may focus solely on the life experience of the author or an individual.
- The poems may set limitations in generalising the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community since few poems would be analysed.
- Not everyone may have access to or be familiar with poetry, which could limit the reach and impact of the research findings.
- Since poetry is a qualitative form of expression it may be challenging to quantify and measure the specific impact of LGBTQ+ identity on mental health solely through the analysis of poems.

1.2 Research Question/ Problem

- How do LGBTQ+ poets convey their LGBTQ+ Identity and mental health experiences through various themes and techniques in their poetry?
- How does self-expression in poetry help spread awareness, foster empathy and promote acceptance in society?

1.3 Relevance and Necessity of the proposed Research

1.3.1 Necessity in the field of language and literature

This study is relevant in the realm of language and literature especially with the growing literature of the LGBTQ+ community that seeks to be acknowledged and recognised widely. It delves into the portrayal of LGBTQ+ experiences in poetry, offering insights into societal values, creative expression, and human emotions. It's necessary in an era of mental health awareness, it focuses on a marginalised group, contributing to their advocacy efforts. Additionally, it addresses the lack of comprehensive research on this intersection in poetry, filling a crucial knowledge gap in the field. In summary, this study fills in a significant gap and enriches the understanding of language, literature, and the human experience with respect to the intersection of LGBTQ+ Identity and their mental health.

1.3.2 Relevance to the society

The study's relevance to society lies in its potential to imbibe empathy, challenge stigmas, and raise awareness about the mental health challenges faced by

LGBTQ+ individuals. By representing these experiences through poetry, it promotes inclusivity, reduces discrimination, and contributes to promote mental health in an era where such issues are of growing concern. Through educational insights, the study helps society to better understand the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental well-being, among other factors like gender, race or religion, ultimately play a vital role in creating a more conscious, compassionate, and inclusive social fabric.

1.4 Objectives

- To investigate the ways in which societal attitudes, discrimination and acceptance as reflected in the poetry of LGBTQ+ poets impact their mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- To assess how poets use artistic expression to challenge and work to address problem related to sexuality and mental health within the LGBTQ+ community.
- To contribute valuable insights to LGBTQ+ advocacy efforts and mental health awareness by elucidating the role of poetry in shaping societal perceptions and supporting marginalised communities.
- To critically analyse and identify the prevalent themes, symbols, and literary techniques employed in poetry that depict the intersection of sexuality and mental health.
- To examine the potential positive and negative impacts of poetic expression on the mental wellbeing of LGBTQ+ individuals
- To provide recommendations for future research and interventions aimed at promoting positive mental health outcomes for LGBTQ+ individuals through poetry.

- To contribute to the field of LGBTQ+ literature that seeks to be recognised and acknowledged.

1.5 Literature Review

The research paper on “Poetry as a way to express emotions in mental health” by Jose Carlos Marques Carvalho, Paula Isabella Marujo Nunes da Fonseca and Claudia Mara de Melo Tavare (*Carvalho, et al. 2020*), describe poetry as a medium that allows “introspective thinking and building of self- identity”. This study was done to provide a deeper understanding of mental health for the nursing students through poetic expressions. Using a qualitative research methodology different emotion affecting mental health are revealed and analysed. Through further analysis poetry is shown as a creative process that contributes to the understanding of the complexities of mental health and human emotions. The study asserts that “new pedagogical approaches can help deal with emotional stressors linked to the novelty of mental health education”. This paper particularly deals with enhancing and strengthening the understanding of mental health through exploring different underlying connotations, experiences and themes from the poems.

“Capturing queer and trans lives and identities: The promise of research poems to inform stigma research” is a research paper by two authors namely, Sarah Jen and Meghan Paceley (*Jen and Paceley 2021*), stressing on the “effects of marginalisation”. By undertaking a qualitative method for their study, they have studied the identities of one’s personality. This paper is more focuses on relating the researcher’s experiences

with that of the other queer and trans members of the community through the use of few research poems and also providing a personal touch to it.

An article from a website called LGBTQ intersect, titled as “*Intersectionality*”. It as well as describes the influence of intersectionality on different aspects of a human life. It provides an insight into the repressed lives of people coming from different walks of life through the lens of intersectionality.

An article titled, “I See Myself Strong: A Description of an Expressive Poetic Method to Amplify Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer Indigenous Youth Experiences in a culture-Centred HIV Prevention Curriculum” , written by Ramona Beltran, Antonio Rose- Garriga Alvarez and Angela R. Fernandez (*Beltran et al, 2023*) focus on the emergence of expressive poetics as an art-based research method further underscores the potential for a multi-sensory and rational analytical process. In the context of this study, the writers adapt and demonstrate the application of expressive poetics to explore the experiences of marginalised youth within the 2SLGBTQ indigenous community participating in a culture-centred HIV prevention curriculum.

In another article by, Pal Bjorby in “Rhetoric Versus ‘Poetry’: Literature and Literary Criticism as Lesbian Politics”, (*Biorby 2016*) writes about the intersection of politics, ideology and aesthetics in literature, focusing on the study “Lesbianism in Swedish Literature: an ambiguous affair” by Jenny Bjorklund. It also highlights the complexity of balancing political intentions with literary aesthetics, emphasising the risk of oversimplification when reducing literature to a single ambition. It underscores the

importance of considering both political and aesthetic dimensions in literary analysis, cautioning against overlooking literary quality in favour of ideological agendas.

The research article, “Exploring the intersections of LGBTQ experience and social work education: a scoping review”, by Gita R. Mehrotra, Kimberly D. Hudson and Eli Hess talks about the scoping review that delves into the peer-reviewed articles from 2010 to 2020, uncovering 54 relevant pieces. Their key areas of exploration included classroom dynamics for LGBTQ students/ faculty, attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals, integration of gender and sexuality content in curricula and pedagogical approaches. Besides, the analysis has also scrutinized research rationales, theoretical frameworks, identity representation, engagement with race, author identity disclosure and education recommendations.

To sum up, these articles provide information or studies particular aspect of terms like intersectionality, mental health, poetry or focus on just the cultural aspect of the source. Whereas this study will provide an insight into the lives of the people of the LGBTQ+ community and their mental health through the framework of poetry. The relation or the intersection of these two aspects will be keenly focused on throughout the study.

1.6 Formulation of Hypothesis

This dissertation aims to show that LGBTQ+ individuals use poetry as a powerful medium that reflects their inner emotions and mental health but at the same

time, this act of self- expression offers to create awareness, empathy and promote acceptance towards the LGBTQ+ community in the society.

1.7 Research Methodology

This research majorly employs a qualitative as well as a quantitative approach to investigate the intricate connection between LGBTQ+ identity and mental health as conveyed or reflected in the poetry. The study begins with an in-depth review of the existing literature, which serves as the foundation for the research, navigating its focus by identifying areas where knowledge is lacking. A selection of LGBTQ+ poetry from various historical periods and cultural backgrounds will be thoughtfully chosen for analysis. Qualitative analysis methods, such as thematic analysis, content analysis and narrative analysis, will be applied to learn or dive deeper into the shared themes, metaphors, and emotions within the poetry. Also, under the quantitative analysis method a questionnaire will be circulated to find out about the variations in the responses of the people regarding LGBTQ+ and hence analysing the approach, societal attitudes and impact on the LGBTQ+ identity and their mental health. This study overall aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how poetry serves as a medium for expressing the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health.

1.8 Chapterisation

Chapter 1: LGBTQ+ literature and intersection

- Introduction
- Introducing LGBTQ+ literature

- Overview of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health
- Outlining the significance of exploring this intersection.
- Research Problem/ question
- Relevance and Necessity
- Objectives
- Literature Review
- Formulation of Hypothesis
- Research Methodology
- Chapterisation

Chapter 2: Poetry as a powerful medium

- Historical context of LGBTQ+ poetry
- Poetry as a powerful tool to self- expression.
- Understanding the therapeutic nature of poetry.

Chapter 3: Empowering voices of the LGBTQ+ poets

- Examining the themes and techniques in the poems.
- Comparative analysis of the poems.
- Investigating the intersection of LGBTQ+ Identity and mental health in poetry.

Chapter 4: Findings and analysis

- Presenting the findings of the questionnaire
- Drawing Inferences from the data collected

Chapter 5: Reviewing the key findings and insights of the research

- Implication of mental health support and advocacy
- Emphasis on the scope of this research on society

Chapter 2: Poetry as a powerful medium

2.1 Historical context of LGBTQ+ poetry

LGBTQ+ poetry serves as a testament to the vastness and variety of human expression, intertwining the elements of identity, longing, and strength across different eras and societies. In order to grasp the historical backdrop of LGBTQ+ poetry, it is essential to embark on a voyage through time, delving into the societal perspectives, cultural shifts, and literary customs that have molded and impacted its evolution. From the covert verses of ancient civilizations to the courageous proclamations of modern-day poets, LGBTQ+ poetry mirrors the challenges, victories, and dreams of LGBTQ+ individuals throughout the course of history. The origins of LGBTQ+ poetry can be traced back to ancient civilizations like Greece and Rome, where same-sex relationships and expressions of homoerotic desire were frequently celebrated in poetry and art.

In ancient Greece, poets such as Sappho of Lesbos wrote passionate verses about love and desire between women, while poets like Plato and Pindar delved into themes of same-sex love and companionship. These poets praised the beauty of same-sex relationships and questioned traditional ideas of gender and sexuality. Likewise, in ancient Rome, poets like Catullus and Martial crafted poems that conveyed desire and affection for individuals of the same sex. The Roman emperor Hadrian famously penned love poems to his male lover Antinous, immortalizing their relationship in verse. Despite the prevalence of same-sex desire in ancient literature, it is important to recognize that these societies were not devoid of discrimination or prejudice against

LGBTQ+ individuals. Nevertheless, the presence of LGBTQ+ themes in ancient poetry stands as a testament to the enduring existence of queer identities throughout history.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, LGBTQ+ themes in poetry became more covert due to the ascent of Christianity and the growing moral conservatism of European society. Nonetheless, LGBTQ+ poets found ways to express their desires and identities through allegory, symbolism, and coded language. The troubadour tradition in medieval Europe, for instance, featured poems that celebrated same-sex love and desire disguised as courtly romance. In Renaissance England, poets like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe integrated LGBTQ+ themes into their works, albeit often indirectly or ambiguously. Shakespeare's sonnets, for example, contain expressions of love and desire for both men and women, blurring the lines of gender and sexuality. Similarly, Marlowe's poetry and plays, such as "Edward II," delve into themes of same-sex desire and companionship.

The 18th and 19th centuries saw the rise of LGBTQ+ poetry as a form of resistance against societal norms and oppression. In England, the Romantic poets of the 18th and 19th centuries, including Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, challenged conventional morality and explored themes of individual freedom and expression. While not explicitly LGBTQ+ in content, their poetry often celebrated the beauty of unconventional love and the pursuit of personal happiness.

In America, the 19th-century poet Walt Whitman emerged as a pioneering voice in LGBTQ+ literature with his seminal work, "Leaves of Grass." Whitman's poetry celebrated the human body, nature, and the interconnectedness of all beings,

including expressions of homoerotic desire and affection. His frank depiction of same-sex love and desire challenged prevailing Victorian attitudes towards sexuality and laid the groundwork for future generations of LGBTQ+ poets.

The early 20th century witnessed significant social and cultural changes that influenced the landscape of LGBTQ+ poetry. The emergence of modernism in literature brought with it a greater emphasis on individual subjectivity and experimental forms of expression. LGBTQ+ poets, such as the British writer Radclyffe Hall and the American poet Langston Hughes, began to explore themes of queer identity and experience more openly in their work. Radclyffe Hall's novel "The Well of Loneliness," though not poetry, is considered a landmark work in LGBTQ+ literature for its unapologetic portrayal of lesbian identity and desire. Similarly, Langston Hughes, a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance, incorporated themes of race, sexuality, and identity into his poetry, challenging prevailing stereotypes and prejudices.

During the mid to late 20th century, there was a significant period of social and political upheaval that greatly influenced LGBTQ+ poetry. The Stonewall Riots of 1969 played a crucial role in the LGBTQ+ rights movement, inspiring a new wave of poets to delve into themes of activism, freedom, and self-acceptance in their literary creations. Prominent poets like Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, and Allen Ginsberg emerged as key figures in LGBTQ+ literature during this era, tackling issues of race, gender, and sexuality with raw honesty and fervour. Lorde's poetry, in particular, delved into the intersections of race, class, and sexuality, while Rich's work challenged patriarchal conventions and celebrated female empowerment. Ginsberg's iconic poem

"Howl" served as a manifesto for the Beat Generation and a call to arms for LGBTQ+ liberation.

In the 21st century, LGBTQ+ poetry remains a thriving and diverse form of artistic expression. Poets from marginalized communities, such as people of colour, transgender individuals, and non-binary writers, are reclaiming space within the literary landscape and challenging dominant narratives about gender and sexuality. Contemporary poets like Danez Smith, Ocean Vuong, and Saeed Jones are pushing the boundaries of LGBTQ+ poetry with their unique styles and fearless exploration of identity and experience. Smith delves into themes of race, queerness, and masculinity with raw intensity and lyricism, while Vuong's work contemplates the immigrant experience, trauma, and desire with haunting beauty and grace. Jones's memoir "How We Fight for Our Lives" blends poetry and prose to document his journey of self-discovery as a queer black man in America. In conclusion, the historical backdrop of LGBTQ+ poetry showcases the resilience, creativity, and diversity of LGBTQ+ individuals over time. From the covert verses of ancient civilizations to the bold declarations of modern poets, LGBTQ+ poetry has served as a form of resistance, celebration, and self-affirmation in the face of societal prejudice and discrimination. By exploring themes of identity, desire, and liberation, LGBTQ+ poets are challenging prevailing narratives about gender and sexuality, leading the way for increased understanding, acceptance, and inclusivity in the literary realm and beyond. Also, the efforts of these writers and poets have paved a path of free expression for the future queer writers as well as the entire community.

2.2 Poetry as a powerful tool of self-expression

Poetry, often regarded as the language of the soul, has been an integral part of human expression for millennia. It is a form of art that transcends boundaries, cultures, and time, allowing individuals to articulate their deepest thoughts, emotions, and experiences in a profoundly personal and creative manner. At its core, poetry serves as a powerful tool of self-expression, enabling individuals to explore and communicate their innermost feelings, perceptions, and truths in ways that conventional language often cannot capture. Language is the primary medium through which humans communicate their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. However, conventional language often falls short in conveying the depth and complexity of human feelings and perceptions. This is where poetry steps in, offering a unique and versatile means of expression that transcends the limitations of everyday speech. Through the use of metaphor, symbolism, imagery, and rhythm, poetry amplifies the emotional resonance of language, enabling individuals to convey abstract concepts and elusive emotions with precision and nuance.

Moreover, poetry encourages a heightened awareness of language itself, inviting individuals to play with words, sounds, and meanings in ways that challenge conventional syntax and grammar. This linguistic experimentation not only expands the expressive potential of language but also fosters a deeper connection between the poet and their innermost thoughts and emotions. In this sense, poetry becomes a medium of self-discovery, allowing individuals to explore and articulate aspects of their identity and experience that may lie dormant or unexpressed in everyday discourse. One of the most profound aspects of poetry is its ability to serve as a gateway to the inner realms of human consciousness. Through the act of writing poetry, individuals embark on a

journey of self-exploration, delving into the depths of their psyche to unearth hidden truths, desires, and fears. The process of crafting a poem requires introspection, reflection, and a willingness to confront the complexities of one's own inner world. As poets grapple with their thoughts and emotions on the page, they often discover new insights about themselves and the world around them, leading to moments of profound self-discovery and personal growth.

Furthermore, poetry provides a safe space for individuals to express thoughts and feelings that may be difficult or taboo to discuss openly. By channelling their innermost thoughts and emotions into poetic form, individuals can explore sensitive or painful experiences with a degree of detachment and artistic distance, allowing for a deeper level of introspection and emotional processing. In this way, poetry serves as a therapeutic tool, enabling individuals to confront and make sense of their innermost struggles and traumas in a supportive and cathartic environment. Another defining feature of poetry is its capacity to embrace vulnerability and authenticity in all their rawness and complexity. Unlike other forms of communication that often prioritise clarity and coherence, poetry thrives on ambiguity, contradiction, and emotional intensity. It invites individuals to embrace the messiness of human experience, celebrating the imperfections, contradictions, and ambiguities that make us uniquely human. In a world that often demands conformity and perfection, poetry offers a refuge for authenticity and self-expression. Through the act of writing poetry, individuals can shed the masks and pretences of everyday life, revealing their true selves in all their vulnerability and complexity. By embracing their innermost thoughts and emotions without judgement or inhibition, poets cultivate a deeper sense of self-acceptance and self-love, fostering a greater sense of authenticity and connection with themselves and

others. Poetry has the power to bridge the gap between individuals, fostering empathy, understanding, and connection across diverse experiences and perspectives. Through the act of reading and interpreting poetry, individuals are invited to step into the shoes of another, experiencing the world through their eyes and emotions. This empathic engagement with poetry cultivates a greater sense of compassion and understanding for the struggles, joys, and complexities of human existence, fostering a deeper sense of connection and solidarity among individuals.

Moreover, poetry has the ability to transcend cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries, serving as a universal language that speaks to the shared humanity of all people. Whether through ancient epics, classical sonnets, or contemporary spoken word performances, poetry has the power to unite individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures under a common banner of human experience. In a world that is often divided by differences of race, religion, and ideology, poetry serves as a powerful reminder of our shared humanity, transcending the barriers that divide us and forging connections that endure across time and space. Poetry stands as a testament to the enduring power of human creativity, imagination, and self-expression. Through its unique blend of language, emotion, and imagery, poetry empowers individuals to explore the depths of their inner worlds, confront the complexities of human experience, and forge connections that transcend the boundaries of time and space. Whether as a form of self-reflection, emotional catharsis, or empathic engagement, poetry serves as a powerful tool for personal growth, self-discovery, and connection with others. Poetry is a timeless art illuminates our path, inspires our souls, and unites us in the shared journey of humanity.

2.3 Understanding the therapeutic nature of poetry

Poetry has long been recognized as a powerful therapeutic tool, offering solace, insight, and healing to individuals grappling with a myriad of emotional and psychological challenges. Within the LGBTQ+ community, where individuals often face unique struggles related to identity, acceptance, and mental health, poetry serves as a particularly potent form of self-expression and exploration. Here the therapeutic nature of poetry, with a specific focus on its intersection with LGBTQ+ identity and mental health will be explored. Through the lens of poetry, we will delve into the ways in which individuals within the LGBTQ+ community use language and imagery to navigate their inner landscapes, confront stigma and discrimination, and foster resilience and empowerment.

At its core, poetry is a form of language that transcends the constraints of everyday communication, allowing individuals to articulate their deepest thoughts, emotions, and experiences in a creative and evocative manner. For individuals grappling with mental health challenges, poetry offers a safe and supportive space to explore and express the complexities of their inner worlds. Through the act of writing poetry, individuals can give voice to their struggles, fears, and hopes, creating a sense of validation and empowerment that may be lacking in other forms of expression. Moreover, poetry encourages a deep engagement with language itself, inviting individuals to play with words, sounds, and meanings in ways that can be both cathartic and transformative. By experimenting with metaphor, symbolism, and imagery, individuals can externalise and make sense of their internal experiences, transforming abstract thoughts and emotions into tangible forms that can be shared and understood

by others. In this way, poetry serves as a bridge between the inner and outer worlds, offering a means of communication and connection that transcend the barriers of isolation and loneliness. For many individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, poetry provides a powerful means of exploring and affirming their identities in the face of societal stigma and discrimination. Through the medium of poetry, individuals can reflect on their experiences of coming out, navigating relationships, and grappling with issues of self-acceptance and belonging. Whether through personal narratives, political manifestos, or works of fiction, LGBTQ+ poets have used their art to challenge stereotypes, subvert norms, and celebrate the rich diversity of human sexuality and gender expression.

Poetry has played a central role in the LGBTQ+ rights movement, serving as a platform for advocacy, activism, and social change. From the bold declarations of Walt Whitman to the poignant verses of Audre Lorde, LGBTQ+ poets have used their words to inspire, provoke, and mobilise communities in the fight for equality and justice. In this way, poetry becomes not only a tool of self-expression but also a catalyst for collective empowerment and social transformation. In addition to its role in affirming LGBTQ+ identity, poetry also serves as a valuable resource for individuals grappling with mental health challenges within the community. From depression and anxiety to trauma and substance abuse, LGBTQ+ individuals are disproportionately affected by a range of mental health issues, often as a result of societal discrimination, family rejection, and internalised stigma. Poetry offers a means of processing and making sense of these experiences, providing a space for individuals to express their pain, grief, and resilience in ways that are both deeply personal and universally relatable.

Moreover, poetry has been shown to have therapeutic benefits for individuals struggling with mental health issues, offering a creative outlet for self-expression and emotional release. Through the act of writing poetry, individuals can externalise their thoughts and feelings, gaining distance from their struggles and gaining new perspectives on their experiences. This process of creative expression can be deeply cathartic, helping individuals to process difficult emotions, build resilience, and cultivate a sense of empowerment and agency in the face of adversity.

It is important to recognize that the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health is complex and multifaceted, shaped by a range of intersecting factors including race, class, gender, and ability. LGBTQ+ individuals who belong to marginalized communities face unique challenges and barriers to accessing mental health support, including systemic discrimination, economic insecurity, and limited access to culturally competent care. Poetry offers a means of exploring and addressing these intersecting identities and experiences, providing a platform for individuals to express the complexities of their lived realities and advocate for social justice and equity.

In addition to that, poetry has the power to foster solidarity and connection among individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, creating spaces for mutual support, affirmation, and healing. Through poetry readings, open mic nights, and online forums, LGBTQ+ individuals can come together to share their stories, celebrate their resilience, and build networks of support and solidarity. In this way, poetry becomes not only a form of individual expression but also a tool for community building and collective empowerment.

Chapter 3: Empowering voices of LGBTQ+ poets

In the realm of literature, LGBTQ+ poets have emerged as powerful agents of change, using their artistry and activism to challenge norms, advocate for equality, and celebrate the richness and complexity of queer identity. Through their words, LGBTQ+ poets empower individuals within the community to embrace their identities, confront injustice, and reimagine a more inclusive and equitable world. In this essay, we will explore the empowering voices of LGBTQ+ poets, examining the ways in which they harness the power of language and creativity to effect social change and foster resilience and empowerment within the community. Powering voices of the LGBTQ+ poets. One of the most powerful aspects of LGBTQ+ poetry is its celebration of identity and diversity. LGBTQ+ poets draw upon their own lived experiences to create art that reflects the complexities of queer identity, from the joys of self-discovery and acceptance to the challenges of discrimination and marginalisation. Through their poetry, LGBTQ+ poets assert their right to exist and thrive in a world that too often seeks to silence or erase their voices.

From the intersectional poetry of Audre Lorde to the playful lyricism of Richard Blanco, LGBTQ+ poets represent a rich tapestry of voices that defy stereotypes and challenge mainstream narratives of sexuality and gender. By centring marginalized voices and experiences, LGBTQ+ poetry fosters a greater sense of visibility and representation within the community, empowering individuals to embrace their identities and claim their rightful place in society. Beyond its role in celebrating identity and diversity, LGBTQ+ poetry also offers a powerful critique of language and representation. LGBTQ+ poets are keenly aware of the ways in which language can be used to uphold systems of power and

privilege, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and erasing marginalised identities. Through their poetry, LGBTQ+ poets challenge linguistic norms and conventions, reclaiming words and phrases that have been used to oppress or marginalised queer individuals.

These poets use language as a tool of resistance, subverting dominant discourses and challenging societal norms and expectations. Whether through the use of irony, satire, or metaphor, LGBTQ+ poets disrupt conventional ways of thinking and speaking about gender and sexuality, opening up new possibilities for understanding and representation. In this way, LGBTQ+ poetry serves as a form of linguistic activism, empowering individuals to question and challenge the status quo and imagine alternative futures grounded in justice and equality. For many LGBTQ+ individuals, poetry provides a safe and supportive space to explore and express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, particularly in the face of discrimination and marginalisation. Through the act of writing and sharing poetry, individuals can find validation and solidarity, knowing that their voices are being heard and their stories are being honoured. Their poetry offers a sense of empowerment and agency to individuals who may feel marginalised or disempowered in other aspects of their lives. By asserting their right to self-expression and self-determination, LGBTQ+ poets reclaim their identities and assert their presence in a world that too often seeks to silence or erase them. In this way, LGBTQ+ poetry becomes a form of resistance and resilience, empowering individuals to take ownership of their narratives and assert their worth and dignity in the face of adversity.

LGBTQ+ poetry stands as a testament to the power of creativity and imagination to effect social change and foster resilience and empowerment within the community. Through their artistry and activism, LGBTQ+ poets celebrate the richness

and diversity of queer identity, challenge linguistic norms and representations, and empower individuals to embrace their identities and claim their rightful place in society. For a better understanding of the LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, some of the poems will be closely analysed in the next chapter and therefore, as we continue to navigate the complexities of LGBTQ+ existence, may we turn to the empowering voices of LGBTQ+ poets to illuminate our path, inspire our souls, and forge a more just and inclusive world for all.

3.1 Examining the themes and techniques in the poems

1) "*Kochu's Bride-Seeing*" by Megha Rao

"*Kochu's Bride-Seeing*" by Megha Rao is a thought-provoking poem that provides insight into the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health within the context of traditional Indian arranged marriages. Through the lens of the protagonist, Kochu, the poem explores themes of societal expectations, gender roles, and personal autonomy, shedding light on the emotional complexities faced by individuals navigating the intersection of their LGBTQ+ identity and mental well-being. In this analysis, we will examine the themes and techniques employed in "*Kochu's Bride-Seeing*" to explore how the poem illuminates the challenges and struggles of LGBTQ+ individuals in the context of cultural norms and expectations.

Themes

- **LGBTQ+ identity:** The poem subtly explores themes of LGBTQ+ identity through the character of the brother, who appears to be struggling with his gender

identity or sexual orientation. His discomfort and guilt when teased about the bride's gold and his avoidance of discussing auspicious dates suggest a sense of internal conflict and unease about his own identity within the rigid framework of societal expectations.

- **Gender Expression and Nonconformity:** The poem touches upon the theme of gender expression and non-conformity through the brother's symbolic act of pretending his dhoti (traditional Indian garment worn by men) is a skirt. This gesture hints at his desire to challenge traditional gender norms and expectations, suggesting a possible exploration of femininity or non-binary identity that contradicts societal norms.
- **Family Expectations and Pressure:** The poem highlights the pressure and expectations placed on individuals by their families, particularly in the context of arranged marriages. The brother's discomfort and avoidance of discussing marriage-related topics suggest the suffocating weight of familial expectations and the struggle to reconcile personal identity with societal norms, leading to internal conflict and mental strain.
- **Mental Health and Stigma:** Although not explicitly addressed, the poem implicitly touches upon the theme of mental health and the impact of societal stigma and pressure on individuals grappling with LGBTQ+ identity. The brother's guilt, discomfort, and avoidance behaviour suggest underlying psychological distress and the toll of navigating a society that invalidates or marginalised LGBTQ+ identities.

Techniques

- **Symbolism:** The use of symbolism is prominent in the poem, particularly in the depiction of the brother's attempt to visualise his dhoti as a skirt. This symbolic

gesture serves as a metaphor for his desire to break free from traditional gender roles and express his true self, highlighting the internal struggle faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in conservative or heteronormative environments.

- **Imagery:** The poem utilises vivid imagery to evoke the atmosphere of a traditional Indian family gathering, where discussions of marriage and tradition are central. Descriptions of the bride's gold, horoscopes, and auspicious dates create a sense of cultural specificity and familial intimacy, while the brother's discomfort is conveyed through his guilty expression and avoidance of eye contact.
 - **Narrative Voice:** The narrative voice in "Kochu's Bride-Seeing" is intimate and introspective, providing insight into the brother's internal thoughts and emotions. The first-person perspective allows readers to empathise with his struggle and experience the tension between societal expectations and personal authenticity. The use of simple yet evocative language enhances the emotional impact of the poem, drawing readers into the narrator's world and inviting reflection on themes of identity, conformity, and mental health.
 - **Tone:** The tone of the poem is reflective and contemplative, conveying the brother's internal conflict and emotional turmoil. While there is an undercurrent of discomfort and tension, there is also a sense of empathy and understanding towards the brother's struggle. The tone invites readers to consider the complexities of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health within the context of familial and societal expectations, prompting reflection on the importance of acceptance and authenticity.
- Through its themes of concealment, discomfort, and familial expectations, the poem sheds light on the internal struggle faced by individuals navigating the

intersection of their sexual orientation or gender identity with societal norms. By employing techniques such as symbolism, imagery, narrative voice, and tone, the poem invites readers to empathise with the narrator's experience and reflect on the complexities of identity, conformity, and mental well-being.

2) *LGBT suicide* by Rains of Bloom

This poem delves into the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, shedding light on the experiences of discrimination, isolation, and despair faced by many individuals within the LGBTQ+ community. Through its exploration of themes such as societal prejudice, internalised shame, and the consequences of stigma, the poem offers a sobering reflection on the challenges and struggles encountered by LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly in environments where acceptance and understanding are lacking.

Themes

- **Societal Prejudice and Discrimination:** "LGBT Suicide" confronts the theme of societal prejudice and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals, highlighting the pervasive homophobia and transphobia that permeate many aspects of society. The poem depicts instances of verbal harassment and bullying experienced by the protagonist, who is subjected to derogatory slurs and hateful remarks from peers and classmates. These acts of discrimination contribute to the protagonist's feelings.
- **Internalised Shame and Self-Blame:** Another prominent theme in the poem is the internalised shame and self-blame experienced by the protagonist as a result of

societal stigma and rejection. The protagonist grapples with feelings of inadequacy and self-loathing, internalising the negative messages and stereotypes perpetuated by society. This internalised shame manifests in the protagonist's decision to take their own life, as they feel unable to escape the overwhelming burden of self-hatred and despair.

- **Isolation and Loneliness:** "LGBT Suicide" explores the theme of isolation and loneliness experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals who feel marginalized and ostracized by mainstream society. The protagonist's sense of alienation is palpable throughout the poem, as they navigate hostile environments where they are made to feel like outsiders. This profound sense of loneliness contributes to the protagonist's deteriorating mental health and ultimately culminates in their tragic decision to end their own life.
- **Mental Health and Suicide:** At its core, this poem grapples with the theme of mental health and suicide within the LGBTQ+ community. The poem offers a sobering portrayal of the mental anguish and emotional distress experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals as a result of societal prejudice and discrimination. The protagonist's suicide serves as a stark reminder of the devastating consequences of untreated mental illness and the urgent need for greater support and resources for LGBTQ+ individuals struggling with their mental health.

Techniques

- **Imagery and Symbolism:** "LGBT Suicide" involves vivid imagery and symbolism to evoke the emotional depth and intensity of the protagonist's experiences. Descriptions of the protagonist's tears and anguish, as well as the

imagery of the rope and hook used in their suicide attempt, create a visceral sense of despair and desperation. These powerful images serve to underscore the profound impact of societal prejudice and discrimination on the protagonist's mental health and well-being.

- Repetition and Parallelism:** The poem employs repetition and parallelism to emphasise key themes and motifs, such as the protagonist's experiences of harassment and bullying. Phrases such as "FAGOT, gay, lady lover" and "kill or be killed from pain" are repeated throughout the poem, highlighting the relentless nature of the protagonist's torment and the cyclical nature of their suffering. This repetition serves to reinforce the pervasive nature of homophobia and transphobia in the protagonist's environment, contributing to their sense of hopelessness and despair.
- Narrative Voice and Perspective:** "LGBT Suicide" is told from the perspective of the protagonist, offering readers a glimpse into their inner thoughts and emotions. The first-person narrative voice creates a sense of intimacy and immediacy, allowing readers to empathise with the protagonist's experiences on a visceral level. By centring the protagonist's perspective, the poem invites readers to bear witness to the profound impact of societal prejudice and discrimination on LGBTQ+ individuals' mental health and well-being.
- Tone and Mood:** The tone of "LGBT Suicide" is sombre and melancholic, reflecting the gravity of the themes explored in the poem. The mood oscillates between moments of intense despair and quiet resignation, mirroring the protagonist's emotional journey as they grapple with feelings of isolation and hopelessness. Through its tone and mood, the poem creates a sense of empathy and

compassion for the protagonist's plight, underscoring the urgency of addressing the mental health needs of LGBTQ+ individuals within society.

"LGBT Suicide" by Rains of Bloom offers a powerful exploration of the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, shedding light on the profound impact of societal prejudice and discrimination on individuals within the community. Through its portrayal of themes such as societal prejudice, internalized shame, isolation, and suicide, the poem invites readers to reflect on the urgent need for greater support and resources for LGBTQ+ individuals struggling with their mental health. By amplifying the voices of those who have been marginalized and silenced, "LGBT Suicide" serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of compassion, understanding, and acceptance in creating a more inclusive and supportive society for all.

3) *Queer youth are five times more likely to die by suicide* by Andrea Gibson

Andrea Gibson's poem, "Queer Youth Are 5 Times More Likely to Die by Suicide," confronts the harsh reality of the disproportionate rates of suicide among LGBTQ+ youth. Gibson sheds light on the struggles faced by queer youth in a society marked by discrimination, stigma, and systemic oppression.

Themes

- **Vulnerability and Resilience:** Central to the poem is the theme of vulnerability and resilience among queer youth. Gibson highlights the immense challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, including the threat of suicide and the pervasive effects of

discrimination. Despite these challenges, the poem also celebrates the resilience and strength of queer youth who continue to fight for their survival and dignity.

- **Internalised Shame and Self-acceptance:** Another prominent theme in the poem is the struggle with internalised shame and the journey towards self-acceptance. Gibson explores the impact of societal stigma on queer youth, including feelings of alienation, fear of rejection, and internalised homophobia. The poem challenges these negative narratives and emphasises the importance of self-love and self-acceptance in overcoming mental health struggles.
- **Activism and Solidarity:** "Queer Youth Are 5 Times More Likely to Die by Suicide" also explores the theme of activism and solidarity within the LGBTQ+ community. Gibson's poem serves as a call to action, urging readers to stand up against discrimination, challenge oppressive systems, and support queer youth in their struggle for survival. The poem celebrates acts of resistance and solidarity, from correcting hate speech to advocating for LGBTQ+ rights.

Techniques

- **Imagery:** Gibson employs vivid imagery throughout the poem to evoke the emotional and psychological experiences of queer youth. The metaphor of "cutting hate out of my mall" and "papier-mâché Christmas ornaments of queer couples" conjures images of resistance and resilience, highlighting the creative ways in which LGBTQ+ individuals reclaim their identities and assert their humanity. This imagery not only captures the resilience of queer youth but also serves as a powerful call to action for social change.
- **Repetition:** The use of repetition is a prominent technique in which helps to emphasise key themes and emotions. Phrases like "means you were five times more likely" and "to know there was" are repeated throughout the poem, echoing the statistical realities

of LGBTQ+ youth suicide and emphasizing the importance of solidarity and support. This repetition not only amplifies the emotional impact of the poem but also serves as a rallying cry for social justice and equality.

- **Symbolism:** The poet utilises symbolism to convey deeper layers of meaning within the poem. The image of "graffitied billboards" and "my diary into confetti" serves as symbols of resistance and empowerment, highlighting the transformative power of activism and community solidarity. Similarly, the metaphor of "spotting a stranger crying" and "asking if there's anything they can do to help" reflects the importance of empathy and compassion in supporting queer youth in crisis.

Here the poet, through her work address's themes of vulnerability, resilience, activism, and solidarity, the poem serves as a call to action for social change and a celebration of the strength and resilience of LGBTQ+ youth. Through examination of themes and techniques, the poem invites readers to reflect on the importance of empathy, compassion, and solidarity in supporting queer youth in their struggle for survival and dignity.

4) *To Every Suicidal Trans Kid* by Sonder

The poem delves into the struggles faced by transgender individuals in a world that often fails to recognize and affirm their identities. The poet addresses this poem to all the trans kids who are fighting against their inner turmoil or rather are consumed by the thought of unwantedness and feel suicidal. The analysis of themes and techniques employed in "To Every Suicidal Trans Kid," focus on the portrayal of LGBTQ+ identity and its intersection with mental health.

Themes

- **Alienation and Isolation:** The theme of alienation and isolation experienced by transgender individuals within society. The poem depicts a world that is hostile and unwelcoming, where transgender individuals are marginalised and subjected to discrimination and violence. Lines such as "We exist in a world not made / For us" capture the profound sense of otherness and marginalisation experienced by transgender individuals, who often struggle to find acceptance and belonging.
- **Mental Health and Suicide:** Another prominent theme in the poem is mental health and suicide within the transgender community. The speaker addresses the alarming rates of suicide among transgender individuals, highlighting the pressures and struggles they face in a society that often fails to support and affirm their identities. The line "In the age of 20 / One in three / Transgender people will attempt suicide" underscores the urgent need for greater awareness and support for mental health within the transgender community.
- **Self-Acceptance and Resilience:** Despite the challenges and obstacles faced by transgender individuals, the poem also explores themes of self-acceptance and resilience. The speaker encourages self-compassion and self-care, emphasising the importance of recognizing one's own worth and value. Lines such as "You will survive in / This body with his body" convey a message of resilience and determination, encouraging transgender individuals to embrace their identities and find strength in their own bodies.

Techniques

- **Imagery:** Sonder employs vivid imagery throughout the poem to convey the emotional and psychological experiences of transgender individuals. The metaphor of "wooden

prison" and "splinters" evokes the sense of confinement and suffocation experienced by transgender individuals within societal norms. This imagery not only captures the physical and emotional pain of marginalisation but also serves as a powerful metaphor for the struggle for liberation and self-acceptance.

- **Repetition:** The use of repetition is a prominent technique in this poem which serves to emphasise key themes and emotions. Phrases like "I am here / With you" and "You will survive" are repeated throughout the poem, reinforcing the speaker's message of solidarity and resilience. This repetition not only amplifies the emotional impact of the poem but also serves as a rallying cry for transgender individuals to persevere in the face of adversity.
- **Symbolism:** Sonder utilises symbolism to convey deeper layers of meaning within the poem. The image of "blades" replaced with "flowers" serves as a powerful symbol of transformation and healing. By replacing self-harm with symbols of beauty and growth, the poem offers a message of hope and renewal, encouraging transgender individuals to find strength and resilience in their journey towards self-acceptance and self-love.

Therefore, by addressing themes of alienation, mental health, self-acceptance, and resilience, "To Every Suicidal Trans Kid" serves as a rallying cry for solidarity and empowerment within the transgender community. Through examination of themes and techniques, the poem invites readers to reflect on the importance of empathy, understanding, and support for transgender individuals in their journey towards self-acceptance and liberation.

5) *Dysphoria Days* by Ray Stove

Through vivid imagery, evocative language, and powerful themes, Stove's poem delves into the complex experience of gender dysphoria and the emotional toll it takes on individuals

navigating their identities within societal norms. The themes and techniques employed in "Dysphoria Days," focus on the portrayal of LGBTQ+ identity and its intersection with mental health.

Themes

- Gender Dysphoria and Identity:** Central to "Dysphoria Days" is the theme of gender dysphoria—the profound discomfort and dissonance experienced by individuals whose gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth. The poem vividly captures the speaker's struggle to reconcile their internal sense of self with external expectations and societal norms. Lines such as "Today my skin does not fit / Me nothing's really wrong it just feels" encapsulate the feeling of being trapped in a body that does not reflect one's true identity.
- Alienation and Otherness:** Stove explores the theme of alienation and otherness experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals within a heteronormative society. The speaker expresses frustration at being misunderstood and invalidated, highlighting the disconnect between their authentic self and the perceptions imposed upon them by others. This theme is underscored by phrases like "I am so tired of being told I am not / Real when I am standing in front of you," which convey the emotional toll of societal erasure and marginalisation.
- Validation and Acceptance:** Throughout the poem, there is a longing for validation and acceptance within a world that often refuses to recognize non-binary identities. The speaker's desire to be "remade into something the world can understand" reflects the universal human need for affirmation and belonging. Stove emphasises the importance of self-acceptance and authenticity in the face of societal expectations, challenging normative notions of gender and identity.

- **Emotional Exhaustion and Resilience:** Another prominent theme in "Dysphoria Days" is the emotional exhaustion and resilience required to navigate the complexities of LGBTQ+ identity. The repetition of phrases like "I am so tired" underscores the weariness resulting from the constant struggle for recognition and validation. Despite this exhaustion, the poem also conveys a sense of resilience and determination to assert one's identity and find self-acceptance.

Techniques

- **Imagery:** Stove employs vivid imagery throughout "Dysphoria Days" to convey the visceral experience of gender dysphoria. The metaphor of ill-fitting clothing, such as "like pants cut a little / Too short," evokes the physical discomfort and dissonance experienced by the speaker. This imagery not only provides insight into the subjective experience of dysphoria but also serves as a powerful metaphor for the broader struggle of LGBTQ+ individuals to find acceptance within societal norms.
- **Repetition:** The use of repetition is a prominent technique in "Dysphoria Days," serving to emphasise key themes and emotions. Phrases like "I am so tired" and "maybe I shouldn't / Be trying to wear this at all" are repeated throughout the poem, reinforcing the speaker's sense of weariness and frustration. This repetition not only amplifies the emotional impact of the poem but also highlights the cyclical nature of the struggle for acceptance and self-acceptance.
- **Symbolism:** Stove utilises symbolism to convey deeper layers of meaning within the poem. The image of "mending" rather than "alteration" serves as a powerful symbol of self-discovery and authenticity. By reframing dysphoria as a process of "mending" one's sense of self, the poem challenges societal narratives that pathologize non-conforming identities. This symbolism invites readers to reconsider their understanding

of gender and identity, emphasising the importance of self-acceptance and self-compassion.

Hence by delving into the experience of gender dysphoria and the emotional toll it takes on individuals navigating their identities within societal norms, Stove invites readers to reflect on the importance of validation, acceptance, and self-compassion. Through themes of gender dysphoria, alienation, validation, and resilience, and techniques such as imagery, repetition, and symbolism, "Dysphoria Days" offers a poignant portrayal of the complexities of LGBTQ+ identity and the universal human longing for acceptance and belonging.

6) *Black queer poet* by Quan

"The Black Queer Poet" by Quan is a powerful exploration of the intersectionality of Black and LGBTQ+ identities, and the mental health struggles faced by individuals within these communities. Through vivid imagery, emotive language, and profound themes, the poem delves into the struggles faced by black queer individuals in navigating their identities within a society marked by racism, homophobia, and systemic oppression. A group of people whose predicaments are more due to their multidimensional nature.

Themes

- **Identity and Intersectionality:** Central to "The Black Queer Poet" is the theme of identity and intersectionality. The poem celebrates the multifaceted nature of black queer identity, rejecting the notion of binaries and embracing the complexity of lived experience. Lines such as "I am not one or the other / Rather a perfect Symphony of both" highlight the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality, challenging monolithic understandings of identity.

- **Saviourhood and Sacrifice:** Another prominent theme in the poem is the concept of saviourhood and sacrifice. The black queer poet is portrayed as a figure of resilience and resistance, tasked with the burden of carrying the collective trauma of their community while also striving for liberation and empowerment. The lines "To be a black queer poet is to be a saviour / And sacrifice" capture the dual role of the poet as both activist and artist, committed to using their craft as a tool for social change.
- **Trauma and Healing:** "The Black Queer Poet" explores the theme of trauma and healing within the context of black queer experience. The speaker confronts the legacy of racism and homophobia, acknowledging the pain and scars inflicted by systemic oppression. Yet, the poem also speaks to the transformative power of art and activism, suggesting that through storytelling and self-expression, healing and liberation can be achieved.

Techniques

- **Imagery:** Quan employs vivid imagery throughout the poem to evoke the emotional and psychological landscapes of black queer identity. The metaphor of "crafting spells and colliding two worlds / Into one" conjures images of alchemy and transformation, highlighting the poet's ability to merge disparate experiences into a cohesive narrative of resilience and resistance. This imagery not only captures the complexity of black queer identity but also serves as a powerful metaphor for the creative process itself.
- **Repetition:** The use of repetition is a prominent technique in "The Black Queer Poet," serving to emphasise key themes and emotions. Phrases like "Free at last / Free at last / Thank god almighty / We are free at last" are repeated throughout the poem, echoing the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and underscoring the poet's vision of liberation.

and empowerment. This repetition not only amplifies the emotional impact of the poem but also serves as a rallying cry for social justice and equality.

- **Symbolism:** Quan utilises symbolism to convey deeper layers of meaning within the poem. The image of "rainbows of / Sunshine rest in our pockets" serves as a symbol of hope and resilience, contrasting with the darker themes of oppression and trauma. Similarly, the metaphor of wounds turning into art reflects the transformative power of creativity and self-expression in the face of adversity.

Overall, by addressing themes of identity, saviourhood, trauma, and healing, "The Black Queer Poet" serves as a testament to the power of storytelling and self-expression in the struggle for liberation and empowerment.

7) *Behind our tears* by Keaton

Keaton's poem, "Behind Our Tears," delves into some vital themes of love, loss, and resilience in the face of adversity. Through the poet's artistic expression, the poet explores the complex emotions experienced by individuals navigating the challenges of societal oppression, personal tragedy and criminalisation of LGBTQ+. The themes and techniques employed in the poem will be focusing on the portrayal of love, resilience, and the impact of societal norms on LGBTQ+ individuals.

Themes

- **Love and Loss:** Central to the poem is the theme of love and loss, particularly in the context of LGBTQ+ relationships. Keaton vividly portrays the deep bond between the speaker and their partner, despite the societal pressures and discrimination they face. The poem explores the profound grief and longing experienced by the speaker

following the death of their partner, underscoring the enduring power of love in the face of tragedy.

- **Resilience and Courage:** Another prominent theme in the poem is resilience and courage in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges and persecution, they face as a queer couple, the speaker and their partner continue to love each other unabashedly. The poem celebrates their courage to defy societal norms and embrace their love, even in the face of violence and discrimination. Despite the tragic outcome, the speaker finds strength in their resilience and determination to honour their love.
- **Memory and Trauma:** "Behind Our Tears" also explores the theme of memory and trauma, particularly in the aftermath of loss. The speaker grapples with painful memories of their partner's death and the violence they endured as a couple. These memories haunt the speaker, serving as a reminder of the injustices they faced and the price they paid for their love. Despite the passage of time, the trauma remains deeply ingrained in the speaker's psyche.

Techniques

- **Imagery:** Keaton employs vivid imagery throughout the poem to evoke the emotional and psychological landscape of the speaker's experience. The metaphor of "behind our tears" serves as a powerful symbol of the hidden pain and sorrow that accompanies love and loss. Similarly, the image of the speaker weeping under their blanket conveys a sense of vulnerability and intimacy, highlighting the private nature of their grief. This imagery not only captures the depth of the speaker's emotions but also invites readers to empathise with their experience.
- **Repetition:** The use of repetition is a prominent technique in his poem serving to emphasise key themes and emotions. Phrases like "our tears" and "our love" are

repeated throughout the poem, underscoring the shared experience of the speaker and their partner. This repetition not only amplifies the emotional impact of the poem but also reinforces the bond between the two characters and the enduring nature of their love.

- **Symbolism:** The poet utilises symbolism to convey deeper layers of meaning within the poem. The image of the speaker weeping "till I fall asleep" serves as a symbol of emotional exhaustion and the struggle to find solace in the midst of grief. Similarly, the metaphor of "a story of courage amidst discouragement" symbolises the resilience and strength of the speaker in the face of oppression and persecution. These symbols enrich the poem's exploration of love, loss, and resilience, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of the human experience.

Through the portrayal of the theme of love, resilience, memory, and trauma, "Behind Our Tears" by Keaton, serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of love in the face of oppression. Through examination of themes and techniques, the poem invites readers to contemplate the complexities of love and loss, and the courage it takes to persevere in the face of adversity.

8) *Oh to be a boy!* by Avery Korth

Avery Korth's poem, "Oh to be a Boy!" delves into the struggles of gender dysphoria and the quest for self-identity. Korth captures the intense emotional turmoil experienced by individuals grappling with the incongruence between their assigned gender and their true sense of self. The themes and techniques employed in this poem, focuses on the portrayal of gender dysphoria and its impact on mental health and self-acceptance.

Themes

- **Gender Dysphoria and Body Dysmorphia:** Central to the poem is the theme of gender dysphoria—the distress experienced by individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. Korth vividly portrays the physical and emotional discomfort of inhabiting a body that does not align with one's true gender identity. Lines such as "The problems with me / Are my bones / And my chest" underscore the deep-seated dissatisfaction and dysphoria experienced by the speaker.
- **Identity and Self-Expression:** Another prominent theme in the poem is the quest for self-identity and authentic self-expression. Korth explores the struggle of navigating societal expectations and norms, particularly regarding gender roles and presentation. The speaker longs to embody their true self, lamenting that "My voice doesn't sound like mine at all" and expressing a desire to escape the constraints of their assigned gender.
- **Stream of Consciousness:** The poem adopts a stream-of-consciousness style, capturing the raw and unfiltered thoughts and emotions of the speaker as they confront their gender identity and dysphoria. This narrative technique offers insight into the internal turmoil and psychological complexity of the protagonist's experience.
- **Mental Health and Self-Harm:** the poem also addresses the profound impact of gender dysphoria on mental health and well-being. The poem portrays the speaker's desperate attempts to cope with their dysphoria through self-harm, symbolized by lines like "I'm taking my nails and scratching my skin." Korth highlights the urgency of addressing mental health challenges within the transgender community and the need for greater support and understanding.

Techniques

- **Imagery:** Korth employs vivid imagery throughout the poem to evoke the physical and emotional experiences of gender dysphoria. The metaphor of "scratching my skin / 'Till blood comes out" vividly conveys the intensity of the speaker's distress and desperation. This imagery not only captures the visceral nature of dysphoria but also serves as a powerful representation of the speaker's internal struggle for self-acceptance.
- **Repetition:** The use of repetition is a prominent technique in the poem serving to emphasize key themes and emotions. Phrases like "I know" and "Not just today and the day before" are repeated throughout the poem, underscoring the enduring nature of the speaker's struggles with dysphoria and mental health. This repetition not only amplifies the emotional impact of the poem but also serves to reinforce the urgency of addressing these issues within the transgender community.
- **Symbolism:** Korth makes use of symbolism to convey deeper layers of meaning within the poem. The metaphor of "scratching my skin" can be interpreted as a symbol of the speaker's attempts to assert control over their own body and identity in the face of societal pressures and expectations. Similarly, the speaker's lament that "Not being born at all would be a greater joy" symbolizes the profound sense of alienation and longing for authenticity experienced by individuals with gender dysphoria.

The poem sheds light on the intense emotional turmoil experienced by individuals grappling with the incongruence between their assigned gender and their true sense of self. By addressing themes of dysphoria, self-expression, and mental

health, "Oh to be a Boy!" invites readers to empathize with the struggles of transgender individuals and underscores the importance of acceptance, understanding, and support within the LGBTQ+ community. Through examination of themes and techniques, the poem serves as a powerful testament to the resilience and courage of individuals on their journey towards self-acceptance and authenticity.

3.2 Comparative analysis of the poems

Poetry has long served as a medium for exploring and expressing the nuances of human experiences, including those related to identity, emotions, and societal issues. In recent years, there has been a surge in poetry that delves into the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, offering profound insights into the challenges, triumphs, and complexities faced by individuals within these communities. This essay aims to conduct a comparative study of several poems that explore LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, analysing the themes and techniques employed by each poet to convey their message effectively. The poems selected for this comparative study are "The Black queer poet" by Quan, "Dysphoria Days" by Ray Store, "To Every Suicidal Trans Kid" by Sonder, "Behind Our Tears" by Keaton, "Oh to Be a Boy" by Avery Korth, "Queer Youth Are 5 Times Likely to Die by Suicide" by Andrea Gibson, "LGBT Suicide" by Rains of Bloom, and "Kochu's Bride-seeing" by Megha Rao.

Themes

Across the selected poems, several recurring themes emerge, reflecting the multifaceted nature of LGBTQ+ identity and its intersection with mental health

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- **Identity and Self-Expression:** Each poem grapples with the theme of identity, exploring the struggle for self-acceptance and authentic expression in the face of societal norms and expectations. Quan's "The Black queer poet" addresses the complexities of being both black and queer, emphasizing the intersectionality of identity and the challenge of reconciling multiple facets of oneself. Similarly, Avery Korth's "Oh to Be a Boy" delves into the experience of gender dysphoria and the longing for self-acceptance, highlighting the internal conflict of feeling trapped in a body that does not align with one's true identity.
- **Discrimination and Stigma:** Several poems confront the discrimination and stigma faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, both within society and within themselves. "Queer Youth Are 5 Times Likely to Die by Suicide" by Andrea Gibson addresses the alarming rates of suicide among LGBTQ+ youth and the impact of systemic discrimination on mental health. Keaton's "Behind Our Tears" reflects on the hidden struggles and emotional turmoil experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly in the aftermath of discrimination and violence.
- **Resilience and Solidarity:** Despite the challenges they face, the poems also celebrate resilience, solidarity, and the power of community support. "To Every Suicidal Trans Kid" by Sonder offers words of encouragement and solidarity to those struggling with their mental health, emphasizing the importance of visibility and acceptance within the LGBTQ+ community. Megha Rao's "Kochu's Bride-seeing" explores the theme of resilience through the lens of cultural and familial expectations, highlighting the strength of individuals in navigating societal pressures and norms.

- **Isolation and Alienation:** The experience of isolation and alienation is a recurring theme in many LGBTQ+ poems, reflecting the struggles of individuals who feel marginalized or ostracized by society. In "Behind Our Tears" by Keaton, the protagonist grapples with a sense of loneliness and isolation, finding solace only in the privacy of their own thoughts. Similarly, in "Kochu's Bride-seeing" by Megha Rao, the protagonist's brother experiences a disconnect between societal expectations and their own identity, leading to feelings of guilt and isolation. The theme of isolation underscores the importance of community and acceptance in fostering mental well-being among LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Self-Discovery and Identity:** Self-discovery and identity formation are central themes in many LGBTQ+ poems, as individuals navigate their journey of understanding and accepting their true selves. In "Oh to Be a Boy" by Avery Korth, the protagonist grapples with gender dysphoria and the struggle to reconcile their internal identity with societal expectations. Similarly, in "Dysphoria Days" by Ray Store, the protagonist reflects on their experiences of dysphoria and the process of self-discovery. The theme of self-discovery highlights the importance of introspection and self-acceptance in achieving mental well-being and authenticity.
- **Resilience and Empowerment:** Despite facing adversity and discrimination, many LGBTQ+ individuals demonstrate remarkable resilience and empowerment in their journey toward self-acceptance and liberation. In "The Black queer poet" by Quan, the protagonist celebrates their identity as a black queer poet, embracing their multifaceted identity with pride and defiance. Similarly, in "Queer Youth Are 5 Times Likely to Die by Suicide" by Andrea Gibson, the speaker channels their pain into activism and advocacy, refusing to be silenced by the systemic injustices they face. The theme of

resilience underscores the strength and resilience of LGBTQ+ communities in the face of adversity.

- **Intersectionality and Social Justice:** Intersectionality, or the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, and sexuality, is a prominent theme in many LGBTQ+ poems, highlighting the diverse and complex identities within the community. In "The Black queer poet" by Quan, the protagonist navigates the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, confronting systemic oppression while advocating for social justice and equality. Similarly, in "To Every Suicidal Trans Kid" by Sonder, the speaker addresses the unique challenges faced by transgender individuals, particularly those from marginalized communities. The theme of intersectionality emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing the intersecting forms of oppression faced by LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Acceptance and Belonging:** The quest for acceptance and belonging is a fundamental human need, and it is a central theme in many LGBTQ+ poems as individuals seek validation and affirmation of their identities. In "Dysphoria Days" by Ray Store, the protagonist longs for acceptance and understanding from others, grappling with the societal pressures to conform to binary gender norms. Similarly, in "Oh to Be a Boy" by Avery Korth, the protagonist yearns for acceptance and validation of their gender identity, struggling to find a sense of belonging in a world that often invalidates their experiences. The theme of acceptance highlights the importance of creating inclusive and affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals to thrive and flourish.

Techniques

- Imagery:** Vivid imagery is used to evoke sensory experiences and convey the complexities of identity and emotions. For example, in "Dysphoria Days" by Ray Store, the metaphor of trying to fit into ill-fitting clothing serves as a powerful allegory for the struggle of conforming to societal norms. Similarly, in "The Black queer poet" by Quan, rich imagery such as "rainbows of sunshine rest in our pockets" paints a vivid picture of resilience and creativity amidst adversity.
- Tone:** The tone of a poem sets the overall mood and atmosphere, influencing how readers interpret and engage with the text. In "The Black queer poet" by Quan, the tone oscillates between defiance and vulnerability, reflecting the poet's resilience in the face of systemic oppression while also acknowledging the emotional toll of discrimination. Similarly, in "Kochu's Bride-seeing" by Megha Rao, the tone is tinged with irony and satire, offering a critique of traditional gender roles and societal expectations within a cultural context. The use of tone adds layers of complexity to the poems, inviting readers to reflect on the emotional nuances of the LGBTQ+ experience.
- Narrative Technique:** Narrative technique refers to the structure and storytelling devices employed to convey the poem's message and evoke reader engagement. In "Dysphoria Days" by Ray Store, the narrative unfolds through a series of vignettes, each depicting a moment of dysphoria and self-reflection. This episodic structure allows the poet to explore different facets of the protagonist's identity and experiences, creating a sense of intimacy and immediacy for the reader. Conversely, "Queer Youth Are 5 Times Likely to Die by Suicide" by Andrea Gibson employs a more direct and confrontational narrative style, drawing the reader into the urgency of the issue through vivid descriptions and rhetorical questions. By varying narrative techniques, poets can

effectively capture the complexities of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, drawing readers into the lived experiences of marginalized individuals.

- **Symbolism:** Symbolism is the use of symbols to represent abstract concepts or themes within a poem. In "Behind Our Tears" by Keaton, tears and confinement serve as powerful symbols of emotional and psychological burdens carried by LGBTQ+ individuals in the face of societal prejudice. Similarly, in "Oh to Be a Boy" by Avery Korth, the metaphor of scratching one's face off symbolizes the internal struggle of gender dysphoria and the longing for self-acceptance. Symbolism adds depth and resonance to the poems, allowing poets to convey complex emotions and ideas in a succinct and evocative manner. In "Queer Youth Are 5 Times Likely to Die by Suicide" by Andrea Gibson, the metaphor of replacing blades with flowers symbolizes the transformative power of self-love and acceptance. Likewise, in "Behind Our Tears" by Keaton, tears and confinement are used as symbols of emotional and psychological burdens carried by LGBTQ+ individuals in the face of societal prejudice.
- **Sound Devices:** Sound devices such as rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration can enhance the musicality and impact of a poem. In "Queer Youth Are 5 Times Likely to Die by Suicide" by Andrea Gibson, the use of internal rhyme and repetition creates a sense of urgency and momentum, driving home the gravity of the poem's message. Similarly, in "LGBT Suicide" by Rains of Bloom, the rhythmic cadence of the poem mirrors the emotional intensity of the speaker's experiences, drawing the reader into their inner world. By incorporating sound devices, poets can evoke visceral responses and heighten the emotional impact of their work
- **Repetition:** The use of repetition is employed to emphasize key themes and motifs, creating a sense of rhythm and resonance within the poems. In "To Every Suicidal Trans Kid" by Sonder, the repetition of phrases like "you are not alone" serves to reinforce

the message of solidarity and support. Similarly, in "Queer Youth Are 5 Times Likely to Die by Suicide" by Andrea Gibson, the repetition of the phrase "five times more likely" underscores the magnitude of the issue and highlights the urgency of addressing mental health disparities within marginalized communities.

3.3 Investigating the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and poetry

In the exploration of LGBTQ+ identity intertwined with mental health within these poems, a profound intersection emerges, offering insight into the intricate experiences of individuals navigating their gender identities and emotional well-being. Through the lens of poetry, these works delve into the complexities of self-expression, societal pressures, and internal struggles faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, shedding light on the profound impact of these intersections on mental health outcomes.

The poems provide a platform for exploring the multifaceted dimensions of LGBTQ+ identity and the challenges that arise in reconciling one's authentic self with societal expectations and norms. Within this exploration, themes of dysphoria, stigma, resilience, and empowerment emerge, painting a nuanced portrait of the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals grappling with their identities and mental health. Central to the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health is the experience of dysphoria, as depicted in "Dysphoria Days" by Ray Stove and "Oh to be a Boy!" by Avery Korth. These poems offer poignant reflections on the profound discomfort and distress experienced by individuals whose gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth. Through vivid imagery and emotive language, the poets convey the visceral nature of dysphoria and its profound impact on mental well-being.

The internal conflict and longing for self-acceptance portrayed in these works underscore the significant toll that gender dysphoria can take on an individual's mental health.

Furthermore, the poems highlight the pervasive influence of societal attitudes and stigma on the mental health of LGBTQ+ individuals. In "To Every Suicidal Trans Kid" by Sonder, the speaker grapples with the societal pressures and discrimination faced by transgender individuals, confronting the sobering reality of high rates of suicide within the community. Similarly, in "Behind Our Tears" by Keaton, the speaker reflects on the impact of societal norms and discrimination on queer love, underscoring the emotional toll of living in a world that marginalizes and stigmatizes LGBTQ+ identities. These poems illuminate the external forces that contribute to feelings of isolation, shame, and despair among LGBTQ+ individuals, exacerbating mental health challenges.

Amidst these struggles, themes of resilience and empowerment emerge, offering glimpses of hope and strength within the narratives of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health. In "To Every Suicidal Trans Kid," the speaker asserts their resilience in the face of adversity, finding solace in their identity and community. Similarly, in "Behind Our Tears," the speaker celebrates the resilience of queer love in the face of tragedy, highlighting the power of love to transcend societal barriers and discrimination. These poems serve as reminders of the resilience and courage exhibited by LGBTQ+ individuals in confronting adversity and advocating for their rights and well-being. The intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health depicted in these poems underscores the importance of creating supportive and inclusive environments for individuals to explore and express their authentic selves. By challenging stigma, promoting awareness, and fostering acceptance, society can play a crucial role in mitigating the mental health disparities faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. Additionally, providing access to affirming

mental health care and support services is essential in addressing the unique needs of this population and promoting positive mental health outcomes.

The poems examined offer poignant reflections on the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, illuminating the profound challenges and struggles faced by individuals navigating issues of gender identity, societal norms, and emotional well-being. Through emotive language, vivid imagery, and themes of dysphoria, stigma, resilience, and empowerment, these works provide a glimpse into the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals and underscore the importance of creating supportive and inclusive environments to promote positive mental health outcomes within the community.

Chapter 4: Findings and analysis

4.1 Presenting the findings of the questionnaire

This dissertation aims at unveiling the inner emotions of the people belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. It is a study based to familiarize ourselves with the mental wellbeing of a queer person and comprehend on the reasons that shapes one's identity. There are various reasons in the entire universe but the biggest one is the society that shapes the growth, personality and the identity of a person. Society as a thing, is the strongest force to influence any human being for a man is a social being and is required to be among people and communicate with others for his survival; as the great saying goes "*No man is an island*" by John Donne. Therefore, to understand the impact of society on LGBTQ+ community and to know the amount of awareness in the society about the former, this questionnaire carefully curated and carried out. There were 126 responses received for the survey which vary in their perceptions. The survey has tried to reach out to various kinds of people, community and gender. Here, given below are some key findings from the questionnaire created.

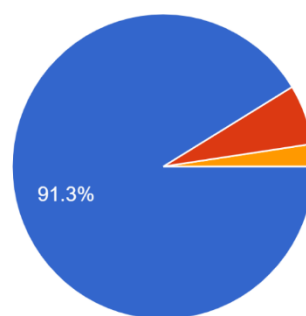


Fig. 4.1

The figure given above is a representation of the number of people who are aware of what LGBTQ+ is. It is a pleasant thing to know that the majority of the people are aware about the community. The initial questions in the questionnaire were about their age, gender and occupation. The questionnaire was open for people from every age group, any occupation, any social strata or background. The main of this survey was to gather a wide range of perception about LGBTQ+. The response was pretty good. The fact that people know about LGBTQ+, makes it easier to get better and broader range of views.

When it came to the next question, there were only 51.7% of people who strongly agreed and 34.9% who agreed that LGBTQ+ individuals have the right to freely express themselves, while the rest of them disagreed with the statement. In response to the question, “Have you ever read or watched any of the works of the individuals belonging to the LGBTQ+ community?”, it was known that 57.1% of the people have been known to their works and there is 27% who haven’t come across any of their work, which shows that LGBTQ+ literature, movies or other commercials require that recognition to contribute to the awareness among people for the society should be updated with all that goes on in the world. Furthermore 58.7% of the population voted for the idea that representation of LGBTQ+ in media is very important while 34.9% of the people believe that it is somewhat important and a very small portion doesn’t support this idea at all.

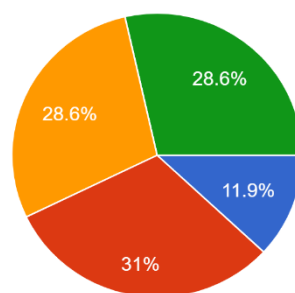


Fig. 4. 2

The chart given above depicts the different percentage of people who have witnessed discrimination or ill treatment against LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace, educational institution or anywhere else. 11% of the people have frequently witnessed ill treatment towards LGBTQ+ individuals, while there are 31% of the people who have witnessed it occasionally, while the other percentage of the people were not sure or either never witnessed. Similarly in the following question, only 19% of the respondents have frequently and 19.8% have occasionally witnessed exclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in religious or cultural communities and large section of people. In reference to the next two questions, people showed a satisfactory amount of support for the questions which asked about the necessity of legal protection laws and whether the government should place importance on policies that protect LGBTQ+ right. There was 45.2% and 47.6% of strong agreement for each question along with 42.9% and 38.9% of the people who agreed to with each question.

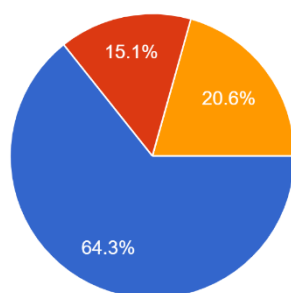


Fig. 4.3

The Fig 4.3, depicts that a major section of the respondents truly believe that educational institutions should incorporate LGBTQ+ topics into their curriculum while only 15.1% do not support this idea and 20.6% of the people are not sure about it. In a similar way, even in the next question, which was about the how important do they think it is for the society to actively support LGBTQ+ rights, majority of the people (63.5%) considered it very important while on the other hand only 7.1% did not support the same. In one of the latter questions, 52.4% of the people are very accepting of the LGBTQ+ community, 39.7% are neutral about it and a minor portion of the chart doesn't support them at all. These series of

questions have proved that a good portion of the people in the society have a positive impression of the LGBTQ+ community but there are others who are yet not aware about this community and a few who are strongly against it. To add on, from the last two questions which was a multiple choice question and a subjective question, people have quite genuinely given their honest reviews about LGBTQ+. Most of them believe that people in that community face the issue of unacceptance (67.5%), discrimination (66.7%) and social stigma (60.3%). These three problems received the most votes and stand as a reason that cause trouble or are the major challenges for the LGBTQ+ community. Later in the order people have selected less employment opportunities, lack of recognition, and lack of healthcare facilities are the challenges that they face. People have also shared their honest views and opinions to create a safer and acceptable environment for LGBTQ+ individuals. Their views varied a lot but there were many who stressed on the idea of education and creating awareness by spreading proper and positive information about them. Also, the authorities need to involve these topics in schools college and other educational levels is what most of the people shared their ideas on. There were some who believe that, at least on the grounds of humanity, people should be empathetic and treat them as equals and not differentiate them just for their gender fluidity. These ideas and views from people have contributed extensively in this research for they have shared important information about LGBTQ+ and also provided on a lower scale a reflection of the larger society.

4.2 Drawing inferences from the data collected

In the ever-evolving tapestry of human society, the perceptions and attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community occupy a significant and evolving space. Understanding these perceptions isn't just a matter of academic inquiry; it's a critical step towards fostering

inclusivity, combating discrimination, and championing human rights. As our global community navigates the complexities of gender identity and sexual orientation, empirical data emerges as a powerful tool for deciphering the intricate nuances that underpin societal attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals.

Our journey into this realm of inquiry began with a recognition of the multifaceted nature of public opinion. LGBTQ+ issues intersect with a myriad of factors, including culture, religion, politics, socio-economic status, and personal experience. To capture this complexity, we embarked on a comprehensive data collection process, employing a meticulously crafted questionnaire designed to solicit candid responses from a diverse array of voices. The methodology we employed was guided by principles of inclusivity and representation. Recognizing the importance of diverse perspectives, we sought participation from individuals spanning various demographic backgrounds, geographical locations, and socio-economic strata.

The questionnaire itself was crafted with careful attention to language and sensitivity. Recognizing the diverse spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations within the LGBTQ+ community, we utilized terminology that respected and acknowledged this diversity. Questions were designed to elicit nuanced responses, probing not only for explicit attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals but also for the underlying beliefs, values, and experiences that shape those attitudes.

The DA received was as varied as the individuals who provided them, offering a rich mosaic of perspectives on LGBTQ+ issues. Some respondents expressed unwavering support and solidarity, championing the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ individuals. Others articulated

more ambivalent sentiments, grappling with questions of acceptance, tolerance, and personal belief. And still, there were those whose responses reflected scepticism, misunderstanding, or outright hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community.

Navigating this diverse landscape of opinions required a nuanced and rigorous approach to data analysis. Our goal was not merely to quantify attitudes but to uncover the underlying narratives and ideologies that shape them. By delving beneath the surface of the raw data, we aimed to reveal the intricate web of factors that inform societal perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals. One of the key themes that emerged from our analysis was the role of education in shaping attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. Respondents who reported higher levels of education tended to exhibit greater levels of acceptance and support, suggesting that exposure to diverse perspectives and critical thinking skills may play a crucial role in fostering empathy and understanding. Religious beliefs also emerged as a significant factor influencing attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals.

Respondents who identified as religious tended to exhibit a more conservative outlook, with some expressing views that were explicitly opposed to LGBTQ+ rights and equality. However, it's important to note that this trend was not universal, and there were many religious individuals who expressed support for LGBTQ+ rights, citing principles of love, compassion, and inclusivity within their faith traditions. This nuanced understanding highlights the diversity of religious perspectives on LGBTQ+ issues and underscores the potential for dialogue and reconciliation between religious and LGBTQ+ communities. Personal relationships also played a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals. Respondents who reported knowing someone who identified as LGBTQ+ were more likely to express positive attitudes and beliefs, suggesting that personal familiarity and empathy play a crucial role in fostering understanding and acceptance. This

finding underscores the power of individual stories and experiences in challenging stereotypes and fostering empathy.

Furthermore, our analysis revealed significant disparities in attitudes towards different segments of the LGBTQ+ community. While some respondents expressed broad support for LGBTQ+ rights in general, there were instances where specific identities or expressions of gender and sexuality were met with greater resistance or scepticism. Transgender and non-binary individuals, in particular, were often the targets of discrimination and prejudice, reflecting broader societal challenges around gender identity and expression.

Chapter 5: Reviewing the key findings and insights of the research

The importance of uncovering inner emotions through poetry cannot be overstated. Through poetry, individuals especially the LGBTQ+ individuals can delve into the complexities of their inner worlds, confront difficult emotions, and gain insight into their own psyche. One of the key benefits of uncovering inner emotions through poetry is the opportunity for self-discovery and personal growth. By delving into the depths of their emotions, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their values, and their experiences. Through poetry, individuals can explore aspects of their identity, confront unresolved issues, and embark on a journey of self-exploration and self-acceptance.

Moreover, uncovering inner emotions through poetry can be a cathartic and healing process. Poetry provides a safe and creative outlet for individuals to express and process their emotions, allowing them to release pent-up feelings and find solace in the act of writing. Whether grappling with grief, trauma, or anxiety, poetry offers a means of coping and finding meaning in the face of adversity. By sharing their innermost thoughts and emotions through poetry, individuals can forge connections with others who may have had similar experiences or emotions. Poetry has the ability to transcend boundaries of language, culture, and lived experience, creating a sense of shared humanity and understanding. In addition, uncovering inner emotions through poetry can be an act of resistance and empowerment. In a world that often discourages vulnerability and emotional expression, poetry provides a platform for individuals to reclaim their voices and assert their truths. Through poetry, individuals can challenge societal norms, confront injustices, and advocate for social change.

Overall, the importance of uncovering inner emotions through poetry lies in its ability to foster self-discovery, healing, connection, and empowerment. As individuals engage with poetry, they embark on a journey of self-exploration and expression, gaining insight into their own inner worlds and forging connections with others. In a world that can often feel chaotic and overwhelming, poetry offers a beacon of light, guiding individuals towards greater understanding, acceptance, and authenticity.

5.1 Implications for mental health and advocacy

The exploration of the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health in poetry carries significant implications for mental health and advocacy. Through an analysis of various poems within this context, it becomes evident that poetry serves as a powerful medium for individuals to express their innermost thoughts, emotions, and struggles related to their LGBTQ+ identity and mental health. This dissertation has shed light on the complexities of navigating these intersecting identities and the profound impact they can have on an individual's well-being. One of the key implications for mental health stemming from this exploration is the importance of validation and visibility. Many LGBTQ+ individuals face stigma, discrimination, and marginalization, which can significantly impact their mental health. Poetry that addresses these experiences not only validates the lived realities of LGBTQ+ individuals but also provides a sense of visibility and representation. When individuals see their experiences reflected in poetry, it can help validate their feelings and experiences, reducing feelings of isolation and alienation.

Poetry offers a safe space for individuals to explore and process their thoughts and feelings, allowing them to find solace and empowerment in the act of creative expression.

Furthermore, the exploration of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health in poetry has implications for advocacy and social change. Through poetry, individuals can raise awareness about the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in relation to mental health. Poetry has the power to humanize these experiences, making them more accessible and relatable to a wider audience. By sharing their stories through poetry, individuals can challenge stereotypes, combat stigma, and advocate for greater understanding and support for LGBTQ+ mental health issues. Additionally, poetry can serve as a catalyst for social change by amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and advocating for policy reforms. Through spoken word performances, poetry slams, and online platforms, poets can reach diverse audiences and engage in advocacy efforts to promote LGBTQ+ mental health awareness and support. Poetry has the ability to spark important conversations, mobilize communities, and inspire action towards creating more inclusive and supportive environments for LGBTQ+ individuals.

The implications for mental health and advocacy in connection to society are multifaceted and profound. Mental health is an integral aspect of overall well-being, and the societal context in which individuals live plays a significant role in shaping mental health outcomes. By understanding and addressing the societal factors that influence mental health, we can work towards creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for all individuals. The recognition of the impact of systemic inequalities and social determinants of health. Socioeconomic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to healthcare can have a significant impact on mental health outcomes. Marginalized communities, including people of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and individuals with disabilities, are disproportionately affected by these systemic inequalities, leading to disparities in mental health outcomes.

Moreover, societal attitudes and stigma surrounding mental health can contribute to negative perceptions and discrimination towards individuals with mental illness. Stigma can prevent individuals from seeking help and accessing appropriate treatment, exacerbating mental health issues and contributing to social isolation. By challenging stigma and promoting awareness and understanding of mental health issues, we can create a more supportive and inclusive society where individuals feel empowered to seek help and support. The role of advocacy in promoting mental health and well-being cannot be overstated. Advocacy efforts play a crucial role in raising awareness of mental health issues, advocating for policy change, and promoting access to mental health services and support. Advocacy organizations and grassroots movements play a vital role in amplifying the voices of individuals with lived experience, advocating for their rights, and challenging discriminatory practices and policies.

In addition, the importance of intersectionality in mental health advocacy cannot be ignored. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals hold multiple social identities that intersect and interact with one another, shaping their experiences of oppression and privilege. Mental health advocacy efforts must take into account the intersecting factors that influence mental health outcomes, including race, gender, sexuality, disability, and socioeconomic status. By adopting an intersectional approach to advocacy, we can ensure that the needs of all individuals are addressed and that advocacy efforts are inclusive and equitable.

The promotion of mental health and well-being requires collaboration and partnership across sectors, including government, healthcare, education, and community organizations. By working together, we can develop comprehensive strategies to promote mental health, prevent mental illness, and address the underlying social determinants of health. This may include implementing policies that promote mental health literacy, providing funding for mental health

services and support programs, and creating supportive environments that foster resilience and well-being.

Finally, the importance of destigmatizing mental health issues and promoting open dialogue cannot be overstated. By fostering a culture of acceptance, understanding, and support, we can create a society where individuals feel empowered to seek help and support for their mental health concerns without fear of judgment or discrimination. Mental health advocacy efforts must prioritize promoting mental health literacy, challenging stigma, and promoting access to culturally competent and inclusive mental health services. Thus, by addressing systemic inequalities, challenging stigma, promoting awareness, and advocating for policy change, we can work towards creating a more supportive and inclusive society where mental health is prioritized, and all individuals have the opportunity to thrive. It is only through collective action and commitment that we can create a society where mental health is valued, and all individuals have access to the care and support they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

5.2 Emphasis on the scope of this research on society

The intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health has emerged as a critical area of study, prompting discussions, research, and advocacy efforts worldwide. This intersection delves into the complex interplay between one's sexual orientation, gender identity, and mental well-being, shedding light on the unique challenges and experiences faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in navigating their mental health journeys. The LGBTQ+ community faces a myriad of challenges, including social stigma, discrimination, violence, and lack of legal protections. These stressors can significantly impact mental health, leading to higher rates of

depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. Moreover, the intersectionality of LGBTQ+ identity with other marginalized identities, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, further exacerbates these challenges.

Research consistently demonstrates the adverse effects of societal prejudice and discrimination on LGBTQ+ individuals' mental health. Minority stress theory highlights how chronic exposure to stigma and prejudice contributes to psychological distress, leading to disparities in mental health outcomes. Moreover, internalized homophobia, transphobia, and shame can further compound these challenges, hindering help-seeking behaviours and access to affirming mental health care. Despite the pressing need for mental health support within the LGBTQ+ community, various barriers hinder access to inclusive and affirming care. These barriers include lack of culturally competent providers, fear of discrimination in healthcare settings, financial constraints, and limited access to gender-affirming treatments. Additionally, the pathologizing of LGBTQ+ identities within psychiatric discourse historically has perpetuated harmful stereotypes and hindered affirming care practices.

Recognizing the intersectionality of LGBTQ+ identity underscores the importance of adopting holistic approaches to mental health care. Intersectional frameworks acknowledge the interconnected nature of various social identities and experiences, emphasizing the need for inclusive and culturally responsive interventions. Incorporating diverse perspectives, promoting social justice initiatives, and addressing structural inequalities are integral components of fostering mental health equity within the LGBTQ+ community. Efforts to address mental health disparities among LGBTQ+ individuals require multifaceted approaches encompassing policy reforms, institutional changes, and community-driven initiatives. Policy measures aimed at protecting LGBTQ+ rights, combating discrimination, and expanding access to affirming care are paramount. Moreover, investment in LGBTQ+ affirmative mental

health services, provider training programs, and research funding can further advance this agenda.

Exploring the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and mental health illuminates the intricate interplay between social context, identity formation, and psychological well-being. By acknowledging the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals and advocating for inclusive and affirming mental health care, society can foster resilience, promote social justice, and uphold the fundamental rights of all individuals to thrive authentically. Embracing diversity, challenging stigma, and amplifying LGBTQ+ voices are essential steps towards creating a more equitable and compassionate society for all.

In conclusion, this dissertation has tried to bring out the hidden emotions through the poems by giving a larger perspective through the interplay of the intersectional theory, which brought out the cultural and social aspects to light, that affect the mental well being of an LGBTQ+ individual and also shapes one's identity. Furthermore, by the end of the study is clear that LGBTQ+ individuals use poetry as powerful medium that reflects their inner emotions and mental health but at the same time this act of self- expression offers to create awareness, empathy and promote acceptance towards the LGBTQ+ community in the society.

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Appendix I

Poems

1) *Kochu's Bride-seeing* by Megha Rao

When the bride walks in,
our mothers talk about her gold.
My brother looks away guiltily
as they tease him.
They share horoscopes.
Discuss auspicious dates.
All this while, he pretends
His dhoti is a skirt.

2) *LGBT Suicide* by Rains of bloom

Darling stands by the sidelines
corner of the football field
the team gathers, speaking words of
the 'go, go away.

she stood in the locker room
in the tennis field

they say don't look-
you're gay.

maybe it is wrong (and it probably is
doesn't mean you should hate on it
discriminate all your people,
Then who will be your friends?

if you do something wrong
would no one still be your friend?
if you cheated once
Does that mean you'll cheat again?

She's gay,
she admits it openly
she's hurt
by the HOLY white observants

3 o'clock noon by the team lockers
come in, rise 2 a halt;
stop.
FAGOT,

the nerves these children possess
cruelty, she will never forget

home in 20 minutes
face wracked with tears
home, can't help crying
kill or be killed from pain.
fagot, gay, lady lover

she takes some rope
ties the fisherman knot
opens the hook, hangs it from the window
and jumps.

hospital bed
Wi-Fi internet
Facebook says
'Better luck next time'

3) *Queer youth are 5 times likely to die by suicide* by Andrea Gibson

Queer youth are five times
More likely to die by suicide

Means You leave 5 times harder
Then you should have had to
To Still have a body when
You graduated High school.
Means hate worked five times harder
To make your spirit, it's wishbone
Means when your mother asked
What was wrong
You were five times more likely
To believe you would lose her
If you spoke the truth,
Means you were told 5 times more often,
You would go to hell when you died.
It means burning for eternity
Seemed five times more to doable
Then another day in school lunch room
Means you were five times more incline
The triple padlock your diary
Means you were five times more likely
To stop writing your story down means,
I write my heart out now,
I have graffitied billboards

With the page of my diary,
The bullies start the rumors with,
I tie the page to the end of the kite string
And run a crooked line
Through the straightest mile of the Bible belt
That page is a protest sign
That page is a bandana
Washing the tear gas
Out of my lovers' eyes
Queer youth are five times
More likely to die by suicide
Means I sneak into fascist sleepovers
And sharpie my pronounce
Under the faces of senators
Who voted to criminalize
My kisses when I was 19
I cut hate out of my mail
And papier-mache Christmas
Ornaments of queer couples
Whose parents do not want
To know they are grandchildren.
I hack High school curriculums

And delete every test that does not ask
Watch the P in Marsha P. Johnson stands for
I walk through graveyards with a chisel
Correcting the names of trans kids
Whose family said no when
Asked why you just let me leave?
I pace the suburbs was spray paint
Editing the welcome mats of homophobes
Until they all speak the truth
The they personally burned
The roof over the heads of
Queer youth, are five times
More likely to die by suicide
Means there were days I
Thirst for my own silence
But walk through the desert
Screaming instead because I
Like most of my queer
Friends don't have a child,
I have millions from Nebraska to Chechnya
To the Baptist Church where I grow up,
My pride in them is a parade

I know I won't keep all of them alive
But I keep cutting my diary into confetti
To throw at their hopes
When they float by scared
Or furious or laughing
Or in love and desperate
For the headline to say
Queer youth five times more likely to
Offer to walk they are younger
Siblings home after school
To notice the difference
Accents of sparrows
To find an eyelash and spend 20 minutes
Trying to pick what wish for
5 times more likely to
Never outgrow blanket forts
To know there was a word
For the sent in the air after it rains
To see lifelines, look like telephone wires
And call a friend who is having a bad day,
Five times more likely to adore
The Last man who worked on the moon,

Just because he wrote his
Daughters initials there
To know there was no universe
In which they would not be
Proud of the own children,
Queer youth are more likely
To see you,
How you dream of seeing yourself
To write something in your yearbook
That will get you through next decade
To spot a stranger crying
And ask if there's anything
They can do to help,
Five times more likely
need us to do the same.

4) *To ever suicidal trans kid* by Sonder

I am here with you
we exist in a world not made
For us called freaks, cold deceptive
Called kill yourself.
We don't understand

What we did wrong
We hide in closets
more like coffins hope to God or
Something that we will be able to escape
This wooden prison one day but it's not safe out there
It's so much soil holding us down and
Every time we move another splinter and
Enters our bodies somehow.
We exist on cliffs, not holding on for enough
Of us to survive.
One in three transgender people will attempt suicide
In the age of 20 I may or may not be one of those
I know not to blame myself if
You're over the age tomorrow weather
You're jumping or falling it's not my fault
if I can keep my arms around your
Waist to hold you your instead of
Letting you tumble yourself into
Becoming a pile of little broken stars and
How to lace on the pavement today
Newspaper headlines tomorrow that would
The enough for me.

If I can steal your
Blades and replace them with flowers
I would be a happy boy that is until you find a
New way to spill bed
Our average lifespan is about 23 to 30 years
Quickly dropping, rustle with the
Uncomfortable fact that the world
Doesn't care until we are already dead
until we are a headline if we even make it up that far.
But dear listen to the soft whisper of
Your heart beating and remember the
Complexity of your distance.
Every cell dividing every organ working
together in harmony, remember
that you are spawning is a strongest spider suck
Your hands are graceful even if they shatter glass
Your body is a form just a form
Just for clumsy and an expertly
Carved the thing of the shapes that
Makes the arcs and curves when you move
The way it crumbles and folds when
Your tired or prone or empty you think

Of the shapes it makes it rests
the ones to makes by your command
It's not an easy thing to let yourself live in your
On body certainly for some of us it's
Near impossible but you will survive in
This body with this body such as those
Who decide if our bodies are not valid.
Eat chew your words carefully like
Communion crackers holy meaningless and
Flammable and to be drowned in wine.
Will shallow our fears dry because
Overcoming nature is opposed to hurt for
A little while. Derk nerves like whiskey
Fast and thoughtless it will always be a
Little tough to hold down a liquid
Courage takes the pain in and crush it
Between your hard-won teeth
pull into yourself because it can't hurt you
if you own it.

5) *Dysphoria days* by Ray Store

Today my skin does not fit.

Me nothing's really wrong it just feels
like a shirt when the shoulders are a
little too small, like pants cut a little
Too short the fabric pulls tight in all
The wrong places and I keep trying to
Stretch it out but I can't can't can't
Get my body inside it, maybe I shouldn't
Be trying to wear this at all, may be some
Part of me needs to be cut a way and sewn
Up again and maybe then I'd feel comfortable
In this skin.

Get me Taylor
tear out the seams and remake me
Into something the world can understand
I am so tired of being told I am not
Real when I am standing in front of you
So tired of having to explain myself
When you will never need to
note to self, making yourself visible does not
Mean you will be seen
you will tell people your correct
Gender pronoun over and over and over

Until you wonder if you are speaking the
Right language because it seems like
They can't understand, you these sheets
Fall from their mouth like drop stitches
Mistakes in a pattern they
Don't even realize they are following
I'm so tired of hearing
Apologies yes, I know you known me a
Long time yes, I know you are trying yes
I know my gender is hard for you to
Remember believe me I know, I have spent
My whole life forgetting myself fitting
Myself into boxes bending over backwards
For someone else's standard, shrinking
Myself a size too small to pretending
It felt right
This is not an alteration
This is mending
I am not becoming someone
Else after all these years of
Reflection I want to look in the
Mirror and see

Myself.

6) *The Black queer poet by Quan*

To be a black queer poet is to be a savior

And sacrifice

Martin and Rosa educated in the

Masculine and feminine marching rose

With an iron fist as rainbows of

Sunshine rest in our pockets we have

Been told that we are the leftovers of America

But we are magic.

Crafting spells and colliding two worlds

Into one so we all can learn to love

To be a black queer poet is to remind

People I do not choose my blackness or

My queerness, I am not one or the other

Rather a perfect Symphony of both

Scars of racism and homophobia haunt me

Dreams. I remember my most painful scars

Comes from those who look like me

To be a black queer poet is to take your

Wounds turn them into art that makes the

World uncomfortable and become the
 Activists for those overlooked to forgive
 Those who spit on your grave
 Before you even had a chance to rest in
 Peace, see we have forgiven our oppressors
 Our family's culture and society and we
 Come to heal
 Educate and motivate for the day will
 Come when black and queer stand as one
 And the great words of Dr king will ring
 Free at last
 Free at last
 Thank God almighty
 We are free at last

7) *Behind our tears* by Keaton

Lights dim and life's grim, just another night in confinement
 In this death box meant for refinement, survival is my only assignment
 Here, under my blanket, it's safe for me to let loose and cry
 It's safe for me to dream about you, for I know no one will pry
 But that safety is a double-edged sword, for with it comes all my painful
 memories,

Memories of your fate, and how our destinies had different trajectories
Memories of your face, and its lifelessness as you lay on the street
Memories of us, and the price we paid for the love we couldn't keep
discreet

Even though I'm locked up, I've never felt an ounce of regret
I only wish that I'd perhaps kept our love a hidden secret
We always knew that there'd be a sad story behind our tears
But we kept on with our love irregardless of our fears
They tortured us for being queers, but we still kept on loving
Now you're no longer here, and I'm the only one left grieving
Sometimes I wonder whose outcome is better in the long run
Even though I came out alive, am I really the lucky one?

You're death was so undignified that it haunts me to this day
While you're killers were cheered, fourteen years was my price to pay
Now I'm here, in this bed, where I weep till, I fall asleep
With memories of our tragic love being the clip that I'm left to keep
No, there lies not a sad story behind our tears
There's only a story of courage amidst discouragement and prowess amidst
oppression.

8) *Oh, to be a boy* by Avery Korth

The problems with me

Are my bones and my chest,

In addition, my shoulders

Make me feel like a mess.

My voice doesn't sound like mine at all,

And I wish I'd be a bit taller.

The look of my face makes me want to scratch it off

You mean to tell me that's not everyone's thought?

I can't quite find the right words to pick,

But I know this body makes me feel sick.

Dysphoria isn't a game, my dear,

Not even my hands feel right at me

Sometimes I can't even look down and see

If I could just...without fear...

I'm taking my nails and scratching my skin,

'Till blood comes out and makes my head spin

At least that way I gain some control,

Over my pain though, not over my soul.

My soul doesn't quite like this body I'm in
Maybe if I'd get rid of this stupid fucking skin!

I know everybody feels unwell at times,
But I'm fighting against my own suicide
Not just today and the day before. I feel like, at the very core,
Not being born at all would be a greater joy
But if I were to choose, I'd choose to be a boy.

Appendix II

Multifaceted approach towards LGBTQ+

1) Do you know what LGBTQ+ refers to?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

2) Do you believe LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other) individuals have the right to express themselves freely?

- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3) Have you ever read or watched any of the works of the individuals belonging to the LGBTQ+ community?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

4) Do you feel comfortable to participate in discussions or conversations regarding LGBTQ+

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

5) Do you think LGBTQ+ representation in media is important?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

6) Have you witnessed any discrimination or ill treatment against LGBTQ+ individuals in your workplace, educational institution or anywhere else?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Not sure
- Never

7) Have you ever witnessed or experience exclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals within religious or cultural communities?

- Frequently
- Occasionally

- Not sure
- Never

8) Do you believe that they should be legal protection laws for the LGBTQ+ community?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree

9) Do you think the government should play importance on policies that protect LGBTQ+ rights?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10) Do you think educational institutions should incorporate LGBTQ+ topics into their curriculum?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

11) How important do you think it is for society to actively support LGBTQ+ rights?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

12) In your opinion what are the biggest challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in the society?

- No acceptance
- Discrimination
- Lack of healthcare facilities
- Social stigma
- Less employment opportunities
- Lack of recognition
- Other

13) How would you describe your level of acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community?

- Very accepting
- Neutral
- Not accepting

14) In your opinion, how do you think one could create a safe and acceptable environment for the LGBTQ+ individuals?