



**QUEER STUDIES & EDUCATION**

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# Queer Social Movements and Outreach Work in Schools

A Global Perspective

*Edited by*  
Dennis A. Francis  
Jón Ingvar Kjaran  
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# Queer Studies and Education

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Jukka Lehtonen  
Editors

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# Introduction: The Synergistic Potential of the Outreach Work and Activism of Queer Social Movements and Schools

*Dennis A. Francis*<sup>ORCID</sup>, *Jukka Lehtonen*<sup>ORCID</sup>  
and *Jón Ingvar Kjaran*<sup>ORCID</sup>

The idea for this edited book began in Helsinki in 2018 where the editors participated on a panel at an educational conference discussing heteronormativity and schooling. A key thread in the research presentations was the frustrations and difficulty many teachers felt in broaching the teaching of counter normative gender and sexualities in the classroom or intervening

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to stop homophobic and transphobic bullying and harassment. In fact the corpus of international research resonates this frustrations and tells how teachers and school managers need opportunities for professional development on how they respond to issues of sexuality and gender diversity (Baruch-Dominguez, Infante-Xibille, & Saloma-Zuñiga, 2016; Carrara, Nascimento, Duque, & Tramontano, 2016; Francis et al., 2018; Kjaran & Lehtonen, 2017; Smith, 2018; UNESCO, 2016). Scholars researching the field of gender, sexuality, and schooling contend that in some school contexts heterosexist prejudice and discrimination results from attitudes and behaviors by peers, teachers, and school managers which contribute to the vulnerability, victimization, and social isolation of queer youth (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2015; Baruch-Dominguez et al., 2016; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Francis, 2017; Francis & Brown, 2017). Moreover, research shows that schools are ill-equipped (Allen, 2019; Bhana, 2012, 2014; Ferfolja, 2007; Francis, 2016; Francis & DePalma, 2015; Kjaran & Lehtonen, 2017; Rasmussen, Sanjakdar, Allen, Quinlivan, & Bromdal, 2017) and community organizations resourceful in their curriculum and pedagogical approaches (Chipatiso & Richardson, 2011; Francis, 2019; Hoosain Khan, 2013, 2014; Lehtonen, 2017).

Building on our own activist orientations with marginalized communities and outreach work in schools (Francis, 2010, 2013; Francis & Francis, 2006; Francis & Reygan, 2016; Kjaran & Jóhannesson, 2017; Kjaran, Francis, & Hauksson, 2019; Lehtonen, 2012, 2014, 2017), our edited book questions what if we explored solutions outside of schools with the hope of creating new insights to advancing the teaching and learning of gender and sexuality diversity in schools. What is the synergistic potential of the outreach work of queer social movements and schools and is there a mutually influential relationship between the two? By examining a range of cases from a diversity of country contexts which draw on various theoretical and methodological approaches, our edited book aims to contribute to a scholarly conversation about how queer social movements and schools connect. In doing this, the contributing authors trouble heteronormativity in educational contexts and at the same time highlight what is available in terms of queer resistance, activism, and advocacy. The time is ripe for research to focus on and explore teaching, support, and activism that challenge heteronormativity from beyond and outside the school gates.

In this book, we focus on the educational outreach work done by civil society organizations, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and

queer (LGBTIQ) human rights organizations, in and with schools. We acknowledge that these same organizations have been active in changing educational policies and legislation to prevent discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression also within educational institutions as well as influencing schools and education system by their general advocacy work, media campaigns, research projects on education, instructional material production, and cooperation with other nongovernmental organizations working with schools.

Many of the contributing authors argue that content knowledge related to gender and sexuality diversity is either hidden in curricular policies and teaching or not broached at all. They show how queer social movements can only have limited effects when they work outside the formalized school curriculum. Also highlighted is how activist organizations have begun to develop resources to address existing gaps in the policy framework for teaching related to gender and sexual diversity. Troublingly, all the chapters highlight the hindrances, challenges, tensions, and contradictions implicit in connecting the outreach work of queer social movements with teaching, learning, and support in schools. What is consistent across the chapters, is the call and need for schools and queer social movements to build alliances to address the gap in educational policies and the teaching of gender and sexuality diversity.

The contributions in this edited book are from a number of countries which vary significantly in legislation and attitudes. For example, in Iran, same-sex sexual acts are still punishable by death. In Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, same-sex sexualities are illegal and, in some instances, also criminalized. Such legislation conjointly with religion and cultural heteronormativity determine educators' attitudes which shape the process of teaching, learning, and support in schools. Despite positive changes in countries such as Botswana and Taiwan, teachers who challenge normalization are often regulated and silenced (see Yang, Chapter 4 and Reygan, Chapter 9). In Canada (see Schmitt, Chapter 3), Denmark, Finland and Iceland (Kjaran and Lehtonen, Chapter 2), Spain (DePalma, Chapter 6) and South Africa (see Francis and Khan, Chapter 11)—countries seen as progressive and leading the way on various issues related to the rights and inclusion of LGBTIQ individuals—the social realities are not necessarily better. Despite the progressive legislative shifts regarding gender and sexual equality in these countries, there remains discrepancy between policy and practice concerning LGBTIQ rights and attitudes within education, keeping the power of heterosexuality intact.

At the same time, the post-gay image drawn up in some parts of the world tacitly implies that we don't need queer activism and advocacy anymore. The Nordic countries within Europe, for example, in being depicted as queer utopias are seen as beacons of LGBTIQ rights. However, some caution is advised in the tendency to cast these cultural contexts in idealized and romanticized terms, and describing them as a paradise for sexual minorities. It can also be argued, that depicting them as a queer utopia for sexual and gender minorities is in some ways a contradiction, as queer and queering can be seen as an antithesis to utopic thought. Furthermore, any notion of a utopia, for example in respect to sexual and/or gender minorities, has the tendency to include certain subjects while at the same time it excludes others, even rendering them as sexual and gendered abjects. Duggan has argued that these "utopic" transformations of LGBTIQ rights, which are mostly focused on marriage equality, have resulted in "public recognition of domesticated, depoliticized privacy" for some non-heterosexual subjects (Duggan, 2003, p. 65). In other words, these changes have, to a certain degree extended the limits of heteronormativity, including some privileged groups within the LGBTIQ spectrum, by making homosexuality, practiced within the grids of heteronormativity, more acceptable vis á vis heteronormative society. In other words, granting civil rights to sexual and gender minorities speaks, on the one hand, to utopian progressive thought, framed within the human rights discourse, but also sustains and produces homonormativity, in which some members of the LGBTIQ family seek compliance and inclusion within the heteronormative framework. Furthermore, there is still a gap between a progressive society in terms of sexual rights and gender equality, on the one hand, and more conservative schools, on the other hand, particularly in terms of the implementation of LGBTIQ policies in the classroom and educational context. Thus, institutionalized heterosexism and heteronormativity are still (re)produced and sustained within the educational context, despite progressive policies in terms of gender and sexual equality, and a strong legal and human rights history.

The contributors, concerned with the oppression of counter normative gender and sexualities, foreground heteronormative harassment as accepted parts of schooling where teachers and school managers, in most instances, do not intervene to stop bullying and marginalization. In doing so, they emphasize schools as sites of regulation that restrict gender and sexual expression and at the same time highlighting queer social movements as a powerful resource for social awareness and change. While



highlighting inequality and social injustices in education, the contributors also speak to broader issues about political repression and the containment of queer social movements in some fairly hostile contexts. Drawing on country-specific case studies, the contributors of this book illuminate what is possible when schools and queer social movements connect.

While this collection reveals a great deal of shared understanding between contributors, it also shows, and strikingly, how different country contexts enable different possibilities for queer social movements and schools to connect. With many of the chapters derived from authors writing about educational outreach work in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America, it will not go unnoticed that there are no chapters that talk of queer social movements in the United Kingdom or the United States of America. Kjaran (in this book), in his chapter on outreach work in Iran reminds us that “coming out” as a political action, and doing outreach work in schools or formal educational settings, has not been the main focus of gay and queer activism in all social and cultural contexts in the global south.

Tunneling, through many of the chapters, are the relational mobilizing capabilities of queer social movements highlighting their collective and intersectional approach to social justice and inclusion. Chapters by Nardi, Quartiero, and Rodrigues (in this book) and Francis and Khan (in this book) for example underscore that in unequal societies like that of Brazil and South Africa, an intersectional and institutional approach is crucial in planning and analyzing outreach actions. Through the arguments raised by Nardi, Quartiero, and Rodrigues (in this book) and Francis and Khan (in this book), who showcase that heteronormativity and homophobia do not exist in a vacuum but exist alongside other oppressions such as racism and classism and that these too require reform and change in schools.

This book also emphasizes the variation of sexualities and genders around the globe. Sexuality and gender are understood and lived differently in different regions and this is also true within one country. Religious, cultural, and societal factors affect the possibilities children, youth, and adults have in constructing their sexualities and gender. Educational institutions have their own sexual and gendered cultures which are developed within their surrounding cultures. Civil society organizations including LGBTIQ or queer movements are limited by their local legislation and societal contexts but also their aspirations, aims, strategies, and tools to change the educational practices within schools, are affected by these local possibilities and discourses. At the same time, international human

rights discourses (like the ones promoted by United Nations and international LGBTIQ movements) are influencing the understanding of human rights and their connection to sexuality and gender throughout the world which has become smaller with social media and internet.

Already earlier colonization with its legal implications has influenced criminalization of homosexuality in many countries, particularly in some countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The same is true with many religious thoughts imported throughout the world which have been poisonous in many ways with respect to human rights situation of sexual minorities and gender-diverse people. They have both caused the destruction of many local practices and cultures, which have been more understanding of human diversity on gender and sexuality, and advocated sex-negative gender binary thinking, which influence greatly throughout the globe still. Also, medical discourses developed in Europe and North America, which have portrayed same-sex interests and nonnormative gender identification and behavior as well as bodies with variation in relation to gendered features, have been successfully transported all over the globe. These medical, legal, and religious discourses have interpreted differently in various contexts and they are also challenged in many ways. Interestingly, these discourses were first challenged in Europe and North America, which were the origins of many of these problematic discourses, but in later years also many other regions have joined them in questioning these. Also, human rights-based discourses around sexualities, gender, and body variation have been interpreted differently in many countries, and they have special local aspects, which are also visible in this book.

This variation of understanding sexualities and gender—as well as sexuality and gender education within schools—is expressed in the chapters of this book also in the language and terminology used. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer are common terms in many countries, but they are not always used in the same way as in the countries their use originates. The use is also challenged, and local, more appropriated terms are used. The same is true with many other concepts and terms which are related to sexuality, gender, and the work done for and with schools by the LGBTI and other civil society organizations. This book aims to be both understandable for the readers but also acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of cultures and languages concerning sexuality and gender diversity. We also acknowledge the difficulties of translating the local terminology and conceptualizations—and at the same time the local

contexts and specific ways of understanding sexuality and gender—into English (see Lehtonen & Taavetti, 2018).

## CHAPTERS IN THIS BOOK

As editors, we spent time organizing the chapters to make some sort of sequential sense. We wanted to shy away from presenting the chapters in vacuous blocks based simply on their geographic sameness, and focus more intentionally on the outreach work done by LGBTIQ organizations, including tensions within their work and that of schools. Irrespective of the ordering, each chapter brings to life a uniqueness of context and the exciting connections and in some contexts, connecting queer social movements and schools.

To start, **Jón Ingvar Kjaran** and **Jukka Lehtonen**, argue that queer issues and non-heterosexuality are either hidden in many national curricula or not enacted at all. They point to the active role of LGBTIQ organizations who do outreach work within schools and educational institutions in the Nordic countries. **Kjaran** and **Lehtonen** posit that all of the stakeholders involved in outreach work draw to a varying extent on norm-critical pedagogy. Norm-critical pedagogy has been developed as the main pedagogical approach in some of the Nordic countries during the past years and entails taking a critical view to outreach work about the other in order to disrupt the workings of heteronormativity within schools. Outreach organizations thus give information on sexuality and gender diversity for students and pupils, often through “coming out” narratives, but also aim to question heteronormative practices and knowledge in the schools to promote queer education. **Kjaran** and **Lehtonen** also argue that in Nordic countries, most schools practice heteronormativity and that teachers do not have abilities and know-how to challenge this or to give adequate information on LGBTIQ issues. Moreover, LGBTIQ organizations are only reaching a small portion of schools and students with their educational outreach work, and often they work only to fill in the gaps of formal education by adding extra information on LGBTIQ issues in heteronormative schools. Their chapter thus shows how outreach organizations can only have limited effects when they work outside the formalized school curriculum. Yet, at present, they play a pivotal role in creating awareness and to some extent, a more critical stance toward heteronormative practices and curricula in Nordic countries.

Using interview data collected from 39 teachers in Canadian schools, **Irina Schmitt** examines what informs educators' social justice work on gender and sexuality and how this relates to queer social movements. Drawing on these interviews she discusses how it is possible to differentiate three strategies in terms of queer educational justice work: reflexive identity politics, intersectional systems critique, and individual humanism. Furthermore, she argues that responsibility for queer educational justice work is attached to queer educators through fear. Thus, as further discussed in this chapter, it is necessary to analyze this attachment of responsibility to understand how it can undermine the work of QSM and queer educational justice work in schools.

Chapter 4, **Chia-ling Yang**, draws on data from Taiwan by focusing on the struggle over power and knowledge between the Tongzhi (LGBTI) movement and the religious or conservative countermovement in gaining access to educational spaces and doing outreach work in schools. In the chapter she demonstrates that with unequal discursive and nondiscursive resources, the religious or conservative countermovement employs both prohibition and productive discourse formation to hinder Tongzhi education and sustain the heterosexual norm in schools. In response to the challenges, Tongzhi activists and LGBTI-friendly teachers have collaborated to defend Tongzhi education and Tongzhi students' rights in schools, public hearings, and various committees at the local and central government level.

While many of the chapters in this volume focus on how queer social movements and schools connect, **Pablo Astudillo** and **Jaime Barrientos**'s chapter analyze the actions and involvement of the *Sexual Diversity Pastoral Office* in Chilean Catholic school's sexuality education. The *Sexual Diversity Pastoral Office*, comprising a community of young and adult Catholic gays and lesbians, including the parents of LGBTIQ youth, operate in three Chilean cities. Participating in different fora for sexuality education in the country's Catholic schools the *Sexual Diversity Pastoral Office* might be thought of as representing a shift in how traditional attitudes to homosexuality has been understood in Catholic schools themselves contravening in many ways a catechetical norm. Chapter 5, therefore, zooms in on the outreach work of the *Sexual Diversity Pastoral Office* in Chilean Catholic schools and the implications this has for the debate about the role of schools in sexual education and the teaching of sexuality diversity specifically.

**Renée DePalma** in Chapter 6 illustrates how activist organizations have begun to develop resources to fill an existing gap in the policy framework for teaching related to gender and sexuality diversity. DePalma looks at the two main lines that social movements in Spain have followed—the promotion of equality and visibility for (primarily gay and lesbian) persons, and a more radical trend based on transfeminist thinking that resists the notion of normal, extending a feminist critique of the patriarchy. DePalma points out that some of the stumbling blocks that prevent direct participation of activist organizations in teaching activities and teacher preparation is that teachers need to cover the explicit school curriculum, and furthermore that some might be reluctant to draw attention from the small but vocal conservative movements that have begun to respond critically to gender and sexuality diversity education initiatives. The author argues that in the Spanish context, where curricular inclusion is permitted and supported by the nation’s broader legal context, partnerships with social activist organizations can help fill the gap left by educational policy and practices.

Chapter 7 by **Jón Ingvar Kjaran**, situated in a different national, social, and political context—that of Iran—is a compelling site for understanding queer outreach work in schools given the prohibition on homosexual acts, as well as the scarcity of research on the topic in this context. The chapter offers fresh insights into what it means to be a sexual minority and queer activism in Iran as a context with strict prohibitions around sexuality. Appropriately, the chapter draws on post-structural approaches to language and identity construction to make sense of queer agency and resistance.

**Henrique Caetano Nardi**, **Eliana Quartiero**, and **Manoela Carpenedo Rodrigues** describe and analyze “queer intersectional outreach work” aiming to prevent and fight prejudice and discriminations against LGBTQI students in Brazil. It has been developed in public schools in the city of Porto Alegre, in the south of Brazil and carried out by graduate and undergraduate students. In the chapter the authors discuss the benefits of this approach to outreach work, particularly in extremely unequal societies like Brazil. Furthermore, the chapter gives an overview and a brief history of education on sexuality and gender diversity in Brazil.

In many African countries, liberated from colonial rule, gender and sexuality diversity is perceived to disrupt the continuity of national progress. In response, queer social movements challenge the prevalent

homophobia and transphobia as part of the decolonization movements that have emerged in post-independence nations in the global South. Drawing on data from a five-country study by UNESCO, HIVOS and Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) on homophobic and transphobic violence in schools and an eight-country, civil society organization project on sexual and reproductive health rights education, **Finn Reygan** explores how civil society organizations challenge and advance teaching and learning on gender and sexuality diversity in Eastern and Southern Africa. Drawing on the lessons learnt from both projects, Reygan concludes that to make critical anti-homophobic teaching, learning, and support connections with the education sector, LGBTIQ civil society organizations have the potential to play a vital role given their expertise related to the social and cultural forces that perpetuate homophobia and transphobia across the region.

**Andrea Arnold** and **Nin Langer**, based on the experiences and self-reflexive processes of a queer educational group in Vienna, Austria, explore the potential of autobiographical storytelling used by LGBTIQ activists. In the chapter the authors argue that the presence of LGBTIQ activists in schools and the method of autobiographical storytelling help question the cis-heteronormative framework predominant in most Austrian schools. However, in order to destabilize heteronormative assumptions and to counter processes of Othering, it is important that the narrations draw upon queer theoretical considerations, such as underscoring the fluidity of identities and desires. As discussed further in the chapter, a specific challenge for LGBTIQ activists within a teaching context lies in negotiating the ambivalence between the desire to destabilize norms and the students' understandable need for security and labels.

In questioning the utility of creative methods in bringing together queer activists, teachers, and school managers to address homophobia in South African schools, **Dennis A. Francis** and **Gabriel Hoosain Khan** show that while South Africa's transition to democracy is filled with promises of transformation in education and access to all South Africans, these promises are met by the reality of lasting and entrenched inequality. South African schools remain defined by racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. Even in this oppressive environment, educators, learners, and communities have been coming together to respond to these adverse circumstances. When it comes to gender and sexual diversity in education, while there are many challenges—opportunities for dialogue and social change are emerging. Drawing on a two-day workshop with

queer activists and school teachers, their chapter focuses on the potential of creative methods, including Boal's Forum Theatre and Art for Activism inspired by Freire to facilitate partnership and discussion on how best to address gender and sexuality diversity in schools and the classroom.

Intersex individuals and the topic of intersex often do not appear in educational curricula. **Martina Enzendorfer** and **Paul Haller** focus in their chapter on what kind of needs and challenges there are in the educational outreach work within schools by LGBTIQ organizations from the perspective of intersex people and issues. They base their analysis on the school experiences of intersex people, the recommendations of international organizations and their analysis of the local Austrian outreach work done by LGBTIQ organizations.

Chapter 13 brings this collection to an end by addressing the challenges and opportunities regarding outreach work of queer social movements in schools globally.

In terms of the chapters, it has to be said that, there are more queer outreach projects, initiatives, and interventionist work in schools across the world than the ones included here. The fact that they are not here does not mean that they are less important or not worth writing about; it means that we need more platforms to hear about and learn about the different outreach practices, pedagogies, and interventions in schools.

Our hope for you is that the collection of chapters is relevant and useful to those who undertake research on gender, sexualities, and schooling. Furthermore, we hope that this book offers a profoundly critical contribution to the debates on sexualities and schooling and the synergetic potential of the outreach work and activism of queer social movements. Mostly, we want the reader to take away a key message of many of the contributions that there are in fact, many examples of queer advocacy, resistance, and commitments for social change.

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# Educational Outreach Work in Nordic Countries: Challenges, Tensions, and Contradictions for Queering Schools and Teaching About Sexual and Gender Diversity

Jón Ingvar Kjaran  and Jukka Lehtonen 

The Nordic Countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden—have often been depicted as progressive societies regarding the issues of gender equality and sexual diversity. World Economic Forum report (2015) ranks four of the five Nordic countries among the top four gender equality countries. Moreover, with respect to legal frameworks and protection of sexual and gender minorities, the Nordic countries rank among the highest in Europe (ILGA Europe, 2018). All five countries

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have an equal marriage law and legislation to criminalize discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression in the workplace, including educational institutions. Most of them have a rather progressive legislation regarding trans rights and recently the Icelandic parliament passed one of the most progressive laws in Europe regarding trans rights (see for example Fisher, 2019).<sup>1</sup>

In Nordic welfare states, the education system is mainly public and free; public education is secularized and emphasizes democratic thought, human rights and gender equality (Lehtonen, 2012a). Queer issues and non-heterosexuality, however, are typically either hidden in many national curricula (see Lehtonen, 2016; Røthing, 2008; Røthing & Svendsen, 2009), or not enacted at all. Queer students and teachers are not very visible in schools and educational institutions (Kjaran, 2017; Lehtonen, 2004; Lehtonen, Palmu, & Lahelma, 2014). Moreover, some researchers have suggested that institutional processes are widespread in many Nordic educational institutions, which police and silence non-heterosexuality and gender diversity, and sustain a discourse of heteronormativity (see e.g. Alanko, 2013; Ambjörnsson, 2004; Blom & Lange, 2004; Bromseth & Wildow, 2007; Huotari, Törmä, & Tuokkola, 2011; Kjaran, 2017; Kjaran & Jóhannesson, 2013, 2015; Kjaran & Kristinsdóttir, 2015; Lehtonen, 2010, 2012b, 2014, 2016; Røthing, 2007, 2008; Taavetti, 2015).

Thus in order to break the silence around non-heterosexuality and gender diversity and provide education about these issues, many Nordic lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) organizations are doing educational outreach work in schools and other educational settings. They are doing this work in order to advance knowledge on sexuality and gender diversity in both compulsory (7–16 years) and upper secondary (16–20 years) schools. In fact, this kind of outreach work is often the only information students receive about LGBTIQ issues as schools and teachers lack knowledge and training to offer this kind of education.

Bearing in mind the discrepancy in broader social policies that support sexuality and gender equality, and the lack of such policies and education on these issues in formal educational contexts (see e.g., Kjaran, 2017; Kjaran & Kristinsdóttir, 2015; Kjaran & Lehtonen, 2017; Lehtonen, 2016), the main objective of this chapter is to investigate how NGO's that operate outside of the formal educational institutions deliver and organize education on LGBTQ issues and heteronormativity. The investigation will involve a detailed discussion of queer educational outreach work within educational institutions, drawing on examples from Denmark, Finland,

and Iceland. It has two objectives: Firstly, to give an account of educational outreach work within educational institutions in Nordic countries. Secondly, to discuss the potentials of educational outreach work to queer or transform schools and to carve out a space for sexual and gender minorities within education. As will be discussed in the chapter, outreach work is performed differently in the three organizations under investigation, but it can be argued that all of the stakeholders involved draw to some extent on norm-critical pedagogy. It has been developed as the main pedagogical approach in some of the Nordic countries during the past years and entails taking a critical view to outreach work about the other in order to disrupt the workings of heteronormativity within schools (see e.g. Bromseth & Sörensdotter, 2014). As an example of this approach, educational outreach workers who participated in our research emphasized the critical aspect of their educational work and told us that during visits they tried to engage the students in critical thought about privileges and to question heteronormativity within society and in their own school environment.

The chapter is organized by giving first a short introduction to the Nordic context. Then we give an account of queer educational outreach work by focusing on: organization and scope, tensions and challenges, and new approaches in doing outreach work in schools. We will then conclude by summing up our main arguments and findings and discuss the potentials of transforming and queering schools through outreach work. In our analysis and discussion, we draw on queer theory (Jagose, 1996), particularly the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1993), Steven Seidman (2010), Michel Warner (1993, 1999), Wendy Brown (2006), and Deborah Britzman (1995, 1998), who emphasize challenging and transgressing heteronormativity; the binary construction of gender and sexuality; and opposing the hegemonic regimes of gender and sexuality. Butler (1993) refers to this as “the heterosexual matrix.” Outreach work and education on LGBTIQ issues also involve engaging in doing justice for all students irrespective of their gender or sexuality identity. Thus, in exploring that aspect of outreach work we are inspired by Nancy Fraser’s (2009) writings on justice, and the opposite construct of injustice, particularly her conceptualization of justice and injustice as justice of recognition and injustice as misrecognition.

In this chapter, the data consists of interviews with key practitioners and organizers of educational outreach work in the respective countries

as well as policy documents and educational material. We draw on ethnographic data on queer youth and schools in the respective countries, with a particular focus on outreach work of LGBTI human rights organizations Seta in Finland, Samtökin 78 in Iceland, and LGBT Danmark in Denmark.<sup>2</sup> The data consist of interviews with stakeholders, volunteers, and educational workers, as well as documents, and digital material collected in the field. Moreover, in the case of Finland, Jukka Lehtonen<sup>3</sup> (2017), conducted extensive fieldwork at Seta in 2013–2014, generating data which consist of observation in several educational settings.

The data were analyzed by using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001). According to Van Dijk (2001), critical discourse analysis “primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). Accordingly, critical discourse analysis draws attention to the different modalities of power. One of its main objectives is to disclose hidden power relations both within the discourse and the social actions of dominant group(s); secondly, to transform prevailing social practices, by disturbing the dominant discourse (Collins, 2000; Van Dijk, 2001). We achieved this by identifying recurring themes in the documents: how they intertwined and how arguments were presented, and by paying particular attention to any processes of normalizations and silences.

## NORDIC COUNTRIES AND LGBTIQ ISSUES IN EDUCATION

We will first give an overview of the Nordic context and analyze the current situation concerning the sexual and gender diversity issues in education in the three Nordic countries. Within the Nordic context, LGBTIQ rights have evolved progressively in the latter part of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Today, the Nordic countries are among the most progressive states in the global north with respect to sexual diversity and gender equality. These changes have been gradual during the past decades in which new laws have been passed, thus incorporating improved rights for LGBTIQ subjects. Furthermore, progressive laws and rights for LGBTIQ subjects, particularly for gays and lesbians, have been accompanied by the gradual recognition of this particular group in society (Rydström, 2011). Within the three Nordic countries under investigation educational practices in relation to sexuality

and gender diversity have progressed slowly and not kept pace with the legislative developments in society in general.

In Denmark, the official narratives on LGBTIQ issues in education seem to be submerged in silence, at least in terms of the overall legislation (Education Act) for compulsory schools, which does not mention sexuality and gender diversity in its text (LBK No. 823). Although this is absent from the Danish Educational Act, the curriculum contains a topic called, Health, Sex, and Family Education, which includes education about sexuality and gender, and is mandatory for all students in compulsory schools from grade 0–9. This mandatory topic is supposed to be interdisciplinary and has no set timeframe within the school schedule. It is, therefore, up to individual teachers to integrate it into all other subjects. In other words, the enactment of this policy and the choice of issues or topics discussed and included in the classroom curriculum depends on the individual teacher. However, as it is not stated clearly in the curriculum nor in the legislation, these issues are in praxis rarely addressed within the classroom space and often left out of the classroom curriculum, rendering LGBTIQ students and teachers invisible within schools.

For the first time in 2014, sexual orientation was included in the Finnish national core curriculum for compulsory education (children aged 7–16). This was an important step toward increasing queer visibility in educational settings. The introduction of the core curricula document only mentions the word “sexual orientation” once, as part of a listing of the prohibited reasons to discriminate against people on various grounds in the Finnish Constitution or anti-discrimination law (POPS, 2014, p. 14). That does not provide adequate information on how to deal with issues of sexual orientation in education. It also refers to the anti-discrimination law as something that should be considered when planning education in schools. Gender diversity is handled more concretely, as the curricula document states “basic education adds knowledge and understanding on gender diversity” (POPS, 2014, p. 18), which is understood to mean that there should be some education on gender diversity issues in basic education. The document also mentions that during compulsory education “students’ understanding of their gender identity and sexuality develops, and along with its values and practices, the learning community advances gender equality, and supports students in constructing their identities” (POPS, 2014, p. 28). In addition to recent curriculum changes, the Equality and Non-Discrimination Act was renewed in 2014

and came into force in 2016 to strengthen equality and nondiscrimination in education, workplaces, and elsewhere. Accordingly, all schools and educational institutions must have a plan to address gender equality and advance anti-discrimination measures. The framework of this renewed legislation covers trans and intersex people, illustrating innovation and progression, as well as groups under a greater threat of discrimination, such as sexual minorities. Equality and nondiscriminatory measures, based on either gender or sexuality, should therefore be advanced at both compulsory and upper secondary educational levels. The National Board of Education published a guidebook (NBE, 2015) on how schools can advance gender equality, and include gender diversity in compulsory education. In school practices, heteronormativity is still widespread and young people can experience bullying based on their gender or sexuality nonconfirming behavior. LGBTIQ issues are dealt to some extent within Health Education and in some other subjects, but usually focus is on heterosexuality and cis- and gender-normative people (Lehtonen, 2016).

In Iceland, a new Education Act has been in implementation from 2008 for both the compulsory school and the upper secondary school (The Compulsory School Act, No. 91/2008; The Upper Secondary Education Act, No. 92/2008). It is silent about discrimination on the basis of sexuality and gender and does not stipulate any measures, special needs, or protection for this vulnerable group. Moreover, neither the concept of sexuality nor gender is mentioned at all in the legislation. This, however, is given considerable space in the new national curriculum guide, which was released in 2011 in accordance with the 2008 legislation. In this regard, there is a gap between the Education Act itself and the national curriculum based on that very legislation. The new national curriculum guide consists of three books, one for each school level; i.e., preschool, compulsory school, and upper secondary school. Each book contains about a 10-page section explaining the so-called fundamental pillars of education. These cross-curricular pillars are literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, equality, health and welfare, and creativity. The text about each of the pillars is about one-page long; for instance, the equality pillar is explained in 560 words. The equality pillar is broadly defined as “an umbrella concept” to include any possible dimension of inequality. It lists 13 such dimensions in alphabetical order: “age, class, culture, descent, gender, disability, language, nationality, outlook on life, race, religion, residence, sexual orientation” (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2011, p. 20). The Ministry further argues that a goal of



equality education is to be a “critical examination of the established ideas in society and its institutions in order to teach children and youth to analyze the circumstances that lead to discrimination of some and privileges for others” (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2011, p. 20). This is a radical notion of equality education and fulfills, up to a certain degree, the three first approaches to anti-oppressive education, introduced by Kevin Kumashiro (2002).<sup>4</sup>

## OUTREACH WORK IN SCHOOLS: ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE

In Iceland and Finland, the outreach work is mostly undertaken by LGBTI organizations Samtökin 78 and Seti. In Denmark, there are mainly two nongovernmental organizations that are responsible for this kind of educational outreach work: Sex and samfund and LGBT Danmark. For the Danish context this chapter will solely focus on LGBT Danmark. There are also some variations of the scope and nature of the outreach work in these three countries. However, all of these organizations are funded, either fully or partly, by the public sector such as the state and the municipalities.

LGBT Danmark has been operating since 1948 when it was called Organization 1948 or Group 1948. This makes it one of the oldest operating LGBT organization in the world. Today it is the largest LGBT organization in Denmark with sections in most towns and provinces across the country. Its activity focuses on three issues: political activism, counseling, and networking, although reaching out to young people through education and talks is an important aspect of their work. As an indicator of the importance of educational and outreach work, the homepage of LGBT Danmark emphasizes education and schools, by having a special link to educational material under the “For skoler” button. However, outreach work and school visits, have been limited, mainly because of financial restrictions and lack of governmental support. Thus, sex and sexuality education in schools is mostly conducted by an NGO called Sex and samfund (translated into English as Sex and Society), which according to educational secretary of LGBT Danmark, “is a very big organization, working all over the country.” LGBT Danmark is smaller and it is mainly active in Copenhagen and Aarhus. Outreach work in schools is mostly conducted by the youth group of the organization. They do approximately 20 visits a year and have during the last two years employed norm-critical pedagogy

in their outreach work. In fact, the youth group is more radical and more inclusive than for example the other fractions of LGBT Denmark, adding the + symbol in the LGBT acronym. Moreover, their strategic aim is to destabilize norms related to gender, sexuality, body, and any other limits.

Seta, which is a national LGBTI umbrella organization for 24 member organizations, is training voluntary educational activists of the local member organizations, which are mainly responsible for organizing the educational outreach work in schools and other educational institutions in their area. There are around 200 more or less active voluntary educational activists in Seta and its member organizations, and 150–250 visits in schools and other educational settings are made yearly. This means that yearly thousands of people have a chance to hear an activist or an employee from Seta talk about LGBTI issues to them. In every age cohort in Finland there are about 60,000 young people, which means that Seta trains on LGBTI issues around 5–10% of each age cohort. There are bigger figures in larger towns in which Seta has an active member organization, and smaller ones in the countryside and small towns. While most of the visits are done in schools (basic education or upper secondary educational institutions) and in youth centers or youth camps, the recipients of the training are mostly young people. Also the so-called professional training is organized mostly for young people, such as students in universities of applied sciences (specifically youth, social, and health care workers) and in universities (e.g., teacher trainees). Voluntary educational activists are also mainly young people. The educational secretary stated that about 90% of the school visits were done by young voluntary educational activists. Most of the voluntary activists are non-heterosexual (with various identifications) and there are also some trans people. It is recommended that there should be two educators with different backgrounds in relation to gender and sexual identity taking part in school visits.

Samtökin 78 has ever since it was established in 1978 focused on education about gay and lesbian issues. This emphasis on education is reflected on their homepage, which features three main aims of Samtökin: education, counseling, and events. During the last decade, Samtökin has incorporated other issues connected to queer reality, such as education on, for example, trans and intersex subjectivities and reality. The educational aspect of Samtökin has grown gradually and in 2015 its educational volunteers held lectures in 20 primary schools and 9 upper secondary schools, mostly in and around Reykjavík (Samtökin '78 2016). As the total number of primary schools in Reykjavík is 45, this is quite a

small proportion, also considering a formal agreement made at this time between the city of Reykjavík and Samtökin 78. The educational manager of Samtökin 78 expressed her views:

It is dependent upon individual teachers and schools whether they include this kind of education in the classroom or school curriculum. A coherent policy is lacking on this matter, and schools, for example, rarely request education on these issues for teachers and educational workers.

## TENSIONS AND CHALLENGES IN NORDIC EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH WORK

In all the three organizations presented in this study, educational outreach work on sexuality and gender diversity is rather well established and has been part of the organizational aims and work for the past four decades. For example, on the homepage of Samtökin 78, under the category of “service,” queer education or education about queer issues is among the services offered. Seta and LGBT Danmark also highlight education and outreach work on their websites as a part of the services provided. The emphasis is on increasing the visibility of queer people, educating about sexuality and gender diversity, and giving basic information about LGB-TIQ issues to young people and schools. However, there are some differences between the organizations on how these aims are achieved in terms of pedagogy, approaches, content, and emphasis of the outreach work. There are also ideological tensions within and between these organizations which mainly revolve around whether the outreach work should focus on giving information on LGBTIQ lives and reality in a more “neutral” way, defined here as the informative learning or education, or whether the education should be more orientated toward norm-critical pedagogy. LGBT Danmark, and particularly the youth group, LGBT + Ungdom, has adopted the norm-critical pedagogy in their outreach work. This new emphasis in the outreach work is rather recent according to the educational secretary of LGBT Danmark and was a necessary move forward as it was felt among educational outreach workers that the previous methods and approaches were neither having an impact on the students nor challenging heteronormativity:

It was not an education. It was like being in a zoo, being looked at from the other pupils, and it might help those LGBT + pupils that might be there, but it could also go the other way [around] actually.

In the quote, the educational secretary of LGBT Danmark uses the metaphor of being in a “zoo,” when describing previous pedagogical approaches during outreach work which focused on telling a personal “coming out” story. By doing that she is emphasizing that previous approaches focused solely on the queer other, who was looked at and epistemologically objectified, by a presumably straight audience, just as one would do when visiting the zoo. Thus, in order to engage the “spectators” and move away from an education about the queer other, approaches such as norm-critical pedagogy were introduced.

The story-telling approach can be defined as experience-based or narrative-based education or learning which is still being used in both Finland and Iceland (Lehtonen, 2017). The educational secretary of Seta emphasized the importance of this approach in order to increase the visible LGBTQ people in schools. Thus, in combination with telling their “story,” outreach workers from Seta and Samtökin 78 are mostly engaged with educating about LGBTQ issues. This is what can be defined as *peer-to-peer education* as the outreach worker are themselves young people, most often under the age of 25 years and work at the organization as volunteers. This was emphasized by the educational secretary of Samtökin 78: “[The volunteers are] supposed to be young people talking to other young people so that they can relate and give some kind of personal examples, and ... be a role model.” Furthermore, she pointed out that it is “important to share personal information, to have connection. There’s an added element in this peer connection.” The notion of “added element” of sharing personal information is also to convey to the students that it is “okay to be a little different from the mainstream [and] that is something you can’t just get from a book or from someone who reads from a slide.” Thus, “personal connection” and the aspect of being a queer “role model” intersects with the informative approach, both in Iceland and Finland. These approaches were however criticized by the Danish volunteers interviewed as can be seen in the following quote:

What if the person speaking is not sympathetic enough? What are the troubles being an ambassador of an entire group of people that you might not

be able to speak about if you're, if you mainly have experienced homophobia or discrimination regarding sexuality, what about gender, can you even, are you qualified to talk about that, and stuff like this?

The educational volunteer draws attention to some of the “pitfalls” related to the “role model” approach as it cannot represent the wide spectrum of LGBTIQ realities and lives. This approach might have worked in the past when the focus was mostly on sexual diversity, meaning homosexuality, but today all the three national organizations need to focus on and cover in their visits a variety of identities in terms of gender and sexual diversity. Thus, it can be a challenge to fit all this into a talk which only lasts from 45 to 80 minutes, depending on the national context. For Seta and Samtökin 78 lack of time does therefore not give much possibilities to discuss gendered norms and practices in schools as the volunteers need to cover so many other topics. This was expressed for example by the Seta educational secretary, as can be seen in the following quote:

Well, time-wise, for example school visit is about 45 minutes, that will make a limitation on, like we have certain basic things we should go through within the training.

Moreover, not all topics could be addressed during the outreach visits, and some were regarded as “taboos” as can be seen in the following quote from an interview with the educational secretary of Samtökin 78:

We are very explicit about this not being sex education. I would love to do queer sex education, absolutely. So, we are very explicit that we are not here to talk about sex. Of course, where the sex ends and begins is a very fuzzy thing. A lot of times, we do get questions about sex, and it's usually “how do lesbians have sex?” and there really are in a bind, because maybe this person is actually curious, maybe they are actually a lesbian and they don't have this information.

So, when the educational workers get questions about sex, they often have to avoid that topic or refer to some websites or tell the students to contact the counselor's office of Samtökin 78. The same applies to Seta, and its educational volunteers are trained not to discuss sex (Lehtonen, 2017). This topic did however not come up in the interviews with the Danish educational volunteers as their approach is mostly focused on norm-critical pedagogy, instead of informative education or learning. Thus, in

terms of outreach work, at least in Finland and Iceland, there is a “fine line” to walk as giving out the wrong messages or information can lead to some reaction from the more conservative part of the society as mentioned by the educational secretary of Samtökin 78:

[Today] there is backlash in society about us talking about queer issues to teenagers, especially to children, where people connect discussions about gender identity and sexual orientation to sex. Because our access to schools is not guaranteed. It is sensitive [matter] and it’s important that we do it well. At the same time, I really don’t like that we have to sanitize ourselves. So, it is a fine line to walk.

To sum up, the main challenges and tensions that need to be considered when doing outreach work in the Nordic countries mostly concern pedagogical approaches, possible backlash from the conservative arms of the society, and whether and what kind of outreach work can really transform schools and society. In other words, how can we move from informative to transformative education, and thus in line with Nancy Fraser (2009) create queer counter-spaces. All the organizations tried to address the issue of transforming or changing society. The LGBT Danmark did so by developing new pedagogy in line with norm-critical approach. Seta and Samtökin 78 focused more on a mixture of informative and experienced-based education, keeping in mind that some topics were off-limits. Thus, in that sense, they all tried to incorporate some aspects of the anti-oppressive education framework developed by Kumashiro, consisting of education for the other (role model approach), education about the other (disseminating information about LGBTQ lives and reality), education that is critical of privileging and othering (norm-critical pedagogy). However, despite their efforts in trying to transform schools and society through their outreach work and activism, most of our interviewees were rather pessimistic about whether that would ever be possible. For example, in the case of Seta, the educational outreach visits were often done year after year in the same schools with not much being changed in terms of teaching practices or dominant ideology. In reflecting on this the educational secretary therefore saw the Seta’s educational outreach work more like “a first aid.” In order for real changes to take place they needed to be through the state and municipalities as can be seen in the following quote in which the educational secretary of Seta expresses her views:

I think it cannot continue like this. It should be done through school, state, training of the municipalities. Kindergartens should have the knowledge on gender, girl can be boy, boy can be girl, girl can be tomboy, you can have two mums, this kind of, and that should continue through out the education system, and especially in the vocational sector.

## FROM TOLERANCE LEARNING TO NORM CRITICISMS

As mentioned in the previous section, educational outreach work in Denmark, Finland and Iceland, is understood on the one hand to help people to learn about LGBTI people and accept them, and on the other hand to support people in questioning heteronormativity and changing their principle ways of understanding gender and sexuality. Because tolerance or acceptance as an aim and norm-critical understanding as an aim are rather far from each other, this can create both tensions and contradictions within the organizations and in their outreach work. LGBTIQ organizations doing educational outreach work are still balancing between the general societal acceptance or tolerance policy of LGBTI identities and the critical questioning of heteronormativity and related norms. In Nordic countries the legislation and school core curricula incorporate gender and sexual diversity at least to a certain extent, and it is argued that minorities should not be discriminated against and there should be information given on these minority groups. However, the aim seems not to be to disturb or dismantle heteronormative practices and understandings. This message might have an influence on the discussion in the organizations.

The political philosopher Wendy Brown (2006) has argued that the discourse of tolerance in the West is embedded in power relations and involves neither neutrality nor respect toward the object of tolerance. In fact, tolerance marks boundaries between what is considered to be the norm and thus accepted, and what is outside of the norm, on the margins, something that is considered to be “undesirable,” of which one would prefer that it did not exist. However, in societies that considered themselves to be “civilized” the “undesirable” somehow needs to be tolerated, although not fully included, in order to accommodate difference in society and reduce conflicts (Brown, 2006). Thus, today, in Western democracies, such as the Nordic countries, the discourse of tolerance has mostly revolved around identities or human differences based on culture, ethnicity, race, or other identity categories. Accordingly, we as ethically moral beings, should therefore tolerate and respect different subject positions

and identities, even though we view those depicted as the Other as “undesirable,” perhaps as someone of which we would prefer that would not exist at all. However, we need to overcome our discomfort and through toleration we achieve that state of mind or being. We feel that we are morally good in our act of tolerance, even though we neither accept nor respect those human differences that are objects of our tolerance. Thus, in line with Brown, tolerance is something that “one permits or licenses, a posture that softens or cloaks the power, authority, and normativity in the act of tolerance” (Brown, 2006, p. 25). The discourse on tolerance produces and constructs those subject positions that need to be tolerated and, in that sense, it operates as a mode of governmentality.

An educational outreach worker of LGBT Danmark referred in an interview to the narrative approach in educational outreach work, consisting of telling a personal or coming out story, as the “tolerance” policy or approach toward outreach work. For example, this can be seen in the following quote, this kind of approach did not enhance criticism but drew instead on the discourse of tolerance:

The tolerance policy is like, that ... one person usually, a LGBT person, goes to a school and tells them their entire life story and says: “It was tough and I met this kind of discrimination, and I had this kind of feelings about it and I felt bad.” And it’s all about getting the students to tolerate or accept the person. And that’s something a lot of people felt a resistance against, you know, because there’s a lot of pitfalls here. You’re not even sure if the room is going to tolerate you. And the thing about tolerance is that you can decide to tolerate one person, but that doesn’t mean you might accept the gay community or the LGBT community [as a whole]. You can also withdraw your tolerance towards this person if [s/he] does not seem like a charismatic person or something like that.

He told us that his perspectives changed after taking part in a course on norm-critical pedagogy two years ago, as it was all about “norm criticism, about being killjoy, and about privileges.” In fact, being a “killjoy,” as argued by Sara Ahmed (2017), is often a necessary subject position in working against heteronorm and heteropatriarchy. It entails asking questions about what normally is taken as granted and criticizing established views. In other words, being a norm-critical pedagogue entails becoming a “killjoy.” Thus today, educational outreach workers of LGBT Danmark discuss norms and privileges during their school visits: how are some individuals privileged and how do norms operate in terms of sexuality and



gender? They emphasize that during school visits educators always go in pairs: “We need to protect each other, there has to be another person who can stand up for you, maybe switch roles or something like that.” So, before the session starts, they explain that it is important to set out some rules in the beginning, for example that they are not here to address or talk about their personal life. It is necessary to create a safe space within the classroom and encourage all the students to participate in the discussion. By laying down these ground rules, the educational workers are trying to reduce their vulnerability, and focus on the essence of their educational work, which does not entail talking about themselves and their lives but to enhance critical thinking about the heterogendernorms and how they restrict some but privilege others.

As discussed in the previous section, time for outreach work is limited in all three national contexts. Thus, not much time is left for norm criticism according to the educational manager at Samtökin 78. The main aim of their work is therefore, as previously mentioned, “just to try to combat prejudice by normalizing these things.” By “normalization” she is referring to LGBTQ identities. She however has some doubts whether this kind of approach is working and if other ones would be better: “I do have doubts about the normalizing aspect of an outsider coming and speaking for an hour and then leaving. That does reinforce that being queer is something outside.” Thus, she is aware of the need to take a norm-critical approach toward these issues but so far it has not been the main part of the educational outreach work of Samtökin. She adds that if teachers and educational workers could be trained to give basic information on these issues, it would enable the educational workers of Samtökin to focus more on norm-critical pedagogy. Thus, today educational workers of Samtökin only work with norm-critical pedagogy indirectly, by for example talking with the students about the social construction of norms, and how normative ideas on gender and sexuality change over time. In that respect, students are confronted with the idea that gender and sexuality identities are fluid and can change over time. In that sense, the educational outreach work of Samtökin is gradually adopting more of a norm-critical approach, although the main focus is still to give basic information on LGBTQ issues.

In Finland, diversity understanding and LGBTI-based identity descriptions were still very much in focus during the outreach visits in schools, but recently there were more aims to adopt norm-critical perspectives to

these visits (Lehtonen, 2017). This approach was influenced by the work done in Sweden according to the educational secretary of Seta.

We are going more and more to the direction, or I don't know if more and more, or if we have already reached it, but in Sweden there is this norm critical pedagogy. Our educator is not talking about gays to gays or about gays to straights, but tries to raise up discussion on the strict gender norms, how they limit everyone. But sometimes, I feel about this Swedish norm critical pedagogy, or the RFSL [Swedish LGBTI organization] thing, and I don't speak based on knowledge but feeling, that they have gone a bit too far, or not maybe too far, but at least I want that our educators say that there are transvestites and what that means, and other things, while I think that, if the educator of Seta does not say that, who then. So that you don't base everything on the norms, or norm criticism, but also the LGBTIQ is brought up. If we don't do it, then who will.

Norm-critical pedagogy became more popular in Seta during the last few years. That was partly because of the youth work coordinator of Seta, who is Swedish-speaking and had close contacts to Swedish LGBTI organizations. The youth coordinator told about the cooperation and differences between the organizations in the area of educational outreach work.

In Sweden very much people are into norm critical pedagogy. Often, I have this feeling that in Sweden they have so much more resources, and more advanced in many issues. But then after all, I felt that it does not differ that much from our trainings. This norm critical approach is still more in the beginning phase in our educational work. But then in the end, their set does not differ so much from ours. We are doing a lot of rehearsals, and we have brought some from Sweden. Certain rehearsals, which we use, they don't use anymore, while they see them as being against the norm critical pedagogy. They think that if you will express the issues by having an experiential educator, this person is like personal identification target, which makes people react as tolerating this person. This focus the issue on the norm breaking person, and this activate the identification experience and feelings of tolerance. This is how I understand that. And then the focus is moved away from the difficult norm.

The youth coordinator, even if being otherwise a strong supporter of main Swedish arguments, did not fully agree with them about the experiential educator:

In the classroom there are people, who might need that experience of identification in that person, and through that might get encouragement for breaking the norms in their own lives.

There was also a project in Seta titled “From tolerance to equality,” in which norm-critical pedagogy was a key focus point. The project, later called “Against the norms,” was a cooperation project with Seta and three student organizations. The youth coordinator said that “Against the norms” book and project was not planned to be so progressive. It became more so because the employee of the project was so active in the direction of the norm criticism: “this project is more norm critical than in the original plan and application it was.” He said that the representative of the state funding organization was hoping that the project would have focused mainly on the area of gender and sexual diversity issues, not so much on other differences. Within the new project, norm-critical approach with the emphasis on intersectional feminist perspectives was advanced more than typically within the educational outreach work of Seta (see Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). When asked about the discussion with the official of the state funding organization representative the youth coordinator said: “Yes, we will focus while that is our special area, but can we also talk same time about the other aspects, while they link together and are all equality issues.” He also mentioned that sometimes he has used a more moderate sounding term: “I might sometimes talk on norm awareness, somehow soften it (laughing), when I try to explain for people who, I presume, would [react negatively].” This project was a good example of the balancing act between norm-critical queer activism and state-funded LGBTI-identity political activism. State funded and Seta applied a project to take a distance from tolerance policy but not really focusing on norm criticism either, but the queer activist who worked as the project manager turned it into a norm-critical project.

The balance between informing on sexual and gender diversities and questioning the basic heteronormative practices in schools seem to be difficult to find in all Nordic countries. With the limited time and resources of the educational outreach work, the questions are raised on, should the efforts be targeted on changing the structures of education or on helping students to get models for being LGBTI, does norm-critical approach mean the erasure of LGBTI visibility, and does the focus on identities mean that the queering of schools is not done.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the chapter, we have analyzed the educational outreach work on sexuality and gender diversity done by three Nordic LGBTIQ organizations. The aim of these organizations is to both give information on sexuality and gender diversity for students and pupils, but also to question heteronormative practices and knowledge in the schools and in this way queer education. Nordic welfare states fund this work and have changed legislation and core curricula documents to reflect the need to include diversity aspects in teaching. However, in most schools, heteronormative practices are typical and widespread, and teachers do not have abilities and know-how on challenging heteronormativity and to give adequate information on LGBTIQ issues. LGBTIQ organizations are only reaching a small portion of schools and students with their educational outreach work. Thus, some of the educational workers interviewed saw this work as being only “a first aid.” Much more has to be done. The main responsibility is on the state, municipalities who are responsible for organizing the education, and teachers and principals in school. It is great that LGBTIQ organizations can give the expertise on sexuality and gender diversity issues in developing new methods and practices, but often in practice they fill in the gaps of the official education by adding extra information on LGBTIQ issues in heteronormative schools.

We focused on several tensions, challenges, and contradictions within the educational outreach work. The organizations are all keeping in mind the overall situation in society and in the schools. They might need to think about how the funding bodies, such as the state and the municipalities, of their outreach work are reacting, as well as ponder upon how they face the reactions of teachers, parents, and students within the educational outreach work. Can they be critical, or do they have to find language to make the message more acceptable and understandable for all? What subjects and viewpoints to choose? Is it alright to talk about sex, and how to construct gender and sexuality? Key discussion in the Nordic educational outreach work is on whether to demand acceptance of LGBTIQ people and their needs, or to focus on queering the heteronormative principals in the minds of people and the practices of schools. Recent trend supports the norm-critical pedagogy but there are still several hindrances in achieving the aim of queering schools and education in the Nordic countries. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, there are both possibilities and opportunities to transform schools and make them more inclusive in

terms of gender and sexual diversity, both through outreach activities but also by incorporating this kind of diversity education into the curriculum of schools.

## NOTES

1. “When feminism supports trans rights, everybody wins – just like in Iceland”, *Guardian*, September 9, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/09/feminism-trans-rights-iceland-uk-movements>.
2. Seta (<https://seta.fi/>), LGBT Danmark (<http://lgbt.dk/>), Samtökin 78 (<https://samtokin78.is/en/>). We are thankful for these organizations for their help as well as for the interviewees we cite in the text. We would like to thank Dennis Francis for the valuable comments for our chapter.
3. Lehtonen currently works on workplace diversity and equality issues in WeAll project ([weallfinland.fi](http://weallfinland.fi)) funded by the Academy of Finland (Strategic Research Council) [Grant number 292883].
4. The four approaches to anti-oppressive education are the following according to Kevin Kumashiro: education for the other, education about the other, education that is critical of privileging and othering, and education that changes students and society.

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# Embodying Responsibility? Understanding Educators' Engagement in Queer Educational Justice Work in Schools

*Irina Schmitt* 

Queer social movements (QSM) inform crucially and in different ways “queer educational justice work in schools” (Quinn & Meiners, 2012, p. 4). This chapter examines how QSM and schools interact by analyzing the logics underlying educators’ social justice work on gender and sexuality, and how these logics relate to engagement in and sense of responsibility for queer social justice education. The material, interviews with thirty-nine educators in Vancouver and Toronto, Canada, suggests that interaction between schools and QSM is often embodied by educators who are engaged in QSM as well as in schools, school boards, and unions.

Accordingly, the questions this chapter addresses are: What are the strategies of queer educational justice work formulated by educators in schools and QSM, and how do they relate to an attachment and a sense of responsibility? I argue that it is possible to differentiate three strategies of queer educational justice work: reflexive identity politics, intersectional

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systems critique, and individual humanism. These strategies reflect the fact that school-based and QSM-based queer educational justice work are closely connected and often embodied by the same people, and inversely, that educators without such connections express a lack of access to the knowledge needed to do queer educational justice work in schools. I also contend that responsibility for queer educational justice work is attached to queer educators, that is educators who are or are seen as queer, through fear. With this reading of “queer” I hope to destabilize the notion of an easily identifiable victim of homophobia or transphobia, pointing to the processes of being queered as an ascription of otherness that in the context of this chapter is linked to responsibility.<sup>1</sup> I argue that it is necessary to analyze this attachment of responsibility to understand educators’ engagement in queer educational justice work, and how such an attachment of responsibility can undermine the work of QSM and queer educational justice work in schools. With this discussion, I hope to provide educators and schools with a deeper understanding of some of the gaps in translation of existing policy into the curriculum and into school culture, and give insights into ways of creating change.

In our conversations, participants discussed school- and QSM-based social justice work, and the entanglement of regulative progress, economy, and the resistance-to-change factor that can be rooted in religious or political convictions (Dehli & Fumia, 2002), fear of upsetting principals and parents (Bower & Klecka, 2009), insecurity, and the sense that things are fine as they are (Meyer, 2008). Talking with educators from different contexts has allowed me to analyze approaches to queer educational justice and how responsibility is assigned to queer bodies in the context of local interrelations of QSM-based and school-based work. Thus, it complements research on gaps between Canadian teachers’ self-understanding and their practices of social justice education on gender and sexuality (Taylor et al., 2016).

While the initial aim of the study was to understand teachers’ knowledge and skills relating to queer students and content, the issue of community engagement emerged from the material. QSM engagement was an important factor, but it was not an uncomplicated one. Logics and strategies differed also between participants connected to QSM. With this chapter, I discuss strategies of engagement rather than analyze moments of interaction to understand the role of QSM-based work in an overarching sense. As shown by Dennis Francis (2017, p. 371), fear can hinder especially non-queer educators from addressing hetero-cisnormativity

in education. The work of QSM in schools in Canada is still crucial, yet it acts in a setting where the attachment of responsibility limits how the knowledge produced by queer education networks is accessible to all teachers through curriculum and teacher education.

In what follows, I present the participants and research setting as well as the theoretical context and research process, before analyzing the three strategies. Finally, I discuss how responsibility is attached to queer educators in a context of fear.

## PARTICIPANTS AND QUEER SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This chapter is based on thirty-two interviews with thirty-nine educators held in the fall of 2010 in Vancouver and Toronto. Some participants worked in schools as teachers or administrators (in Vancouver Hannah, Michael, and Jeremy; in Toronto Tracey, Ruth, Jody, Amy, Laura, Wayne, Angela, Phillip, Brian, Tom, Terri, Daniel, Julie, Kevin, and Karen) or counselors and support staff (in Toronto Bobbie, Pauline, and Ana); some of these were engaged in queer education networks. Others worked through QSM (in Vancouver Andy, Dev, Elly, Maya, and Geena; in Toronto Jamie, Colin, and Monica), and school boards or teachers' unions and federations (in Vancouver Tony, Andrea, Nathan, Jason, Deb, Ramona, and Anne; in Toronto Rick, Lisa, and Sean), and many of these had trained as teachers. Some of them knew each other from queer education networks and well-established collaborations between schools, school boards, unions, and QSM. QSM-engaged participants agreed that the knowledge produced in queer educational justice work was important for changing oppressive understandings of gender identity and sexuality for all students, rather than for queer students only.

The invitation to participate in the study had not focused on queer educators; I had asked more broadly about schools' competences in working with LGBTQ students and topics. That twenty-seven of the participants were lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or queer can be read as a first result. Though such categorizations risk problematic reification, they also illustrate a tendency toward who is "on the right side" (everybody) and who feels the responsibility to act (those embodying difference), and I will discuss these participants' sense of responsibility further down in the text.

That thirty-one participants were white, and none Indigenous, can partly be analyzed as a reflection of my own whiteness and lack of strategic

attention in the process of contacting prospective participants to make the project more relevant for people with diverse experiences of oppression. Partly, it reflects on who held positions of power in the unions, school boards and QSM that I got in touch with.

Thus, many of the participants who did queer educational justice work, in schools, teachers' unions, or school boards, were active in and interacting with formal or informal QSM. These were contexts of knowledge production and networking otherwise lacking in schools. For this reason, I am working with an understanding of QSM as multifaceted, including queer organizations which do large-scale educational outreach work, in and outside of schools, as well as smaller groups for knowledge production and outreach, and informal networks.

Queer educational justice work happened as outreach activities of local organizations, or through teachers who were active in such networks and organizations. Starting out from small autonomous networks, some activists in this study had made their way into school boards, federations, and policymaking. This is community-driven work, and parts of the networks are close-knit by many years of shared activism. As one participant argued, engagement by schools, universities, and policymakers, as well as activists, is needed to make "a coherent whole." Importantly, queer educational justice networks and organizations question the liberal, colonial notion of individual teachers who save individual children from individual acts of discrimination (Britzman, 1995; Meiners, 2002), and call for a focus on the collective work of knowledge production and pedagogical change from oppressive norms of gender and sexuality.

### QUEER PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS: WHO FEELS RESPONSIBLE FOR QUEER EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE WORK?

The analysis in this study is informed by queer-feminist education researchers' critique of depoliticizing logics of oppression (Britzman, 1995). Two central contentions of this critique are relevant for this article: First, that they conflate queerness with violence against queer people, suggesting that queerness is defined by vulnerability to violence (Airton, 2014, p. 397; Monk, 2011), which also creates a "proper subject" for queer pedagogies (Talburtt & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 11). A second critique focuses on the propensity for single-issue narratives in anti-discrimination work and policy based on a logic of individuation (Daley, Solomon, Newman, & Mishna, 2007; Meyer, 2007). Not least in the Canadian

context with its colonial history and present, it is important to take into account scholarship that analyzes normative gender categories as violently colonial (binaohan, 2014; Driskill, 2004).<sup>2</sup> Such discussions of gender and sexuality as historically specific are important for the analysis of educators' strategies toward issues of gender and sexuality in schools.

Thus, queer-feminist education research works both with claims for the existence and representation of queer subjectivities, and for the queering of education, aiming "to unsettle the myth of normalcy as an originary state and to unsettle the unitary subject of pedagogy" (Britzman, 1995; 2012 [1998], p. 293). I understand the need both to claim and identify positions and belongings in societies that work in the logic of individuation, and hope to disrupt this logic by engaging these tensions between queer representations in and queering of education.

Working with these discussions, I use queer as a theoretical and methodological tool deriving from politics of resistance and deconstructive analyses of the regulatory workings of norms. It is a site of struggle, understanding the interrelatedness of oppressions and productions of power, necessarily critiquing the contingency of growing racism in the stabilizing of "queer" (Puar, Pitcher, & Gunkel, 2008). The present analysis is especially informed by Jen Gilbert's (2014, p. xiii) problematization of "being on the right side of an issue" that

is not enough if, in standing there, we erode the possibility for new, more expansive understandings of sexuality and learning.

Gilbert problematizes Western liberal positions, arguing that they do anti-discrimination work in schools by acting upon notions of repressive tolerance (Brown, 2008 [2006]), which shuts down rather than opens up conversations about sexuality in school.

Conversely, I engage with the complication of notions of injury and of responsibility suggested by Mary Lou Rasmussen, Fida Sanjakdar, Louisa Allen, Kathleen Quinlivan, and Annette Bromdal (2015, pp. 40–41):

Accountability and responsibility cannot be located in a specific individual, nor a specific event, place or time. This is not to say that responsibility and accountability no longer matter. It is recognition that neither are they virtues, straightforward or easily apprehended.

The authors “interrupt the notion that education can repair ignorance, fear and anxiety” (2015, p. 40). I use this contention to analyze why some educators feel personal responsibility to do queer educational justice work at the intersections of schools, QSM, school boards, and unions, intersections often embodied by a small and intensely engaged group of people. As the analysis will show, (not) feeling responsible and being made responsible are decisive motivations for the level of engagement in social justice work for the participants in this study.

These seemingly contradictory contentions, a critique of “standing on the right side” on the one hand and complications of responsibility on the other hand, unsettle assumptions of stable positions for queer students as always-already victims of violence, and queer adults in schools as always already responsible to change that.

This inscribes this chapter in a queer tradition of analysis that focuses on the norms that produce subject positions, as vulnerable to violence or as responsible for queer educational justice work, and that understands conceptualizations of social justice as materially productive of inclusions and exclusions (Butler, 2009; Spade, 2015 [2009]). Beyond showing the productive interrelations between personal engagement and continuous social justice work in schools, it analyzes how a lack of such engagement allows for a lack in social justice work. I argue that the sense of responsibility which QSM-engaged participants express gives them access to knowledge and continuous knowledge production that is necessary for queer educational justice work. It is not in the first instance their experiences as queer that produces this knowledge, but the intense work of knowledge production done on the basis of educators’ experiences in larger and smaller networks.

## METHODOLOGY, AND THE TRICKY QUESTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Working in a queer-feminist research tradition relates to the methodology as much as the theoretical framing of this chapter (Ahmed, 2012; Britzman, 1995; Butler, 2009; Lather, 2001). Central issues are the critique of researchers as neutral objective subject, of reproductions of societal power structures, and ongoing discussions on research as reflective of the shifting power relations that form a study during the entire process, including ways of contacting participants, during conversations and during analysis (Potts & Brown, 2015). This includes reflections of researcher

subjectivities; it does matter who we are when we meet research participants, but not in a causal chain of events. It mattered in our conversations that I was someone from outside Canada, albeit with earlier research experience in Canada, and that I was a queer white academic who had read similar texts to those that some of the participants referred to (Schmitt, 2010). There were moments of recognition, and moments of uncomfortable silence (Gorman-Murray, Johnston, & Waitt, 2010).

In Vancouver, fifteen people met with me for fourteen interviews; one of the conversations was with two teachers. In Toronto, a key participant generously organized most meetings, and twenty-four people met with me individually or in pairs for eighteen interviews. The interviews were semi-structured; all but one was recorded digitally and transcribed by research assistants. I kept a research diary, spoke with colleagues in both cities who helped me contextualize my questions, studied current education policy (Schmitt, 2012), and was invited to join community events such as a vigil, a fundraising event, and the Toronto Halloween parade. Briefly, I became part of a “community of speakers” in which understandings of social justice were expressed and formed (Ahmed, 2012, p. 81).

There are good reasons to credit activists by using their names (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 7), and I asked participants how I should refer to them. Fourteen agreed to have me use their names, twenty-five preferred a pseudonym. Analytical emphasis lies on the narratives and discourses of experiences and strategies, rather than on attaching blame or praise to individuals (Lather, 2001). With these two considerations in mind, I ultimately used pseudonyms for all.

For the analysis, I worked with both the sound files and the transcripts. Using a feminist post-structural discourse analytical approach (Baxter, 2002), I read the material for participants’ discourses, terminologies, and practices of social justice concerning sexuality and gender identity. The pattern emerging from this, the three strategies of engagement, is not meant to be read as static. Rather, it highlights the critical role of networks and communities of knowledge production in queer educational justice work.

In the analysis, differences in how queer educational justice work is related to QSM manifest; the participants’ narratives show that locally specific contexts inform, but do not fully account for, their approach to social justice work. As I discuss in the following section, in the federal Canadian setting, structures and cultures for social justice education differ between provinces and between public and private school boards.



## MATTERS OF PLACE

This study is set in the public-school sector in two Anglophone metropolitan centers, chosen as both cities' public-school boards had strong but different frameworks for anti-discrimination and social justice work on gender identity and sexuality (Dehli & Fumia, 2002; Mulligan, 2006, pp. 50–51; Schmitt, 2012), as well as close-knit networks of education activists, school boards, and unions working on queer educational justice. Nationally, the Canadian Human Rights Act states sexuality, and since 2016 gender identity and expression.

Similar to most education systems in the global North, the Canadian education system is a context for the reproduction of whiteness formed by (post)colonialism and immigration. In the conversations, participants reflected on how gender, gender expression, and sexuality are produced through other forms of identification and oppression such as colonialism, racism, sexism, religious beliefs, and poverty (Loutzenheiser, 2007, p. 103). Nonetheless, Black participants and participants of Color discussed the racism within queer communities and the lack of interrelations between queer and anti-racist activism (Kumashiro, 2002; McCready, 2004). I use the terminology of “Black” and “person of Color” to stress differentiated yet related experiences of racism and following critique of the previously common Canadian ascription “visible minorities” as depoliticizing. In conversations about hierarchies of oppression that made it easier to get attention for racism than for homophobia, but also problematizing that suicides by queer young people were more visible than suicides by Indigenous young people, problematic narratives of racialization and gender identity and sexuality as mutually exclusive emerged (Driskill, 2004). The legacy of Western understandings of gender and sexuality as tools of colonialism to enforce new social structures of personal relationships and society is important to remember here and is challenged by Two-spirit and queer Indigenous scholars and activists (binaohan, 2014; Morgensen, 2016; Wesley, 2014).

The Vancouver School Board had an explicit policy to support “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-spirit, Questioning” students, and an anti-homophobia and diversity consultant. Yet, not least in the context of diminishing funding for that work, participants in Vancouver emphasized working through QSM and queer educational justice networks, which included people working at the school board or unions, both in the current work and in narrating the history of changes (Gilbert, 2014, pp. 16–18; Haskell & Burtch, 2010, p. 23). As Andy, who worked

with a QSM that did workshops in schools, phrased it, “everyone is perfect working together, everyone.” Interested teachers invited QSM representatives to come to their schools, and teachers were engaged in outreach work through the networks and organizations that they were part of. For many of the teachers, their engagement in social justice work did not end when the school day was over; and for some, this engagement led them from active service as teachers to full-time work at teachers’ unions or the Vancouver School Board. Many schools had a “safe contact” who distributed information about anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia work. Participants demanded clearer political and administrative leadership for social justice work, though this leadership was not to infringe on teacher autonomy, on the decentralized structure of schools, or on teachers’ collective agreements.

The underlying narrative in Toronto spoke of human rights as enforceable legal rights, and the knowledge of political victories that are manifest in elaborate policy and structure (McCaskell, 2007). Within the Toronto District School Board, social justice work focused on policy integration and explicit anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia work (Ferfolja, 2013), including the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Office and a school for students who had experienced homophobic and transphobic violence at their previous schools. Teachers were to refer behavioral questions to colleagues such as child and youth counselors. For some this created clarity, while others questioned the demotion of the pedagogical issue of social justice to a matter of mere “behavior”.

Educators in both cities situated social justice work within the larger context of diminishing education funding and politics that also affected queer students (Russell, 2006). This also concerned the circulation of relevant policy and resources: knowledge of regulations and resources required personal commitment when the structures for implementation of social justice work failed (Rudoe, 2018).

### ANALYSIS: THREE STRATEGIES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK

Despite the differences between the two cities, with QSM organizations being part of everyday queer educational justice work in schools in Vancouver, and participants in Toronto referring more to the school

board's work, more relevant distinctions emerged between the participants' conceptualizations and strategies of social justice concerning sexuality and gender identity (Haskell & Burtch, 2010, p. 13). The participants' strategies elaborate the differentiation made by Emily C. Graybill, Kris Varjas, Joel Meyers, and Laurel L. Watson's study (2009, p. 576) between approaches based on ethics or rules, with rules-based approaches reflecting Gilbert's "being on the right side" and an ethics-based strategy reflecting Rasmussen, Sanjakdar, Allen, Quinlivan, and Bromdal's discussion of responsibility. I identify the different strategies used by participants in achieving social justice as "reflexive identity politics," "intersectional systems critique," and "individual humanism." Strategies overlapped and participants could refer to different ones. Nonetheless, as I discuss in the analysis, the strategies clearly reflect educators' engagement in queer educational justice work and QSM.

### *Reflexive Identity Politics*

This strategy entailed a focus on pedagogy as a way to translate politics and policies into learning on social justice issues concerning sexuality and gender identity. With this strategy, identificatory positions and power relations were expressed through terminologies of queer, social justice, hate (not phobia), and equity, rather than bullying. Queer educational justice was discussed as teachers' responsibility, and also as something that becomes attached to queer teachers. Participants pointed out intersections, often positioning violence against queer people in relation to other forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, and classism; and Jamie, who worked at a QSM in Toronto, argued that "if I only tease out one [issue], then really, I am not doing the work."

Vancouver-based teacher and QSM activist Jeremy discussed the pedagogical limitations of anti-bullying logics, demanding to make "safety" "the core underlying basic thing first before anything else can happen" in schools, but reflected that this shift would be unwelcome in the given education system. This discussion of the logics of social justice education is important, not least in Vancouver, where QSM were discussed as a regular resource in the local strategies of queer social justice education. Elly, working through a local QSM, considered some limitations:

One thing that we worked on developing was like, okay, oppression happens to so many people, so why don't we talk about that, instead of just

having the gay kids in front of the classroom, right? So, so a big thing that we see in the schools is that if you start talking about what students are experiencing, and how they are experiencing stereotypes and how they are experiencing discrimination, and you can connect that to experiences of homophobia, then they get such a better understanding – they can relate to it a lot more.

Discussing the logics of education in this way speaks to a demand to change approaches to learning on a larger scale, going beyond reparative or add-on models of anti-discrimination (Monk, 2011, p. 191). Elly's comment echoes Hilary Malatino's skepticism toward a kind of queer educational justice work that contains queer people as "other" (Malatino, 2015) and Jón Ingvar Kjara and Jukka Lehtonen's discussion of QSM being given the role of filling educational gaps (Kjara & Lehtonen, 2018, p. 1040). Instead, Elly argued for a pedagogy based on solidarity that creates an understanding of how oppression works.

Educators argued that anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia work can reproduce an understanding of discrimination as a matter of ignorance, not as complex productions of power. Jody, teacher and QSM activist in Toronto, discussed this frustration:

One of the big, of the most massive issues that I see is how many white teachers there are, white straight teachers [...] so you can, like, have the framework but then the people who are delivering it – like, there is this disconnect.

For Jody, lack of appropriate representation created problems of plausibility in classrooms. At the same time, she critiqued the assumption that education against homophobia and transphobia is only relevant when queer students or teachers are visible or "out" to their teachers, classmates, or colleagues (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 26).

Educators using this strategy argued that many teachers were only abstractly aware that anti-discrimination was constitutionally stipulated. This resonates with Gilbert's analysis that "being on the right side" is not sufficient to address social justice concerns. They highlighted the necessity for an analysis of power relations that sees queer students and adults in schools not merely as individual subjects of useful policy or momentary educational interventions, and works with ongoing pedagogical change.

### *Intersectional Systems Critique*

This strategy understands oppression as systemic and structurally embedded in all aspects of education, including teacher training, curricular changes, and structures of education administration. Therefore, queer educational justice work needs to address the understanding of how and on what premises education is organized and what is considered relevant to learn in schools. Two aspects that were discussed were strategies of change work, that is, the question as to whether pedagogical work is more relevant or the control of compliance with existing policy, and the question of how to address disparities between advanced policy and a lack of translation into practice.

Jason, who worked with queer education questions at a Vancouver school board or union,<sup>3</sup> emphasized the structural intersectionality of homophobia:

Homophobia is the norm in BC [British Columbian] schools. Racism is the norm in BC schools. Sexism is still the norm in this province. And in Canada too. So – and there are a lot of intersections between all those issues.

Nathan, who also worked with queer education questions at a Vancouver school board or union, also declared that education in Canada is “patriarchal, hierarchical, colonial – you know, it’s still set up on a British model, so it’s hard to kind of break away at that.” He argued that it was not sufficient—although momentarily necessary—to relegate certain students’ wellbeing to activities separated from everyday schoolwork, such as Gay/Queer–Straight Alliances or a separate school, in what Lori MacIntosh has discussed as the “Band-Aid” approach (2007).

If the problem is intersectional and systemic, so must be the solution. The understanding that educators can use policy as a tool for resistance was strong in this group, though Deb, who worked through a school board or union in Vancouver, argued that there was a lack of societal consensus for anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia work that existed for anti-racism work, and that more staff education addressing the intersections of oppressions was necessary. Similarly, Kevin, a Torontonion teacher and QSM activist, argued that there needed to be

education, education, education, ’cause I believe that the reason we are teachers is because we believe we can make change through education,

and that's where we really need to put our money where our mouth is and stop writing policy and start putting the money into implementing policy.

Importantly, both linked the individual teacher in need of more education, which is a classic trope in any anti-discrimination discourse, and which has been importantly critiqued, to the structures of education.

Another discussion focused on compliance. Rick, a QSM activist working at a school board or union in Toronto, argued that there was "not as much compliance as we should have" and continued: "[m]any of the tools we need are there and being developed [in our society]. What's missing is the security to do it." Rick also wished that teachers would feel more comfortable to be out at work, as this would make it easier for them to support queer students: "I think the system would be different."

Ramona, a QSM activist working for a school board or union in Vancouver, argued that many teachers did not have access to such tools, or to queer educational justice conversations: "Everybody knows it's not okay to be overtly homophobic; I don't think we're at a place where everybody knows that they should be teaching positively." This led to a situation where many teachers, as Torontonian teacher and QSM activist Karen pointed out,

pretend not to see it or hear it, because they don't know how to deal with it. [...] It's not the guidance counselor's job necessarily. It is not the principal's job to do the discipline. It's your job to get to know them and find out what's going on, if they are bullying in your classroom or in your school.

Karen and others argued that when oppression is framed as an individual behavioral problem, the task of addressing it is shunted from classrooms to counselors. Teachers needed to have access to analysis hetero- and cis-normativity in society and to pedagogies that strengthen social justice to be able to go beyond information about nondiscrimination. These conversations sum up a challenge that educators and policymakers face: The impact of anti-discrimination regulations is limited if teachers fear that compliance will put them in conflict with normative logics of school and with student and parent communities.

The language of compliance shifts the focus from the individual teacher to the analysis of structures and routines, formulating the possibility of consequences for those who do not adhere to the protective regulations.

This is a shift from activist work toward institutionalization, from individual, community-based to collective responsibility (Rasmussen et al., 2015). Yet the politics of consequence fail when educators lack the knowledge to understand and work with it (Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007; Sykes, 2004), and schools often lack the resources to circulate the knowledges produced in queer educational justice networks.

### *Individual Humanism*

Finally, this approach encompasses a pedagogical philosophy based on human rights. A shared sense was a focus on individual students who needed help in difficult situations. Teachers and staff felt that homophobia and transphobia did not happen (a lot) and many did not know whether there were queer students in their schools, leading to little sense of urgency (Loutzenheiser & Moore, 2009, p. 151). Homophobia and transphobia were discussed through a terminology of stereotypes, respect, human rights, zero tolerance, anti-bullying, and behavior, making homophobia and transphobia an issue of individual perpetrators, attached to progressive rationality and regulation (Rasmussen, 2016). In Gilbert's (2014) terms, participants were "on the right side," containing the issue of gender identity and sexuality within specific bodies and specific moments.

Most participants in this group associated queerness with forms of excess, either noticeable as homophobia or transphobia, or existing in visible representations of queerness. This "mobile, transferable and generalized queer subject has tended to invoke a homophobic conception of homophobia as harming only queers" (Airton, 2013, p. 554). Notions of "appropriate behavior" and prohibitive measures, such as stopping students from using "bad language," were the most accessible ones to teachers and staff in this group. They expressed a strong sense of equality and justice and acted whenever they encountered individual homophobic or transphobic events and behaviors. Anne, who worked at a school board or union in Vancouver, summed up the basis of her work as an educator with "a child is a child," though she also discussed the need for systemic change, viewing the situation of Vancouver's schools through the lens of child poverty. For Torontonion teacher Laura, this was a question of professionalism in education: "You may have bias, you may have personal beliefs, but when you get into that classroom you'd better not ever let that bias taint the decision you make about a kid."

Some participants in this group were unsure about available resources or legal frameworks, and spoke of a lack of information and training. They felt that they lacked knowledge to apply policy in the classroom, and expressed being overwhelmed by the task of fitting in social justice work with all the other demands on their time.

## DISCUSSION: ATTACHING RESPONSIBILITY

These strategies—reflexive identity politics, intersectional systems critique, and individual humanism—show that educators’ logics of social justice work are a decisive factor in understanding their engagement in queer educational justice work. The different strategies also reflect fundamental conflicts. Some participants expressed the necessity for ongoing work in classrooms, governing bodies, and especially through the continuous conversation with and through QSM to change the structure of education and of pedagogy to make it safer for all students. For others, this work was completed, in that their understanding of equity incorporated bisexual, lesbian, gay, Two-spirit, gender-nonconforming, and transgender subjecthood, without having to change their underlying norms and logics of education.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) provided strong leadership, and central work was done by people in the TDSB with QSM engagement, but not all teachers had sufficient access to these resources. Also, in Vancouver, both policy and support from the Vancouver School Board and the teachers’ unions were in place. Clearly, policy changes regarding social justice have to be read in the context of diminishing resources, and the analysis of responsibility needs to engage a broader understanding of education in neoliberal settings (Malatino, 2015, pp. 398–399). While QSM play an important role in schools’ queer educational justice work, in the Canadian and many other Western contexts, we need to read their work in this context of neoliberal understandings and structures of education.

Also, especially in Toronto, concepts of justice and inclusion were operative beside notions of danger, consequence, and punishment. Logics of shame and punishment, previously used against queer people, can paradoxically displace the analysis of structural heteronormativity with the idea of individualized, depoliticized homophobia (Monk, 2011, pp. 199–200). Approaches based on punishment can lead to pedagogies of “progressive censorship” (Sykes, 2004, pp. 77, 82) that reproduce invisibility for those



they are meant to protect (also Gilbert, 2014, pp. 97–98) or “simply suppress the most blatant forms of violence and harassment in an authoritative and top–down manner” (Goldstein et al., 2007, p. 185). By forbidding “bad language,” terms such as queer or gay, in order to stem violence, schools deprive young people of the words needed to give language to their sense of self.

Especially in Vancouver, participants spoke about systems of oppression, such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, and poverty, rather than about politics of identity. Policy, however, works through identity and speaks in the logic of visibility (Hansman, 2008). While policy can offer ways of redress for those being victimized as queer (as racialized other, as dis/abled, as sexualized), it can also confine queer and other minoritized people to the position of victim. Britzman (1995, p. 158) unpacks the conundrum of visibility by asking for curricula to be “proliferating identifications, not closing them down.” Likewise, Airton (2013, p. 534) proposes a “flourishing of queerness in schools,” where educators can form strategic alliances based on such proliferation.

That the participants who were most engaged in queer social justice work in schools were those positioning as queer or as allies points to another symptom of the limitations of policy, as necessary as policy is. This is crucial: as long as non-queer educators feel disengaged toward queer educational justice work, this work will remain minoritized. Educators’ engagement, formally or informally, sustained and informed queer educational justice work. For these educators, especially those working through reflexive identity politics and intersectional systems critique, social justice work was a way to create community for themselves and others. It was also linked to a form of pain. The knowledge that their work mattered profoundly was an undercurrent in the narratives, as was the understanding that, if it were unsuccessful, children and young people would suffer (more) (Taylor & Peter, 2011). They felt responsible.

For some, this sense of necessity was linked to the frustration that queer communities were simply not doing enough. Rick’s earlier insistence that queer teachers be out at work shows that the ascription of responsibility to queer teachers comes not only from non-queer teachers uncomfortable with the task but also from within queer communities. Similarly, Kevin was frustrated that many people in queer communities were content with legislative recognition and abstained from working for educational change: “That’s when things are taken away from us.” While I do understand the hope attached to queer teachers creating visibility

through their own bodies, I also see how the attachment of interest and injury to people identified as queer contains the problem as a minority issue, instead of addressing it as a question of democracy and pedagogy (MacIntosh, 2007; Malatino, 2015).

These educators' strategies were rooted in personal convictions and experience and have grown in dedicated formal and informal queer education networks. Educators without such networks were often unsure about both regulative frameworks and classroom strategies, focusing on managing student behavior rather than on discriminatory structures of everyday hetero-cisnormative course materials and pedagogical practices, reflecting Britzman's (2012 [1998], p. 298) contention that:

For those who cannot imagine what difference difference makes in the field of curriculum, the hope is that the truth of the subaltern might persuade these normative folks to welcome the diversity of others and maybe feel their way into people in order to transform, at the level of these very transferable feelings, their racist, sexist, heterosexist attitudes.

As Ahmed argues (2012), good policy can create the faulty impression that all is well. Instead, we need to read laws and regulations in the context of how neoliberal and neoconservative politics and cuts in resources affect educators and students. Policy will not be implemented broadly when teachers fear being stigmatized as queer and there are too little resources to engage teachers with the knowledge produced in queer educational justice networks.

### ... IN A CONTEXT OF FEAR

In this second part of the discussion, I relate responsibility to the aspect of fear. Torontonion teacher and QSM activist Ruth argued that teachers "are petrified of how to do it" and Kevin noted that "people are terrified." Teachers feared they might intensify problems, or be read as queer. These fears challenge the idea that all hetero-cisnormative violence can be stopped by education about sexual and gender diversity alone (Bower & Klecka, 2009, p. 370; Gray, 2013; Meyer, 2008). These fears can also be read as embodiments of what Rasmussen, Sanjakdar, Allen, Quinlivan, and Bromdal (2015, p. 41) described as the "opacity of accountability and responsibility." I am interested in this way of attaching responsibility. In our conversation, Ramona explained:

There was a big movement a while ago to do good work around violence and social justice stuff that was everyone's job. And I think many people took up that, mainly in the form of multiculturalism, diversity, anti-bullying – like real generic, you know, no names, who doesn't want to teach diversity. [...] we correctly identified that, for instance, white people shouldn't be teaching about aboriginal experience, right, and so we started doing this thing about inviting our First Nations workers, or our aboriginal colleagues, to come and talk about their own communities and share stories in that way. And I think what happened then was that many people, out of liberalism, like, and not the good kind, decided that it was too risky to speak for others, and not in a way that was thoughtful. Like I think many people, like, I try not whenever possible to say 'this is what people of Color believe' or 'this is what people of faith believe', because I am not either of those groups. But that doesn't mean that I can't teach anti-oppression, right? And so I think there was a bit of a backlash that came from a well-intentioned movement, to try and say 'let's make space in schools for gay people to talk about homophobia', and then somehow that got turned into 'nobody can talk about homophobia but gays'.

Ramona discussed how a movement of avoidance replaced the hard-won understanding that oppressed groups should have precedence of representation. This movement attaches the injury of oppression to seemingly easily identifiable people and groups. Michael, a QSM activist and teacher in Vancouver, talked about the experience that queer teachers are assigned the responsibility for "gay issues."

Attaching responsibility to those considered most affected, and implicitly most competent, is a widespread practice of containment, reflected in having units on anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia taught by external activists, a practice problematized by Malatino (2015). It assigns both victimhood and agency in a paradoxical gesture of attaching ownership of a problem, and obliterates interlinkages between aspects of oppression. Rasmussen (2006, p. 20) argues:

When the art of inclusion is exercised through the construction of LGBT teachers and young people as objects of pathos or empowerment, it deflects analysis away from the broader social mechanisms invested in these same people's continued objectification.

This produces a need to create readable representations among those working from communities of injury toward anti-oppression, and sets up

a faulty separation between those doing the representing and those considered in need of being educated. In assigning responsibility to oppressed bodies—teachers or people from QSM doing work in schools—non-queer teachers try to avoid being stigmatized. In the context of this book, we understand that that one lecture or that one teacher can be a lifesaver for a queer student. Yet, queer teachers and QSM-based educators engaging in social justice work can come to embody Otherness and be made responsible for making the nonattached happy by circumventing painful or confrontational moments in the process of change (Ahmed, 2012). Attaching both difference and responsibility to queer teachers is equally injurious to students and to the movement for change and confines the representation of interest and injury to people identified as queer, containing the problem as a minority issue (MacIntosh, 2007; Malatino, 2015).

### CONCLUSION: UNDERSTANDING QUEER EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE WORK THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF RESPONSIBILITY

While political and pedagogical leadership is important, it does not solve problems of reactive pedagogies that concentrate on addressing discriminatory moments, instead of creating institutional change. As I have shown, for some, queer educational justice work, indeed all social justice work in schools, was about helping young people seen as different. For others, it was about making the world less structured by violent norms that position queer young people as different in the first place. Policy is a powerful tool for those educators who wish to use it; for others, it is but a yardstick for professional conduct. It is never self-acting.

When “being on the right side” (Gilbert, 2014) is the minimum engagement framed by policy and scarce resources for training and education, responsibility becomes attached to queer teachers and QSM-based educators through fear of stigmatization and fear for queer young people (Rasmussen et al., 2015). This creates a problematic situation where the knowledges produced within queer education networks and QSM, and even policy formulated based on these knowledges, are undermined and confined.

The knowledges produced by educators and teachers in queer educational justice networks and organizations are crucial for the wellbeing of many students and for changing oppressive understandings of gender

and sexuality. The material also shows that the best policy will remain unused if it is not brought into schools through teacher training and regular in-service training, and coupled with the deep knowledge produced in queer educational justice networks and QSM. This negatively impacts how queer educational justice work in schools can be done.

In neoliberal and neoconservative contexts, policy can be both a powerful tool and a method of containment that covers up for lack of the funding that would allow QSM to come to schools, for in-service teacher training and to support ongoing knowledge production. The work of QSM in schools is important: in times of cuts in funding or in contexts where social movements are under attack, the networks that educators create are the spaces where this work continues, with or without political support. Wherever possible, further focus on teacher training to give all teachers the knowledge needed to do social justice as a regular part of their work will be a way to attach responsibility to all teachers.

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## NOTES

1. Equally, homophobia and transphobia are not readily separable, as homophobic acts and heteronormative structures often do not attack a person's sexuality but rather their nonnormative gender expression, and transphobia is often expressed in homophobic terms. Hetero-cisnormativity describes the privileging of stabilizing binary understandings of bodies and relationships.
2. While reference to Canadian colonialism was made by some participants, Indigenous understandings of gender identity and sexuality, as framed in

the term Two-spirit, were limited. For a discussion of the formation of Two-spirit as an umbrella term for what in colonial logics are called non-normative Indigenous gender identities and sexualities, see Driskill, Finley, Gilley, and Morgensen (2011).

3. I use the phrase “school board or union” for ethical reasons.

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## Challenges to LGBTI Inclusive Education and Queer Activism in Taiwan

*Chia-Ling Yang* 

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the activism of both women and queer communities has been instrumental in making changes to laws in Taiwan. As of 2019, the Gender Equity Education Act<sup>1</sup> has been in force for 15 years. In 2019, Taiwan also became the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage. However, in the past decade, conservative religious groups have attacked queer activism and gender equity education relentlessly, with a focus on sexuality education and LGBTI-inclusive education. In November 2018, just half a year before the passage of the same-sex marriage law, about 7 million Taiwanese voted for a national referendum to legalize same-sex unions without changing the civil code's definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and to call for a ban on “*Tongzhi* education (同志教育)” in elementary and junior high schools. *Tongzhi* education is the term for LGBTI-inclusive education in Taiwan.

Within the context of progressive law reform and the countermovement<sup>2</sup> against queer activism and gender equity education in Taiwan, this

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chapter aims to answer the following questions: What is at stake in the struggle over power and knowledge between the Tongzhi movement and the countermovement? How do Tongzhi activists and LGBTI-friendly teachers collaborate with each other to incorporate Tongzhi education in the school curriculum? What are the challenges Tongzhi education and activism face?

## THE TAIWANESE CONTEXT IN RELATION TO GENDER DIVERSITY AND TONGZHI ACTIVISM

Taiwan had a long period under martial law (1949–1987), during which freedom of speech and social movement were forbidden. Still, the Awakening Foundation (婦女新知基金會), established first as Awakening Magazine (婦女新知雜誌社) in 1982, became the first women’s organization in Taiwan. Focusing on law reform, in the past three decades the Awakening Foundation has worked for the legalization of abortion, revision of the civil code with regard to women’s property, inheritance, and child custody rights, and for passage of the Gender Equality in Employment Act.

In 1988, the Awakening Foundation examined textbooks used in schools from elementary through senior high, analyzed, and critiqued their gender stereotypes, gender ideology, and gender ratios. During 1994 and 1996, when various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Taiwan asked for educational reform, women’s organizations highlighted gender issues and demanded that the Executive Yuan (行政院, the Taiwan Cabinet) Educational Reform Committee implement “*Lian-Xin* equity education (兩性教育)” (*Lian-Xin* means “two sexes” in Chinese—women and men) (Su, 2002). In 2002, some board members and previous staff from the Awakening Foundation, activists from Tongzhi NGOs, school teachers, and university scholars established the Taiwan Gender Equity Education Association (台灣性別平等教育協會, TGEAA).

*Lian-Xin* equity education began when the 1997 passage of the Sexual Assault Prevention Act required schools to have at least four hours of *Lian-Xin* equity education per year and established a *Lian-Xin* equity education committee at the Ministry of Education. Since 2001, *Lian-Xin* equity education has become one of the six crucial issues in the National Curriculum for grades 1–9.<sup>3</sup> In 2004, the Gender Equity Education Act (“*Xin-Bie* equity education (性別平等教育)”—*Xin-Bie* means either “biological sex” or “social construction of gender” in Chinese; in this context

it means “social gender,” with a focus on gender diversity) was passed. Enforcement Rules for the Gender Equity Education Act were passed in 2005. Tongzhi education appears only in Article 13 of the Enforcement Rules for the Gender Equity Education Act: “The curriculum related to gender equity education referred to the second paragraph of Article 17 of the Act shall cover courses on ‘intimate relationship education, sexuality education and Tongzhi education’ in order to enhance students’ gender equity consciousness.”

The concept of “gender” in the law in Taiwan was broadened from “two sexes” in the 1990s to “gender diversity” in the 2000s. The change was catalyzed by a tragedy in 2000—the death Yung-Zhi Yeh, a ninth-grade schoolboy who was bullied in school because of his feminine traits. After the investigation of this incident, the Lian-Xin Equity Education Committee at the Ministry of Education proposed broadening the scope of equity education to include LGBTI students. In 2004, the Gender Equity Education Act was passed and the name Lian-Xin Equity Education was changed to Xin-Bie Equity Education. Article 2 in the Gender Equity Education Act defines gender equity education as generating “respect for gender diversity, to eliminate gender discrimination and to promote substantive gender equality through education,” and highlights the rights of LGBTI students and teachers in schools. The renaming process had significant meaning since it extended the binary understanding of gender to a post-structural one.

Although in recent decades there have been many progressive laws regarding Tongzhi in Taiwan, Tongzhi students still face discrimination in schools (Chiang, 2019; Tsai, 2012), just as LGBTI students’ do in other countries (e.g., Francis, 2017; Steck & Perry, 2018). The situation hasn’t improved even after ten years of the Gender Equity Education Act (Wang & Lin, 2014). During the referendum on same-sex marriage and Tongzhi education, Tongzhi students faced a hostile climate and suffered depression (Liu, 2018). Nine Tongzhi students committed suicide after the referendum.

The broadening of Taiwan’s equity education’s mandate was also due to queer activism or Tongzhi activism (Su, 2002). The term “Tongzhi” was first used in Hong Kong in 1988. It means “comrade” and appears in Sun Yat-Sen’s, who is regarded as the “father of the nation” in both China and Taiwan, famous words: “The revolution has not yet succeeded. Comrades [Tongzhi] still need to fight.” These words still appear in school textbooks in Taiwan. According to Hong Kong scholar Wah-Shan Chou

(1997), Tongzhi includes not only gays and lesbians, but any individuals who deconstruct heterosexual hegemony and are allied as a social movement to fight for Tongzhi's equal rights. In that sense, the word Tongzhi is in some ways an umbrella concept for the LGBTI movement in Taiwan as a whole and connotes some of the semantics (meanings) of the word queer/queering.

In the beginning of the 1990s, queer activism began with a lesbian group and later the first gay university students' club in Taipei. In the early 1990s, many lesbian university students participated in women's studies clubs and formed connections to women's organizations and social movements (Hsieh & Lee, 2014). In 1998, the Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association (同志諮詢熱線, Hotline Association) was established in Taipei and registered as an NGO in 2000. From 2000 to 2004, the Hotline Association held "Teachers' in-job training for knowing Tongzhi;" this was the only teacher's in-job training on Tongzhi education. Most other Lian-Xin equity education in-job training focused on gender stereotypes, inequality between women and men, and prevention of sexual assault. In 2007, the Hotline Association's southern office in Kaohsiung (Taiwan's second-largest city) began as a work group and in 2008 became a Hotline Association division office.

In Taiwan, being homosexual is not criminalized. Nevertheless, the crime of "offending against sexual morality" (妨害風化罪) in the Penal Code was applied to men with long hair under martial law, and gay men were arrested under it when the HIV/AIDS epidemic reached Taiwan in the 1980s (Chu, 2003). In 2017, the countermovement instituted lawsuits by referring to this clause in the penal code against a teacher who taught his third-grade students about condom use in sexuality education. Although currently only 1% of prosecution is under this particular clause ("offending against sexual morality") ("Statistics on Prosecution," n.d.), it can be used to threaten teachers who provide Tongzhi or sexuality education.

## DATA, ANALYSIS, AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The data in this chapter includes documents and interviews. The documents gathered include official documents (national Laws and Regulations Database, official website of the Ministry of Education, and local government websites); websites of both the Tongzhi movement and

the conservative or religious countermovement; and research on gender equity education and Tongzhi/LGBTI inclusive education in Taiwan and worldwide. The documents and websites are used firstly to describe the development of Taiwan's Tongzhi activism and Tongzhi education. Secondly, themes and discourses that function as pro- and anti-Tongzhi education discourse will be identified. For the semi-structured qualitative interviews, I used purposive sampling, in order to recruit teachers who have included Tongzhi education in their classroom spaces. Moreover, I targeted two of the NGOs previously mentioned—TGEEA and the Hotline Association—which both concentrate on Tongzhi education. Educational workers and board members from these two NGOs were interviewed.

During October and December 2018, 18 interviews were conducted with teachers from elementary school to university, as well as educational workers and board members from the two NGOs.<sup>4</sup> Having participated in Taiwan's women's movement for more than 20 years,<sup>5</sup> I personally know all the interviewees and some of the interviewees know each other. The interviews lasted from one and a half to three hours, and all the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. I use the real names of the NGOs and pseudonyms for all interviewees. Through "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p. 258) in the official documents, the website sources, and the interviews, and using inductive coding (Boyatzis, 1998) as a form of pattern recognition within the data, themes were identified on the basis of how important they are for the description and analysis of Taiwan's Tongzhi education. Furthermore, discourse analysis based on Foucault's (1972, 1978) theories on discourse and power/knowledge was employed. According to Foucault (1972), discourse formation concerns how certain discourses are produced within a network of power. In alignment with his focus on the productive network of power, the focus is on how discourses and practices of Tongzhi education are debated in books, schools, regulations, parliament, etc.

Regarding the competitive discourses between the Tongzhi movement and the countermovement, I employ Fraser's (1990) concept of "competing counterpublics." Fraser complicates Habermas's understanding of the public sphere from "a site for production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state" (p. 57) to "a plurality of competing publics" (p. 61). Fraser exemplifies counterpublics as "subaltern counterpublics" (p. 67)—alternative publics that include groups

such as women, gays, and lesbians, who develop and circulate counterdiscourses, formulating their own interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. However, Fraser also suggests that not all subaltern counterpublics are virtuous, as some counterpublics pursue anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian agendas.

Using Fraser's concept to analyze the development of the Gender Equity Education Act in Taiwan, feminists and members of the Tongzhi movement constituted alternative publics and invented new terms to shift the binary understanding of gender to the one of gender diversity. However, the countermovement also constituted alternative publics and participated actively to voice their views on how gender, education, and marriage should be defined and practiced. I further analyze how these competing counterpublics participate in debates on Tongzhi education at the sites of schools, committees from the school level to the central government level, public hearings, and social media.

## TONGZHI EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

In Taiwan, gender equity and Tongzhi education are related to the following laws: Sexual Assault Crime Prevention Act (1997); Domestic Violence Prevention Act (1998); Family Education Act (2003); and Sexual Harassment Prevention Act (2005). All these laws and acts require two to four hours of education, which must include gender equity education. The Gender Equity Education Act requires schools to have at least four hours of gender equity education per term (eight hours per year), including Tongzhi education. These laws also request two to four hours of related in-job teacher training per year.

Gender equity education became one of the six crucial issues in the National Curriculum for grades 1–9, for which ten basic competencies are detailed. For example, the main concept of “gender identity” includes sub-concepts of “sexual orientation” and “diversities in gender characteristics.” For grades 5 and 6, the basic competence is “to know various sexual orientations” and for grades 7–9, it is “to know one’s own sexual orientation” (“2008 National Curriculum,” n.d.).

In the 2019 National Curriculum for grades 1–12, gender equity education is not one of the crucial issues but is listed in the curriculum’s Appendix II. The themes most related to Tongzhi education are “respect for diversities of biological sex, sexual orientation, gender characteristics



and gender identity,” “acceptance of one’s own and others’ sexual orientation, gender characteristics and gender identity,” and “self-recognition and respect for others’ sexual orientation, gender characteristics, gender identity” (“2019 National Curriculum,” n.d.).

To help teachers integrate the crucial issues into their teaching, there are “compulsory education counseling groups (輔導團).” Some elementary and junior high school teachers are invited by the leaders (usually university scholars) of the counseling groups to be full-time counselors, who only need to teach four hours in schools per week; or as part-time counselors, whose teaching hours are reduced by four hours per week. The counselors lead teachers’ in-job training workshops, develop teaching materials, and demonstrate teaching methods for teachers at other schools. At the level of senior high schools, the Ministry of Education established “resource centers for gender equity education (性別教育資源中心)” in 2005. The resource centers are responsible for holding in-job training and collecting related books, research, and teaching materials for senior high school teachers.

In practice, required educational hours and gender equity education are usually addressed as a theme during “flexible teaching hours (彈性教學)” and sometimes integrated into subjects, particularly Social Studies, Language Learning, Arts and Humanities, or Integrative Activities.<sup>6</sup>

“Flexible teaching hours” are two to six hours per week covering elective courses in various subjects, students’ clubs, and class or school activities. Before the Temporary National Curriculum (2001), “flexible teaching hours” were used for a national flag-raising ceremony every morning, class meetings, and school gatherings once a week; these occasions were meant to strengthen patriotism and discipline under martial law.

In contrast with the past, most schools use “flexible teaching hours” for gender equity education in the following ways: school teachers talk about gender issues in morning sessions; the school invites guest speakers to school gatherings; or the school holds student competitions for poster design, essay writing, or dramatic performances with the theme of gender equity (Lee, S.-C., 2011b; Lee, S.-L., 2011).

## TENSIONS AND CHALLENGES IN TONGZHI EDUCATION

Although the dominant form of integration of gender equity education seems to be somewhat “decorative” in some “flexible teaching hours” in schools, conservative groups still targeted Tongzhi education for its

presence in the Enforcement Rules for Gender Equity Education at the 2018 referendum. All my interviewees call this a fake issue, since few teachers actually do Tongzhi education.

Yun-Chen (female, public officer charged with gender equity education at the Education Bureau in a municipality) said:

Usually sexuality education is practiced within Health and Physical Education. And if [the schools] talk about “body rights,” they talk mostly about self-protection, sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual bullying, [which makes up] perhaps more than 50% of gender equity education. [...] I would estimate that...less than 10% is about gender diversity, including gender identity and sexual orientation. (Yun-Chen)

Ren-Hao (male, secondary school counselor) confirms: “Actually, few teachers talk about Tongzhi.” Mei-Yu (female, junior high school teacher), from Penghu, an island near Taiwan with fewer educational resources, said that “most teachers don’t want to get into trouble. They are not interested in [Tongzhi issues].”

Counselors in the compulsory education counseling groups, who are supposed to be capable of developing marginalized issues in gender equity education, also shy away from engaging in Tongzhi education. Take Shu-Fen’s (female, elementary school teacher and part-time counselor for a municipal compulsory education counseling group on gender equity education) words, for example:

When we [Shu-Fen and another part-time counselor] intended to raise Tongzhi education in the group, some counselors were hesitant. [...] They just wanted to do safe things and the schools were worried [about making trouble]. So, when we wanted to develop Tongzhi education, they recommended that we not talk about the issue too openly. (Shu-Fen)

These observations correspond to research on gender equity education in Taiwan. According to a national survey on gender equity education in elementary and junior high schools, of the three kinds of education mentioned in the Enforcement Rules, 80% of schools provide intimate relationship education and sexuality education, while only 24.2% of schools provide Tongzhi education (Fang, You, & Li, 2009).

Studies in multiple municipalities confirm these results. A study on gender equity education in Taipei (Lin, 2013) demonstrates that most gender equity education focuses on the prevention of sexual harassment

and violence because educators find it easier to give such a lecture to the whole school. A study in Hualien (Lee, 2011), a town in eastern Taiwan with fewer educational resources, and a study of four different cities (Lee, 2011b) also note that most gender equity education focuses on gender stereotypes, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. Taken together, the studies further illustrate that when sexuality education is mentioned, the prevention of teenage pregnancy and abstinence-only sex education are usually the focus.

As Eley points out, “the public sphere was always constituted by conflict” (quoted in Fraser, 1990, p. 61); the reality of whether Tongzhi education has or has not been practiced in schools becomes an arena for struggle. Based on observations in schools and related research results, Tongzhi-friendly teachers and scholars highlight hindrances and a failure to teach Tongzhi education.

I first situate the failure to teach Tongzhi education within the new managerialism of Taiwan’s education governance evaluating schools’ performance. Like the neoliberal discourse and parameters that influence the education system globally (Ball, 2010), the evaluation forms used under the new managerialism model privilege numbers over content. Lectures for the whole school on the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual violence produce the largest numbers. Those numbers are used for various evaluations of a school’s engagement of gender equity education as it is regulated in the Gender Equity Education, Sexual Assault Prevention, and Family Violence Prevention Acts. Issues around intimate relationships, sexuality education, and Tongzhi education are seldom covered, seen as too controversial for lectures to the whole school and better for smaller groups—which do not translate to large numbers on evaluation forms and reports (Lin, 2013). Similarly, teachers’ in-job trainings are dominated by the same subjects, prevention of sexual harassment and violence, because they meet the requirements of the various laws without causing “trouble” (Tsai, 2012).

Further, the failure to teach Tongzhi education lies not only in Taiwan’s educational governance but is reinforced by an essentialized, depoliticized understanding of gender equity education. Though the renaming process embodied in the law reform shifted the binary conceptualization of gender to one of gender diversity, most teachers still perceive gender equity education from a binary viewpoint and often avoid talking about power altogether.

Studies illustrate that when gender equity education is practiced, teachers usually don't talk about feminism or Tongzhi (Lee, S.-C., 2011b; Lee, S.-L., 2011; Tsai, 2012). Most teachers work from an essentialized understanding of gender—i.e., “men and women are different.” Many teachers see equity as an issue of treating all students equally, making it unnecessary to mention gender at all.

I classify this understanding of gender equity education in a liberalist framework, akin to early liberal feminism (Wollstonecraft, 1993 [1792]) or to the famous words of Hsiu-Lien Lu (呂秀蓮), a feminist in the 1970s and later, in 2000, the first female vice president in Taiwan: “To be a human being, and then a man or a woman.” The implicit understanding is that on the one hand, human beings are born equal, de-emphasizing gender, while on the other hand, there are fixed differences between women and men and gender equality should be achieved without breaking the harmony of and between two sexes.

In schools, the word “feminism” is regarded as too radical. Taking Wan-Ting's (female, senior high school teacher) words as an example:

Once I suggested the Office invite Yun-Ling [female, university lecturer] to give a lecture about intimate relationships, but it was cancelled by the Counseling Office Director. The Director said that Yun-Ling belongs to an NGO with the name “*Nu-Quan* (女權).” [Nu-Quan in Chinese means “women's rights” or “women's power.”] The Director was afraid that this might make those “old heterosexual men” complain about lectures held by the Counseling Office. (Wan-Ting)

I would like to situate the fear of “women's rights and power” and the fear of feminism in a cultural narrative of reverse sexism that imagines a world in which women get too much power (in Chinese the term is *Nu-Quan Gao Zhang* (女權高漲), the “overflow of women's power”) and men will be oppressed by women (Yang, 2002). Therefore, when gender equity education is taught, teachers often avoid any discussion of power. This is illustrated by Yun-Chen's statement that when body rights are addressed, teachers stress self-protection instead of looking at the power relationship in sexual harassment and violence.

When the countermovement protested Tongzhi teaching materials, the term “heterosexual hegemony” was removed from materials and school textbooks. As with power and feminism, the term “heterosexual hegemony” is considered too radical.

However, in public hearings and election campaign referendums, the countermovement uses “homosexual hegemony” to allege that heterosexual students are being bullied by homosexual students. Again, the narrative of the reversal—a world in which LGBTI individuals have too much power and become the oppressors.

These competing discourses demonstrate the unequal discursive positions of a reasonable-seeming picture of a “reversed power relationship,” the taken-for-granted assumptions of gender differences and harmony between two sexes make such anti-egalitarian discourse easy to accept. In contrast, the oppositional interpretations and critiques of LGBTI-friendly teachers and scholars are unfamiliar, complex, and challenging. In short, the change from a binary to a post-structural understanding of gender happened only at the level of law revision. In practice, most teachers de-emphasize gender and essentialize the differences between the two sexes, sustaining the heterosexual norm. Within the framework of “harmony between two sexes,” Tongzhi education is considered too controversial, while feminism and heterosexual hegemony are regarded as too radical. In practice, gender equity education fails to incorporate queer pedagogy’s (Browne, Lim, & Brown, 2007) emphasis—that is, to question fixed gender identity and gender categories, and to challenge the heterosexual norm.

### THE COUNTERMOVEMENT’S USE OF THE PARENTAL POSITION IN TAIWAN CIVIC SOCIETY TO STOP TONGZHI EDUCATION

Even though Tongzhi education is seldom practiced in schools, it is the main target of the countermovement. In 2011, the Taiwan True Love League (真愛聯盟, the League) argued that teaching materials on gender equity education for elementary school (Hsiao, Wang, & Hong, 2012 [2009]) and junior high school (You & Tsai, 2010)—especially the chapters titled “to deconstruct the binary of women and men” and “to challenge the myths of family,” as well as contents mentioning Gay Pride—were “confusing children’s gender identity, encouraging teenagers to have sex and leading students to diverse sexuality and families.” The League asked the Ministry of Education to stop publishing two books and for teachers not to get any in-job training on these issues of gender diversity and LGBTI families.

Responding to the League's requests, the Ministry of Education held public hearings about the 2008 National Curriculum on sexual orientation and the two books in question. In the hearings, hate speech against Tongzhi prevailed. According to interviewees who participated in these hearings, they were threatened for being Tongzhi or Tongzhi-friendly. After the public hearings, the Ministry of Education deleted the terms "myths about heterosexual love" and "homophobia" and removed the "controversial" chapters about gender diversity and Tongzhi education from the two books (Wang, 2017).

The countermovement established other leagues, such as the Taiwan Guardians of Family (護家盟), Happiness of Next Generation (下一代幸福聯盟), and National Taiwan's Mothers Association for Guarding Families and Children (台灣全國媽媽護家護兒聯盟). They continued to condemn TGEEA's short film about sexuality education and the concept of a "continuum of biological sex, gender and sexual orientation" in school textbooks as "improper." The leagues protested in front of schools, held press conferences, and asked municipal councilors to question the Educational Bureau (Chiang, 2019).

Under these political pressures, the Bureau of Compulsory Education requested that elementary and junior high schools stop using TGEEA's short film (Wang, 2017). In 2010, the Education Bureau in Taipei requested that schools from elementary to senior high ban students' gay clubs in order to "prevent students' clubs from seducement of students into homosexual activities" (Chiang, 2019). These official letters to schools reminded many of the censorship and lack of freedom of speech under martial law. It had been rare for official institutions to ban the circulation of private publication and people's freedom to organize after the lift of martial law in Taiwan (Wang, 2017).

The countermovement often positions themselves as the good and caring "parents"—even when they have no children in a targeted school—in order to stop Tongzhi education. In Taiwan, every school has its own parents' association. Parents' association representatives can participate in school committees and in decision-making processes with teachers, office directors, and the school principal. The parents' association donates money to the school and participates in fundraising for school activities. In elementary schools, parents volunteer to read books to children in the morning session before class begins. There are also various municipal and national parents' associations.

According to the Gender Equity Education Act, a Gender Equity Education Committee is required at the central level (Ministry of Education), local level (municipality), and at every school. Based on the Scandinavian participant democracy model within the democratic corporatist mechanism (Liu, 2011), the committee members include the head and administrators of the institution (at the central level, the Minister of Education and appropriate administrative staff; at a school, the school principal and office directors), with representatives from among scholars, professionals working in related areas, and NGOs. Since parents' associations count as NGOs, the NGO representatives on the gender equity education committee can be members of the countermovement.

The countermovement not only tries to forbid circulation of Tongzhi educational materials and to gain positions in related committees to influence decision-making processes, but also goes to schools directly or calls or writes the municipality to complain (when there are such complaints, the municipality, the school, and the teacher involved are all required to respond); and its members protest or hold press conferences in front of schools.

To give an example of this, I turn to the case of Ru-Ping (female, senior high school teacher), who has collaborated with the Hotline Association for two decades. She received complaints from five parents. The parents questioned her bringing her civics class to a Gay Pride event and wondered if Ru-Ping would bring students to demonstrations organized by Taiwan Guardians of the Family. After Ru-Ping explained the reasons for the teaching activity, she was attacked by the parents, one parent splashing water from his cup on her and cursing her with the words: "How dare you say you are Christian! You will go hell!" In another senior high school, two counselors invited the Hotline Association's southern office to give an outreach lecture to the school's 10th grade Life Education Course and faced protest. According to Hua-Chuan (female, senior high school teacher), the pressure was not from parents with children at the school, but from a local parents' association. The chairperson of this association went to the school and harangued the two counselors for an hour. The outreach lectures from the Hotline Association were canceled because of "complaints from the parents."

The countermovement has pressed their complaints with related authorities, including municipalities, the Bureau of Compulsory Education, and the Ministry of Education—and has even brought a lawsuit against a teacher. Previously, I mentioned Chien-Wen (male, elementary

school teacher), who was the subject of a lawsuit brought by the counter-movement. Taiwan's public television filmed Chien-Wen's sexuality education class. In class, Chien-Wen mentioned the special kind of condoms lesbians use. The counter-movement took a picture of the blackboard showing the words "condom" and "findom" out of context from the film. This photo was spread through social networks, causing fear of lesbian sexuality, which led to an investigation by the municipality's Education Bureau. In 2017, the counter-movement used this out-of-context information to bring a lawsuit against Chien-Wen claiming that he "offended against sexual morality," as defined in the Penal Code. Although the municipality's investigation report found Chien-Wen's teaching unproblematic and the prosecutor found Chien-Wen's case non-prosecutorial, the counter-movement continued to call and write various authorities about the case, which made other teachers and schools scared.

Another example of how the counter-movement has advocated against Tongzhi education is a press conference held in front of particular schools to criticize their use of "improper textbooks." Consequentially, the school principals had to respond at the press conference and promise that they would discontinue the use of these books.

These examples demonstrate how the counter-movement can employ the position of "parents" to stop Tongzhi and related education. As the interviewees have said, "most teachers don't want to get into trouble" (Mei-Yu) and "teachers want to do safe things and the schools are worried about making trouble" (Shu-Fen). These are the "troubles" that teachers and schools face. Even when they don't face the trouble directly, news about these events can intimidate and alarm. As Mei-Hui You (2014) points out, teachers face difficulties when engaging in Tongzhi education and many become reluctant to continue it at all, given the challenges brought by conservative religious leagues.

The counter-movement has tried to stop Tongzhi education at multiple sites: At the national level, they target teaching materials published by the Ministry of Education, make complaints to various authorities—and they requested the national referendum to ban Tongzhi education altogether; at the local level, they pressure schools and threaten teachers with parents' complaints, protest or hold press conferences, and bring on lawsuits. The counter-movement not only tries to forbid Tongzhi education, but also actively forms its own discourses on and practices of gender equity education. These practices are what I analyze in the following section.



## THE COUNTERMOVEMENT'S DISCOURSE FORMATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF PARENTS AS EDUCATORS

In 2011, the League produced a short film titled “Sex Education on Desire” (the title in Chinese, “*Xin Gjiao Yu* (性教慾),” sounds exactly the same as “sexuality education” (性教育) in Chinese, with the word *Yu* changed from “education” (育) to “desire” (慾)). This widely disseminated film raised a fear of sexuality and emphasized negative impacts of gender equity education on children’s gender identity and health development. By pointing out what they see as improper in Tongzhi and sexuality education, the countermovement is producing discourses on what is “good” for children (see also Huang, 2017).

The countermovement actively participates in teaching at schools to push abstinence-only sex education and sex within heterosexual marriage as the only “proper” course. For example, Taiwan Rainbow, Loving Family and Life Education Association (彩虹愛家協會, Loving Family Association)<sup>7</sup> provides touring drama performances at schools free of cost or sends “rainbow mothers (彩虹媽媽)” as volunteers to teach the 12 classes of the “Rainbow Life Education Course” in schools (“Introduction of Loving Family Association,” n.d.). Similarly, the “True Love Course” provided by the Champions Education Association (得勝者協會) also stresses abstinence-only sex education and sex only within heterosexual marriage.<sup>8</sup>

These associations have various training programs for volunteers and many of the volunteers are mothers with school children. Often, these mothers are already volunteers at schools, where they use morning sessions to read stories to the children. These are the “rainbow mothers.” They use their volunteer positions, along with connections to teachers, the schools, and other parents, to introduce drama performances and courses adhering to the leagues’ beliefs. They “borrow” teaching hours from teachers or use the “flexible teaching hours” to teach their courses. They also introduce the training programs to other parents, thereby recruiting more parents to be trained as volunteers of these two organizations.

According to the study in Hualien, the True Love Course in elementary schools aims “to do gender education for elementary school students and teenagers in order to prevent sexual crime and sexual liberation, to keep abstinence before getting married, and to build a holy family” (Lee, 2011, pp. 158–159). Many teachers welcome the courses, consider the

teaching activities interesting, and report that children are happy in class (*ibid.*, p. 160).

Wen-Sheng (male, Hotline Association staff) further explains why school teachers welcome the rainbow mothers:

Taiwan's teaching resources are insufficient. Teachers have to be in school early [before 8:00]. Since teachers are tired, it is easy for them to give out their teaching time and let the mothers volunteer to take over the time. (Wen-Sheng)

The countermovement tends to use a general description to hide its heterosexual-centered ideology. For example, the names of the leagues contain the words "love," "family," and "happiness of the next generation," which all refer to things that most people want. The Loving Family Association's introductory film depicts the league as focusing on "inner values that can grow into a good life" ("Introduction of Loving Family Association," n.d.). A good life is also something that most people desire. However, few people question what the leagues mean by "love," "family," "happiness of the next generation," and "a good life." For the countermovement, "family" refers only to heterosexual marriage, "love" means only heterosexual relationships with traditional gender roles, "values" means traditional values in patriarchal society, and "a good life" is a life of heteronormality. These are exactly the definitions that Tongzhi activism challenges.

The discourses demonstrate that both the conservative groups and Tongzhi activism compete under a definition of "social good." As previously mentioned, these counterpublics are unequally positioned in society and it is generally the conservative groups' discourse that resonates most with the societal default of heterosexual ideology.

In contrast, Tongzhi activism's oppositional interpretations defamiliarize the unquestioned vision of a "normal and happy life" and invent new definitions for a normal and happy life to challenge the heterosexual norm in schools. This makes many teachers and schools uneasy, since Tongzhi education questions the comfort zone most people spend their lives in and raises fears of disturbing the "harmony" between sexes. Thus, the countermovement's rhetoric suits the prevailing perceptions of gender equity education, in which the terms and substance of feminism and Tongzhi education are avoided or marginalized, so that the familiar, essentialized, and depoliticized understanding of gender may continue to dominate.

Moreover, the countermovement's conservative activism appropriates terms from feminism and Tongzhi activism. For example, "rainbow mothers" and "rainbow kid." The stated aims of the league's True Love Course are "to do gender education" and "to prevent sexual crime." In recent years, the countermovement also established an NGO called the "Taiwan Gender Education Development Association (台灣性別教育發展協會)," which is quite similar to the TGEEA's name, since both can be shortened to "Gender Association" (性別協會, *Xin-Bie* Association in Chinese). The touring drama performances, lectures, and courses provided by the countermovement also talk about gender and relationships. According to a PhD study on Tongzhi education (Chiang, 2019), the countermovement even imitates the format of the Hotline Association's outreach lectures and employs individuals who have "stopped" being gay or lesbian to share their life stories in schools.

This appropriation of terms and themes makes it difficult for parents, teachers, and schools to distinguish between the educational activities of the countermovement and those of LGBTI NGOs in actual gender equity education. Additionally, since the names of the countermovement's courses and organizations sound associated with the related laws, purporting to discuss prevention of sexual assault and harassment, family education, and gender equity education, schools often include these countermovement educational activities as part of their required educational hours.

The countermovement also appropriates the terms "freedom of speech" and "diversity" when asking for more parent and scholar representatives on gender equity education committees. When other representatives question whether these representatives are qualified, given their anti-LGBTI stance, the countermovement claims that the committees cannot be dominated by "only one voice" and that there should be different viewpoints on them. In other words, the design of participant democracy allows the countermovement to enter the committees. Many of my interviewees describe gender equity education committee meetings as "battle fields," which hinders the development of gender equity education at the local and central levels (see also Wang, 2017).

Additionally, just as Ke-Hsien Huang (2017, pp. 130–131) analysis of how Taiwan's religious conservative groups use news about anti-gay-marriage protests in Western countries, the "truth" about how same-sex marriage "impacts children's rights" and reports from the United Nations

Human Rights Council and European Court of Human Rights to demonstrate that they are aligned with civilized Western society, I argue that the countermovement's appropriation of terms from the women's movement, Tongzhi activism, and the rhetoric of democracy serve to disguise their anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian discourses.

### DOING TONGZHI EDUCATION: EDUCATORS' PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

The teachers I interviewed who engage with Tongzhi education use various methods and strategies to include LGBTI issues in their classroom curriculum. For example, some elementary school teachers find stories (Wang, Liu, & Lin, 2011) useful in helping school children understand diversity in families, including single families, children cared for by grandparents, transnational families (especially women from other Southeastern Asian countries who married Taiwanese men), and rainbow families. Moreover, Tongzhi education occurs when it's necessary and relevant to a student's daily life—teachable moments. Many teachers say that most often it is students who raise questions about LGBTI issues and this opens the way to Tongzhi education and dialogue. If teachers integrate Tongzhi education into other subjects, they usually begin with deconstruction of gender stereotypes followed by discussion of gender diversity, and/or include Tongzhi education as the last part of a section on intimate relationships and/or sexuality to illustrate that heterosexual intimate relationships are not the only valid expression of intimacy and sexuality. When the Hotline Association is invited to offer outreach lectures to school gatherings, the lectures run one to two hours and Tongzhi education only constitutes about one-fifth of the time. Teachers and Tongzhi NGOs use these strategies to incorporate the so-called “controversial issues” (such as sexuality education or Tongzhi education) that schools try to avoid when doing Tongzhi education.

If teachers really want to focus on Tongzhi education, they often collaborate with the Hotline Association, whose volunteers provide outreach lectures using ideas like those underpinning “the human library,” which uses life stories shared by individuals from groups discriminated against for gender, sexuality, and race/ethnicity to deconstruct prejudice against these groups. These outreach lectures are important resources for Tongzhi education in schools. For example, Ru-Ping participated

in the Hotline Association's first "Teachers' in-job training for knowing Tongzhi" and has collaborated with the Hotline Association since then:

As a resource center for gender equity education, we could provide in-job training courses for teachers in this municipality. Nevertheless, we didn't have extra money for lunch seminars or lectures [in our own school]. Therefore, I either gave lectures myself without extra payment or...I really thank Wen-Sheng because he brought volunteers to these seminars for free. (Ru-Ping)

Even when schools have money for only one lecturer to come to a school gathering or lecture in a class, the Hotline Association usually offers multiple diverse speakers, gay, lesbian, intersex, and transgender, to demonstrate gender and sexuality diversity and deconstruct LGBTI stereotypes. Teachers welcome this, but Wen-Sheng admits that due to limited resources they can only offer free-of-cost outreach lectures in western and northeastern Taiwan, leaving the rest of Taiwan with little access. Moreover, the Hotline Association relies on volunteers, who are usually university students. In Taipei, there were only 25 volunteers to do outreach lectures in 2018; in Kaohsiung, there have been around 50 volunteers over the last ten years. In contrast, the countermovement's resources include more than 6000 volunteers conducting courses in more than 700 schools for 150,000 school kids per year ("Introduction of Loving Family Association," n.d.). Conservative groups are often supported by material resources from churches, faithful wealthy businesspersons, and international connections (Huang, 2017), enabling them to actively circulate their discourses, through the production of teaching materials, training of volunteers, and the free-of-cost drama performances and lectures. Using these abundant resources, the countermovement can employ the strategies mentioned earlier to stop Tongzhi education and create a hostile environment that makes Tongzhi education more difficult.

Taking the statistics from Hotline Association as an example, after the passage of the Gender Equity Education Act, the Hotline Association provided 150–200 lectures in schools per year. In 2016, it provided 441 lectures for students and teachers (415 for students). After the same-sex marriage debates and the backlash against Tongzhi education, the Hotline Association's outreach lectures dropped to 146 (139 for students) in 2017, with similar numbers in 2018 (Hotline Association, 2016, 2017,

2018). That means outreach lectures to students dropped 67% in 2017–2018. Similarly, the Hotline Association’s southern office, according to Chi-Kai, had 150 outreach lectures in schools several years ago, but in the last two years only around 80 outreach lectures per year.

During the years between 2004 and 2016, the counterdiscourse from the women’s movement and Tongzhi activism successfully changed the state’s law and gained activists’ access to a position from which to circulate discourse through these outreach lectures. Nevertheless, with the protests from the countermovement since 2011, together with the intensified struggles between Tongzhi activism and the countermovement over the public concerns around equal marriage, the hostile atmosphere has caused schools and teachers block the Hotline Association’s outreach lectures in order to protect themselves from trouble with the countermovement.

LGBTI-friendly teachers face similar difficulties in doing Tongzhi education. For example, Shu-Feng invited a Hotline Association lecturer to her classes for several years using her own money. Nevertheless, it put her in a difficult position:

Actually, there have always been courses offered by the “rainbow mothers.” [...] I have been telling our school that we should say no to such a course [...] but then they said that my invitation of Tongzhi to my class is also not “unproblematic”. (Shu-Feng)

Shu-Feng’s words demonstrate that schools often regard Tongzhi NGO’s outreach lectures and the courses offered by the countermovement as the same thing.

Wen-Sheng, however, pointed out the disparities between the two in terms of frequency and access:

The gender equity education offered by the Hotline Association is usually once in the whole semester, while the “rainbow mothers” are in school every day. I would like to ask what problem there is in Taiwan’s educational system. The conservative groups tend to criticize that we are not qualified teachers, but how about the qualification of those rainbow mothers? We are only guest lecturers and the teachers are in class with us. But the rainbow mothers are in class alone every day, giving their own course. (Wen-Sheng)

Wen-Sheng’s words illuminate the everyday presence of the rainbow mothers and this resonates with the connections these rainbow mothers

have to the schools and the teachers. Compared to Tongzhi activists, the countermovement enjoys far more convenient access for their activities. I would argue that the unequal access provided to Tongzhi activism and to the countermovement demonstrate clearly that schools are “heteronormative sites” (Kjaran, 2017).

Some members of the gender equity education committee in the municipality where Yun-Chen worked took a stricter stance on courses offered by conservative groups, since the committee members thought that the contents of the courses and the way students were asked to sign and swear to keep celibate before marriage contradicted the Gender Equity Education Act. Accordingly, the municipality listened to the concerns of the gender equity education committee and asked schools to be cautious about the “Rainbow Life Education Course.” Moreover, Yun-Chen held a workshop for school principals in the city:

I asked the school to follow the Curriculum Guideline, that if the school wants to invite someone outside school to do such long-term courses, [...] the school has the responsibility to know the contents of the course. Besides, the teachers should be in class so that they can clarify or guide students to think critically. Moreover, we emphasize that [...] the school should know what kind of NGOs are in school. If there are complaints about the course, the school can know how to react according to the Gender Equity Education Act. (Yun-Chen)

As a public officer, Yun-Chen stresses the need for school professionalism in enforcing the Gender Equity Education Act. In a similar vein, Shu-Feng thinks that teachers’ professionalism is the vital element:

In my opinion, education is to do right things. Why should I ask permission from the parents in doing right things? If I need to go through such kind of procedure, it will become the referendum this time. (Shu-Feng)

Both Yun-Chen and Shu-Feng emphasize the professionalism that educators should demonstrate and that they should defend doing the right thing within the framework of the Gender Equity Education Act. However, the challenge that Tongzhi activists and educators face is that teachers’ and schools’ perception of gender equity education is often different from what is regulated in the Act. As a result, teachers and schools either cannot distinguish the countermovement’s rhetoric from LGBTI

activism, or they outright block LGBTI and feminist organizations and Tongzhi education.

Since courses from the countermovement and outreach lectures from the Hotline Association are often seen as the same thing—all being lecturers from outside—and since there have been controversial cases in the news, schools tend to use “course development committees,” that is, the democratic procedure, to solve the problem. However, despite the supposed democratic process, many of my interviewees said the course development committees tend to be more critical of gender equity education. In Hua-Chuan’s words:

[Although lectures offered by the Hotline Association constitute only one of the 18-week lectures], the counselors have to prepare a thick bunch of profiles of the teaching plans of this course, while other teachers only need to provide one-page description of the lecturers they invite from outside the school. (Hua-Chuan)

How the course development committee works depends largely on the educators’ professionalism, but the democratic process in schools faces the same challenges mentioned earlier—it is usually Tongzhi education under scrutiny, not the countermovement’s courses.

Studies have demonstrated that the heterosexual norm is maintained and enforced in the everyday routines of school life (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Kjaran, 2017). Although LGBTI-friendly teachers include Tongzhi education in their classrooms and collaborate with Tongzhi activists to challenge the heterosexual norm and support LGBTI students in schools, they face pressures from parents, colleagues, school heads, and conservative groups.

Despite the participatory democratic mechanism inherent in committees that include teachers, school principals and directors, parents, NGO representatives, and scholars to discuss controversial issues, such as who qualifies as a guest speaker for gender equity education and what teaching materials and contents are appropriate for students, the dominant heterosexual ideology and the conservative groups that support it—through existing access for “rainbow mothers” as school volunteers and creating a fear of “causing trouble” that inhibits teachers and schools—are guaranteed greater access to schools and classrooms.



## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I employ Foucault's understanding of discourse formation and Fraser's concept of competing counterpublics to analyze the development of and struggles over power and knowledge in Tongzhi education in Taiwan. Habermas defines the public sphere as a site for discourse production critical to the state, which can be applied in analysis to the development of Tongzhi education. Since the 1990s, the women's movement and Tongzhi movement have constituted oppositional discourse and successfully extended the definition of gender from a binary understanding to one of gender diversity. With Fraser's concept of "competing counterpublics," I illustrate how conservative groups take the position of "subordinate groups" when the Gender Equity Education Act's inclusion of LGBTI rights in education seems to harm their belief in what gender, family, and marriage should look like. I argue that the competing counterpublics have unequal discursive and nondiscursive resources in the struggle over definitions of gender, family, and gender equity education. For example, conservative groups' discourses suit the prevailing, essentialized, and depoliticized understanding of "gender equity education" in schools and correspond to the existing cultural narratives of heterosexual ideology. This makes conservative groups' discourses easy to accept.

The countermovement also employs a wealth of material resources to actively circulate their discourses within the network of power. Using strategies from complaints and protests to pressuring teachers, schools, and politicians, they create a hostile atmosphere that makes the practice of Tongzhi education difficult. I classify this as the "prohibition discourse" that the countermovement deploys to stop the circulation of Tongzhi activism's discourse and thereby sustain the heterosexual norm. Moreover, as Foucault reminds us, the power/knowledge apparatus is not only deployed for prohibition but can also be productive. The countermovement employs the position of "caring parents" to invent narratives and rhetoric of morality and to define values with regard to children, love, and family. Schools, as heteronormative sites, also provide the countermovement with greater access to circulate their idea of "gender education" in schools. Additionally, the countermovement's appropriation of progressive terms like "rainbow" and "gender education," and of the progressive value of diversity in participatory democracy, serves to disguise their anti-egalitarian discourses. This adds to the difficulty teachers and schools have in distinguishing between heterosexual-centered education that reinforces

the traditional gender ideology, as well as heteronormativity, and Tongzhi education that calls for respect of gender and sexuality diversity and the elimination of discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation.

Since the counterpublics are always conflictual, Tongzhi activists and LGBTI-friendly teachers collaborate with each other to form oppositional discourse against the conservative groups, articulating alternative definitions of love, family, and marriage and defending the need for LGBTI students' rights and Tongzhi education. The arenas—the network of power—include classrooms, related committees in schools, social media, public hearings, and various committees at the local and central government level. My research demonstrates the discrepancy between progressive laws and the actual practice of Tongzhi education. The critical discourse analysis provides a complicated reflection of competing counterpublics in a democratic society and the relationship between subordinate groups and the state.

In struggles over power and knowledge in a democratic society, it's necessary to reflect carefully on the meaning of freedom of speech and democracy. As one of the scholars who participated in writing the draft of the Gender Equity Education Act suggests, we should consider a new law making, which would aim at restricting hate speech (Hsieh, 2019). Regarding challenges in competitive discursive formation and the professionalism of school educators, I propose that empowering school teachers' education and in-job training with a better post-structural understanding of gender and sexuality diversity, as well as being equipped with a knowledge about queer or critical pedagogy, would enable the discursive change in the revision of the laws to extend to the everyday world and allow for the practice of Tongzhi education in schools. In other words, transforming policy into practice and making school spaces inclusive of all students, those who identify as LGBTI and those who do not.

## NOTES

1. In Chinese “*Ping-Den*” (平等) is either translated into “equality” or “equity.” I use “gender equity education” throughout the chapter because the Gender Equity Education Act is translated as such in Laws & Regulations Database of The Republic of China. Most scholars in Taiwan use “equity” education (e.g., Chuang, 2004; Lee, 2011a) and define the differences between “equity” and “equality” as the following: “Equality generally refers to equal opportunity and the same levels of support for all segments

of society. Equity goes a step further and refers to offering varying levels of support depending upon need to achieve greater fairness of outcomes” (“Equity vs. Equality,” n.d.), which illustrates similar understandings of the two words among Taiwanese scholars.

2. According to Chao-Ju Chen (2014), the countermovement arose in Taiwan after some success in the Tongzhi movement and women’s movements. Throughout this article, I employ the term “countermovement” to refer to the conservative movement against Tongzhi activism.
3. In Taiwan, grades 1–6 are elementary school. Grades 7–9 are junior high school. Beginning in 2014, 12-year education, with the first nine years compulsory, followed by three years (grades 10–12, senior high schools) of universal, free-of-cost, noncompulsory education. There are some secondary schools (grades 7–12) where the first three years are compulsory, while the last three are the same as senior high schools. There have been four versions of the National Curriculum: the 2001 Temporary National Curriculum, the 2003 National Curriculum, the 2008 National Curriculum, all of which are for grades 1–9 and, in autumn 2019, the new National Curriculum for Grades 1–12.
4. I conducted the interviews mainly in Mandarin Chinese, sometimes mixed with Taiwanese. My first language is Taiwanese; I learned Mandarin Chinese, Taiwan’s official language, in school. All translations are my own.
5. I became a board member at the Awakening Foundation in 1998, the year that a lot of teachers’ in-job training lectures on gender equity education began. I have given lectures to students and teachers from preschools to universities since then and published two books about gender equity education before the Gender Equity Education Act was passed (Yang, 2002). I was one of the founders and the first Secretary General at TGEEA.
6. *Integrative Activities in Elementary School* is a junior high course that includes different subjects such as Guidance and Counseling, Home Economics, Scouts, etc.
7. Here I translated the name of the association, founded in 1999, directly from the Chinese name, although they use “rainbow kids” as the name of their website link. I shortened the name to “Loving Family Association” to stress that it is the heterosexual family they love.
8. According to Champions Education Association’s description, the association “was founded by a couple from the U.S. to devote themselves to Life Education in schools in 1994” (“Champions Education Plan,” n.d.).

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# The Sexual Diversity Pastoral Care Group and the Catholic Schools in Chile: An Attempt to Confront Heteronormativity in School Spaces

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## INTRODUCTION

Queer theory “as a perspective to read and act against normative and normalizing power” (Ben-Moshe, Gossett, Mitchell, & Stanley, 2015, p. 267) has been used by various scholars and researchers to deconstruct and dismantle normalizing practices in schools (Malmquist, Gustavson, & Schmitt, 2013; Miller, 2015, 2016; Renold, 2004). Schools are spaces where individuals produce dominant discourses about sexuality, in which

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a hierarchy of what is considered morally good or bad, different or “normal,” is reproduced and sustained. Nevertheless, this social process is always in conflict with dynamic and changing expressions of identities, affections, and sexualities. For this reason, schools might emerge as spaces where these power relations can be contested, debated, and even questioned.

In this chapter, we analyze and discuss the outreach work of a Catholic LGBTI organization, *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual* (Sexual Diversity Pastoral Care Group<sup>1</sup>), which intervenes in Chilean Catholic schools through the testimony of its members. Focusing on its quest to change the attitudes toward sexuality and gender diversity in Chilean society, we will analyze the tension between power and resistance, and the possibilities of transforming the hetero-cisgender norms within religious schools by sharing personal experiences. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s (1988) understanding of the workings of power, we demonstrate in this chapter, the technologies of power not only regulate sexuality, but they also confront and disturb what is normative.

### SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

In the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1988) identifies two basic factors in understanding how contemporary sexuality is organized. The first one is the establishment of what he calls *culture de soi* (literally translated as a culture of oneself), which refers to the obligation of taking care of our soul and the establishment of a personal ethic in terms of pleasure. Consequently, this ethic regulates behavior, practices, and the moral dimension of sexuality. The second factor is what Foucault describes as the establishment of *scientia sexualis*, clinical and scientific knowledge about sexuality and sexual desire. The science of sexuality exercise vigilance over what could be considered a “deviation” from the norm as scientifically established. Foucault identified these processes as the panoptic vigilance model, that is, power and control technology incorporated in all social relationships and institutions. Both factors are essential for establishing a biopolitical regime regarding sexuality, linking power (and the consequent individual sovereignty) and the individual body.

This Foucauldian understanding of sexuality has been widely used and revisited by cultural studies and *queer* theory in order to draw attention to the underlying power dynamics that not only regulate the manifestations



of sexual activity, but also, the way these devices have been internalized by individuals, creating the illusion of a norm related to an eminently non-normative sexuality. This illusion is maintained by means of symbolic mechanisms that somehow, “disguise” power technologies through sexuality discourse (Binnie, 2004; Wittig, 1980), configure masculinity and femininity ideals as eminently heterosexual (Butler, 2010; Rubin, 1984), or silence everything that does not lie within the “norm,” which is the case of homosexuality in Western societies (Eribon, 2012; Halperin, 1995, 2012).

This process can then produce new ways to resist this “will to knowledge,” as identified by Foucault in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Due to the mutability and everyday nature of these technologies of power about sexuality, individuals may experience difficulties in recognizing their effects on their lives. Considering the invisibility of these power mechanisms, it is appropriate to wonder how individuals organize an account of their own sexuality, and from there, recognize the discursive production of experience, but also the agency of the subjects within this framework (Scott, 1991).

Certainly, from a Foucauldian viewpoint, the confessional device and practices—religious first and psychoanalytic afterwards—make up a particularly privileged power technology because, through the act of confession, the subject compares his own experience with the dominant norm. As Jeffrey Weeks (2011) states, sexuality has played an important role in individuals’ self-understanding in Western societies: it reveals their interiority in a way that other dimensions of their individuality do not. This acquires special importance when it becomes clear that personal identity is always constructed in relation to the way others reflect what the individual chooses to project (Singly, 2010).

As Eva Illouz (2014) describes, the massification of psychotherapy (and the consequent trivialization of psychological thought) emphasizes the individual’s role in changing him/herself and his/her environment. This process should not be understood in isolation, but rather within a social framework that requires the individual to take responsibility for him/herself and be recognized for doing so. Consequently, for individuals, confession technologies can also be described as a space for personal agency. Therefore, it is necessary to observe this ambivalence in order to recognize how subjectivity is constructed through the way individuals report on their sexuality.

From this perspective, for example, knowing about the structuring effects of the technologies of power does not necessarily mean that the individual will avoid subjectification and become “emancipated.” As Emma Renold (2004) points out, some individuals take advantage of the technologies of power for their own benefit, positioning themselves against the norm and obtaining returns from it. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the subjective experiences of the subjects in order to understand both the weight of the structures in the individual narrative and the way the subjects position themselves regarding the norm.

Thus, sexuality is a kind of mirror for social relationships, configuring the notion of the individual. In observing the reflexivity of the self, it is somehow possible to give an account of the different forms of personal agency and the understanding of intimacy within power relationships in history (Bozon, 2009). An example can be found in what occurs within two social spaces that can operate complementarily to one another to regulate sexuality: schools and religious communities.

### *The Regulation of Sexuality in Schools*

As stated above, gender identity and sexuality are subjected to specific forms of discipline produced in the context of cultures that render heterosexuality as the hegemonic norm. As Teresa de Lauretis (1989) points out, this norm has consequences in terms of what is understood by gender, sexuality, and bodies: for a female body, the only desire possible is that of a male body, and vice versa, and this lies at the base of the binarism of the sex/gender system.

In the context of schools, the regime of gender and sexuality is reproduced and sustained through dominant discourses and cultural codes. Every educated subject is sexed and gendered at the same time (Epstein & Johnson, 2000). School becomes a key space for the proliferation, change, and endless inscription of gender discourse and sexual desire, apart from the production and reproduction of “compulsive heterosexuality” (Youdell, 2005). As Raewyn Connell and Rebecca Pearse (2015) identified, different spaces within schools (curricula, classroom, corridors, social interactions etc.) produce a symbolic gender (sexuality) regime that entails a specific positioning of men and women, perpetuating, at the same time, the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm in terms of sexuality.

In this regard, Kerry Robinson, Peter Bansel, Nida Denson, Georgia Ovenden, and Cristyn Davies (2014) and Cheri Pascoe (2007) demonstrated that students who identify as LGBTI face discrimination at school, expressed through physical and symbolic violence. This is not limited to North American or European countries. In Chile, as María Teresa Rojas et al. (2019) show, advances in the recognition of gender identities and sexual diversity are partial and fragile. Respect for diversity is a principle present in the discourses of school actors, but this does not question the hegemony of heteronormativity in the curriculum or teaching practices, producing new forms of homophobic violence. Similar patterns can also be found in Mexico (Baruch-Dominguez, Infante-Xibille, & Saloma-Zúñiga, 2016); Brazil (Carrara, Nascimento, Duque, & Tramontano, 2016), Argentina (Molina, 2013; Stamble, 2017) or southern African countries (Francis et al., 2019), where culture (and often religion) perpetuate specific forms of LGBT discrimination within schools.

This disciplinary logic is supported by a heteronormative discourse that constructs normality around particular gendered and sexual identities (Wittig, 1980), either by making the plurality of bodies invisible or by explicit negation of people's right to be recognized according to their sexual and gender expression (Miller, 2015). Nonetheless, this negation must be interpreted in the ambivalent context described above: The norm is not always visible, and individuals can claim spaces where they experience agency. As Renold (2004) argues, in the case of schools, the heterosexual norm can be responded to through an active personal positioning where the students can strategically use the rules of hegemonic discourse.

Particularly in Chile, this reflection must respond to a specific context characterized by social ambivalence about non-heterosexual sexualities. As Jaime Barrientos (2016) stated, the LGBT population has gained civil rights in recent years. Today, discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression is illegal, and a same-sex civil union law is now in force. This normative transformation goes hand in hand with a change in the population's attitude toward this group, particularly among the younger generations. Thus, for example, in Chile, the latest National Survey for the Young (INJUV, 2016) shows that only 28% of young people agree that a heterosexual couple raises children better than a same-sex couple, and only 24% agree that it is preferable for school teachers to be heterosexual rather than homosexual. Nevertheless, these progressive

changes have not broken down some of the barriers affecting LGBTI youth.

Schools are an ideal place to observe the workings of these legal changes. Even though the law prohibiting discrimination based on sexuality and gender diversity is in place,<sup>2</sup> schools still discriminate against LGBTI youth due to institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism. Aurore le Mat (2014) warns about the privileges given to heterosexuality in the curriculum, such as in sex education and biology, which can be understood in Foucauldian terms as a disciplinary device. Furthermore, as Le Mat points out, the homosexual experience is also silenced when schools emphasize that it is a private issue and, thus, not given any space in the classroom curriculum to discuss and teach sexuality and gender diversity. When this topic is raised, according to Carlos Cáceres and Ximena Salazar (2013), it is usually introduced as something from the “outside,” about the Other, that may give rise to a debate about morality. Homosexuality is also presented as a “matter of individuals,” and within the educational system there is an ambiguous discourse of tolerance in accepting a non-heterosexual sexual orientation.

Even though there is a social consensus against discrimination, it will remain unchallenged as long as the acceptance of sexual diversity operates from an unstable discourse. As Pablo Astudillo (2016) states in Chile, from a conservative viewpoint, homosexuality is particularly presented as a category that is essentially different from heterosexuality, it can be visible and talked about as long as it is made quite clear that homosexual behavior is not what is expected from a subject. From a progressive point of view, however, homosexuality is seen as a “possible orientation,” “legitimate” but always understood as an individual question. As a result, the homosexual individual becomes isolated. His or her experience does not question heterosexuality, and the discourse on normality is not questioned at all.

Thus, within school spaces, the possibilities for resisting power technologies concerning sexuality and gender diversity are still limited. As discussed earlier, the conditions for constructing “a good image of the self” for non-heterosexual individuals at school are not assured in the same way as they are for heterosexual subjects (Miller, 2016). This principle is also observed in religious spaces open to sexual diversity.

*(Homo)Sexuality and Gender Identity in Religious Spaces*

Foucault emphasizes the important role religion has played in contemporary sexuality construction and the (re)production of the *culture de soi*. An example of the display of disciplinary forms and power technology in relation to sexuality can be found in religious spaces. We will not delve into this type of analysis; instead, we focus on the way the individual agency is understood within the religious discourse on sexuality.

First, we must address a certain moral ambiguity in relation to sexuality and gender in Chile. The country is experiencing an important secularization process and, at the same time, a greater acceptance of homosexuality (Barrientos, 2015). In this regard, the country is replicating a tendency already observed in countries in the North (Pew Research Center, 2013). However, this movement cannot be understood without examining how certain conservative positions have consolidated their power and influences at the same time (Morán, 2012). For example, in Chile, when the National Congress discussed the Gender Identity law in 2017, conservative groups organized protests and supported the “Bus of Freedom,” which drove around the streets of several cities spreading tendentious messages against the law.

In addition, universities that teach Catholic theology in Santiago have organized seminars on “gender ideology” and promoting therapies to “cure” homosexuality. This counter-discourse or narrative is in line with what Kath Browne and Catherine Nash (2017) have identified as the advance of hetero-activism in Western societies with the aim of marginalizing those sexualities and gender identities that are outside the “heterosexual matrix.” Nevertheless, Irma Palma (2008) argues that religion is only one part of self-regulation. In Chile, at least, differences in sexual practices are more related to gender, social class, and age, which explain personal distance from the religious discourse on sexuality. Therefore, the question of self-positioning becomes relevant.

Thus, the matter of personal choice becomes an essential element for analysis. Particularly, Catholic discourses create particular subjective positions beyond mere religiosity. According to Angélica Thumala (2007), Catholic education is basically characterized by paying attention to character formation, which entails emphasis on “the art of self-governance.” This “care of the self” is highly present in the Catholic discourse that subjects draw on and that influences every aspect of their lives: habits,

orientation to work, and personal vocation. From this perspective, character cannot be formed without disciplining the body through the strategic management of pleasure and desire. However, it needs to be emphasized, following Martine Sevegrand (2002), that religious discourse on sexuality is not independent from the way it is constructed and understood within societal discourse. Thus, pleasure, and especially sexual pleasure, becomes an aspect of life that must be organized according to a “sense of the world,” which is socially constructed. Regarding different matters related to sexuality, an effort to link sexual morality to the principles of modern intimacy has been made since the 1980s, that is, an intimacy that assumes that coherence lies in the individuals themselves and their capacity to recognize themselves as a creature with a certain goal. This is known as the personalistic ethics characteristic of “conservative modernity” (Kristeva, 2009; Sevegrand, 2002).

Hence, we can assume that individuals would recognize themselves precisely in their capacity for sovereignty over their will. Thus, it is important to analyze not only the values system organizing this government of the Self, but also the personal way of governing oneself. Sexuality analysis should consider all these elements: personal narratives about self-control and choice, social values learned, and the context producing it. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the aspect of paternalism in relation to sexuality in religious contexts<sup>3</sup> (Morán, 2012; Vaggione, 2012). This paternalism based on obligations and prohibitions, expressed in laws and ethical projects, necessarily affects the way individuals take care of themselves and comprehend their sovereignty and the choices of other individuals.

Drawing on Foucault, subjects have agency to resist this kind of technology of power, but it cannot be understood outside the power dynamics that are being resisted (Sevegrand, 2002). Thus, if heterosexuality is presented as the dominant and natural norm to organize sexuality and sexual desire, the question then remains: How can an alternative subject position be understood in this context? According to Butler (2010), in the process of affirming a difference in matters of sexual diversity or gender, the political mechanism that gives rise to the distinction is recreated and reinforced. In this regard, the affirmation of a non-heterosexual identity would be a useful effort to revert the heterosexual consensus and achieve subjects’ fair treatment. However, the identities operate in anchors that are necessary for social life. As François de Singly (2010) points out, in contemporary societies, subjects are permanently confronted with observing the identities to which they are assigned. In the process, subjects can

choose which labels they will accept as their own and which ones they will reject. The subject is an agent of his or her own social presentation. For this reason, the question about the strategies and ways of positioning oneself regarding a norm, in this case, sexual and gendered, is still a necessary one.

## METHODOLOGY

The chapter examines the work of the *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual* (Sexual Diversity Pastoral Care Group), an NGO established in Santiago de Chile in 2010. It is a platform for gay and lesbian youth and adults who have children identifying as non-heterosexual. Since its establishment, this organization has organized talks and outreach work at different Chilean schools, particularly Catholic ones. In these schools, the context of school-based regulations on sexuality intertwine with those produced by Catholic discourses. In this regard, it provides a good opportunity to understand how these sexuality norms are reproduced and resisted.

For this purpose, a descriptive qualitative approach was used. To do this, ten volunteers or educational workers at the *Pastoral* were interviewed: two youth workers and two mothers who visit schools and talk to students on behalf of the organization, one general coordinator of the association, one priest and one nun accompanying the group, and three people in charge of organizing these activities at different schools in Santiago de Chile. All the participants are cisgender between the ages of 23 and 66 years old; five of them are male, and five are female. Only three of them identify as homosexuals. All the subjects interviewed have completed higher education; nine present themselves as Catholics, and eight live in high-income districts of the city. All the interviews were conducted in Santiago de Chile between November and December 2018.

Each of them was interviewed by using a semi-structured interview guide that included three main topics: the experience of giving and listening to testimony, the way of organizing the testimonial activity, and the results perceived of the activities carried out. The interviews lasted for an average duration of one hour. Interviews were later transcribed and analyzed by coding the material obtained according to discourse analysis. After detailed transcription of every interview, the extracts were grouped up under different thematic areas, guided by research questions. Then, specific patterns and recurrent organization of ideas were explored. In this case, and according to Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickman (2003), we

search for: (i) norms that delimit the sayable and (ii) rules that create the spaces in which new statements can be made. The purpose of this coding is to recover the analysis of the experience proposed by Joan Scott (1991), in terms of considering that subjects' experiences are the result of a political production of the discourse, and where the social norm is represented in the descriptions given by the individuals of their own practices and limits.

### CHANGING THE ATTITUDES TOWARD SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSITY: BETWEEN POWER AND RESISTANCE

The outreach work by the *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual* at Chilean schools highlights the ambiguity when recognizing contemporary sexuality and the resulting subjectivity construction, both in schools and religious spaces. There is no mention of gender issues or transgender identities because within the *Pastoral* there are no transgender individuals.<sup>4</sup> In the end, testimonies mainly present experiences about homosexual marginalization and do not reflect on how gender is politically constructed.

To organize the discussion, personal testimonies will be compared to the confession devices described by Foucault (1988) because they articulate public expression of an intimate process. In the case we analyze, the testimony always has two components: what individuals say about their sexuality and what they do to confront an ecclesiastical norm that can accept or reject sexuality itself. Later, the power technologies coexist with the ambivalence of subjects who identify and want to resist the norm, but, at the same time, must describe and validate the framework in which they understand their sexuality. To address this ambivalence, we propose three axes for analysis: the way they confront the religious norms that regulate sexuality, the strategic use of certain visibility devices, and the explicit negation of the political nature of the norm that produces the differences in matters of sexuality.

#### *Identification of Norms Regulating Sexuality*

In the outreach work, the *Pastoral* aims to reconstruct sexuality vis a vis the dominant discourse using the narrative method. In doing so, it



is working with two conflicting discourses on sexuality and sexual identity: on the one hand, the Catholic one, based on the Vatican understanding of non-heterosexuality, in which it is assumed that it cannot give rise to a lifestyle per se (Vaggione, 2012); and on the other hand, the self-affirmation discourse, which draws on LGBTI pride and acceptance (Halperin, 2012). This latter principle, self-affirmation, is a characteristic element of different religious LGBT organizations, where the Vatican norm about sexuality is set aside to highlight the love that arises from the spiritual experience of feeling loved and created by God (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000; Tan, 2005).

In the case of the *Pastoral*, testimony is a strategy that seeks to nurture empathy for the Other and, based on it, transform reality. Then, what is “confessed” is exactly the way subjects organize their own life and the steps they have taken to achieve their current position. The result is that the testimony always refers to two elements: first, the personal strategy to overcome the established norm; and second, the individual capacity to live without having to deny or separate two dimensions of his/her own individuality.

More than speaking from theory, what the Pastoral has always done is to talk about personal experience, especially considering this context of a permanent conflict with Catholic doctrine. Then, the strategy has always been the testimony, speaking about what happens to us, about this experience of faith and sexual diversity, how they can be experienced at the same time, and that is what calls people’s attention. (General LGBT group coordinator)

Here, sexuality occupies an important place in individual identity construction. It is a source of both self-recognition and social recognition. Interviews with youth workers and mothers show that testimonies always present the inherent suffering of a lifestyle outside the heterosexual norm, through a series of more or less defined steps: first, the evidence of not adjusting to the norm; second, the difficulty of experiencing rejection from a significant social space (in this case the Church); and third, the specific possibility of overcoming this suffering by drawing on something that is greater than the individual. God’s action is not mentioned as the mechanism that restitutes ties and solves the identity conflict; instead, this mechanism consists of what the individual does due to feeling loved by God.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of the *Pastoral*, the subject is presented as someone who can go beyond the conflict, protected by concrete social support retold along with individual experience. The accepting family and some non-orthodox priests are presented here as invaluable. The support of these actors allows the individual to finally recognize him/herself in a positive way. In this case, personal identity construction cannot avoid the way a subject understands that s/he is observed (Singly, 2010). For this to be possible, it is always necessary to accept sexuality as something given, and where these actors cannot be separated from their acts, a narrative that goes hand in hand with advances in modern sexology and psychology.

This premise makes it possible to enter Catholic schools because the Vatican norm operates under the same principle of sexuality as “given data” (Morán, 2012). At the same time, sexual education in Catholic schools reproduces the idea that sexuality is a privileged expression of individual interiority (Astudillo, 2016). Testimonies collected always articulate the same rule of personal coherence and self-affirmation, which is accompanied by accepting oneself as a creature, but also as an agent of oneself. In this way, the notions of fecundity, donation, and love can also be associated with homosexuality. Thus, heterosexuality is no longer represented as the only valid experience, depriving other individuals of the possibility of organizing “good sexuality” (Rubin, 1984).

Here, the testimony is used as an instrument to move the limits, not necessarily to change them. However, the strategy of the testimony never deals with how the association between homosexuality and “bad sexuality” has been politically constructed. This is not because people renounce denouncing arbitrariness, but because the individual experience is defended, without making it explicit how this is produced within a specific social framework (Scott, 1991). In this way, in the testimonies, sexuality is never presented as an active construction.

### *Identification of Visibility Devices*

Presenting the personal strategy of “accepting” one’s sexuality is not only a question of discourse, but also a particular staging. For the *Pastoral* testimony, it is chosen as an essential tool, not only because it can present the subject and his/her subjectivity, but also because it produces a necessary emotional shift in the audience. For most of the interviewees, this production of emotions is necessary to begin to imagine the social reality

outside their known framework. Therefore, speaking in the first person is essential.

Emotionality is what ultimately allows mutual recognition. What is relevant here is not personal sexuality, but rather the act of being a person, something that both the witness and the audience have in common. However, as Singly (2010) states, there must be certain social conditions for this recognition to occur because only in some contexts can subjects choose the category in which they want to be identified. Thus, the testimony cannot be understood without analyzing the scenario where it unfolds. Not just any place or any school can be chosen to talk about personal experience, but only those where there is certainty that the subject will be recognized as witness. The members of the Pastoral know from past experiences that, for the testimony to work, the subjects in the auditorium must be willing to revise their premises about the ecclesiastic discourse on homosexuality.

In the context of these (Catholic) schools we are talking about, what makes the difference is the fact that we have faith in common. Then, when people listen to family testimonies that tell you that it is possible to be a diverse family, that it is possible to be happy and not feel guilty, that it is possible to keep your faith and not feel that you are in sin, when they see that you are congruent (with your faith), you show that the Vatican norm by itself is not the most important, because what is written by priests today is obsolete. (member of the parents' group)

I have never been in a situation where someone told me that I am sick, a pervert. Never. Let's say, when people have concern, have empathy towards homosexuality, then, that is when there is a real space for dialogue. (LGBT group member)

As a result, testimonial confession does not operate, regardless of the way the audience is represented: as allies or not. In the case of Pastoral, the political scenario is formed by the ones who listen (who have a dialogue) and those who, on the contrary, are not willing to talk. For the purposes of our analysis, however, it is more interesting to show how personal resistance strategy is constructed in tune with the recognition of resistance that others may also articulate.

Following this principle, personal coherence is not independent of the way the subject feels observed. Thus, the personal strategy is not independent of the social relations the individual establishes (Singly, 2010),

where different factors can affect his/her possibility of agency. For example, gender predisposes a way of organizing privacy and intimacy. It is not anodyne that men are those who speak in the first person, whereas women those who speak for their children as Sexual Diversity Pastoral Care Group consists mainly of homosexual men and mothers of gay and lesbian children. Second, the expectations of what each subject can or cannot say or do about sexuality are intersected by social class (Palma, 2008), so that special attention should be paid to the eventual asymmetries that can be established between witnesses and audience when talking about homosexuality.<sup>6</sup>

Any of these variables can influence the school audience, even though this influence is not a topic for the interviewees. Making it explicit would strain the ideal of equality sought by the testimonial action. In this regard, we can return to showing the ambiguity of this strategy. Although testimonies can be synonymous with emancipation and resistance to a particular norm, at the same time, they do not manage to escape certain ways of organizing and discussing the truth. In this regard, testimony reinforces a dominant norm in contemporary societies: static identities are necessary to understand sexuality (Binnie, 2004; Wittig, 1980). Self-affirmation is essential, but it can only be interpreted within shared codes. This becomes evident when comparing the Pastoral objectives with the effects that may be produced by other LGBTI associations that want to speak about the same issue:

(Unlike other organizations) this is a group looking for social change from an intimate, spiritual, and communitarian experience, something we can share with others who also believe in God's good news. Sexual diversity is not a problem, it is not a source of fear, we must understand it as part of Christianity. (LGBT group member)

This quote, however, comes into conflict with other possible representations of the same action, as shown in the following interview:

We must be moderately cautious. In this school, we have very conservative and very liberal families, and they coexist perfectly. But we require a precise political management (...) We must say that Pastoral does not have one millimeter of objectivity, so we decided to cancel a meeting with parents because Pastoral is an activist organization, and we could not bring such a group banded together. Maybe it works with our teachers, but not with our parents. (Catholic school representative)

The quotes above show that it is difficult to draw a limit of objectivity in terms of identities and ways to represent them. It is difficult to think of a personal positioning strategy based on the idea of fluid sexuality or deconstructed personality. What the last quote suggests is that there is a limit in representing the fight. Empathy does not necessarily require understanding that the homosexual experience, as different as it may be, has consequences for the way heterosexuality is constructed. Heterosexuality's normality is not questioned, and if it were questioned, it would be at risk of being discredited for being a political issue. However, the way heterosexuality is constructed, as opposed to homosexuality, is well known to scholars of sexuality (Katz, 2007).

However, the technology of power operates here on two planes: in renouncing the testimonial strategy as a way to question the political nature of difference and, above all, in the difficulty of questioning the fact that the testimony does not require an active counterpart that is included in its notion of normality. The people in the auditorium—all supposedly heterosexual—have never been and never will be obligated to give testimony. The privileges generated by the technology of power continue to be invisible.

### *Confronting Power Technology*

We want to propose a final axis to analyze the ambiguity between the recognition of a power technology and the way subjects choose to behave within these coordinates. From the point of view of experience, it is necessary to recognize the capacity to choose, which every subject describes for him/herself. The capacity to choose makes it possible to comprehend the decision to avoid political reflection about that which produces differences in matters of sexuality.

*Pastoral* testimonies are articulated precisely on the capacity to choose. On the one hand, the subject listens and accepts certain norms, while, at the same time, rejecting others and articulating new ways of confronting them. Catholic institutional discourse about homosexuality does not erode, but instead, paradoxically, it may strengthen the sense of belonging to the Catholic church, precisely because the testimonies consolidate the idea that a subject can transcend difficulty due to his confidence in being loved by God. Based on this, it is also possible to reaffirm the social norm of Catholic schools that hold that religion is an essential part of the individual's well-being as a subject. However, the strategies of

moving the limits of normality make it necessary to examine the nature of the limits themselves. To do so, it is necessary to examine what is omitted, what is not heard when individuals want to present themselves. Certainly, there are gender and class differences that are not dealt with, but we refer here to another type of omission that lies at the center of the normative dispute about sexuality—the doctrine as can be seen in the following transcripts.

*[M]any times, (other priests) ask me, what do they do with the moral issue? I say that I also used to worry about that, but I talked to another priest that was already at the Pastoral and he told me, simply, we do not speak about this topic here. We do not speak about moral doctrine. We do not deal with that topic. Researcher: Do you refer to the moral condemnation of homosexual acts? Yes, simply, we do not refer to that topic because if we did and had to spread the Church doctrine, there would be a mess here. We start laying one brick and begin to discriminate, exactly what we do not want to do. We want to be a care group. (Priest)*

*The Catholic Church is also quite diverse, and you listen to some priests saying atrocities on TV and then you listen to others who have a very different point of view. Then, in the end, I feel confused about the actual position of the Catholic Church. I do not know about Mormons and other religions, but it seems to me that Christians are still so obsessed with the Bible, with the Bible purism, that then it is good that these priest and nuns come to our school to reaffirm this new position. (Catholic school representative)*

There is currently a dispute between theologians and Catholic moralists about the correct interpretation of certain biblical passages explaining homosexuality's condemnation. The question here has to do with the correct exegesis of texts (Awi, 2001). However, this dispute is still understood within a framework of institutional authority that is not questioned. For this reason, priests and nuns are a sort of credential reinforcing the Pastoral testimony, according to the second interviewee. In this standing, the political will of certain actors who choose certain biblical passages or religious dogmas (and not others) to construct a canon about the Christian lifestyle is not at play.

Therefore, the *Pastoral* action in schools is supported by the conviction of its members that not everything has been said about sexuality and, at the same time, that it is possible to distance oneself from Vatican arbitrariness about homosexuality issues. As we said in Pastoral outreach

work, the experience of being a Catholic is not defined by adhesion to what others say, but rather to “what I say about myself.” Nevertheless, this critical view never confronts the way religious authority is understood, thus omitting the way the moral is reproduced around “good” sexuality. The Pastoral testimonies in the Catholic schools foster a sense of belonging rather than a discussion about the norms that politically define the characteristics of the Catholic identity.

The aforementioned raises a new question within the frame of the Church’s paternalism. This has been described as the subject’s prerogative in defining the way individuals should live a good life, being suspicious, at the same time, of their capacity to make good decisions. In this regard, voluntary suppression of political discussion about the norm condemning homosexuality—both from biblical exegesis and the ecclesiastic teaching tradition—keeps the testimonies from showing the political structure that produces the testimonial action itself. Therefore, Catholic schools are not questioned about how they normalize heterosexuality, thus creating an otherness in sexual matters. However, we must recognize that, at the same time, they are challenged to make an internal movement, both to confront homophobic violence within them and to change their discourses and practices toward homosexuality. In this regard, power technology does not impede the expression of a form of agency that gives rise to inclusion experiences, no matter how paradoxical this may seem.

As the interviews reveal, testimonies open a new conversation and present new points of view about something previously invisible. For this reason, despite abandoning the political reflection around the production of difference, the resistance strategy associated with the testimony continues to be valid. As Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst (2010) remind us, the sense of belonging must be analyzed in the multiple geographic scales it combines. Testimony allows us to recognize ourselves as equal in Catholic spaces, and, at the same time, it reminds us of an equity principle enshrined by the same law that shaped the school institution and, thus, appeals to reflecting on shared humanity characterized by a moral sense. The queer question, regarding the way the truth regimes produce differences between subjects, also responds to this same ethical purpose.

*There is a need to give sense to the issue of sexual diversity, and this forces you to engage in a mental exercise, because prevailing social discourse is always centered on social demands, on protecting rights (...) Here, we are expecting demands, parades, and revindication, but I have the feeling that there is*

*lack of sense about homosexuality, and maybe this is the other search that we can satisfy* (what Catholic schools are doing). (General LGBT group coordinator)

As this paragraph shows, the opportunity is missed to recognize how certain individuals, and not everybody, are forced to account for their position within the sex/gender system, in order to offer a transcendent sense of homosexuality for both heterosexual and non-heterosexual individuals. Perhaps a more stable acceptance of homosexuality in Catholic schools would require dealing with this inequality. Only then would it be possible to reflect on the way individual sexuality is socially constructed and not just something given, which would require the modification of the frontier of normality.

## CONCLUSIONS

In Chilean catholic schools, the recognition of gender identities and sexual diversity are still partial and fragile, because school actors do not question the hegemony of heteronormativity in their discourses and practices. But as several studies show, this is something inherent to the contemporary school institution. As Foucault (1988) proposes, the power technologies have the capacity to infiltrate subjects' daily life, naturalizing an organization of sexuality and gender that has been politically constructed and institutionalized in Western societies.

However, this statement must be contrasted with the experience told by the individuals. As Scott (1991) suggests, the experience lived, narrated, is understood only within the framework of discourses with a historical origin. As history shows in relation to gender and sexuality, categories lack an ultimate and transcendent meaning and, at the same time, are full of visible definitions and other alternatives silenced by subjects. From this point of view, the testimonies of the Sexual Diversity Pastoral are understood as a historically situated effort, where an attempt is made to modify the effect of a power technology. In this regard, the experience of the witnesses represents an achievement, evidence of a possible change. Indeed, the terrain itself shows some limitations, but this does not keep us from recognizing the transforming effect of its action on the discourse of the Catholic schools.

Later, and based on the ambiguity of the experience, the power technology should be inspected. As the evidence gathered shows, it is difficult



to reproduce a movement without including the idea of stable categories. As Singly (2010) states, the identity of the individuals is defined by a permanent interplay of gazes, where the subjects recognize each other based on common terms that can be claimed by an individual or not, but that exist in that they are common to both. However, this is not the greatest tension.

As Foucault (1988) and Butler (2010) propose, the power technologies regulate not only sexuality and gender, but also the way the norm is dealt with. The Pastoral testimonies in the Catholic schools illustrate this point well, considering the absence of any reflection on how gender and sexuality are politically constructed, and due to their explicit willingness to not go against the discourse of Catholic teaching. But we must not forget that this choice is what makes it possible to show a normative movement in the schools and state with good reason that homosexual marginalization can be modified. Thus, queer criticism would have to be transferred from the construction of the norm to the experience of personal agency. This would open a new field of complexity because of the refusal to look at the political construction of sexuality conflicts with the feeling of well-being achieved when resisting an apparently invincible norm.

Often, for activism, the only strategy is to fix identities in order to combat the norm and create a transformative space. This reminds us that, even when defending a fluid identity condition, the possibilities of allowing its display in a social space must be considered. As Lise Nelson (1999) stated, performativity cannot be understood outside specific historical and geographic anchors through subjects' situated biographies, and identities are articulated in a permanent exercise of transit and fixation. It is here where the individual's active role in his/her own life can be observed. The testimonies of the *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual* in Catholic schools unintentionally clearly show this.

## NOTES

1. Here we use the name that the group itself employs against other similar organization that make up the Rainbow Catholics network, which in some way illustrates a tension that will be noted throughout the chapter: its communitarian and non-political nature, which appears more clearly in English than Spanish.
2. Law of School Inclusion in 2012, Circular No. 0786 on "The rights of transgender boys, girls, and children in the educational environment" in

- 2016, and “Orientations for the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexual individuals in the Chilean educational system” in 2017.
3. From the perspective of the political sciences, paternalism is defined as a form of exercising power, where a subject accepts for himself the responsibility for individuals to have a “good life” and, at the same time, is systematically suspicious of the capacity of those who have enough abilities to make good decisions (Magni-Berton, 2011).
  4. During 2018, the mother of a trans girl went to the meetings of the parents’ group. Without any explanation she left the Pastoral a few weeks later.
  5. This is something that Fassin (2016) and Vaggione (2005) identify with the secularization of religious discourses. In this case, there is an emphasis on the way subjects can set goals for themselves, according to a political context characteristic of individualized societies.
  6. The interviews carried out only provide marginal material in this regard, except when mentioning the authority of the speakers who accompany their education.

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# Education as Activism: Sexual Dissidence and Schooling in Spain

*Renée DePalma* 

## INTRODUCTION

Spain has come a long way in terms of rights for sexual minorities in the past few decades. In the second half of the twentieth century, while much of Europe and the USA were experiencing some of the early stirrings of homophile and gay rights movements (Armstrong, 2002; Rupp, 2011), Spain was still immersed in the Franco dictatorship (1939–1975). Activists who worked to ensure basic human rights for sexual minorities in Spain were persecuted by the Franco regime, forcing these social movements to go underground and severely limited their capacity to effect real legal change. The work of these early civil rights pioneers took decades to eventually culminate in legislation providing for same-sex marriage (Ley 13/2005), and access to identity documentation that accurately reflect one’s gender identity (Ley 3/2007). Currently, Spain ranks 12th out of all 49 European countries on a scale based on laws and policies that directly

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impact on LGBTI people's human rights (ILGA Europe, 2019), suggesting that Spain, despite its recent troubled history and late start, has caught up with its European neighbors on the legal and policy level.

At the same time, sexual diversity increasingly protected by Spanish legislation has not been explicitly supported in educational policy. Spanish education legislation has been rewritten many times since the Franco dictatorship ended in 1973. A review of the preambles of the four laws passed since 1990 (Bejerano Franco & García Fernández, 2016) has revealed that these documents not only fail to recognize the diversity recognized and protected by the state, but also fail to establish a relationship between the emotional and the sexual, that might support more comprehensive sex and relationship education. In this way the institution of schooling, which is best equipped, in principle, for preparing a critical, informed, and socially conscious citizenry, is complicit in erasing past injustice and taking for granted that legislation automatically equals social justice. It is therefore not surprising that there is scarce evidence of school or classroom-based work that might provide children the tools to critically process the sex education they receive on a massive scale through popular media (Francisco & Moliner, 2012).

Spain's rich and powerful history of sexual dissidence has operated largely outside of and parallel to the school sector. Yet as the chapters in this volume illustrate, Queer Social Movements (QSM) play an essential role in disrupting gender and sexual normativities—an educational project aimed at undoing the narrow, restrictive, and inaccurate understandings that fuel social injustice. Spanish schooling lacks an explicit policy and curricular framework for teaching gender and sexual diversity in schools. On the one hand, this leaves it up to the teachers to decide to address this particular area of equality, and to find ways to do it. On the other hand, activist organizations have begun to develop resources and materials, and seem more than willing to provide teachers with the guidance and support they need.

Given the particularities of the Spanish historical context, I will explore in this chapter several lines of activism related to gender and sexual diversity, along with the impact they have had, and continue to have, in school contexts. The institution of schooling plays a key role in disseminating inaccurate and harmful social ideologies, as well as in their resistance. This review includes some of the efforts of activist collectives to educate about gender and sexual diversity, both within and beyond spaces of formal schooling.

## SPAIN: THE LONG ROAD TO RECOGNITION AND REPRESENTATION FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES

Spain has come a long way in terms of rights for gender and sexual minorities in a relatively short time, and an analysis of this rapid social progress may help to explain the disconnect between legislative advances and school policy and practice. In Europe, advances toward legal recognition of gender and sexual minorities were being made as early as 1951, when the first International Congress for Sexual Equality, held in Amsterdam, resulted in a petition to the UN by participating countries, including Denmark, West Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Holland, and Switzerland, and the subsequent formation of the International Commission for Sexual Equality (ICSE). The petition demanded the extension of human rights to what was then referred to as “homosexual minorities” in accordance with “the findings of modern psychological, biological and medical research” and “mankind’s greater awareness of social justice,”—this last argument referring to the Nazi atrocities during World War II (Rupp, 2011, p. 1014). The ICSE serves as a rallying point for the incipient homophile movement, also active in the US as early as the 1950s, which eventually gave way to the more explicit and directed activism that characterized the gay power movement, galvanized by the Compton Cafeteria (San Francisco, 1966) and Stonewall (New York, 1969) riots (Armstrong, 2002).

Where was Spain in the midst of this new awareness of gender and sexual diversity? Under Francisco Franco’s fascist military regime (1939–1975), strongly supported by Catholic authorities, homosexuality was outlawed, along with other practices such as divorce and contraception that were seen to violate the tenets of the Church. In 1954 an existing law meant to control and incarcerate indigents and miscreants was modified to include homosexuals, placing them in the same category of illegality as “ruffians and pimps,” “professional panhandlers” and “those who lived off others through begging” (Ley de Vagos y Maleantes, 1954).

Sixteen years later, penalization was, at least in theory, replaced by a radical form of pathologization with the introduction of *The Law of Dangerousness and Social Rehabilitation*, which set out to cure and reform homosexuals (Ley de Peligrosidad y Rehabilitación Social, 1970). Just one year after the famous and ground-breaking Stonewall riots, Spanish legislation continued to consider gender and sexual minorities to be



on a par with prostitution, human trafficking, delinquency, and drug-addiction, constituting a danger to society, “They will be declared to be in a state of danger, and the corresponding security and rehabilitation measures will be applied to those whose engage in homosexual acts.” Those who were accused of such acts were considered to be potential social contagions, and as such were subject to internment in re-education camps, placed under vigilance, and prohibited from living in certain designated areas and visiting certain public places. In practice, the law resulted in a large number of incarcerations in mental asylums and prisons, with close to a million documented cases of people serving such sentences during the nine years the law was in force (Conde, 2016).

It’s not surprising, given this repressive regime and the specific legal tools that targeted gender and sexual minorities, that much of Spain’s early sexual rights movement took place behind closed doors. Only after many years of secret meetings did the Gay Liberation Front (*Front d’Alliberament Gai*) organize the first public demonstration in Catalonia on the 26th of June, 1977, with some 4000 taking to Barcelona’s popular *Ramblas* pedestrian thoroughfare, shouting “We are not afraid, we ARE<sup>1</sup>” and demanding both the repeal of the infamous law and immediate amnesty for those imprisoned under its mandate (Bernardo, 2015). This landmark protest took place two years after the death of General Francisco Franco and the end of his 36-year dictatorship, and just one year after the introduction of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, which established democracy and officially separated Spain from the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, change was slow: it was nearly a year and a half before the article referring to homosexual acts was eliminated (Álvarez, 2017). Many of those imprisoned under the law were not released until 1979, four years after the dictator’s death, and their prison sentences were not erased from their legal records until 2001. Since these incarcerations and persecutions took place in recent history, many of those who suffered them are still relatively young, living with these memories that are hard to reconcile with Spain’s more recent standing in the international community. For 46-year-old Antonio Ruíz, who was 17 when he was imprisoned upon coming out to his family, silence is not an acceptable response:

Of course I am happy about the new freedoms in Spain ... But we don’t want to forget about the repression. We want to reclaim our dignity. The old police files, with their lists of homosexuals and discriminatory laws and

punitive sentences, should be preserved and archived for the public. We can't forget. (Loewenberg, 2005)

## FROM HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION TO SCHOOLS: A CONTROVERSIAL STEP

Despite Spain's significant recent advances in human rights legislation a number of worrying negative trends have been identified, including several incidences of hate speech on behalf of prominent church officials. These include a particularly inflammatory speech made by the Archbishop of Valencia in 2016, in which he declared that Spain supports "legislation contrary to the family, the acts of political and social forces, to which are added movements and acts by the gay empire, by ideologies such as radical feminism – or the most insidious of all – gender ideology" (ILGA Europe, 2017, p. 216).

The notion of "gender ideology" has emerged as a relatively recent and quite controversial discourse on the part of the Spanish ultra-conservative Catholic sector, in response to what they consider to be a threat to their religious values. These threats are concentrated, it seems, where young children and schooling are concerned. A recent initiative in the form of a bright orange campaign bus received a great deal of media attention as it paraded through several major Spanish cities, brandishing the following message painted on the side, accompanied by normative boy and girl figures, "Boys have a penis. Girls have a vulva. Don't let them fool you. If you are born a man, you're a man. If you are a woman, you will always be one" (Jiménez Gálvez & Constantini, 2017). Dubbed "the Liberty Bus" by its organizers, and re-named "The Hatred Bus" by detractors, it was designed as a reaction to a public educational campaign led by an association of families of trans\* children.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of six days at the beginning of January 2017, posters appearing on bus and metro stations throughout the Basque Country and Navarran regions declared, "There are girls with penises and boys with vulvas. It's that simple" ("Hay niñas con pene y niños con vulva," 2017).

The original campaign, intended to promote social awareness and inclusion of gender diverse children<sup>3</sup> (Mayor, 2017), seems to have struck a sensitive spot among religious conservatives. The same organization that sponsored the gender normative bus campaign also was discovered distributing a 46-page document in primary schools (Laborde, 2016) alerting parents to "sexual indoctrination" and warning that legal protections

and inclusion of LGBTB<sup>4</sup> realities in the curriculum would “disorient children by imposing sexual diversity on them” (Velázquez, 2016). The cover photo of this document is especially unnerving, as it depicts two small children dressed in early twentieth century garb, saluting a rainbow flag in the style characteristic of the Franco fascist dictatorship. In this way, the radical right deploys the time-honored discourse of reverse discrimination—casting sexual minorities, after decades of systematic and legal persecution, as the fascist oppressors.

It is no accident that these ultra-conservative campaigns revolve around the especially hot topic of what young children should be learning or not in schools. While the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Youth and Student Organisation IGLYO has called for proactive pedagogies, arguing that “When heterosexuality is viewed as superior, individuals’ behavior is restricted to rigid gender roles, resulting in stigma and discrimination towards those who deviate from such norms” (IGLYO, 2015, p. 9), initiatives designed to carry out such pedagogies have often sparked fierce resistance. These resistance campaigns often draw upon popular understandings of childhood innocence and asexuality and portray sexual minorities as deviant and unnatural. Together, these discourses combine to portray educators who incorporate gender and sexual diversity into the curriculum as biased, unprofessional, and misguided at best, and pornographers and pedophiles at worst. For example, the Australian Safe Schools Coalition program, launched in 2014 to support LGBTIQ children in schools (Law, 2017), was compared by one MP to pedophilia, “it sounds a lot like the grooming work that a sexual predator might undertake” (Butler, 2016).

Even in national contexts where rights for gender and sexual minorities are protected by law, the inclusion of gender and sexual diversity in education seems to be a controversial and difficult step to take. The public backlash, fueled by religious or conservative groups, can have the effect of weakening policy and intimidating teachers who might otherwise be willing to address what in Spain is referred to as sexual-affective diversity.

## SPANISH SCHOOLING: STILL A LONG WAY TO GO TOWARD EXPLICIT CURRICULAR INCLUSION

Spanish society is, as a whole, generally accepting of gender and sexual diversity, with Spaniards scoring the highest on an international tolerance survey on which 88% expressed the belief that homosexuality should be

accepted by society (Pew Research Center, 2013). As may be expected, attitudes seem to be changing over time, as demonstrated by research with different age cohorts. Interviews with elder residents of a Spanish supported-living facility revealed that the majority expressed a range of negative attitudes, from avoidance to more extreme rejection (Villar, Serrat, Fabà, & Celdrán, 2015). These results contrast with research conducted with college-aged student athletes, who exhibited generally low levels of prejudice, despite the researchers' intentional selection of a sporting context with the aim of targeting a social arena historically considered to be particularly prone to heterosexist and patriarchal attitudes and behaviors. The authors interpret the somewhat higher levels of prejudice directed toward trans\* people as largely resulting from ignorance, which can best be addressed through visibility of sexual minorities and a better education in diversity, equality, and gender issues (Piedra, 2014).

A more nuanced interpretation is provided by more recent research that compares Spanish and English sports participants. The Spanish respondents demonstrated significantly less tolerant attitudes toward sexual minorities, suggesting that Spain has a “pseudo-tolerant” social climate, with levels of rejection moderated by the social undesirability of being perceived as homophobic:

It is possible that the Spanish sample's evident pseudo-inclusivity can be identified as a “politically correct” departure from the rejection of sexual diversity (and thus the negative implication of “being homophobic”) alongside a concurrent refusal of acceptance of sexual minorities, shaped perhaps by the heteronormativity of Spain's traditionally conservative political and religious history. (Piedra, García-Pérez, & Channon, 2017, p. 1035).

This research might shed some light on the ways in which Franco's ultra-conservative political regime continues to haunt modern LGBTI-friendly Spain.

Research conducted by the Spanish Government into youth attitudes toward gender and sexual diversity reveal the weak nature of such (pseudo) tolerant attitudes. Discussion-groups with adolescents (15–18 years) in various Spanish cities showed overall high levels of tolerance and openness to sexual diversity, but were accompanied by more specific trends that bear closer examination, given their relevance to schooling. First, many of the opinions expressed were described by the researchers

as “liberal homophobia,” with counter-normative manifestations of gender and sexual identity relegated to the private arena, and less likely to be tolerated in public spaces. Second, these young people did report witnessing incidents of homophobia and, what seems more worrying, tended to blame less violent cases on the victims themselves. Third, male homosexuality was generally more accepted, while lesbianism was rendered invisible, and bisexual and transsexual experiences remained the subject of incomprehension and even rejection. Finally, respondents were largely unaware of sexual diversity in real life and historical contexts, and very few had encountered these topics in family or school contexts:

A weak role was detected for the schooling context and teachers, as well as for dialog in the family context. There, in the face of relative “silence” on the part of these key actors for young people, television appeared to be the main source of information about sexual diversity. Therefore, the principal models and referents for LGTB people come from the television, while there is an extremely limited knowledge of historic, literary, cultural, etc. LGTB figures. For the young men and women who participated in the study, and especially for those inhabitants of smaller residential areas - LGTB visibility was an eminently televised issue. (CIMOP, 2011, p. 4)

Research in school contexts seems to bear out this characterization of Spanish youth as passively or liberally tolerant, but with shallow understandings of sexuality and gender, and of related discrimination they experience in their social circles. A survey conducted by the Spanish National Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals (FELGTB) survey found that 43% of Spanish secondary students who experienced homophobic bullying considered suicide, while 35% went on to plan it, and 17% attempted suicide (2012). Further research has revealed that eight out of every ten secondary students had witnessed insults relating to perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. While most deemed these incidents to be unacceptable and worthy of intervention, one out of five students considered them to be unimportant, and argued that (1) you hear these kinds of comments all the time, so they don’t matter so much, (2) they are not ill-intentioned, or (3) they are inevitable, because some people deserve them (Pichardo Galán & de Stéfano Barbero, 2015). According to guidelines published by Spain’s Ministry of Health, Social

Services and Equality, exercising one's right to freedom of sexual orientation or gender identity is still the leading cause of bullying and stigmatization, both at the European and Spanish national level, with 25% of students between 15 and 19 years of age witnessing homophobic violence in their schools. While the majority express respect toward LGTB people, their failure to intervene renders them accomplices in maintaining a regime of silence and invisibilization (Pichardo Galán, de Stéfano Barbero, Faure, Saénz, & Williams Ramos, 2015).

A campaign led by FELGTB has brought national attention to the lack of representation of sexual diversity in school textbooks and other classroom materials (Hidalgo & Barcala, 2011). While some secondary school literature textbooks include a few of the important authors who contributed to the gay and lesbian rights movement, they usually do so without contextualizing their work within the broader sexual dissidence movement or even mentioning their sexuality (Santamaría-García & Echaury Galván, 2018). García Cabeza and Sánchez Bello's analysis of Spanish secondary science textbooks revealed superficial and incomplete approaches to sex education and sexuality, leading the authors to conclude that Spanish educators have:

(...) gone from the censorship imposed on textbooks by a dictatorship to a "self-imposed" censorship based on the existence of contents that are visible and others that are hidden, in accordance with a socially constructed reality that attaches greater value to some themes than to others. (2013, p. 1728)

A wide-scale teacher survey has revealed that among the obstacles identified by teachers to providing quality sex education, respondents identified lack of preparation and institutional support—just under 12% had received no undergraduate training, while 50% indicated that their school did not consider sex education to be a priority and 60% argued that their schools lacked the necessary resources (Martínez et al., 2012). In the Spanish context, where curricular inclusion is permitted and supported by the nation's broader legal context, partnerships with social activist organizations can help fill the gap left by laissez-faire educational policy.

## THE SPANISH NATIONAL FEDERATION OF LESBIANS, GAYS, TRANSEXUALS AND BISEXUALS (FELGTB) AND SCHOOLING

The gap in school policy and lack of textbook representation of sexual diversity leaves it up to teachers to take the initiative for finding ways to introduce sexual diversity into their everyday classroom practice. Depending on their willingness, preparation, and sensitivity, individual teachers might incorporate such themes into related curriculum-specific content. Such teachers can at least turn to some activist organizations for support and guidance, and even some ideas for practice.

The Spanish FELGTB remains the driving force at the national level for promoting anti-homophobia work in schools, through educational campaigns and the dissemination of relevant research, news and other information. The group was formed in 1992 as the National Federation of Gays and Lesbians, and its name change reflects the organization's progress in terms of inclusivity and representation of a broader range of sexual diversity. As a federation, many of its approximately 50 affiliate groups represent more specific collectives, such as the Daniela Foundation, which aims to recognize and address lack of information regarding trans\* children's needs on the part of professionals, "whether in the field of medical psychological, social, legal, or educational intervention."<sup>5</sup>

Despite their diversity, the federation's affiliated organizations share and coordinate three major lines of action, as described on the FELGTB website<sup>6</sup>:

- A demand for legal equality and social respect toward sexual-affective diversity,
- Awareness-raising and protest, a part of which is formed by the yearly National LGTB Pride celebration, and
- Training of activists and their member associations.

The Federation's website includes an area dedicated to "combat LGTB-phobia in classrooms" which revolves around two main axes of intervention: the support and defense of students who are at risk of being a victim of school bullying, and a proactive approach to sexual-affective diversity education as a preventive strategy. One specific initiative is the "Back-to-school" campaign—a website with separate sections aimed at students,

families, or professionals that provides a wide range of resources, from contacts and advice for students who have suffered LGTB-phobic harassment to educational resources that can be used in the classroom to familiarize children with sexual diversity.

Similar to the UK organization Stonewall's No Bystanders campaign,<sup>7</sup> FELGTB considers bystanders to be key actors in school bullying, and there is a section of the website specifically dedicated to children who witness such incidents, encouraging them to get involved with the statement "Take action, your silence makes you an accomplice." Perhaps most striking is the section aimed at those who might consider themselves to have perpetrated acts of homophobic bullying, under the heading "Do I bully? – Stop doing so immediately by following these steps." The information provided for self-identified bullies highlights the suffering produced in those targeted by their abuse, as well as the possible legal consequences of perpetrators' actions.

In summary, a great deal of FELGTB's educational work is focused on research in educational settings and the publication of teaching proposals and guides to good practice that are designed to raise teachers' awareness of the issues and provide them with some guidance on how to respond to bullying incidents and to minimize them by proactively incorporating sexual diversity into their teaching. They also have resources designed for families and children themselves. While it might seem optimistic to expect children to self-identify as bullies and access the FELGTB to find ways to avoid such behaviors, the organization's inclusive strategy does symbolically convey the important message that reduction of school-based violence toward children who do not conform to heteronormative expectations should be a collective effort involving not just bullies and victims, but teachers, families, and peers.

Nevertheless, the direct intervention of the Federation in school contexts seems to be relatively limited; the advice and guidance available on the website depend on the initiative of those who seek to redress the lack of information in educational contexts. One of the services provided by the Federation is a network of affiliated activist organizations (*Red Educa*) available upon request to provide educational workshops in schools. The six participating organizations in 2016 increased to nine during the following school year, indicating a great deal of initiative on the part of this activist network. According to the most recent data available from the Federation's website, during the 2016–2017 school year they provided 780 workshops in 90 schools throughout Spain, aimed at primary



and secondary students, teachers, and families. The FELGTB seems well aware that the demand for such collaborations is largely driven by government policy, and expresses the hope that future legislation will “approve effective and urgent measures for the introduction of Sexual and Gender Diversity in the educational system, as well as for the prevention of bullying on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.”<sup>8</sup>

### VOICES FROM THE MARGINS OF THE MARGINS: TRANS AND FEMINIST ACTIVISM

There are voices of sexual minorities that might get lost in generalized social movements such as FELGTB movements; these include lesbians (Trujillo Barbadillo, 2016) and bisexuals (Moreno Sánchez & Pichardo Galán, 2006, p. 149):

Bisexuality becomes an even more subaltern sexuality that homosexuality, despised by heterosexuals who consider them to be depraved, and by homosexuals who see them as gays or lesbians who have not yet accepted or who don't dare accept their true identity.

Invisibility is one of the principal routes to subordination, and those who do not declare a clear and exclusive sexuality are especially prone to this kind of marginalization, both within and beyond activist circles. In the schooling context, especially in the early years, it may be especially difficult to address aspects of sexual diversity that are not easily represented by concrete models (Epstein, 2013). The practice of including same-sex parents in family diversity lessons, for example, might erase experiences such as bisexuality, which is difficult to represent within the remit of a single (parental) relationship. Those who might opt not to have children or to form a stable monogamous relationship are also excluded from these representations.

Trans\* experience also tends to be erased in collective sexual dissident movements (Stryker, 2008), and trans\* people have been even more forcibly excluded from some feminist circles (Riddell, 2006). In Spain, trans\* women have been active in the women's rights movements since 1993, when a national feminist conference in Cordoba first incorporated a round table discussion on trans\* issues (Espineira & Bourcier, 2016); in 2000 the term transfeminism was included in the official program of the Madrid national feminist conference (Platero & Ortega-Arjonilla, 2016).

Since its relatively early collaboration in the Spanish women's movement, transfeminism "resists such feminist practices of exclusion and objectification by appropriating the term feminism itself, and by using the prefix trans- to signify a feminist trans subject or identity subject or identity" (Espineira & Bourcier, 2016, p. 88). The more positive relationship between cis- and trans- feminists in Spain is largely due to two factors: the incorporation of trans\* women's demands in the broader feminist agenda, and the delay of trans incorporation into the burgeoning 1980s gay rights movement that was concerned with normalizing homosexuality in the face of the concurrent HIV crisis (Platero & Ortega-Arjonilla, 2016).

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the modern FELGTB has come a long way from the homonormative origins of early sexual minority activism in Spain, as is evidenced by the scope of the Federation's activism, the variety of its affiliated collectives, and its concern to use inclusive language (for example, the use of LGTB-phobia rather than homophobia in their anti-school bullying campaign). For example, a resource created in 2011 by the affiliate organization COGAM entitled "Teaching guide on transsexuality for youth and adolescents" used a simple and attractive cartoon format to introduce trans\* experience to school children. The resource has some important limitations, including the use of the outdated term transsexuality. The use of this term has been common in Spain until quite recently, when Lucas Platero introduced term in a book designed to provide teachers with understanding and resources to address trans\* issues in the classroom, "what the asterisk adds is to point out the heterogeneity when we conceptualize a body, an identity, and experiences that go beyond imposed binary social norms" (Platero Méndez, 2014, p. 16). The COGAM resource also affirms the notion of being trapped in the wrong body, which has been openly rejected by trans\* activists. At the same time, this teaching guide does provide engaging and clear descriptions of important concepts such as gender identity and society's complicity in potentially misgendering the other:

Immediately, and almost by instinct, without being conscious of it, the first thing we determine is the sex that [each person] belongs to, among other things to address him/her or to describe the person in masculine or feminine terms...and how do we do that? By looking to see how the

person's appearance corresponds to what we understand as being man or woman. (COGAM, 2011, p. 10)

This guide explicitly disengages sexual identity from genitalia, and defines notions such as psychological sex (“how we identify ourselves,” p. 7), and *sexation*, a term used by Spanish sexologists to describe the ways in which we identify and classify ourselves as well as others (Landarroitajauregi Garai, 2000). Spanish sexology has embraced and recognized trans\* experience as part of what is referred to as “human sexual diversity,” a phenomenon which incorporates sexuality as well as gender identity. This academic field has had some impact on the production of educational materials. The association of families of trans\* children Naizen (formerly a local branch of the national organization Chrysalis) is an especially clear example of collaboration between sexologists and activists, as evidenced by their conceptual and terminological framework, as well as the availability of sexological articles on their website. Key concepts include (1) genitalia do not determine one's identity; (2) neither the minds nor the bodies of trans\* children are wrong, and (3) trans\* is just one aspect of human sexual diversity, where children's (psychological) sexual identity does not coincide with that attributed by society (doctors, teachers, peers, etc.). So for example, among their protocols for school practice, we find universal toilet access, so that “all girls, whether they have a penis or vulva, can use the girl's toilet.”

It is also worth noting that activist organizations such as Chrysalis and Naizen have had a particularly strong impact in pressuring regional governments<sup>9</sup> and providing specialist consultation to establish protocols for addressing gender non-conformity in schools, starting with the Andalusian autonomous government's *Protocol for intervention concerning gender identity* (Junta de Andalucía, 2015). This pioneering guidance recommends specific actions, such as using the child's chosen name, positive education about sexual diversity for all children, and collaboration with activist and support groups.

Another educational strategy has been to incorporate gender and sexual diversity into the Spanish tradition of anti-sexist education (Fumero, Llana Moreno, & Ruíz Repullo, 2016). Coauthor Kika Fumero is a secondary teacher who also identifies as an LGBTI activist and has argued that gender violence and homophobic or transphobic violence share a common basis in sexism, and therefore must be addressed together, “We

cannot separate a gender perspective from an LGBTI perspective, we cannot separate gender equality from diversity. Macho culture permeates it all, and it all has the same root”<sup>10</sup> Along these lines, the autonomous government of Navarra has published an anti-sexist teaching plan to be implemented in schools from 2017 to 2021, which is described as “revolving around various concepts that intersect all areas of schooling: the prevention of violence against women and girls, the visibility of women and their contributions, respect for identities, cultures, sexualities and their diversity, social participation and the shared commitment to make equality a reality” (Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de Educación, 2017, p. 9). As part of the backlash tendencies already described in this chapter, the plan has received virulent opposition from an association of Catholic parents<sup>11</sup> as well as conservative political parties, who have accused the Navarran government of indoctrination of young children into what they refer to, predictably, as “gender ideology” (Doria, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

In Spain, the recent past of systematic oppression of sexual minorities continues to shape a modern society that is ostensibly supportive of sexual diversity, but still prone to conservative backlash movements and prejudices born of ignorance. Research within and beyond schools shows underlying homophobic and transphobic attitudes that are fueled by misconceptions and lack of experience. At the same time, schools, the institution entrusted to fomenting values of citizenship and equality, are strangely silent on these issues when they relate to sexual minorities.

While social movements in defense of rights for sexual minorities were slow to make advances in the Spanish context, impeded by an oppressive dictatorship, they have been quite successful in ensuring certain basic rights at the legislative level, particularly in recent years. This work is ongoing: for example, there is currently a draft law proposal to revise the current law, so that people who wish to adapt their identity documentation to their gender identity will not have to present psychological verification. Activist groups have contributed much to education in terms of promoting and participating in the development of educational protocols, research on bullying, and the preparation of teaching materials and guides. Some of these have been the product of a collaboration between anti-sexist and sexual diversity initiatives, which might reflect a historical affinity among different groups of women in social movements.

We have also seen the emergence in recent years of initiatives specifically designed to support young children who transgress gender expectations and/or may identify as trans\*, and these organizations have taken a particularly proactive stance in the design of resources designed to expand and improve concepts related to sex, gender, and sexuality.

However, what is largely missing in the Spanish context is the direct participation of these activist organizations in teaching activities and teacher preparation. This lack of collaboration does not seem to stem from the activist groups themselves, who appear motivated and prepared for this level of involvement. It is more likely to result from the institutional school culture, which is generally prone to isolationism and a focus on covering the explicit required curriculum. Furthermore, teachers might well be reluctant to draw attention from small but vocal (highly mediatized) conservative movements that have begun to respond critically to sexual diversity education initiatives.

## NOTES

1. Translated from the original Catalan—*Nosaltres no tenim por, nosaltres som*.
2. Chrysalis Euskal Herria, available at <http://chrysaliseh.eus/2017/05/02/material-didactico-audiovisual-sobre-transexualidad-infantil/>.
3. The campaign was careful, for example, to use positive language instead of negative, i.e. “boys without a penis...” in order to promote positive body image and gender equality.
4. I have chosen to use this acronym, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Trans, and Bisexual, because it is that used in most Spanish activist circles. In referring to specific campaigns or activists, I will use the term they use.
5. [www.fundaciondaniela.org/](http://www.fundaciondaniela.org/).
6. <http://www.felgtb.org/>.
7. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/nobystanders>.
8. <http://www.felgtb.org/temas/educacion/red-educa>.
9. Spanish education policy is devolved to the local autonomous community level in Spain, rendering this the most appropriate level to develop such policies.
10. See the author’s website: <http://kikafumero.com/portfolio-item/observatorio-coeducativo-lgbti/>.
11. Or fathers, the Spanish word *padres* is ambiguous.

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# Queer Activism and Non-formal Outreach Work in Iran: Creating a Community of Support and Learning

Jón Ingvar Kjaraan 

## INTRODUCTION

When the controversial Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad addressed New York's Columbia University in 2007, he was asked about the situation of gays in Iran. He replied, "In Iran, we don't have homosexuals. In Iran we don't have this phenomenon. I don't know who has told you we have it" (Whitaker, 2007, September 25).<sup>1</sup> These remarks caught the headlines in the Western media and drew widespread criticism, as well as cries of disbelief. Once again the Islamic Republic of Iran was in the spotlight regarding its treatment of sexual minorities, particularly due to the fact that same-sex sexual acts are punishable by death in Iran. Well-established discursive themes about the "barbaric" and "evil" nature of the Islamic Republic re-emerged in the Western media: Iran,

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because of its inhuman treatment of sexual minorities, is depicted as “uncivilized” and “primitive” in comparison to the progressive and civilized global north, where gays and lesbians enjoy freedom and full civil rights. In fact, this discourse about the “civilized” global north depicted against the “uncivilized” global south, particularly the Middle East, in terms of the sexual/civil rights of gays and lesbians, is part of a wider neoliberal political discourse, which has in the aftermath of 9/11 changed the political discourse in the West and the concept of “good” citizenry (Puar, 2007). For instance, in many Western liberal democracies, certain “respectable” LGBTQ subjectivities have now been included as part of the “national imaginary,” which then presents those societies as tolerant and open, in contrast to allegedly homophobic and barbaric Islamic countries. This kind of rhetoric, which Puar has defined as homonationalism, has in the first decade of the twenty-first century, contributed to inciting racist, anti-Arab, and Islamophobic discourses in many Western countries—both with regard to foreign and domestic policy/politics.

The question thus remains as to why president Ahmadinejad renounced that “this phenomenon,” referring to homosexuality, existed in Iran, knowing that it would raise anti-Iranian sentiments based in part on homonationalistic rhetoric? Was he unaware of the reaction his comments would cause or was he evading this sensitive topic altogether by declaring that homosexuality did not exist within Iranian culture/society? Of course Ahmadinejad knows that there are gays, lesbians and other members of the LGBTQ community living in Iran today. It is an “open secret, everybody knows about it,” as one of my informants told me. Moreover, Iranian cultural history gives plenty of examples of same-sex desire and homoerotic love, which can be found in classical Persian poetry and literature (Homosexuality iii. In *Persian Literature*, 2012, March 23). However, this kind of love or desire has always been expressed figuratively, and throughout Iranian history homosexuality/same-sex desire has been an open secret, something neither talked about nor expressed in public. It is to be kept within the private sphere, where one can express one’s true feelings and remove the “social mask.” In fact, when Ahmadinejad was publically denying the existence of gays and lesbians, he was indirectly referring to that kind of cultural division between the private and the public, which many Iranians still embody today. Moreover, gays and lesbians are not officially recognized in Iran and in that sense, they do not exist, and therefore Ahmadinejad was referring to the official rhetoric and erasure of sexual minority subjects.

Thus, in light of the official silencing of sexual minorities in Iran, celebrating visibility, “coming out” as a political action, and doing outreach work in schools or formal educational settings, has not been the main focus of gay activism in Iran. This is also the reality in other social and cultural contexts in the global south. Naisargi Dave has pointed out, in her ethnographic research on lesbian activism in New Delhi, India, the challenges and dilemmas activists face (Dave, 2011). For example, they need to evaluate the limitations and possibilities of identity-based politics in their activist work. Should they, for example, adopt a Western approach to activism, in which the emphasis is on disclosure of sexual identity and the attainment of equal rights? In other words, employ the Western notion of “coming out” as a political action and a strategy. Or should they aim for anonymity and reject predefined sexual identities? As Dave explores further, lesbian groups in New Delhi took different approaches to these questions—some aimed for more identity-based politics while others opted for more anonymity in their work and activities to “avoid being dismissed as westernized” (Dave, 2011, p. 13). The same applies to the question of outreach work which has often in the global north focused on identity work and politics instead of drawing attention to multiple identities and workings of heteronormativity (see e.g. Kjaran and Lehtonen in this book).

These same dilemmas and strategies have been reported within the Middle East context where queer and gay activist groups need to navigate between disclosure of sexual identities, in line with the Western “coming out” narrative, and the politics of anonymity—putting up “masks” within the public sphere. Jason Ritchie has, in his ethnographic study on queer Palestinian activists and social movements, argued that different to their Israeli counterparts, gay Palestinian activists place less emphasis on visibility and recognition of particular sexual identities (Ritchie, 2010). In other words, in a different approach to the dominant activist or outreach discourse in the West, gay Palestinian activists reject the narrative of “coming out of the closet,” with the aim of being accepted as visible and fully recognized citizens. As one of Ritchie’s informants explained: “[T]here are different kinds of visibilities” (Ritchie, 2010, p. 569). In other words, the Western paradigm regarding the politics of visibility and reaching out to LGBTQ+ youth in school and formal educational context is just one aspect of many in terms of gay activism, and cannot be applied to all cultural settings or contexts. For gay Palestinians, as well as Iranians, the

emphasis is on creating a community and offering mutual support instead of pursuing a politics based on identities and visibility.

Thus, in order to understand gay activism among Iranian gay identifying males I turn to the Foucauldian ethics of the self and focus on how subjects can transform themselves within the “grids of intelligibility.” Foucault traces the development (genealogy), discontinuities and changes in respect to the construction and understanding of the self, from antiquity until modernity, focusing particularly on Greco-Roman and early Christian practices of the self (Fornet-Betancourt, Becker, Gomez-Muller, & Gauthier, 1987). He distinguishes between the Greco-Roman notion of the care of the self, which was in a way more transformative, and an ethical practice, a way to relate to and thus also care for others; and the Christian understanding of the self through knowledge and a preoccupation with truth through the mechanism of the confessional in which the self is externalized to the public, for example through confessions. Thus, the Greco-Roman care of the self was more involved with the ethics of being, constructing a “subject of truth” without sacrifice of self (Foucault, 1988). It is that kind ethical being, relating to and caring for others, instead of focusing solely on confessional practices such as “coming out,” that I want to draw on and explore in my discussion on gay activism in Iran. In fact, this kind of ethical being has the potential of transgression as Julie Allan (2008) has argued in her writings on disability and agency, in which the subject crosses limits or boundaries. Accordingly, understanding activism as ethics of being draws attention to the inventive and creative practices performed in order to transform or change the discourse, and produce spaces of same-sex desire and support within the limits set by the hegemonic religious-political discourse.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter focuses on gay activism and what I define as “non-formal” outreach work among Iranian gay men, living inside of the Islamic Republic of Iran. By “non-formal” outreach work I draw on the concept of “non-formal” education (see e.g. Fordham, 1993) which is any organized educational endeavor that does not take place in the formal education category, e.g. within the context of schools. Non-formal outreach work, which among other is operated online or in small group gatherings, is the only way to inform young Iranians who identify as LGBTQ+ and thus build a community and support, as homosexuality and non-heterosexuality is not accepted in society in general. Thus, schools do not provide any platform for education about gender or sexuality diversity. The first part will give a brief account of the data used in this chapter and

how I analyzed it. I will then explore how gay Iranian men experienced school, as well as giving a short description of the Iranian school system. I then move on to discuss what it means to be a gay activist, drawing attention to the socio-cultural context and particular historicity. The chapter will also address websites and other social media sites, which have been widely used by Iranian youth to express their dissatisfaction and voice their protests with authorities (Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010). Despite the strict online censorship that the Iranian authorities have in place, these online platforms have also been used by gays, whether activists or not. Thus, these online platforms are discussed in terms of gay activism, as well as their impact in creating a gay or queer social space and awareness of a particular gay community within Iran. It can also be argued that the social media, blog sites, and gay activism contributes to the construction of non-formal educational virtual spaces.

## DATA AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter I draw on a larger dataset collected during several field trips to Iran—from 2014 to 2016—mostly in the capital city of Tehran (see Kjaran, 2019). It consists of interviews with gay identifying men, field notes, research diary, as well as online sources. One of the interviews was taken with an Iranian gay refugee in Istanbul, Turkey, who had fled Iran because of his sexuality and activism within Iran. All the other interviews were conducted in Tehran. My participants were in the age group of 23–30 and had finished secondary or tertiary education. They came from different social classes, identified as gay, and understood themselves as activist, not only fighting for sexual rights, but also political rights in general. In the interviews they were asked to reflect upon their past school experiences in relation to their sexuality, as well their experience as activists. Memories of the past are constructed in the present and materialized in the narrative of the interview. Thus, the significance my participants attached to these memories of schooling and other past experiences needs to be interpreted and understood in relation to their current positions as gay identifying men and activists. All names that appear in this chapter are pseudonyms. Participants were recruited before and during my fieldwork in Iran in relation to my previous research on same-sex desire and the experiences of gay identifying Iranian men. The participants were mostly identified and accessed through key informants, and through snowballing. Ethical questions and how I reached out to my

informants/participants is described extensively in my book on the topic (see Kjaran, 2019). In analyzing and interpreting the data the focus in this chapter is on Foucault's analytic perspectives on power, self-knowledge, and the ethical relations of subjectification, as well as ethics of being.

## SCHOOL EXPERIENCES OF GAY IDENTIFYING IRANIAN MEN

In the Islamic Republic of Iran education is centralized and supervised by the Ministry of Education. That means that every aspect of schooling and education is organized and planned by the state in order to uphold Islamic values and state ideology (Farhady, Hezaveh, & Hedayati, 2010). One of the main objectives of education and schools is thus to produce an Islamic person, an ideal citizen of society, *homo Islamicus*. The characteristics of this ideal and model person are according to Golnar (1989) the following:

... [B]elief in God, love of nature, piety and chastity, honesty, trustworthiness, thrift and frugality, knowledge, sense of responsibility and dependability, loyalty and devotion, modesty, simplicity, and passion for equality and justice. The model individual is one who has cleansed him/herself of carnal desires and sins, and as such is different from his/her counterpart in the West whose life is aimed at pleasure-seeking and fun. (Golnar, 1989, p. 38)

For young Iranians who do not fit into the grid of heteronormativity it can be difficult and psychologically conflicting to live up these ideals, become *homo Islamicus*, as Nima, who identifies as gay, gives an example of in the following quote:

I found out that I have a difference inside my heart. [...] They say it is against Islamic rule. I found my sexuality because I felt different. But it was against my religious ideas at that time, so I had some difficulties dealing with it.

As Nima mentions in this quote, he experienced some inner conflicts between his sexuality and religious ideas. Indeed, religious ideas and traditional values, directly or indirectly, affect most Iranian students, and for those that do not "fit in," as in the case of Nima, they rarely get any support in schools. They are constituted as "sick" and outside the grids

of recognizability. Furthermore, although some teachers admit the existence of non-heterosexual students in their schools, they are most often depicted as exceptional and outside the norm, as expressed in the following quote by a teacher, quoted by Alireza Tabatabaie (2015) in a paper on sex education in an Iranian school for boys:

Neither do I deny the fact that non-heterosexual expression does exist in Iran, even in our school, although, we don't recognize these expressions as acceptable. We also tend not to make a big deal of these and tend to see them as a transient phase of youthful exploration, which they [pupils] eventually pass. Some may not; but this is all we can do at the moment. (p. 207)

The teacher emphasizes that non-heterosexuality is more than often just a stage of "youthful exploration" and will pass over when the individual will grow older and more mature. In fact, this is in line with the official discourse that does not recognize homosexual subjectivities per se but instead criminalized same-sex sexual acts. Thus, in Iranian schools there is no discussion, or adequate teaching about sexuality and gender diversity, nor is there any support or understanding from teachers and educational workers, for students that are exploring their sexuality. This was felt by Ramtin when he was coming to terms with his feelings:

I went to our school counselor about my fearful dilemma in my life. I told him: "I don't know why I never liked girls and I have only feelings for guys." ... He got offensive and shouted at me: "NO! You need to do confession to God and pray. These thoughts are satanic, and they will ruin your life. This is blasphemy, these are voices of America in your head. You need to see a specialist [doctor], and you have to read the holy Quran and pray."

As Ramtin reveals, the counselor draws on three discourses: the religious discourse, the discourse of "Westoxification" (in Farsi *Gharbzadegi*), referred to as the "voices of America," and on the discourse of the "sick homosexual." In fact, all these discourses, and particularly the one relating to the "sick homosexual," are often cited in Iran when discussing non-heterosexual practices. The discourse of "Westoxification" has been in circulation since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, and is used to depict bad influences, particularly on Iranian youth, originating in the West (see further Kjaran, 2019). Thus, those individuals who



do not fit into the grids of heterosexuality are either told to pray, act, and behave in accordance with the cultural and religious norms, or more often nowadays referred to psychiatrists. For Ramtin, this was a shocking experience, being young and emotionally lost, having neither support nor information about these issues in his school. He also did not receive any support from his family, coming from a religious home. He therefore decided, after discovering and accepting who he was, to become a gay activist and help others, as I will discuss in the next section.

As reported by many of my informants, schools were also sites of sexual harassment, even sexual abuse, bullying, and loneliness of those who did not fit into “norm,” whether in terms of gender expression or assumed non-heterosexuality. The following interview extracts give some insights into these negative school experiences:

The schools in Iran are segregated, for boys and girls. In school, when I entered my teenage years, I was too small and acting a bit feminine. I did not realize it, but my fellow students picked it up and said that I had a voice of a girl and that I acted like a girl. I did not know what they were talking about, so I decided to act normal. There were many boys that fell in love with me at that time, but they wanted to do some sexual things and I did not want to do that. (Morteza)

I was alone in school and did not have many friends ... I never let anyone know that I am gay. (Ardalan)

I was always bullied in school. I can remember that they called me Miss Arman, or will you be my girlfriend. I was afraid of the boys in school, that they would mock me or bully me. I lost a bit my confidence especially among straight boys. For example, when I am with gay boys, I am more comfortable because I know that they are like me, they would never bully me. But when I am with straight people I have always this fear that they might mock me, they might laugh at me, they might talk behind my back. ... The most negative experience in school was when my religious teacher tried to force me to have sex with him. He told me to come to the classroom after school to help him with some tasks. Then he tried to kiss and touch me and wanted to go further but I did not let him. I told him that I would tell the authorities if he did not stop. (Arman)

These stories of bullying, mocking, and loneliness, told by Morteza, Ardalan, and Arman, have also been told by queer youth in the global

north. In that sense the Iranian accounts feed into the global narrative of queer youth victimization in schools. However, what is distinctive of the Iranian context, are frequent reports of overt sexual harassment and abuse of male students, as well as teachers, particularly preying on those who are somehow constructed as “feminine,” and thus considered to be weak. They get abused sexually by both staff members and fellow students. Here it needs to be noted, that schools, and in fact Iranian society in general, is strictly gender-segregated. Thus, as some of my informants reported, first sexual encounters of young males are often with other males or younger boys. This might also contextualize the stories told by queer youth of sexual abuse and harassment.

As discussed in this section, school experiences of gay identifying Iranian men were mostly negative and they lack both support and information about what they were going through. They often did not have anyone to talk to about their feelings, and there is neither a queer community nor any visible gay role models of which they could identify with or relate to. Thus, many of them used other means to gain support or build a community which I will now turn to.

### BECOMING A GAY ACTIVIST

Ramtin is in his twenties and lives in Istanbul as a queer refugee. His story mostly follows the same patterns as mentioned in the previous section, consisting of inner conflicts, pressure from the family, religious beliefs, and upbringing conflicting with your sexuality. However, his story is more tragic, though also full of hope and an example of how you can transform your oppression and suffering into something meaningful through ethics of the self. In Ramtin’s case, becoming a queer activist and finding strength in his gay friends and activists was his way to survive and find meaning in life after having endured both physical and psychological violence from his brother and father after they found out about his sexuality. Moreover, when he helped one of his gay friends, an addict and living on the streets, to get to the place he was staying at in one Tehran’s shadier neighborhoods, he was gang-raped by five men and physically abused. However, looking back, Ramtin does not regret having helped his friend:

I am not that person who doesn’t want to help others. It has always been deep in me to help people, even if they have done something bad to me,

it doesn't matter. I will give my last money to others in need. That is why I went there and helped my friend. I am happy I did it.

Wanting to contribute to the Tehran gay community by supporting and helping other gays and those questioning their sexuality, he became an activist. “For me it is not about recognition or being visible as gay, we don't have that here in Iran anyway. It is more about support, building a community and helping others, without thinking about who you are or how you define yourself” said Ramtin, when I probed him further about his motives for becoming an activist and what it meant for him. This is in line with what Ritchie has reported in his ethnographic study on queer activism among Palestinians. Through the ethics of being and by focusing on taking care of others instead of advocating for visibility and coming out, Ramtin and Ritchie's participants built a supportive community for their fellow gays and lesbians, but at the same time took a critical stance toward a racist and homophobic society (Ritchie, 2010). Hence, Ramtin began disseminating information about gay issues to those that were like him, young gay Iranians who were unaware of the underground gay community of Tehran and what it is to be gay. Ramtin also got involved in some queering activities which entailed taking photos in public places with either gay symbols, such as the rainbow flag, or slogans about ending homophobia and heterosexism. These pictures were then posted on the gay website *Hamjensgera* (see discussion later in this chapter) with the aim of showing other gays and lesbians inside of Iran that there is a community out there and that we as queers can claim or queer the public space with our presence—although done rather discreetly.<sup>3</sup> These pictures show the rainbow flag and slogans against homophobia in the public sphere: in busses, on the street, and in the hills surrounding Tehran, indicating that sexual and gender minorities are everywhere in public spaces although invisible and not recognized by the official discourse (Day of Fighting Against Homophobia and Transphobia in Iran, 2012). Hence, in line with understanding activism as ethics of being, Ramtin and his activist friends found means of performing inventive and creative activist works, the “queer photo installations,” in order to transform or change the discourse and produce spaces of same-sex desire and support. However, these photo installations and raising of the rainbow flag in public had some repercussions for Ramtin. Shortly afterwards he was arrested and spent some time in jail. Most of his friends, out of fear, stopped staying in touch with him and he felt rather isolated. Around the same time,

his mother died. Having nothing in Iran anymore and being branded as a gay activist he decided to leave Iran and apply for asylum in Turkey.

In Istanbul, he has continued his activism. He is much aware of how homophobic Turkish society is becoming, and, in that respect, he made a comparison to Iran in our talk: “Turkey is becoming a religious fascist state just like Iran. They are banning everything, and it is becoming more difficult to be a gay refugee in Turkey.” He, however, tries to confront the situation through activism. For example, he took part in the “illegal” Istanbul gay pride in 2015, when the authorities had banned it on the grounds that it clashed with the holy month of Ramadan. Force was used to disperse those that dared to march under the rainbow flag (Caliskan & Dikmen, 2015).

### BATTLE OF THE WORDS: CLAIMING A DISCURSIVE SPACE WITHIN THE OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON SAME-SEX DESIRES

Post-structural theorists, such as Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, have drawn attention to the importance of language or discourse in calling identities into being and hence producing subjects (Butler, 1990, 1993). In fact, Butler has argued that resistance is limited to the linguistic field. The individual subject can therefore only offer resistance at the discursive level, as discourse confers existence and creates particular realities (Butler, 1993; Livia and Hall, 1997). Thus, according to Butler, individual subjects have the possibility to resist the discursive power of subjectification and categorization through resignification (Butler, 1993). To resignify is, according to Butler, to reclaim particular terms or labels about marginalized groups, which previously had a negative meaning. Thus, early on, discursive or linguist resistance has been part of gay and lesbian activism in the West. The aim was to influence or change the dominant views and attitudes toward sexual minorities and to (re)claim the power to define their own reality. For example, the word queer was reclaimed by resisting the past stigmatization of that particular term. However, resignification as resistance depends on the social context and the social position of those involved. Not all marginalized groups have the same opportunities to resignify oppressive and stigmatized labels because the effect of resignification intersects with for example race, class, culture, and social context.

Inside Iran, gay activists have, since the 1990s, resisted the dominant discourse and negative language on homosexuality. In doing so,

they have employed the Western “gay” identity label as a means by which to counter the derogatory references to same-sex sexuality in the Persian language. The most commonly used derogatory term, *hamjins-bazi* (*hamjinsbaz* when referring to a person), which translates as “same-sex play” or “player,” signifies the immaturity of gay individuals and denies them of any erotic self-determination.<sup>4</sup> *Hamjins-bazi* is used along with other negative referents to homosexuality such as *evakbahar* (sister), which refers to effeminacy and *kooni/kuni* (ass), which denotes the one who assumes the passive role in the act of anal intercourse (Korycki & Nasirzadeh, 2014).<sup>5</sup> In addition, in response to the charges that they have simply appropriated a Western import of gayness, queer Iranian activists inside Iran have simultaneously constructed “new Persian words” to explain, in more positive terms, same-sex identification: *Hamjins-gara’i*<sup>6</sup> (as a counter to *hamjins-bazi*) refers to “same sex orientation” (*hamjinsgera* refers to the person in singular), while the term *degardbassbaan e jensi* refers to the notion of “a sexual queer minority” (Korycki & Nasirzadeh, 2014, p. 11). This positive self-identification as “gay,” coupled with discursive strategies for inventing new terminology and referents for same-sex desire, points to the productive effects of power as it is being mobilized by gay and lesbian activists and subjects inside Iran as a means by which to disrupt the grid of intelligibility that constitutes and others sexual minorities “as non-authentic Iranians” (Korycki & Nasirzadeh, 2014, p. 11).

Nima started his activist work when he was 19 years old. At that time, he joined a gay and lesbian activist or advocacy group called the *Persian Gay and Lesbian Organization*, which was founded outside of Iran in 2006 and is today based in Canada.<sup>7</sup> He worked as a deputy for that group within Iran and his tasks entailed, among others, offering support to his fellow gay Iranians, as well as disseminating information through online publications, particularly by writing blog posts on LGBTQ issues: “I wanted to tell Iranian gays that they are not alone. God does not hate you because you are different.” He was also involved in reclaiming and disseminating the word *hamjins-gara’i*, a more positive Persian word for same-sex desire (homosexuality). In the following excerpt he gives an account of his activism:

If you ask me what was the greatest achievement of our activities, I would say it was when we introduced the word *hamjins-gara’i* to the Iranian public, instead of *hamjins-bazi*. When doing so, our first step was to establish

connection to VOA (Voice of America), the popular TV channel, which broadcasts from the US in Farsi and is watched by many Iranians. We sent them emails and asked them to stop using the offensive word *hamjins-bazi* and use instead *hamjins-gara'i*. For instance, when the famous film *Brokeback Mountain* won the Oscar, we asked them to use *hamjins-gara'i* in their description of the plot. After one or two years even the official Iranian radio channels started to revise their use of words, using *hamjins-gara'i* instead of *hamjins-basi*. Even the official television channel is using the correct term now. It is important to have positive terms in Farsi to describe yourself. For example, if I want to tell my parents that I am gay, I want to have the possibility to do so in Farsi and use a positive word, *hamjins-gara'i*. Today, I am really happy that we were able to accomplish this. You see the results and you become happy, in my case, when I hear that people say *hamjins-gara'i*. Then, inside my heart I feel happiness and I say to myself: I took part in these changes and by using that positive word people no longer connect homosexuality to pedophilia or sickness.

Nima rejects being referred to as *hamjinsbaz*. For him, such a term has connotations that conjure up an image of a pedophile. Furthermore, he would never use that particular term to confront his parents and tell them that he identifies as gay, as they would immediately make association to perverse behavior and being mentally ill or sick. Thus, as Nima points out, the identification with *hamjins-gara'i* opens up new possibilities for Iranian gays to express their feelings and identity in a positive way, and in their own language without having to employ the Western gay identity label—although most of them still do and *hamjins-gara'i* is mostly used in more formal speech (Karimi, 2017). Nima also draws attention to the fact that through their activism, they were able to influence the official discourse and terminology in terms of sexual categories, despite the limits to public debate in the Islamic Republic, given the official medico-religious-legal disavowal of homosexuality and criminalization of same-sex sexual acts. As an indication of this, the new penal code now uses the term *hamjins-gara'i* in place of *hamjins-bazi* to describe all same-sex acts including kissing and touching.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Nima's account gives an example of how gay Iranian men have resisted certain norms, which govern how they are discursively constituted in derogatory terms as sexual minorities, and which makes visible specific language use as both a site of subjectification and ethical agency involving a degree of self-determination vis-a-vis the realization of one's sexual personhood (Martino & Kjaran, 2019).

## NON-FORMAL OUTREACH WORK IN THE VIRTUAL SPHERE

The website *Hamjensgera* (a more positive term for gay subjectivity—see previous section) has been running since 2010 by Hassan, an Iranian gay activist living outside of Iran.<sup>9</sup> The domain is hosted in the US and all the cost of maintaining and working on the website is covered by him. The website caters to those Iranians that identify as LGBTQ, especially young gays and lesbians who are coming to terms with their sexuality. It offers information on LGBTQ issues and has an online forum where it is possible to post questions.<sup>10</sup> The website usually appears very high on Google when searching for LGBT related words in Farsi. So, in that sense it is an important platform for queer Iranians, especially young people that are searching for some answers, and as previously mentioned, are rather savvy in terms of the latest technology and the use of social media. Hassan identifies as a gay activist, although emphasizing in our email conversation that he “might not be a very active activist.” His goal is mostly disseminating information about LGBTQ reality and lives, and thus helping young queer Iranians to navigate sexuality and gender diversity, as they get almost no support nor information on these issues inside of Iran:

My goal is to keep basic information regarding gay and lesbian related issues available on the website. My target audience can be young gays or lesbians who are just learning what homosexuality is. ... I have tried to keep it rather basic and post essential information. Sometimes I post content that might be considered news, but only if it is something substantial and positive news about LGBTQ reality. I then don't want to post lot of negative news such and news regarding LGBT people being executed, tortured, and prosecuted. Because I am mostly trying to talk about what life should be or can be for LGBT people, not how miserable their lives currently are in the Middle east.

As can be seen from this quote Hassan is trying to create an online community and support. He is reaching out to young people and through his online outreach work and activism he is disseminating information about LGBTQ reality and lives. Furthermore, he is also focusing on conveying a positive image of how life can be for young queer Iranians. In that sense, he is trying to bring some hope to them by depicting queer lives in positive terms, not only focusing on what can be defined as queer negativity or queer suspension of happiness (Ahmed, 2010), but more about the future potentials. Thus, he wants queer Iranian youth to have a future,

even though they are on daily basis subjected to state violence, official disavowal of their existence, and homophobia. *Hamjensgera*, as an online community is thus drawing attention to possibilities of “queer positivity,” and queer futurities Muñoz (2009), and can thus be defined as a space in becoming. Thus, as mentioned by Hassan, young queer Iranians use this space actively, which was further confirmed by many of my informants. Farhod gives an example of the emancipatory nature of the Internet in general:

I searched the Internet and I found that there are some words such as gay and that it was ok, it was a good experience for me to know who I am, and the way that I was. (Farhod)

Arman also tried through his online individual activism to reach out to his fellow queers through the social media, as expressed in the following extract:

I have a Facebook account with another name and another family name, with false information. I try to post texts about homosexuality to inform people, to inform my Facebook friends. I also want to show my gay identity in the virtual space of the Facebook because I am not able to show it in real life. You know you can get arrested or no one knows what will happen to you.

Arman discusses here how he uses Facebook to inform others about homosexuality. At the same time being on Facebook and using there a different virtual identity is empowering for him. There he can be himself and in fact disembodily virtually and take up identity; something he cannot do in the material world of contemporary Iran. This is further emphasized in the following quote:

I need some place to get in touch and contact with my real characteristics, my real personality ... I need it for myself and for those that are like me because there are many boys and girls like me who are in danger who need help. I try to help some people on Facebook. I remember once I helped a poor girl from rural religious bigoted part of Iran, in the southern part, who told me that she had told someone that she is a lesbian and her parent found out. She was worried that her parents might kill her or even force her to marry a boy. Her parents took her to psychologist to try to cure her homosexuality. That's stupid who can cure homosexuality. Homosexuality



is not a disease to be cured. So, me as a human being I try to help two or three individuals. I try to do my best.

Arman expresses here his will to help others and that by doing so he is in fact helping himself, finding some purpose in life. Thus, in the case of Arman, Facebook is not only used to give out information about LGBTQ reality, but also through the messenger or chat feature, this platform can be used for counseling and support. Arman narrates how he tried to help a young lesbian who had been sent to a psychologist to “cure” her homosexuality. Arman offers the girl a counter-narrative to the official one and tells her that what she is feeling is not a disease and therefore it does not need to be “cured.”

To sum up, Arman and Hassan engage in non-formal outreach work or activism within the virtual space of the Internet. They try through the ethics of being to transform themselves and their environment. The virtual spaces produced can be understood both as liminal, and fluid. They are also temporal and always changing, in becoming, whether in terms of content and viewers or visitors. Furthermore, in some sense, these virtual spaces are utopic as they create a hope for young queer Iranians of a better future.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I turned to the Foucauldian ethics of the self in order to understand gay activism and non-formal outreach work among gay identifying Iranian males. This meant drawing attention to inventive and creative practices performed in order to transform or change the discourse and produce spaces of same-sex desire and support within the limits set by the hegemonic religious-political discourse. Four stories exemplify how gay Iranian activists tried to transform the self, reach out to their fellow queers, and influence the dominant discourse on sexuality. In other words, carve out a queer space and create a community of support instead of advocating for visibility or drawing on the Western “coming out” discourse in their activism. Ramtin emphasized the importance of creating a community and offering mutual support to other gays. He also participated in more direct activism through “queer photo installations” in order to transform or change the discourse and produce spaces of same-sex desire and support. Nima also emphasized community building, but also the significance of terminology by creating and introducing a positive

word in Farsi for same-sex desire. Thus, the identity category *hamjins-gara'i* opens up new possibilities for Iranian gays to express their feelings and identity in a positive way, and in their own language without having to employ the Western gay identity label. This is particularly important for gay Iranian youth who lack support and have to experience on a regular basis homophobia and official disavowal. Moreover, as Nima explained, through this kind of activism, he and his fellow gay activists were able to influence the official discourse and terminology in terms of sexual categories, despite the limits to public debate in the Islamic Republic, given the official medico-religious-legal disavowal of homosexuality and criminalization of same-sex relations. By doing so they transgressed the official discourse on non-heterosexuality and constructed a “subject of truth” without sacrifice of the self (Foucault, 1988).

This was also the aim of Arman and Hassan—to offer a virtual counter-space where stories counter to the official one could be shared and told. The queer virtual activist feed information and counter-normative stories into the “digital scape” to reach out to young people in Iran, who are active user of social media and blog sites (see Kjaran, 2019; Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010). In that sense, the strategy of creating online activist spaces, seem to be a well-fitted strategy in doing non-formal outreach work, as it creates visibility and virtual queer community, which cannot be materialized “offline.” Thus, through non-formal outreach work of activist such as Nima, Ramtin, Arman, and Hassan, and through online and virtual platforms, Iranian queer youth has the opportunity to gain information about their reality and lives, get inspired by some hope, and perhaps imagine queer futurities. In other words, activist work and informal outreach work which focuses on the ethics of self, is shaping, and sustaining, the hidden queer communities in Iran, by offering support and information about a topic that is not recognized in the official or societal discourse. Young people become aware of these communities through various online platforms which then shape their identities and helps them come to terms with their sexuality. This not only applies to queer youth in the global south, but also to those living in the global north, who are increasingly using the new technologies and various types of social media to reach out and (re)make communities in digital and virtual spaces. This aspect of non-formal outreach work, often being the only strategy for queer activist and young people in many countries in the global south, to reach out and create a community, is perhaps having more impact, than the “traditional” outreach work of various queer organizations in

the global north, which often is focused on visibility, advocacy, and education about the sexual other. Thus, the question remains whether different approaches, for example, a mixture of non-formal and formal outreach work, should be more integrated into the outreach work conducted in the global north, in order to cater to different needs of queer youth—creating a supportive online/offline community on the one hand but on the other hand work against heteronormativity and oppression of sexual minorities.

## NOTES

1. According to Ahmadinejad's media adviser Mohammad Kalhor he meant that "compared to American society, we don't have many homosexuals" (President misquoted over gays in Iran: Aide, 2007, October 10).
2. In her ethnographic study on lesbian activists in New Delhi, Dave theorizes activism as an ethical practice arguing that activism "relies on its own constant interrogation and how moments of closure are the impetus to new kinds of previously unthinkable emergences" (Dave, 2011, p. 4).
3. Hamjensgera is a website and the domain "hamjensgera" means homosexual in Farsi.
4. These terms were popularized and introduced to the Iranian discourse on sexuality by Hasan Hasuri and then by other medical specialists. Hasan Hasuri was educated as neurologist in the United States. *Hamjins-bazi* ('same-sex play', same-sex lust) is a broad term, which refers to actions, rather than feelings or desires (see e.g. Forbes, 2016–2017).
5. My informants mentioned these derogatory words but added the word *obi* to the list, which refers to a person that is willing to sell his ass for money.
6. *Hamjins-gara'i* refers to feelings and desires rather than actions and behavior and can therefore be used by gay Iranians for self-identification. According to Najmabadi (2014, p. 57), this term first appeared in the Iranian press around 1973 and was then mostly used negatively. It was then, in the 1990s, that gay Iranian activists reclaimed the word through resignification.
7. The *Persian Gay and Lesbian Organization* (now named *The Iranian Queer Organization*) was founded in 2006 by the human rights/queer activist Arsham Parsi. He, however, left the organization and established a new organization called the *Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees*.
8. *Qanun-e Majazat-e Islami* [Islamic Penal Code], 2013, Article 237. Forbes has also pointed out that the controversial president M. Ahmadinejad made a distinction in an interview between *hamjins-gara'i*, which entails keeping your actions and desires within your private sphere, putting up masks, and *hamjins-bazi*, in which you express your sexuality and

desires more openly, as being “out of the closet,” so to speak, something that is practiced in the West. Thus, the logic goes, and in line with his argument in the famous Harvard speech where he denied the existence of homosexuals in Iran, that in Iran, there are no *hamjensbas* (openly gay individuals as in the West), only *hamjensgera* (see Forbes, 2016–2017).

9. <http://hamjensgera.com/>.
10. Email from 29th of June 2019 from the manager of *Hamjensgera*.

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# Queer Intersectional Outreach Actions to Prevent LGBTQ+ Prejudice and Discrimination in Schools: The Brazilian Context and Analysis of a Local Experience

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## INTRODUCTION: FROM HOPE TO FEAR

Recent Brazilian history is comparable to a roller coaster. During the 12 years (2002–2014) of center-left government, Brazilian sexual, racial, gender and ethnic minorities have seen the growth of government policies and programs, as well as legislative decisions, that were in line with

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social justice values and equal rights stated in 1988' Constitution. After the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, these minorities are now living in fear of the far-right recently elected in 2018. The new far-right government not only threatens the progress achieved by social minorities but can also potentially destroy the democratic advancements obtained since the end of the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964–1986).

It is with this historical context in mind that this chapter seeks to describe and analyze “queer intersectional outreach work” developed in public schools. The main aim of this initiative is to prevent and fight prejudice and discrimination against LGBTQ+<sup>1</sup> students in Brazil. To do so, the first section of this chapter will introduce a brief history of education on sexuality and gender diversity in Brazil, as it is under the development of sexual education policies that queer intersectional outreach work emerged. Our analysis will focus on the period 1997–2018. This period was characterized by government investment in teachers' continuous education on gender and sexuality and outreach work funding. After 2016, such initiatives were followed by a strong backlash led by an alliance between the far-right and the neo-conservative Pentecostal representatives in National Congress. These first signs of what can be termed a “neo-conservative turn” started in 2011—the same year that the Brazilian Supreme Court decided in favor of same-sex marriage. It was at this time that the Neo-Pentecostal and far-right representatives started to block any legislative advancements in terms of gender and sexuality rights. These forces also tried to prevent any outreach work which focused on LGBTQ+ issues and rights. The neo-conservative political backlash is strongly influenced by the worldwide spread of the “anti-gender” movement (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017). The term “gender ideology,” an umbrella expression for conservative misconceptions and prejudices against sexuality and gender diversity, is now present in several political statements of the far-right in Brazil. This “anti-gender” discourse is also used to attack researchers, schoolteachers, artists, politicians and LGBTQ+ associations.

The second part of this chapter describes queer intersectional outreach work carried out by graduate and undergraduate students and supervised by faculty members of our research group (Nupsex, 2019).<sup>2</sup> This work was mostly conducted in public schools in the city of Porto Alegre, in the South of Brazil, and the activities discussed here were conducted exclusively in the public-school system. Our experience taught us that in extremely unequal societies like Brazil, intersectional framing is crucial to the planning and analysis of outreach actions/work.

The last section summarizes what we learned from queer intersectional outreach work and the possible implications for experiences conducted in other contexts. Our analysis suggests that outreach work cannot be seen as an “applied” area, subordinated to the knowledge produced by research. On the contrary, our experience has taught us that outreach work can be a useful tool to not only challenge knowledge production, but also as a way to decolonize our epistemologies.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDUCATION ON SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN BRAZIL

Brazilian education policy in the early twentieth century was marked by eugenic and hygienist ideology in which the cause of poverty and “sexual degeneration” was explained by racial miscegenation (Costa, 2007). Hygienist physicians allied with Catholic priests were the primary mentors of implementing sex education both outside and within the school environment. In this period, however, sex education was not mandatory by law. Several Catholic priests justified the need for sex education in “combat[ing] the moral degeneration in which our defenseless youth is increasingly exposed” (Almeida, 1946, p. 47). These discourses disseminated a moral panic by invoking an environment “strongly infused with sexual content in which youth would develop, with the moral hecatombs of impurity and with the tumultuous wave of immorality that flooded the world,” mainly propagated by modern theater, cinema, radio, beaches, swimming pools and immoral literature. This exposure to sexual content through media would have demonstrated the urgency of an “audacious combat to defend the virtue of purity” (Campos, 1951, p. 16).

Since 1928 Brazilian schools have been legally allowed to provide sex education to students. Although the content of these programs maintained a hygienist character, there was an important debate about the implementation of sex education at schools, as well as who should be responsible for providing such guidance. Until the 1950s, groups argued that sex education should be discussed within the family unit, while others believed that schools should be responsible for providing some guidelines. These debates within today’s Brazilian public sphere. Despite vocal disagreements on the nature of the strategies addressing youth sexuality, the need for sex education in schools emerged as unanimous. At the end of the 1930s, pamphlets and material related to hygiene and sex education



were widely disseminated in teachers' colleges and training institutions for in-service teachers.

The first sex education initiatives in Brazil were substantially influenced by European medical and hygienist discourse. These guidelines prioritized sex education strategies that mostly sought to prevent masturbation and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, as well as focusing on reproductive health. Such sex education initiatives were directed at young men, since female sexuality did not come into question. Female abstinence and chastity were taken as naturalized assumptions. However, despite these initiatives, all debates about sex education and sexuality were silenced right after the military coup in 1964.

During the military regime (1964–1985) sex education was not implemented in public schools. Although sex education was not explicitly prohibited in public schools, a climate of fear, repression and moralism prevailed (Bruschini & Barroso, 1986). In the late 1970s, discussion of sex education re-emerged in the Brazilian public sphere. By this time, the power of the military dictatorship started to weaken in the country. Simultaneously, two political movements claimed discursive spaces and influenced the debate on sex education: (a) the feminist movement and its claims for equal rights between men and women; (b) government programs of birth control, where sex education at the classroom was meant to help to reduce population growth. During this period, changes in moral codes also took place with the emergence of more open sexual and gender themed programs in the media, especially television, the establishment of the first gay association (*SOMOS*) in 1978, which only lasted three years, and the first gay magazine (*LAMPLIÃO*) (Green, 1999).

Reflecting these moral and political changes within Brazilian society was the emergence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Brazil during the late 1980s and 1990s. As the main actors in the fight for sexuality and gender equal rights, NGOs received financial support from national and international HIV/AIDS prevention funds. These NGOs provided training, published manuals and educational materials (such as books, videos and pedagogic games). They also promoted lectures and workshops and trained professionals and activists in the field of sex education. Despite the advancements promoted through the work of NGOs, however, no systematic sex education in Brazilian schools was implemented. It was only at the beginning of the 1990s that Brazilians saw the emergence of solid pedagogical projects aimed at the prevention of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy. Yet, the experience of sexuality in its

most varied forms and affections occupied little space in these interventions. In these programs, sex education was primarily informed by a biological approach and centered around the idea of risky behavior and pregnancy prevention. Other perspectives on sex education were marginally present, such as the work of Paiva (1993, 2002), a pioneer researcher on sex educational and HIV-AIDS prevention, as well as ABIA (2019) (Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association). According to these alternative perspectives, there was a need to respect and properly address sexual diversity and human rights when working in HIV/AIDS prevention, focusing on youth experiences, how they understood their sexualities and the way that the epidemic affected their sexual and affective lives.

Influenced by the action of the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements who openly criticized the predominantly hetero-cis-normative<sup>3</sup> and medicalized way of thinking about sexuality in sex education, the Brazilian government announced the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN—*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais*) in 1996. Accordingly, sexuality and gender diversity became an intersectional consideration. Published in 1997, the policy document affirms that the content of various disciplines should integrate sexuality and gender issues in an articulated way with other themes, such as ethics, health, ecology and cultural plurality. Scholars' views differ regarding the effects of this curricular definition, but most agree that the incorporation of the PCNs into the school culture was ineffective (Vianna & Unbehaum, 2006; Altmann, 2001). Here, it is important to note that these initiatives were mostly aimed at preventing AIDS/STIs and teenage pregnancy, as opposed to being motivated by respect for sexual rights as human rights.

Despite the controversy surrounding the effects of the National Curriculum Parameters, it is clear that by the end of the twentieth century, and the beginning of the twenty-first century, marked changes regarding sexuality and gender diversity in schools were notable. For instance, such changes can be seen in the inclusion of themes related to gender relations, sexual behavior, teenage pregnancy and sexual and affective relationships in classroom discussions. These transformations reflect more changes in Brazilian society such as more sexual freedom, more equity between men and women, greater visibility and progressive recognition of sexuality and gender minorities' rights; than a planned sexual education program.

In 2004, two years after the historical election of president Lula—the first working-class president ever elected in the country—Brazilian government launched a program titled “Brazil without Homophobia”(Brazil

*Sem Homofobia*). This program included policy actions in the field of law, health and education. ‘Brazil without Homophobia’ (Conselho Nacional de Combate à Discriminação, 2004) was committed to promoting an agenda of equal rights and the protection of sexual minorities against prejudice and discrimination. In this vein of the legitimation of LGBTQ+ rights, Lula’s Government convened the 1st GLBT Conference in 2009, followed by the National Plan for the Promotion of Citizenship and LGBT Human Rights launched in 2009. In addition to this action plan, the chamber of representatives promoted a public hearing on homophobia in schools and published the content of the debates online in 2010 (Brasil, 2010). In the same year, the senate also convened a hearing on the same subject.

Between 2006 and 2016, the Ministry of Education financed training projects designed for teachers and supported publications on sex education. It is also important to note the inclusion of the issue in the National Conference of Basic Education and in the National Conference of Education. One of the main initiatives of this period was Gender and Diversity at School—*Gênero e Diversidade na Escola* (Clam, 2019)—an online training program created in a cooperation between the State University of Rio de Janeiro, the British Council and the Federal government. The program was implemented across Brazil and its pedagogy was exported to other countries of South America (such as Chile), educating 40,000 teachers (Carrara, Nascimento, Duque, & Tramontano, 2016). Through “Gender and Diversity at School” and other similar initiatives, it is estimated that between 80,000 and 100,000 teachers of primary, middle and high school levels have been directly trained to work on sexual and gender issues. The multiplication effect is more difficult to predict, but we can estimate that around 400,000 out of the 2,200,000 teachers (Inep, 2019) in the basic educational system have had some contact with the subject.

Despite all the efforts in introducing the debate on sexuality and gender diversity in schools, Brazilian society is still very homophobic. In his analysis of the cursing practices among students, Amadeo Roseli-Cruz (2011) found that prejudices affecting sexual minorities are widespread within Brazilian society, as insults that disqualify non-heterosexual sexualities and the diversity of gender expressions are used daily. The author states that 90% of the insults have an underlying sexual tone and are either directed at one’s mother’s sexual promiscuity (*filho da puta*<sup>4</sup>) or at homosexuality (*bicha, viado*<sup>5</sup>). Likewise, national surveys have shown

widespread homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in the field of education, whether among students, school staff or teachers (Abramovay, Castro, & Silva, 2004). A combination of quantitative studies and qualitative corroborates these findings by showing the persistence of homophobia and heterosexism in Brazilian schools. On the one hand, we have surveys stressing the difficulty of dealing with issues related to sexual diversity that are greater among teachers than students (ABGLT, 2016; Costa, Peroni, de Camargo, Pasley, & Nardi, 2015; da Silva & Guerra, 2011). On the other hand, qualitative research indicates the reluctant ways in which teachers deal with LGBTQ+ issues in school environment (Nardi & Quartiero, 2007, 2012). All findings demonstrate that LGBTQ+phobia is not considered a priority concern that requires intervention by most educators.

In 2011, political contentions relating to sexuality and gender diversity emerged as prominent. Following the Supreme Court's decision in favor of same-sex marriage, President Dilma Rousseff, shortly after convening the 2nd LGBT National Conference, paradoxically suspended the distribution of pedagogical material by the Ministry of Education aimed at the prevention of homophobia and transphobia in schools. This act was later understood as a political negotiation with the Evangelical lobby in the National Congress. The official legitimacy for carrying out pedagogical projects promoting sexual minority rights was questioned by the 'anti-gender' movement. This led to the suppression of the terms "gender" and "sexual orientation" in the National Educational Plan (2018), despite the document's emphasis on the need to "overcome the educational inequities" in Brazil through "the promotion of citizenship and eradication of all forms of discrimination."

Echoing the growth in support of the far-right as well as other populist political movements in the world, Jair Bolsonaro was elected as President of Brazil in 2018. In his presidential run, he clearly announced that if elected he would "destroy all the left parties and human rights movements (in-text reference). The Bolsonaro administration now accuses public federal universities of being leftist institutions that propagandize communism and "gender ideology," as well as promoting promiscuous sexuality and drug use among the youth. Some of the arguments used by this new far-right movement can be easily traced back to the eugenic ideology of the beginning of the twentieth century, as described above.

Reflecting this shift, the current Minister of Education (the second one in less than 100 days of tumultuous governance) is an obscure neoliberal

economist with no experience in the field of education. Reiterating the anti-intellectualism that characterizes the actions of the current government, he recently imposed drastic cuts on federal universities' budget, which was already reduced by the government that followed the 2016' *coup d'état*.<sup>6</sup> As a result, public federal universities may be unable to afford basic expenses such as water and electricity and will consequently have to shut their doors until the end of the current year. In this climate of austere cuts in the education sector, universities' outreach work—the main provider of this sort of initiatives—is at risk of losing all financial support. Another significant figure to note is the current Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, previously named the Ministry of Human Rights. She is a Neo-Pentecostal pastor who embodies the conservative turn the country is taking. She is openly against LGBTQ+ rights and enforces strict gender roles for women and men, among many other outrageous statements, said that “a new era in Brazil has begun, now girls will dress in pink and boys in blue” (Alves, 2019). In other words, “boys will be boys and girls will be girls”. This kind of statement strongly condemns non-heteronormative affectivities and non-cisgender performances. Therefore, as a consequence of all these political changes challenging not only the narratives supporting outreach initiatives, but also threatening the survival of public universities, outreach work within Brazilian schools is becoming more and more discouraged.

Despite the current political tension, local government initiatives still exist in some center-left municipalities and outreach work, although weakened, is carried out by LGBTQ+ associations and by outreach branches of universities' research groups. As explained previously, the far-right Bolsonaro administration threatens these remaining initiatives.

The brief historical narrative of sex education in Brazil presented here and its association with the anti-discriminatory agenda implemented by the center-left government of the Workers' party (mainly during President Lula's government) is central to understanding our outreach work for two reasons: (a) The historical conditions for the creation of our research group and outreach work team are associated with government's financial support and the changes in the structure and dynamics of Federal Universities, as will be described later; (b) The inequalities of Brazilian society are structured by intersections of race, class, gender and sexuality, as described in the history of sex education and stated in the eugenic discourse. These features are still present as the foundations of prejudice and discrimination regarding gender and sexual diversity (as emphasized

by the far-right anti-gender discourse). It is on these bases that we argue for the necessity of queer intersectional outreach work, as well as the need to overcome the challenges that come with such work.

### ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES OF QUEER INTERSECTIONAL OUTREACH WORK: A LOCAL EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF PORTO ALEGRE

In this section, we will describe and analyze our team's experiences of doing queer intersectional outreach work on gender, sexuality and race. Important to note is that our outreach team titled Nupsex-CRDH emerged from the research group Nupsex and was founded in 2007 within a government program of the Secretariat for Human Rights of the Brazilian Executive. This program proposed a financial stimulus and partnership with research groups and outreach teams in the field of gender and sexual diversity. This financial aid was part of the actions of the Brazil Without Homophobia Program, described in the first section of this chapter, and integrated the anti-discriminatory agenda of the Workers Party (center-left) government. The research grant provided by the program plus another government program (PROEXT) enabled us to form our team, finance our actions and promote outreach actions in the human rights field. In order to understand the broad context in which this outreach work operates, it is also important to draw attention to two aspects that characterize public universities in Brazil. Firstly, Federal Universities in Brazil, as stated in the Constitution of 1988, are free of charge and must be guided by the three pillars of superior education: teaching, research and outreach work (or university extension as it is called in Brazil). Therefore, the idea of Federal Universities in Brazil encompasses a close relationship with the community by providing a range of outreach work. Secondly, from 2008 our University (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul) started implementing affirmative actions for poor, indigenous and black students (and from 2019 for students with disabilities). This change means that 50% of the students that start their University degree are doing so through affirmative actions. These recent changes allowed us to compose a more diverse outreach work team, as we will describe later. Intersectionality is therefore not only a principle of the work we do but also reflected in the composition of our team.

Intersectionality is a concept developed by black feminists mainly from the United States of America (Crenshaw, 2008). The central tenet of the concept is to think about the crossroads of oppression instead of a simple overlap of positionalities. For instance, in the case of women, intersectionality describes the idea that women experience “layers of oppression” caused, for example, not only by gender, but also race and class. Intersectionality as a framework attempts to identify how interlocking systems of power impact those who are most marginalized in society. Therefore, intersectionality as an analytical tool helps us to think about the interaction of various markers of difference such as race, class, gender and sexuality, in a way that acknowledges the complexities and realities of these social identities and the way that operate and are experienced (Brah, 2006). Postcolonial feminist research has been fruitfully applying the concept in examining the complexities of postcolonial societies. For instance, Saba Mahmood’s (2005) ground-breaking study of the women’s mosque movement in Egypt, explores how religious devotion and piety have to be taken into account when analyzing the agency of middle-class pious Muslim women. By articulating an intersectional perspective including gender, class and religion, her critique moved research beyond secular feminist notions of resistance and provided new insights into female agency by highlighting women’s religious roles and wishes.

Similarly, one cannot understand Brazilian social realities without taken intersectionality into account, particularly within and the educational context. Brazil is a very segregated society both in terms of class and race. The effects of these two structures simultaneously operating in relation to a person’s life play a very strong role in the Brazilian context, which is marked by the palpable lack of opportunities and dignity for non-white and working-class people. Statistical data on socioeconomic status of the white and black populations in Brazil describes these structural inequalities. Abundant quantitative data illustrate how class and race are connected with vulnerability. For instance, the average salaries of white workers is 80% higher than that of black workers. Black people suffer from illiteracy more than two times than white people, a black man has two and a half times more likely to be killed than a white man. A young black man has 2.7 times more likely to be killed than a young white man, black women occupy only 1.6% of all management positions (PNAD, 2017; IPEA, 2018). Brazilian Educational system reproduces social segregation and inequality. This inequality in the educational sector can be seen in the tangible differences in teachers’ salaries, infrastructure and quality

between private schools, where students are mostly white and from middle and upper class, and public schools students are mostly black and from lower classes. Our intersectional outreach work targets schools from the public sector, marked by the lack of infrastructure and vulnerability. Our choice of working with public schools plays an important role in the ways we design our outreach activities and workshops, as race and class, in other words, non-whiteness and poor/working-class backgrounds impact the lives of the students we work with. It is important to reiterate that our outreach work is conducted in public schools of Porto Alegre (in the South of Brazil) and most students are either from low middle class or poor, living in the outskirts of the city, they are also very likely to be black, as the percentage of black students in public schools are higher than in the general population. Although this is true for primary and middle school, in high school, due to the higher dropout of black students (mainly men), the percentage of black students drops considerably (Cruz & Monteiro, 2018). So, when discussing gender and sexuality, themes regarding social vulnerability, violence, poor infrastructure and, police harassment are very likely to emerge. Given that, we could not ignore race and class dimensions when elaborating a queer outreach work. Therefore, the articulation of oppressions regarding class and race, gender and sexuality is the central reason for incorporating an intersectional perspective in our actions.

Recognizing that multiple expertise is necessary for addressing the complexity of the challenges presented by outreach work with this population, we put a team together that included faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students and collaborators from different disciplines (psychology, nursing, law, social work, sociology, history, anthropology, communication and arts). Our team is also intentionally diverse in the social identities that our members represent, to be more representative of the people we work with. The members of our team are diverse in terms of gender, sexuality, race and class. This diversity means that personal experiences of prejudice and discrimination are often mobilized as part of our outreach work. This was the motivation behind making “sharing and getting to know each other” the first part of students’ training before engaging in outreach actions. This exercise aims to reflect upon the different social positions and explore personal experiences with prejudice that members of our group may have faced. While challenging, this “sharing and getting to know each other technique” was an important training component, as it will be explored later. Another characteristic of our outreach work is to establish partnerships with different institutions



and associations, for example school boards, social public services and community non-governmental associations.

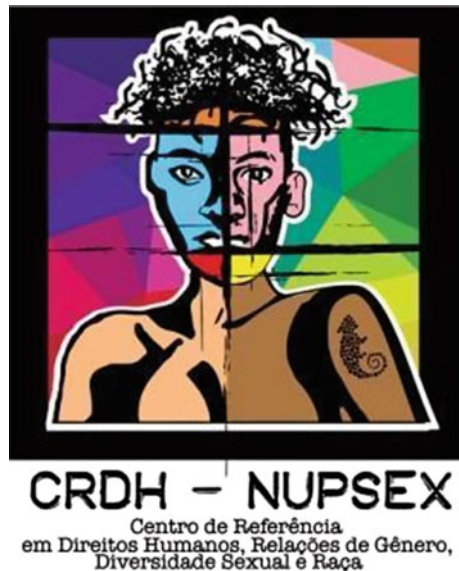
An important task at the outset of our outreach work was the development and design of a logo that represents us as a team and the queer intersectional work that we do. The lengthy nature of this process, lasting more than two months, exemplifies the tensions and the challenges inherent in the queer intersectional outreach work that we do. The outcome of this task in Fig. 8.1.

As the logo tries to represent, queer intersectional outreach work requires openness to a radical alterity. It requires actors/actresses to be able to deconstruct concepts that later need to be translated with the people we work with at schools. It requires being open to learning from local terms and meanings in order to deconstruct any prejudice and naturalized knowledge present both in the academic field as well as on the outskirts of the city. As a result of a long discussion, the logo is black, white, mestizo/a, blue, pink, male, female, trans, gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, poor, middle class and even rich.

When we talk about concepts, we should acknowledge that most of the theoretical corpus draws on LGBT, feminist and queer studies produced

**Fig. 8.1**

CRDH-NUPSEX Logo



in occidental academic contexts. Although extremely useful, we are aware that this framework often fails to capture the particularities of the Brazilian context in which we work. An example of this is the use of the term “queer,” although polysemous in English, this term carries little meaning for those who do not speak English fluently. The Portuguese translation of “queer” does not carry the same associations of injury and insult as the original term. The multiple Portuguese translations have failed to reflect its semantic power. In Brazil, the term “queer” is consequently used almost exclusively in the academic field. This does not, however, mean that the term is not useful. Rather, it is the ideas that its usage represents that are still important, specifically its representation of a process in which an insult is transformed into an affirmative, empowered political positioning. In the Brazilian context, this idea can be applied to local terms such as “sapatão”(dike) or “bicha” (gay).

Our outreach experience taught us that more important than the terms themselves it is fundamental to recognize the limits of communication in outreach work as in research. In order to be able to learn with the people we work with, we cannot assume that even if we use the same words, we mean the same things. This acknowledgment requires breaking with the traditional hierarchies between scientific knowledge and “local” knowledge. In this epistemological process, we also need to consider that outreach workers and the school students we work with have lived different lives. Thus, intersectional queer outreach work entails an understanding that race, class, gender, sexuality and age creates different paths for each one of us and that we entail distinct privileges, oppressions and vulnerabilities related to our social markers of difference. We have also to be aware that these multiple social markers of difference intersect differently in a specific place and time. Therefore, a queer intersectional outreach work in the Brazilian context demands a methodological approach that enables a more horizontal relationship, in which there is constant critical exchange of distinct knowledges both from academic research and from local communities and life experiences. This exercise of sharing experiences, feelings and knowledges is an important element of feminist epistemology, as is highlighted by authors such as Patricia Hill Collins (1989) and Donna Haraway (1995). In outreach work, there is a need to incorporate the dimension of experience and of local knowledge as well as the deconstruction of hierarchies in the production of knowledge.

The goal of the outreach work implemented by the Nupsex-CRDH group is to denaturalize prejudicial and discriminatory knowledge about

gender relations, sexuality, race and class. The ethical-political project in which we have engaged struggles for the construction of a more egalitarian, respectful and free way of living, seeking to contribute to a growing respect of differences. Therefore, respecting our differences means to no longer transform them into inequalities (Skliar, 2003). In our outreach work, the undergraduate and graduate students made use of different and creative tools to stimulate discussion. Through their interactions with the high school students that attended the workshops, our team aimed to disrupt the typical dynamics of a lecture and to draw on conceptual and experiential perspectives in conjunction with one another in deconstructing narratives that reiterate prejudice and discrimination. This process involved demonstrating the various ways in which categories of sex, gender, sexuality, class and race are historically and socially constructed, creating multiple and intersecting hierarchies.

Most of the workshops sought to deconstruct naturalized forms of being that are reproduced through daily repetition of ideas about what it means to be a woman, a man, lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, cisgender, poor, white, black. In this sense, the workshops are an exercise in analysis of the culture and society in which we live and from which we emerge as subjects. Emerging as significant here is the idea of gender as a reiteration of performative and naturalized acts proposed by Judith Butler (2004), the concept of subjectivity as the experience of being oneself in relation to a specific game of truth that we engage in, as defined by Michel Foucault (1994), as well as the *dispositif* (apparatus) of racialization as described by Sueli Carneiro (2005), i.e., the way Brazilian society hierarchies are structured by racism, are essential tools of our work. The three concepts are essential for queer intersectional outreach work because deconstructing the statements that are proposed or imposed as naturalized truth and reiterated performatively by society and school curricula (official and hidden), group pressure, family and society act directly in the subjectification processes. By offering alternative truth (the main outcome of the workshops) it is possible to construct other meanings for the experience that students do of being themselves. Also, the workshops aim at denaturalizing how racism, classism, sexism, heterocisnormativity intersect in our society through the *dispositif* of racialization that has produced hierarchies since the construction of the inferior “other” through the double historical process of slavery and colonization. These processes are reiterated across Brazilian history (as demonstrated

in the first part of this chapter) by eugenic discourses, for example, and a class structure that is strongly marked by sexism and racism.

The workshops seek to break with stereotypes and open up new possibilities for thinking about lived experiences and the ways in which we daily reproduce hierarchies, discriminations and prejudices. In line with our conceptual intersectional queer orientation, we consider ourselves as subjects produced by learning processes and by a socio-cultural context specific to a historical time and a space. We, therefore, intentionally sought to work critically by questioning our theoretical and political implications in our interactions with workshop participants. In order to do so, it was necessary to create an open and safe space in which we, as social actors, could question and reformulate what is considered “natural” and “normal,” particularly by identifying when these ideas of normativity produce violence and inequality. Such a space was constructed during monthly supervisions, where we discussed reports from the activities developed, the emotionality of these activities, and the specific expertise needed. In these meetings, as well as in the outreach work itself, we sought to show how normativity is implicated in and reproduced by the construction of gendered, racialized and sexual subjects, as well as in the consequences of occupying a counter-normative position (Butler, 2004; Foucault, 1976).

The demand for our outreach work is communicated to us through a variety of channels. Most commonly, public school teachers contact us directly. Other means of communication include institutional demands from State government officials, professionals from public policies services, NGOs, or from university staff. Typically, those who contact us present us with specific issues that require our expertise. These specific requirements are then discussed in weekly meetings where the team decides on the priorities and begins with the planning of the workshops to address them.

To create a better picture of the work we have been conducting, we now move to a detailed description of two outreach activities that we implemented. Subsequently, a list of activities that we developed in response to the requests we have received is presented.

### *“Mural of the Insults” Workshop*

This workshop is a useful tool in exploring how sexism, racism, classism and LGBTQ+ phobia are naturalized. We implemented the “Mural of the Insults” workshop with a group of senior high school learners from a

poor outskirts region of Porto Alegre. The class was comprised of mostly women (according to municipal statistics due to the dropout of boys, women outnumber men, in this case 70% of the students were women), 35% of the students were black (in the general population in Porto Alegre, the percentage is around 20%). The request came from a teacher (a white cisgender woman who teaches social sciences) who asked us to intervene in what she called 'a high level of sexual harassment between students'. As we were only asked to do a once and off intervention, we discussed with her which activity would be most effective. Our workshop was intended to be a first step in the introduction of gender relations with the learners. The outreach team responsible for this workshop was comprised of a black heterosexual cisgender woman masters student (social psychology), a white cisgender gay man undergraduate student (nursing school), a black cisgender gay man undergraduate student (psychology), and a white transgender gay man undergraduate student (physical education), with the exception of the transgender gay student, that was from a high middle-class family, all the other students came from low middle class and most of them had schooling experiences similar to the students of the schools we work with.

The workshop began with a brief overview of what the activity would entail. The facilitators emphasized that participation was completely voluntary insisting that in case of any discomfort people could leave the room and that one of the team members would be there to listen and assist. The activity itself is quite simple—learners were asked to share any insults they use or hear in their daily lives, which are written on the blackboard. While one of the members of the team talks to the class, another one writes the insults on the blackboard, sorting them into categories according to their content: Sexist; LGBTQ-phobic; racist; classist; and other. The other two team members observed the class and were ready to act if someone asked for help. As is common in this activity, most of the insults were sexist and LGBTQ+ phobic, but a significant number of insults relating to race, class, ableism/disability and corporal features were also listed. At this point in the activity, a lot of laughter on the part of the learners was noted, which served to mobilize the students in saying more insults out loud. Surprisingly, they did not feel shy and almost everyone participated. When the students finished listing all the insults they knew (some insults were new to the group and needed to be explained), the facilitator asked the class what they could see in common with the classification used in

writing the insults down on the blackboard, and to list the people or things that are targets of the insults.

In the discussion of who and what the groups of insults related to, the facilitators encouraged learners to consider the naturalized and oppressive character of the insults and how they may be offensive to LGBTQ+ groups, women, black people, poor people and fat people. The consequences of verbal violence were discussed using statistics of school dropout, violence, suicide, murder and mental suffering of the target populations. The team also shared their own experiences of being victims of prejudicial and discriminatory insults such as those written on the blackboard when they were at school, explaining the emotions they experienced, the way it impacted their self-image, and how they struggled to overcome the low self-esteem comes from being the target of such insults. Although gender relations and hierarchies were central to the debate, the team emphasized the intersections of various social identities that were implicated in most of the insults used. Here, intersectionality played an important analytical role in expressing how different social structures (race, class, gender and sexuality) are articulated in the perpetuation of discrimination and prejudice. The theoretical background of this workshop is based on the understanding that the performative acts of speech do not just describe inequalities and social injustices, but also reproduce them (Butler, 2004). So, insulting someone as a “fat queer ugly black bitch” would reproduce and enforce race, sexuality, corporal and gender exclusions. Therefore, through these speech acts learners reify gender hierarchies, hetero-cis-normativity, class hierarchies, racism and reinforce normative ideas about the ideal body type and. The evaluations of the workshop were very positive, with most learners reporting that they gained new insights into the naturalized use of insults that they themselves were targets of and have never realized. Participants also mentioned that through the workshops they were educated to avoid reiterating the hierarchies and exclusions materialized in the insults.

### *Amanda and Monick Workshop*

This workshop centered around a screening of a documentary titled *Amanda and Monick*, which addresses topics of sexuality and gender diversity, race, class and gender roles. The workshop took place at the University (where our outreach group is based) movie theater. Two

groups of learners from two different schools, both in poor neighborhoods outside of the city, participated in the workshop. We were contacted by teachers at each of these schools who asked that we conduct a workshop that would introduce and sensitize learners to topics relating to gender diversity. Here, it is important to note that this took place before the election of the far-right president Bolsonaro. Today most teachers are afraid to talk about gender diversity out of fear of the vigilance and attacks of the anti-gender movement in Brazil that spreads fear. Many teachers have recently been accused of imposing “gender ideology” onto their learners. Important in thinking about how this workshop might be implemented in the present day, then, are considerations of access to and connection with teachers and schools.

The group of learners participating was similar in composition to that involved in the Mural of insults workshop. They were from sophomore and junior levels (second and third year of high school in Brazil). Both teachers were white cisgender women. The outreach team comprised of a white gay cisgender man who is a faculty member, one black cisgender lesbian undergraduate student (psychology), one white gay transgender man undergraduate student (physical education), and one white heterosexual cisgender woman who is also a faculty member. Faculty members belong to middle class, the black undergraduate student belongs to low middle class and the transgender student is from an upper middle-class family. After the initial introductory presentation, we screened the Amanda and Monick documentary (Pinto, 2008) which tells the story of two *travestis* in a small town in the Northeast of Brazil, one schoolteacher and one sex worker. The Northeast of Brazil is the poorest part of the country. The cultural, racial and ethnic composition of the population, as well as the predominant accent, are very different from the south. In the movie, both *travestis* are mixed race, and one is married to a butch lesbian that is expecting a child from her partner. In their narrative of how they met, the parental roles were the opposite of what would be normatively expected regarding their genitals and the identity categories commonly used. The lesbian cisgender woman presents herself as the father and the *travesti* as the mother, despite the fact that she (the *travesti*) is the one that performed the penetration that resulted in the pregnancy. The story challenges the naturalized coherence between genitals and gender relations.

The other protagonist is a very feminine schoolteacher. Sometimes she presents herself as a *travesti*, and sometimes as homosexual (homosexual

is an all-encompassing term commonly used in Brazil to describe sexual diversity). Her self-presentation as feminine is informed by normative notions of gender. The support of her father, students and parents of the students is very emotional and touching.

After watching the movie, the discussion that followed centered around “unexpected” and fluid gender and sexual identities in different contexts of Brazil, such as the denaturalization of the imposed normative relation between gender identity and expression and genitals and that are different possible family configurations. Also, that being a *travesti* does not imply being a sex worker. The categorization and fixity of identities linked to sexual orientation, as well as prejudice, are the central themes of the documentary. It shows how the categories (gay, lesbian, trans, *travesti*, cis, homosexual, heterosexual, etc.) used in official and academic discourse (as well as the social movements and public policies) are inadequate in accounting for the diversity of lived realities. The documentary is an excellent tool for denaturalizing categories and illustrating how our gender normative culture forces us to label everything. The general purpose of this technique is to learn how to respect feelings and experiences without the need to label them. Curiously, on this occasion, the school teachers tried several times to label the characters of the documentary as “the woman” or “the man,” while the students were more open to the possibilities, the emotions and the respect for difference. The conceptual tools used are queer theory regarding the limits of identity, the denaturalization of the ways of being and the ethics of alterity, meaning the respect of the other in its radical difference.

In Table 8.1 we present other workshop strategies we have been developing and utilizing in our outreach work. Our work is normally divided according to key operating concepts and the demands of the field.

The internal work involved in planning and analyzing the workshops is fundamental to their effectiveness. As described before, the graduate and undergraduate students’ team is predominantly made up of black, LGBTQ+ and poor students (white cisgender male heterosexual students are a minority). These are people that have experienced discrimination, violence and prejudice in various ways. These team members bring their particular perspectives, positionalities and intersectionalities not only to the development and analysis of workshops, but also their implementation. They share and explore their own experiences in the workshops with younger learners in schools. This is not a simple task as drawing on their own experiences involves re-living their pain and suffering from



**Table 8.1** Workshops description, goals and operating concepts

<i>Workshop title</i>	<i>Dynamics description</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Operating concepts</i>
The privilege walk (The privilege walk [complete], 2019)	<p>We adapted this activity to the Brazilian context (reviewing the questions asked), in order to sensitize learners to social hierarchies based on class, race, gender and sexuality. This is a well-known tool used worldwide. Students are organised into a line and a facilitator read out a list of questions. The participants are asked to take a step forward or backward based on their responses. So according to the answers, the students are positioned in different lines that correspond to social hierarchies. The questions asked are, for example: If the police has stopped you for thinking you are suspicious take a step backward. If at least one of your parents went to college take a step forward</p> <p>This activity involves making the Abayomi doll, a practice introduced by black women who had been enslaved and forced to come to Brazil. The aim of this activity is to familiarize participants with the story of these women as an example of resistance to violence. During the construction of the doll, African (<i>Tarubá</i>) tales and examples of indigenous ethnicities that had inhabited Brazil before the arrival of the European colonizers are told. In doing so, we explore how the modern notions of sexuality and gender were imposed by colonization and Christianity</p>	<p>This activity helps learners confront the ways in which society privileges some individuals over others and the relationship between privilege, prejudice and discrimination</p>	<p>Social markers of difference; Intersectionality; Subjectivation; Power relations regarding gender, sexuality, race and class</p>
The Abayomi Doll (Abayomi, 2019)	<p>This activity involves making the Abayomi doll, a practice introduced by black women who had been enslaved and forced to come to Brazil. The aim of this activity is to familiarize participants with the story of these women as an example of resistance to violence. During the construction of the doll, African (<i>Tarubá</i>) tales and examples of indigenous ethnicities that had inhabited Brazil before the arrival of the European colonizers are told. In doing so, we explore how the modern notions of sexuality and gender were imposed by colonization and Christianity</p>	<p>Explores different epistemologies that were almost completely erased, first by slavery and then after the colonization of Africa and Brazil</p> <p>This activity allows students to understand that what is called now homosexuality and transsexuality were constructed differently and more positively in different socio-historic periods</p>	<p>Social Markers of Difference; Subjectification; Decolonial Theory; African and Brazilian indigenous epistemologies; Racism</p>

<i>Workshop title</i>	<i>Dynamics description</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Operating concepts</i>
Making Gendered Puppets	<p>This activity involves using textile materials to make a doll making from a design of the body. The activity comprises two meetings: the first encounter begins with the creation of the body by drawing it in fabric (a body that may be lean, fat, tall, short and the choice of skin color with different tissues). The second encounter is for the creation of external features of the body (hair, face, breast, genitals) and then the learners are invited to create a story about the doll</p>	<p>The purpose of the activity is to think about the body's constitution in a playful way, and to discuss 'gender rules' associated with body characteristics</p> <p>The activity is intended to stimulate critical thought about the characteristics of the doll they made. A discussion about racism, sexism, ableism, heterocisnormativity and the idealized body is facilitated</p>	<p>Hetero-cis-normativity; Gender Relations Social Markers of Difference; Intersectionality; Racism; Ableism; Performativity</p>
Stonewall Riots	<p>Using a comic book, we tell the history of the Stonewall riots, contextualizing the political struggle of the LGBTQ+ movements. We also draw connections between this struggle and others such as the Black movements and stories of resistance to violence. We also discuss how white gay men ended up being the protagonists in the narratives of the gay pride and how the agency of transvestites and drag queens that were in the front line was erased</p>	<p>Besides exploring the stories behind dates such as June 28th (Stonewall) or November 20th (Zumbi dos Palmares, day of the black conscience in Brazil), we explore forms of daily resistance to oppression and discrimination. We do this by showing the collective and historical aspects of the struggles, emphasizing that these important dates that are only effective if we do not accept the daily forms of prejudice and discrimination and that we must join forces in joining or supporting associations as well as using the institutional and non-institutional forms of resistance</p>	<p>Agency; Intersectionality; Genealogy;</p>

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

<i>Workshop title</i>	<i>Dynamics description</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Operating concepts</i>
Rooms' color in photographs	<p>In this workshop we use the images produced by the South Korean photographer Jeong Mee Yoon (Yoon, 2019). The photographs portray girls and boys from South Korea, The United States and other countries in their rooms with all their belongings. In these images, girls are shown with their belongings in pink. Most of the toys are makeup, dolls, kitchen accessories. In the portraits of the boys we have blue objects, above all, superheroes, games, cars, trucks, musical instruments. The photograph creates a hyperbolic association between toys and colors with femininity and masculinity</p>	<p>The goal of this workshop is to discuss gender performativity (Butler, 2004) and how we learn to be boys or girls. In creating a massive presence of blue and pink with an overdose of toys, the artist helps to deconstruct the naturalized 'essence' of gender. In the discussion, we critically explore how a gendered learning process guides us into adult life</p>	<p>Performativity; Gender relations; Subjectification</p>
Stories of men who have lived as girls	<p>This workshop uses the documentary <i>Homens Trans</i> (Mattos, 2015) depicting the stories of several transgender men. After watching the video, learners are asked about the stories they heard and any doubts and questions that emerged from seeing the documentary. Often the subject of transgenderism raises many questions about gender performativity and the relationship between sexual orientation and gender identity. The fact that transgender people can be heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual surprises many students who believe that sexual orientation is shaped by gender identity</p>	<p>We seek here to break with the stereotypes and deconstruct the alleged coherence between gender identity and sexual orientation imposed by hetero-cis-normativity</p>	<p>Heterocisnormativity; Subjectification; Performativity; Intersectionality</p>

the violence they have faced and continue to experience in daily life. The supervision of workshops by faculty members is therefore key to our outreach work. The discussion of personal experiences, identifications and the workshop experiences is important in that it creates a safe space for talking about feelings and conflicts that emerge during the workshops.

In the outreach work, students from our team draw on different knowledges and tools (conceptual, linguistic, contextual and affective) in creating better connections with the learners who experience successive violations of rights and in sensitizing those that have naturalized classist, racist and LGBTQ+ prejudices and discriminatory views. As stated previously, the majority of schools that request our outreach workshops are situated in poor areas of the city and the metropolitan area. They are situated in dangerous neighborhoods where violence is rife. The social geography of the city shapes the freedom of movement of poor black students. When they go to malls, parks or other places in the wealthy areas of the city, they are often victims of discrimination (Pinheiro-Machado & Scalco, 2014).

As mentioned above, the criteria of diversity in the composition of our outreach team was applied in order to enhance representation and legitimacy during workshops when team members share their own knowledge and life experiences. However, as discussed by our group in a recent publication (Costa et al., 2018) a challenge arises when different knowledges derived from life experiences of prejudice and discrimination are confronted. We noted that this exercise may lead to a hierarchization of oppression. A white gay cisgender middle-class man has a different life experience than a poor black cisgender lesbian woman. Conflict may emerge in listening to or acknowledging differences and working with them. These conflicts were productive in terms of creating a growing capacity to deal with different questions and challenges presented by the outreach work. However, sometimes communication and internal conflicts were so tense that led some outreach workers to quit the team. In one of these cases, the person in question was very much attached to its identity locus because of the violent character of his/her own experience of exclusion and prejudice. This created a rigid boundary between herself/himself and other participants of the outreach team. By emphasizing only one discriminatory dimension, the outreach worker was unable to fully subscribe to our fight against multilayered forms of prejudice and discrimination. We learned that such events occur when intersectionality

cannot be fully understood, experienced and lived. When such events happened, we addressed it through individual guidance and academic supervision. In these meetings, we created safe spaces where outreach workers could express their feelings and discuss emerging issues. When supervision and sharing feelings were sufficiently strong to help the student to deal with her/his own experience of discrimination, prejudice and violence, we created a stronger bond in the group that was powerful in the fieldwork.

Despite these difficulties, our belief in and commitment to following a queer intersectional approach was strengthened during the course of our outreach work. Furthermore, some of the challenges that we encountered along the way may be useful in preparing or informing other teams who adopt a similar approach. Such challenges include: How should we articulate differences within the group? How should we accommodate such diverse expertise and challenges without fragmenting the team, dividing it into a series of specialized interventions? In an intersectional effort to face these challenges, we avoided the tendency to task only black students with outreach work about racism or transgender students with outreach work about transphobia and cisnormativity, and so on. This was a difficult task characterized by conflict. Safe spaces were created to discuss the personal effects of the outreach work on team members. In this vein, we used strategies that combined conceptual debate and a mix of students in each group, who would plan and implement a range of workshops. While the particularities of each workshop differed, the main components of all the workshops remained the same, namely a queer intersectional theoretical framework, and respect for local knowledge and sharing of life experiences.

Besides regular meetings dedicated to sharing life experiences and discussing the personal effects of our work, the team also attends weekly seminars on intersectionality, queer theory, gender studies, human rights policies, law and specific issues related to the characteristics of Brazilian culture and society. The seminars form the basis for the planning of the activities and workshops. Another important part of the work was the negotiation with stakeholders and fieldwork done before each outreach activity. In order to respect local knowledge, the characteristics of the school and the specificities of each request were analyzed by the group of students in charge of that workshop and their faculty member supervisor. After the activities, an oral or written evaluation with the learners and teachers is conducted. The mistakes and misunderstandings, as well

as the effects of each intervention were discussed in a monthly meeting<sup>7</sup> with the group. These monthly meetings helped us to learn from mistakes and adapt our strategies, incorporating this critical and continuous learning in the planning of subsequent interventions.

### WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

During the period in which the center-left Workers' Party was in power, we established our outreach center, recruited students for our outreach teams, and reached out to schools in poor areas of the city. Our activities since the foundation of our outreach center in 2011 (the research group was created in 2007 and we formalized the outreach group in 2011), involved more than 6,000 learners, hundreds of teachers, social workers, health professionals and other workers in the public sector. Our outreach center continues to operate without any financial support. Currently, we rely on only a handful of scholarships granted by our University, but even these are threatened by drastic budget cuts.

It is a sad period for Brazil as human rights are under attack and violence and poverty are growing exponentially in the country. We maintain, however, that our work was not in vain and helped to diminish prejudice, discrimination and give high school learners and teachers critical tools to think about what kind of society they want to live in. An intersectional approach teaches us that creating a safer place for LGBTQ+ students and staff depends on understanding the particularities of how oppressions are articulated and interact in each context. Successful outreach work depends on building strategies that incorporate the specificities of each social, cultural, economic and political scenario.

We hope that the winds of history will soon change again. Students and teachers are already mobilizing themselves against the drastic cuts in education and the arbitrary decisions of the current Brazilian government. Politics and education are inseparable; it is politics that decides the future of society. Unfortunately, there will not be a safer place for LGBTQ+ students if there is not a democratic project of a society guided by the respect of diversity such as ours.

In moving forward, it is important to consider what we have learned through our experiences of doing queer intersectional outreach work so that we can build on it. We can say that outreach work is not just an "applied" area subordinated to the knowledge produced by research. Rather,

the direct contact with school learners and teachers challenged the knowledge informed by concepts produced in Western academic contexts. Local identity categories and experiences highlighted the need to decolonize our epistemologies. This does not mean completely disregarding what we have learnt from these concepts, but rather emphasizes that these concepts should not be used uncritically. Rather, we need to work to transform and rethink theoretical concepts developed elsewhere according to local knowledges. For example, that subjective regimes cannot be understood in Brazil outside race and class frames. That gender and sexuality are tied to racial and class intersection created by the colonial construction of the other (Dussel, 1992; Mignolo, 2011) both by colonization processes as by the inter-tied slavery violence. Also, that queer theory and black feminism that framed our work, need to be understood through the racialization dispositif (apparatus) in the way it presented itself in Brazilian culture and society' class structure. For us, the central aspect of queer intersectional outreach work is the process of denaturalization and deconstruction of prejudice and discrimination. This necessarily involves drawing on and applying theoretical concepts in a critical and contextualized way, as opposed to simply reproducing them.

We believe that our experiences can inform outreach work in other contexts. Significant is our first-hand experience of the limits of thinking about sexual and gender diversity as fixed identity categories, a lesson that can be applied in various other cultural contexts as well. While Brazil is a particularly unequal society, much of the work that we have done can be useful in more egalitarian societies as well. For instance, migration waves in Western countries challenge the foundations of Western queer theoretical frameworks. The flow of people and ideas introduces new and non-normative epistemologies that must be respected and understood. Western multicultural societies demand decolonial ways of understanding not only gender and sexuality but also racial, ethnic and religious dynamics. Therefore, we strongly believe that our experience in Brazil transcends its local relevance and can be taken into account in the elaboration of further outreach interventions in a multicultural global scale.

Finally, the challenges of working with intersectionality as a theoretical framework showed us that it is not sufficient to form a team made up of diverse members. Creating a safe space for sharing both personal and work-related emotions and experiences, as we have done, is essential to

accommodating diversity. This is key to building confidence and cooperation among team members, managing internal conflict and to preventing victimization.

## NOTES

1. Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexuals, Transsexuals, ‘*Travestis*’, Queer and other forms of gender and sexual identity and expression. *Travesti* may be defined as a Brazilian culturally specific identity construction that has no relationship with the idea of transvestite or transvestic fetishism. It can be briefly described as a feminine gender identity that does not necessarily implies the desire for genital surgery. Also, this was the emic term that existed before the introduction of the term transsexuality. Some young activists define themselves as *travestis* informed by queer theory, claiming to use the term as a refusal of medicalization of gender. For a good description of this cultural specificity see Don Kulick’s (1998).
2. Our research group is called NUPSEX (*Núcleo de Pesquisa em Sexualidade e Relações de Gênero*—Sexuality and Gender Relations Research Center) and the outreach group is called CRDH (Human Rights Reference Center: Sexual Diversity, Gender Relations and Race).
3. Hetero-cis-normativity refers to a set of rules that considers normal and hierarchically superior those that are heterosexual and cisgender. Those who have a sexual attraction or feelings that are not exclusively heterosexual or do not conform to the gender attributed at birth have historically been subject to pathologization, imprisonment or did not have access to the rights that were/are accorded to heterosexual and cisgender people.
4. Son of a bitch.
5. Faggot.
6. The impeachment of Dilma Rousseff by the two chambers of the National Congress was a process based on false allegations. Her implication in any of the corruption scandals was never proved and the technical budget error officially used to inculcate her was a usual maneuver used by all presidents before her and, more astonishing, it was considered legal by the same congress just after the impeachment. Even if the impeachment procedures were formally legal and respected all the institutional steps needed to be approved, there is a consensus between political analysts in Brazil and outside Brazil that the impeachment was a *coup d’état*. The Brazilian presidential form of government only allows the impeachment of a president if a responsibility crime is proven. Which was never the case regarding Dilma Rousseff, what happened was a form of disavow by the congress, something that would be legal in a parliamentary regime, but not in the presidential regime stated in the Brazilian Constitution (Carpentier, 2017).



7. Our outreach group during the last period that we were financed by a federal program on human rights (2016–2017), was composed by 14 undergraduate students, 6 graduate students, three professors and one associated researcher.

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# We're Here, We're Queer...but Are We in Schools? Lessons Learned from a Multicountry Project Across Eastern and Southern Africa

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## INTRODUCTION

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), which consists of 16 countries<sup>1</sup> in the region, is in a context of change and shift in recent years in relation to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. The legislative process of decriminalizing homosexuality is gaining momentum with both Botswana and Mozambique decriminalizing same-sex acts

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in recent years. There are also shifts in popular opinion in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity as evidence by large, demographically representative survey data in both South Africa and Malawi (The Other Foundation/HSRC, 2015; The Other Foundation, 2019). However, this progress is hindered by similarly regressive responses to sexual orientation and gender identity in a number of other countries in the region. Tanzania, for example, has clamped down severely on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities in recent years and Zimbabwe continues to be a hostile environment for queer people.

In terms of the education sector, conservatism in terms of gender and sexuality continues to characterize much of the thinking in the sector regionally. This leads to a situation in which religious beliefs and cultural patriarchal norms continue to determine educators' attitudes and to impact on the process of teaching and learning in school systems across the region. SADC has a newly minted sexual and reproductive health (SRH) rights framework for all 16 SADC countries. All countries in the region are signatories to the Eastern and Southern Africa Commitments in relation to the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education. However, this policy level progress, often stimulated by the broader development agenda in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, is often not mirrored in realities on the ground and in schools. For example, there are very high levels of reported homophobic and transphobic violence in schools across the region (UNESCO, 2016) and very little training or capacitation for teachers to engage with the topic of sexuality and gender diversity in the classroom. The South African research, for example, indicates that schools are generally heterosexist and homophobic spaces that exacerbate the vulnerability, victimization and social isolation of sexual and gender minority learners (Francis, 2017a). This prejudice, discrimination and hostility results from the attitudes and behaviors of peers, teachers, and school managers (Bhana, 2012, 2014; Msibi, 2012; UNESCO, 2016). This leads to a situation in which heterosexism prevails and enforces compulsory heterosexuality in curriculum, pedagogical practice, and school cultures across the region. All of this contradicts the broad development agenda of the region in terms of gender equality and access to education as well as broad frameworks such as "Education for All."

The responsibility for this situation lies with a wide range of stakeholders in the region. Ministries of Education are the custodians of schools and are directly responsible for processes of teaching and learning as well

as educational outcomes. When it comes to issues of SRH and young people, Ministries of Health have clearly articulated obligations in terms of linking young people to SRH services. Regional bodies such as the SADC Secretariat have important convening power in terms of bringing all relevant ministries together to further capacitate school systems in terms of linking young people to SRH supports and services.

Queer social movements are often the key knowledge holders when it comes to teaching and learning around issues of sexuality and are often key sexual health service providers at a regional level. Civil society organization often leads the region in understanding the importance of youth-friendly SRH services and how best to provide these to young people. Given the ongoing sensitivity of discussing LGBTI issues, particularly in relation to young people in schools, LGBTI organizations have generally struggled to access the school space and engage school communities, including both educators and learners, on issues of sexuality and gender diversity. This chapter explores some of the strategies and lessons learned in recent years from the movement to include a focus on sexual and gender diversity in processes of teaching and learning in school systems across SADC, particularly as this relates to the work of LGBTI organizations. The core research question driving this chapter is:—What can we learn from an analysis of a multicountry project in Eastern and Southern Africa on sexual and gender diversity in schools?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The work on diversity in schools, including around issues of sexual and gender diversity, is necessarily intersectional given the ways in which race, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, and so on overlap, intersect, and co-construct each other. As a result, intersectionality is a key theoretical framework for this work in studying the manner in which social identities and experiences intersect in mutually reinforcing ways to produce and compound contexts of vulnerability (Crenshaw, 1991). Emerging from feminist and critical race theory, intersectionality aids researchers in foregrounding the ways in which gender, sexuality, age, race, socioeconomic status, locality, (dis)ability and other social identities create interlocking and imbricated systems of advantage and disadvantage (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Central to intersectionality is the idea of social transformation that is not limited to exploring marginalized social identities but also in elucidating and dismantling the

systems of power and privilege that foster marginality and vulnerability. However, despite broad acknowledgment of the value of intersectionality, the concept fails to offer a clear set of practical tools—described by Nash (2008) as “methodological murkiness” (p. 1). Rather, “it offers varied strands of thought, pointing to different methodologies and methods for doing intersectional research” (Rice, Harrison, & Friedman, 2019, p. 409). Local work on intersectionality such as Francis (2019b) foregrounds the ways in which racism, heterosexism, and other oppressive dynamics determine the school experiences of young people. Francis and DePalma (2015) highlight the importance of Freire’s (1972) notion of critical consciousness among educators who work for social change by questioning the status quo. To this intersectional, critical social justice view of education can be added issues of poverty in the postcolonial Southern Africa context as well as the challenges faced by young people with (dis)abilities in education (Reygan & Steyn, 2017a, 2017b).

## SEXUALITY AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

In this chapter following the conceptualization of queer social movements in the book as a whole (see Francis, 2019a) I understand LGBTI civil society organizations to be inclusive of non-governmental organizations, community organizations, and interest groups who attempt to engage the education sector on issues of sexuality and gender diversity. There is a general paucity of research on LGBTI organizations’ work in schools at a national and regional level and little published research is available on the topic in the SADC context. Among the research that does exist, much of this comes from South Africa which reflects a larger knowledge production bias towards the largest economy in the region and on the continent (see Francis et al., 2019). South Africa has had constitutional protections in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity in the post-apartheid period and was one of the first countries in the world to introduce same-sex marriage. With a robust tertiary and research infrastructure, much of the research base on LGBTI work in education has emerged from South Africa though this is beginning to change as the issue of sexual and gender diversity gains greater research attention across SADC.

The research from South Africa indicates that schools often fail to function as sites of care and support for sexual and gender minority young people (Bhana 2012, 2014; Francis, 2017a; Francis and Reygan, 2016;



Langa, 2015; McArthur, 2015; Msibi, 2012; Potgieter, 2006). In contrast, schools continue to operate as sites of marginalization, exclusion, and violence for many LGBTI learners. The predominant sexual culture in schools is one of heterosexism and cisnormative privileging that constructs sexual and gender diversity as something that must remain marginal, silenced and invisible (DePalma & Francis, 2014b; Francis, 2012, 2017a, 2017c; Msibi, 2012; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Richardson, 2004; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014). This happens in a context in which sexual and gender minority learners receive little or no informed education about their sexual and gender identities other than the homophobic and transphobic hidden curriculum (Francis 2012, 2017c; Kowen & Davis, 2006; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014). Given the importance of the development agenda for the SADC region as well as the fact that the region has signed up to most of the global development agendas in the education sector, the reality in schools across the region for LGBTI young people contravenes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This situation highlights the importance of unearthing all barriers to young people's realization of their rights to and in education, including for sexual and gender minority learners. One of the key rights in the SADC context is the right to education and this is particularly the case for free and compulsory primary education as provided for in Article 28(1)(a) of the CRC (UNCRC, 1989) and 11(3)(a) of the African Children's Charter (OAU, 1990). For example, the Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a) was the first in the region and indeed on the continent to explicitly recognize the rights of sexual and gender minorities (Bennett & Reddy, 2015; Reddy, 2001; Richardson, 2004; Sigamoney & Epprecht, 2013). In contrast, LGBTI young people in schools are often denied their rights to education and to full citizenship because of homophobia and transphobia expressed in varied ways through exclusion, marginalization, violence, invisibility, and hate speech (Bhana, 2012; Butler, Alpaslan, Allen, & Astbury, 2003; DePalma and Francis, 2014a; Francis, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Francis & Reygan, 2016; Kowen & Davis, 2006; McArthur, 2015; Msibi, 2012; Reygan & Francis, 2015). This happens in disregard of the protections afforded by the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) (RSA, 1996c) which is clear in challenging all forms of discrimination (Bhana, 2012; Butler et al., 2003; Francis, 2013; Francis & Reygan, 2016; Kowen & Davis, 2006; McArthur, 2015; Msibi, 2012).

What is apparent from the current evidence base is that LGBTI organizations are engaging schools on issues of sexual and gender diversity (Francis & Brown, 2017; Hoosain Khan, 2013; Manion & Morgan, 2006). A global study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2016) on homophobic bullying in schools, which included five countries in SADC, recommended partnerships between schools and civil society organizations to address homophobic and transphobic bullying and violence in schools. A ten-country study across Eastern and Southern Africa on linking young people in schools to SRH supports that they need has foregrounded the importance of partnerships between civil society organizations working in the sector as well as collaboration with government. Another broad framework across SADC for SRH work in schools is the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) framework which has been signed up to by all SADC countries and provides for a broad range of services to make schools more inclusive and effective spaces for teaching and learning. This package of services includes everything from infrastructure such as class furniture and toilets, to extracurricular activities, to feeding programs, to SRH education. The CSTL framework recommends that Ministries of Education across the region partner with organizations in the delivery of complementary services such as sexual health education. In short, educational institutions across the region are encouraged to collaborate with organizations in strengthening the school sector, attaining the broader social development goals in education, and in supporting the process of teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2016). The key role of LGBTI organizations in supporting the process of teaching and learning around issues of sexuality and gender diversity is evident. They deeply understand the complexities and sensitivities of LGBTI issues and increasingly have materials and interventions developed specifically for young people and school-going populations. LGBTI organizations are also capacitated to have and willing to engage in conversations with young people on issues of sexuality and gender diversity in ways that educators in schools are not.

There are a number of key obstacles to teaching and learning around issues of sexual and gender diversity in classrooms across the region. As highlighted above, these include lack of training and preparation for teachers to engage competently and professionally in the teaching around sexuality and gender. They also have cultural and religious beliefs that impact negatively on their ability to teach in a balanced and effective manner on issues of sexual and gender diversity. Educators also have a

range of legitimate concerns about their role in teaching LGBTI content including: the lack of support from school principals or School Governing Boards, the negative response of parents, and their pedagogical concerns about how best to hold these conversations with young people.

In contrast, LGBTI organizations are aware of the issues, have developed innovative and youth-friendly pedagogies (such as the queer organization GenderDynamix in Cape Town), have the energy and dynamism of their youth facilitators and are free of the norms and constraints of a generally conservative and traditional education sector across the region (Francis, 2019a, p. 784). However, while LGBTI organizations clearly have the opportunity to support the SADC education system in delivering on the Eastern and Southern African Commitments and SRH rights education mandate, they have generally struggled to gain access to school systems in the region and forge mutually beneficial alliances with Ministries of Education and other key education stakeholders.

### SCHOOLS WORK BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Given the prevailing disregard, highlighted briefly above, for the rights, health, and well-being of sexual and gender minority learners in schools across SADC, some actors in the space have taken action, notable among whom are United Nations bodies and LGBTI organizations. A range of actions is described below in terms of supporting school systems across SADC to become safer and more inclusive spaces for LGBTI young people. An intervention in the region involves multi-stakeholder partnerships in the roll out of processes to both create greater awareness of the challenges faced by sexual and gender minority youth in schools as well as developing large data and a regional evidence base with which to advocate of education sector reform. A key character of this intervention has been the collaboration between LGBTI organizations, researchers and United Nations bodies among others. This multi-stakeholder approach has provided LGBTI organizations with an entry point and foothold in the education space that they may otherwise have struggled to gain given prevailing social and cultural norms in the region. The presence of LGBTI organizations in these collaborative consortia and their engagement with Ministries of Education has also provided capacitation to LGBTI organizations, not in materials and pedagogical development so much as their ability and experience in finding the rights framings for their work and

leverage points in engaging in education sector advocacy. A key intervention is presented below followed by a discussion of the lessons learned and opportunities gained for LGBTI organizations through this collaborative work.

### TEN COUNTRIES, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION PROJECT ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS EDUCATION ACROSS EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

School's Out is a two and a half year project (2018–2021) aimed at engaging civil society organizations across Eastern and Southern Africa towards making schools safer for all youth under the auspice of Amplify Change the global funder that prioritizes work on SRH as well as sexual and gender minorities across the African continent. The Human Sciences Research Council is one of South Africa's statutory research councils with offices across South Africa. The HSRC is leading the implementation of the School's Out project within the Human and Social Development unit. The project's main focus is on linking schools to SRH support in ten countries in Eastern and Southern Africa: Botswana, Eswatini (earlier Swaziland), Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Uganda. School's Out seeks to create safer and more inclusive environments for learners by linking schools across Eastern and Southern Africa to SRH support through research integration in dialogues and participatory convenings, at country and regional levels between civil society organizations, academic institutions, governments, and other key stakeholders. The project works through partnerships with regional and in-country organizations who have developed or are developing knowledge on how best to implement school-based SRH programming in the most culturally and sensitive ways. A key activity of School's Out is capacity strengthening through grantmaking and technical support of regional and in-country partners toward robust and coordinated advocacy efforts on linking schools to SRH support. The project combines advocacy and research to provide a model of linking schools to sexual health support. The objective of School's Out is to increase the capability and confidence of and opportunities for civil society organizations to engage with other stakeholders including government officials on policy, programming, and practices on linking schools to sexual health support toward a common vision for safer and more inclusive schools. School's

Out also aims to integrate research to investigate and create meaning as well as shared understanding to improve civil society's understanding of challenges in linking schools to SRH support to inform advocacy in Eastern and Southern Africa. Another objective is to create spaces and facilitate dialogue to enable systematic implementation of existing policies and frameworks approved by and available to SADC member states such as CSTL in linking schools to SRH support.

## METHODOLOGY

A core methodological approach to the School's Out work was Participatory Action Research (PAR) suitable to this study in that it not only accommodates transformative change, but also enables it. PAR is an approach for conducting collaborative research with groups and communities described as marginalized or oppressed, as a means to explore forms of recognition and representation, and has the aim of influencing change through the knowledge that is co-produced by researchers and participants (Dudgeon, Scrine, Cox, & Walker, 2017; Johnson & Guzman, 2013). PAR assumes a cyclical nature and is praxis-oriented, which means it has a strong focus on both research and action, where the research influences action and the action in turn, informs further research (*idem*). Furthermore, it is also a methodological frame, which supports the emancipatory and empowerment goals of action research, where the co-produced knowledge contributes to achieving social justice. Substantive participation of marginalized groups is fundamental in the PAR process. In this regard, the members under study take part in identifying the research agenda, take part in collecting relevant information, and identify suitable action priorities in order to develop solutions and facilitate change. This also translates to research that is more contextually relevant, i.e. it speaks to local realities, and may enhance the uptake of recommendations for implementation. In short, PAR was a productive way to engage with the collaborative partnerships between the HSRC research team and 18 CSO partners across Eastern and Southern Africa.

## DATA AND ANALYSIS

The findings below emerge from an iterative process of engagement with CSO partners and the research team over the course of the School's Out

project. This process was dialogic in nature and consisted of multiple convenings organized by partner organizations at both an in-country level as well as convenings that focused on the Eastern and Southern Africa region. These convenings included a wide range of participants including but not limited to government officials, policy makers, academics, community representatives, representatives of traditional leaders, representatives from faith communities, and youth sector representatives. The reports from these convenings were analyzed using a general thematic analysis and the process was aimed at transforming society, especially in relation to young women and to sexual and gender minority young people in schools across the region. In this sense, Mertens (2010) argues that transformative worldviews focus on challenging social oppression wherever it occurs. Young people in schools across the region face severe challenges in relation to exclusion from education due to intersecting forms of oppression in relation to gender, class, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation and gender identity.

Therefore the approach to the School's Out work was transformative research that focused on giving a voice to young people who are marginalized not only because of their race but also because of their gender, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class (Creswell, 2014) which intersectionality was at the heart of the participatory partnership approach that was chosen for this project. Qualitative research was central as the aim was to both create enabling spaces for the emergence of youth voice in school contexts as well as entry points for LGBTI CSOs into schools-based work. The use of participant action research tools such as dialogue and youth-led processes helped unpack some of the issues of power and social injustice that young people, including LGBTI young people, experience in schools in the region. Participatory learning and action (PLA) techniques (Chambers, 2007) were helpful in supporting a wide range of stakeholders to think critically about the best ways to foster the SRH and well-being of young people in schools across the region. In terms of thematic analysis, Creswell (2013) argues that approximately five to seven themes are normative in qualitative research and these themes emerging from the School's Out reports on stakeholder convenings are presented in the section below and presented as the main lessons learnt from the process.

## LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE SCHOOL'S OUT PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

A number of lessons emerged from an analysis of the process and outcomes of the School's Out project described above. While cognizant of the ongoing challenges in the region that function as barriers to LGBTI organizations accessing the school space, it is apparent that opportunities are also emerging for school's work.

One of the key lessons learned is the central role of multi-stakeholder dialogue and convening. This is because the topic of sexuality, let alone non-normative sexualities and genders, remains a culturally sensitive one across the region. As a result, it is important to engage a wide range of constituencies in open but sensitive and well-facilitated conversations around issues of gender and sexuality. These stakeholders include, among others, traditional leaders, religious leaders, policy makers, researchers, government officials and others. This speaks to the sensitivities highlighted in the literature in relation to teaching and learning about sexual and gender diversity in schools in the region (Francis, 2012; Msibi, 2012; Reygan & Francis, 2015). The literature clearly indicates that educators need to engage in a reflexive process regarding their values and attitudes in relation to diversity, including sexual and gender diversity.

A second important lesson emerging from these projects is, again given the sensitivity of the topic, that inclusive social change for sexual and gender minorities is not going to happen on its own. The greater inclusion of LGBTI people in societies and in school systems will require sustained advocacy from civil society organizations and a particularly important area of advocacy is in the policy terrain. The education sector is highly regulated and bound by a wide range of policies, guidelines, and frameworks at continental, regional, and sub-regional levels. Consequently, LGBTI organizations need to engage in action that leads to the development of sensitive and inclusive education sector policies. Engaging with the "rights" discourse is an important entry point for discussions around diversity in schools (Bhana, 2014) though the challenges of managing responses to the rights discourse are also apparent (Francis et al., 2019). The policy context is one that provides opportunities for schools-based work, especially in more progressive country context such as South Africa (Wilson & Reygan, 2015).

A third theme to emerge from the projects presented above was the necessity of engaging educators in a supportive way. While religious and

cultural values often impact negatively on the ability of educators to create safe and affirming school spaces for LGBTI young people across the region, this is due to a number of reasons. For example, as highlighted previously, educators generally have little or no training on sexual and gender diversity and therefore ill-equipped to approach both the content and process of teaching and learning around LGBTI issues. Therefore, it is important to engage educators in a way that provides the knowledge, information, and pedagogical tools to teach affirmingly about sexual and gender diversity in the classroom. The literature (Msibi, 2012; Reygan & Francis, 2015) indicate that inclusive learning and teaching support materials are necessary but not sufficient when it comes to teaching and learning about sexual and gender diversity in schools. This is because educators' own biases may lead them to apply their own values onto comprehensive sexuality education materials or they may avoid the topic completely.

So as to provide this awareness-raising training for pre-service and in-service teachers, it is important that LGBTI CSOs engage in a form of education-specific advocacy that leads to the creation of an enabling school environment for LGBTI young people. This form of education advocacy requires an in-depth understanding of the school sector, its strengths and weaknesses, the relevant policies, and the sector-specific language used by educators and representatives working in the education sector. Researchers writing in the field often point to the important role of CSOs in engaging in schools-based work around issues of sexual and gender diversity (see DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Francis & Brown, 2017; Reygan & Francis, 2017). However as Hoosain Khan (2014) indicates, specific youth-focused methodologies that are also relevant for school's work are required. The existing policy focused work on LGBTI inclusion in education (Wilson & Reygan, 2015) also needs to be something that LGBTI CSOs have in their school's toolkit.

### WHY SCHOOLS-BASED LGBTI REMAINS A CHALLENGE IN SADC?

The intervention project presented above speaks to a desire among LGBTI organizations to engage in schools-based work as well as the challenges that they were aware of. Given their knowledge and experience of both the education sector and of LGBTI communities across SADC, partners were aware that there are a number of reasons for the historical lack



of LGBTI schools-based interventions across SADC. There is an array of reasons, why schools-based LGBTI work remains challenging, primary among which are regional and continental social norms related to sexuality and childhood. The existing body of literature in the region on LGBTI rights (Bennett & Reddy, 2015), gender in schooling (Bhana, 2012), and “culture” (DePalma & Francis, 2014a) speak to the ways in which global human rights discourses, normative understandings of culture and patriarchal gender norms all intersect in creating obstacles to LGBTI work in schools.

Across the Eastern and Southern Africa region social and cultural norms in relation to gender, sexuality and childhood are constraining in terms of the roll out of broad SRH education, including Comprehensive Sexuality Education. These norms, which are often enforced and policed by state actors and communities, are generally patriarchal and heteronormative. For example, at the time of writing there is a substantial backlash against Comprehensive Sexuality Education in schools which is perceived as a threat to traditional family values and childhood “innocence.” These challenges are not new (see early work by Reddy, 2001) and have been foregrounded by data emerging from the region in recent years in relation to homophobic and transphobic bullying and violence in schools (UNESCO, 2016).

One of the challenges that teachers face in the classroom in relation to sexuality education and LGBTI inclusion is concern around the level of support from school authorities in relation to this work. For example, school governing boards are often composed of members who are also parents and hold worldviews and moral frames that hinder teaching and learning around issues of gender, sexuality, and diversity. The literature (Francis & Reygan, 2016; Reygan & Francis, 2015) points to the genuine concerns that educators express in relation to receiving support from the broader school community, including school management and parents, in relation to teaching in an affirming way about issues of sexual and gender diversity.

There are two key levels of engagement in relation to SRH, Comprehensive Sexuality Education and sexual and gender diversity in schools across the region. First, the in-country level is determined by the national Ministry of Education which has ultimate responsibility for the health and well-being of young people in schools. Second, the regional government for the Southern African Development Community based in Botswana

represents all 16 countries in the region. There is a wide range of protocols, frameworks and agreements in the education sector that countries in the region have signed up to. However, there is often a disjuncture between the formal policy level and implementation on the ground.

A recurring theme presented in this chapter as well as in the current evidence base is the lack of preparedness among educators to engage in a process of teaching and learning around issues of gender, sexuality and diversity in classrooms across the region (Butler et al., 2003; De Wet, 2007). Pre-service educators generally receive little or no education on these topics and are therefore generally unprepared pedagogically and in terms of content to engage on these issues. Given widespread resistance to teaching and learning in schools on issues of sexual and gender diversity across the region, coupled with widespread societal homophobia and transphobia, it seems that queer civil society organizations have to date had little opportunity to develop their knowledge and expertise in terms of school-based interventions.

## CONCLUSIONS

The chapter presented the main thematic findings from an analysis of PAR informed partnership between a research team and multiple civil society organizations across Eastern and Southern Africa. Taking an intersectional approach to issues of diversity, the thematic analysis of data emerging from the project points to the ways in which normative understandings of gender and sexuality overlap and co-construct in ways that are determining of the experiences of LGBTI young people in schools across the region. The chapter was framed taking an intersectional, critical social justice approach to the understanding of diversity in schooling in the region. This was premised on the notion that issues of race, class, poverty, (dis)ability, sexual orientation and gender identity are determining both the school experiences and life course of young people. As a result, project interventions focused on these intersecting identities. For example, in Mozambique, the project focused on the experiences of sexual and gender minority learners in schools whereas in South Africa the project focused on the SRH needs of young people with disabilities in schools. The process of collaborative, iterative, partnership-based approaches to schools-based LGBTI work was useful in elucidating both the challenges and opportunities for LGBTI organizations in engaging in school's work. There is a general consensus in the literature, as presented above, that there needs to be a lot more

sensitization and capacitation of educators in relation to the teaching and learning around sexual and gender diversity in schools. Certainly, there are real opportunities here for LGBTI organizations to engage with Schools of Education in universities to sensitize pre-service educators as well as to engage directly with schools on the ground. Similarly, the broader role of cultural norms in creating obstacles to safe and inclusive school spaces for LGBTI young people emerge consistently. Again, there is a clear role here for LGBTI organizations in engaging communities and key stakeholders in advocacy efforts to sensitize societies across the region to the lived realities and challenges faced by LGBTI people and especially LGBTI young people. What also became apparent in the course of this participatory and collaborative process were the systemic barriers posed by societal homophobia and transphobia to LGBTI organizations in getting access to the school's space and in supporting LGBTI young people. These barriers are not insurmountable and there is both the desire and the ability among LGBTI organizations to engage in schools-based work. The School's Out process elucidated some possible ways forward in opening up the education sector, primary among which was the opportunity to convene and dialogue with key education sector stakeholders about the challenges and needs of LGBTI young people in schools across Eastern and Southern Africa.

Furthermore, supranational bodies such as the United Nations have also begun to engage governments in broad regional comprehensive sexuality education programs and civil society organizations have partnered with these United Nations bodies to engage school systems. Global funders such as AmplifyChange also work in and through the education sector in the region so as to make schools safer and more inclusive spaces for all young people. These lessons continue to inform the multi-stakeholder collaborative process between LGBTI organizations, researchers, and national and supranational bodies. These processes indicate that, so as to make critical anti-homophobic teaching, learning and support connections across SADC, LGBTI organizations play a vital role given their expertise related to the social and cultural forces that perpetuate homophobia and transphobia across the region, including in the education sector, in cultural contexts where the official religious and legal discourses often stifle conversation around non-normative sexual and gender expression. In this context, LGBTI organizations must necessarily straddle a number of contexts and respond to a number of agendas and world-views.

First, there are the cultural and religious norms across the region that predetermine the curriculum, context and processes of teaching and learning in schools across the region. Second, there is a particular form of advocacy required in engaging the education sector and in opening productive conversations with Ministries of Education. A key component of the success of this advocacy is understanding the language and reporting priorities of Ministries which are similar across the region. This means that LGBTI organizations need to be able to speak the language of the education sector and know the national reporting requirements as they speak to the global frameworks and development agenda. Third, LGBTI organizations need to be able to offer materials and pedagogical processes in a language that will not alienate or “trigger” Ministries of Education and their stakeholders to the point that they shut down the conversation before it even begins. For example, this may involve avoiding the use of terms such as LGBTI in more conservative countries in the region and rather framing the work in terms of diversity and inclusion, though this is not necessary for more progressive contexts such as South Africa.

In short, LGBTI civil society organizations need to learn the language of the education sector in terms of global education sector frameworks, regional inclusive education approaches, national policies and guidelines, and be able to navigate the content of key subject areas for this LGBTI inclusion work, such as the Life Skills/Life Orientation subject area. LGBTI organizations must also necessarily develop age-appropriate, youth-friendly materials and pedagogies that speak directly to the curriculum in schools so as to allow for hooks into this space. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, LGBTI organizations need to identify opportunities to engage with key allies in the education sector and engage in the quiet advocacy of relationship building so as to maximize any opportunities to engage in schools-based work to support the health and well-being of all young people in school systems across Eastern and Southern Africa.

## NOTE

1. Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

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# Sharing Autobiographical Stories as a Key Method of Queer Activism in Austrian Schools

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## INTRODUCTION

*Queerconnexion* is a queer educational project that started in Vienna in 2003. Originally called *peerconnexion*, *queerconnexion* was founded by the *Homosexual Initiative (HOSI)* Vienna youth group.<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, the project focused on young gay people telling their life stories in a classroom. Year after year, schoolteachers have consistently invited *queerconnexion* to conduct workshops and talk about LGBTIQ topics in their classrooms, which led to a gradual but steady increase in the number of workshops. Due to this growing interest, especially after drag queen Conchita Wurst won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2014, our team started to professionalize and rethink its practices. The group became a more

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inclusive space for trans and intersex people and more engaged in discussions on gender, bodies, and sexuality, by drawing on concepts and theories within Gender and Queer Studies, in addition to postmodern and postcolonial theoretical approaches. This shift corresponded with changing the group's name to *queerconnexion*, which became a registered NGO (independent from *HOSI*) in 2016.

As part of this general transformation, the activists involved in *queerconnexion* further examined their approaches and developed a better understanding of their work's impact on the students. This research process and critical self-reflection aimed at deepening the group's understanding of what later emerged as their main method: autobiographical storytelling. Over the years, autobiographical storytelling has become an integral part of each workshop the group has held in schools. The desire to research originated during a phase of in-depth discussions about autobiographical storytelling and from a desire to conduct the outreach work in a way that could provide support for LGBTIQ youth. It should simultaneously allow for politicization and for the destabilization of heteronormative narratives within the classroom.

Therefore, the group launched a 15-month action research project about autobiographical storytelling by LGBTIQ activists. Here, action research refers to systematic and theoretically grounded research on a specific pedagogical situation, which is led by the explorations and analyses that emerge from pedagogical acts themselves (Prengel, 2010). Both authors were or are board members of the organization and had the advantage of experiencing the group's research process first-hand, with the second author being directly involved in the group's research process. The findings and ideas presented here are largely based on the collaborative work with the whole group.

This chapter discusses the LGBTIQ activists' autobiographical storytelling in terms of their practical experiences and *queerconnexion's* overall research process. Therefore, the chapter will address the question of how autobiographical storytelling by LGBTIQ activists can contribute to supporting LGBTIQ learners and to destabilizing heteronormativity in (Austrian) secondary schools. We argue that autobiographical storytelling by LGBTIQ activists is situated within powerful discourses on and practices of sexuality and gender. When situated within the context of a heteronormative society and educational system, autobiographical storytelling needs to challenge the normalization of dominant and privileged

gender and sexual identities and counter notions of authentic and invariant identities. Here, we take examples from *queerconnexion's* work and theoretical reflections in order to illustrate this. By critically examining autobiographical storytelling as a method in queer activism in schools, and by discussing the organizational concerns surrounding it, we wish to inspire other activist groups to engage in similar processes, and offer a contribution to research on LGBTIQ activism within educational systems and schools. In the following section, we provide a short summary of *queerconnexion's* (practical) research and elaborate on the theoretical framework of our work. Afterwards, we briefly discuss how LGBTIQ topics are addressed in Austrian schools in order to give some insight into the context in which our research took place. We then describe how the activists at *queerconnexion* challenge heteronormative structures in schools, and discuss the possibilities as well as the limitations of autobiographical storytelling in queer educational work. We conclude with a summary of our arguments and relate our discussion to research literature on this topic and to the recent policy developments concerning LGBTIQ issues in schools.

### ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS OF THE QUEERCONNEXION

In order to address our research question, we draw on the experiences of *queerconnexion*, an LGBTIQ activist group in Vienna, Austria. Over a period of one and a half years, the group thought about ways to destabilize heteronormativity in secondary schools through outreach work in local schools. The research process can be understood as action research, as it was conducted and embedded within the explorations and analyses of pedagogical work (Prengel, 2010; Schütze, 1994). Professional pedagogical work is based on analyses of the situation within which it takes place, which in turn allow for a context-specific plan of action to be developed (Prengel, 2010). Therefore, the aim of such an action research process is to create a deeper understanding of the situation and to broaden perspectives on the situation in which pedagogical practices take place (Moser, 1995; Prengel, 2010).

The research process took about fifteen months and consisted of phases of diagnosis and reorientation, following the description of action research that Annedore Prengel provides (2010), a German scholar who works on inclusive education with a focus on disability. We began with the phase of diagnosis, where we discussed the unsuitability and insufficiency

of the existing practices, from which we developed our research questions. Afterwards, we drew up a research plan and acquired a small amount of funding. In several weekend group seminars and at international meetings with other LGBTIQ activist projects, the group reflected on using autobiographical storytelling in LGBTIQ activism. During the second phase of reorientation, new concepts for action were developed, realized, and reevaluated. Based on the previous discussions, the activists involved in the research process prepared the school workshops, and met again afterwards to reflect on how the method of autobiographical storytelling went. Over sixteen months, the activists repeatedly entered into phases of using storytelling as a key method in their workshops, and phases of extremely conscious reflection in small groups. This enabled an ongoing internal evaluation and helped to actively involve the entire team and the different forms of knowledge they contributed based on their diverse professional and personal backgrounds (Gudjons, 1992). External supervisors helped the team systematically review particular situations, organizational aspects, and to factor into the analysis the effects of the different personality traits of the activists involved (Dlugosch, 2006). Toward the end of the research process, the authors discussed this chapter with members of the group. In addition, the insights gained from the research process are now being used to train new team members. This chapter, therefore, draws on the dense practical knowledge the LGBTIQ activists obtained in the field and has a retroactive effect on the group itself (Prenzel, 2010).

### LGBTIQ ACTIVISM BETWEEN NORMALIZATION, EMPOWERMENT, AND DECONSTRUCTION

The theories guiding the activism had largely been inspired by social psychology, which was partly due to the professional background of some of the long-term activists involved. One of the main ideas was that encountering (coming into contact with) people who are openly queer would decrease prejudice and derogatory attitudes and create a space for discussion in which young queer people could be empowered. This idea was based on contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), which posits the idea that intergroup contact usually reduces intergroup prejudice. Indeed, evaluations of projects similar to *queerconnexion* indicate that this kind of activism has a positive effect on students' attitudes toward queer people (Timmermanns, 2014).

Although this idea from contact theory is still part of queerconnex-ion's pedagogical approach, the work of *queerconnexion* is also informed by postmodern and queer theories. This shift in thinking also took place due to the work of especially trans\* and nonbinary persons in making the organization more inclusive for gender non-confirming people. This shift led to what one could call a queering of the organization, as the understandings of gender and sexuality within the organization were fundamentally questioned. One outcome was the change in the group's name from *peerconnexion* to *queerconnexion* and the establishment of *queerconnexion* as an independent organization. Here, queerness is not only understood as "a negation of established values but [as] a positive and creative construction of different ways of life" (Halperin, 1995, p. 80). Halperin points to an ambivalence inherent within our use of the term queer as well. While we understand the term queer as a concept that entails a critical stance toward power dynamics and categorizing bodies, desires, and genders—and as a concept that is necessarily unstable (Carlin & DiGrazia, 2004)—we still use it as an umbrella term for LGBTIQ people.

Since then, ideas from queer theory have continued to shape our understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality (Butler, 1990; Villa, 2004). Instead of assuming gender and sexual identities to be an authentic and stable essence inherent within any given subject, sexual, and gender identities need to be understood as modes of subjectivation, which position a person differently in society. Subjectivation is to be understood as an ambivalent process (Boger, 2015; Butler, 1990). On the one hand, subjectivation entails a subjection to preexisting discourses such as heteronormativity. By the notion of heteronormativity, scholars refer to the discourses that normalize heterosexuality, dyadic sexes, and (only) cisgender identities<sup>2</sup> as the prevailing and normal identities in a society (Villa, 2004). With reference to schools, heteronormativity is to be seen as "the organizational structures in schools that support heterosexuality [and cisgender] as normal and anything else as deviant" (Francis, 2017, p. 12). On the other hand, subjectivation is considered a prerequisite to becoming an intelligible subject and to obtaining the ability to act (Butler, 1990; Villa, 2004). This includes the ability to challenge heteronormative expectations (Jäckle, 2009).

This concept of gender and sexuality is connected to a critique of normality and power and to the interlocking of normality and deviance (Villa, 2004). In this vein, rather than referring to a statistical figure, normality is understood with regard to power, making it important to question "how

an image of normality is constructed” (Boger, 2014, p. 143). Part of this critique is the idea that the normalization of certain identities and practices relies on so-called deviant identities so that they can appear normal. Kevin Kumashiro (2002) speaks of identities that are marked as deviant, and are thus constructed as the Other, referring to “groups that are traditionally marginalized, denigrated, or violated (i.e., Othered) in society” (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 32).<sup>3</sup> He therefore calls for anti-oppressive education that should not just be *education for and about the Other*, but it should also question normalization and the positioning of identities and desires differently within a society. Such heteronormativity-critical education aims to be an LGBTIQ-inclusive education, not at better integrating LGBTIQ youth into a heteronormative school system (Boger, 2015; Francis, 2017).

The analysis of the ambivalences of subjectivation and its particular shape in heteronormative societies must be taken into account if one is to engage in educational work that is critical of heteronormativity (Hartmann, 2018). While it aims at a critique of heteronormativity and of essentialist identities, it must respond to (young) people’s need to be recognized and find answers to their questions about their own (current) identities (Hartmann, 2018). This is especially true for LGBTIQ youth who are especially vulnerable within a heteronormative society. Based on this, activists can draw upon three strategies for inclusive education (Boger, 2015): normalization, deconstruction, and empowerment. Normalization aims at being perceived as a normal person; deconstruction aims at critiquing binary thinking; and empowerment aims at strengthening one’s autonomy and self-determination (Boger, 2015). All three strategies can function as important tools in anti-oppressive education (Boger, 2015; Francis, 2017). Addressing ambivalences within educational settings becomes both a task and a method for anti-oppressive education (Boger, 2015; Hartmann, 2018).

A queer theoretical perspective views heteronormativity as a narrowing of intelligible identities and a restriction of agency that comes with certain identities (Villa, 2004). One aim of educational work critical of heteronormativity is to broaden the participants’ scope of action regarding sexual and gender identities (Hartmann, 2018). Based on this, LGBTIQ-inclusive education should aim to develop “approaches that address normalcy and the normalization of heterosexuals [and cis-dyadic people] and work against privileging” (Francis, 2017, p. 24) specific gender and sexual identities. To do so, Kevin Kumashiro proposes teaching in a way that



troubles students' ideas of gender and sexuality so that new knowledge can be constructed (Kumashiro, 2002). Francis expands on Kumashiro's idea by proposing teaching should be based on "what it means to address our resistances to discomforting knowledge, and what it means to put uncertainties and crisis at the center of the learning process" (2017, p. 8).

## LEGAL SITUATION FOR LGBTIQ IN AUSTRIA AND AUSTRIAN SCHOOLS

The situation of LGBTIQ people in Austria changed fundamentally when in 1971, Austria decriminalized homosexual acts with the support of the Social Democratic government. In 2009, binary trans people who had not (yet) undergone medical treatment became legally recognized. In 2018, Alex Jürgen, and intersex person and activist, won a court case for the legal recognition of a sex classification other than male or female.<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that the equality for LGBTI(Q) persons regarding adoption rights, marriage, and age of consent was not obtained through a democratic process or by amendments to the national laws through Austria's own National Council but was imposed by European and Austrian High Courts. Although the legal and the social situation has noticeably changed in Austria, LGBTIQ people are still often perceived as deviant from the heterosexual and cisgender norms and continue to face multiple forms of discrimination and violence (Schönplugg, Hofmann, Klapeer, Huber, & Eberhardt, 2015). This is also the case for LGBTIQ youth in Austrian schools.

In Austria, schools are legally required to further the students' personal development, of which sexuality is considered integral (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung/BmBWF, 2018, p. 8).<sup>5</sup> There are two legal acts that concern diverse sexualities and gender identities in the classroom: the "Reflexive Gender Pedagogy and Equality Act" of 2018 and "Sexuality Education Act" of 2015. Schools are legally obliged to adhere to these acts. The Sexuality Education Act (2015) establishes the basis and content of sex education, highlighting a positive approach to human sexuality. It stipulates that educators include diverse sexual and gender-specific ways of living in their teaching and encourage the students to develop relevant skills, such as critical thinking and communication skills (BmBWF, 2015, pp. 3f.). The Sexuality Education Act also addresses homophobia and transphobia and encourages schools to adopt a universal pedagogical stance that should counter any derogatory,

discriminatory, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic actions or statements (BmBWF, 2015, p. 12). These points make the Sexuality Education Act an important pillar for anti-oppressive education within the field of sexuality and gender identity in Austria. In 2018, the “Reflexive Gender Pedagogy and Equality Act” further builds upon the groundwork laid by the Sexuality Education Act. While it does criticize restrictive role models, it fails to include intersex or nonbinary identities, which therefore maintains their marginalization (BmBWF, 2018).<sup>6</sup>

In practice, hardly any of these points are present in curricula, teacher training, or teaching materials. There is little to no support, learning, or teaching materials available to teachers and, as mentioned above, there are no mandatory subject-specific amendments (Feller & Stürzgh, 2017). In addition, there is no guarantee that people studying to become teachers will encounter gender and sexual diversity during their studies, as these courses are only offered as electives (Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes, 2019; Universität Wien, n.d.). Therefore, it is possible that young teachers lack basic knowledge regarding non-heterosexual, intersex, and non-cisgender identities, as is in many other countries (Francis, 2018; Lehtonen, 2017).

## THE SITUATION OF LGBTIQ YOUTH AT SCHOOL

There are only few empirical studies regarding the situation of LGBTIQ youth in Austria. The study “Queer in Wien” focuses on the situation of LGBTIQ persons in Vienna (Schönpflug et al., 2015). These results can be complemented by a study about LGBT<sup>7</sup> people in Austria as a whole (FRA European Agency of Fundamental Rights, 2013). Since there is no detailed study for Austria regarding the situation of LGBT(IQ) youth at school, the German study “*Coming-out – und dann...?!*” (*Coming out—what then?*) is helpful, as it could be considered comparable to the experiences of LGBT(I)Q students in Austria (Krell & Oldemeier, 2017).<sup>8</sup> The study highlights that many participants avoided coming out at school because they feared exclusion and bullying (Kleiner, 2015; Krell & Oldemeier, 2017, p. 17). Only one in three adult LGBTIQ people in Vienna reported being out at school (Schönpflug et al., 2015). This corresponds to European-wide figures, where 68% of LGBTIQ adolescents report hiding their sexual orientation during their school years (FRA, 2013). Regarding coming out to themselves, the majority of LGBTIQ youth perceived the phase of inner awareness as “medium” to “difficult” and

reported facing loneliness in the ways they view their own sexual or gender identity (Krell & Oldemeier, 2017). The problematic use of the word “fag” as well as the absence of teachers who openly speak out against anti-LGBTIQ discrimination have been confirmed by this and other studies in Austria and globally (FRA, 2013; Francis, 2017; Kleiner, 2015; Krell & Oldemeier, 2017, p. 21; Schönpflug et al., 2015).

These findings reveal a need for action that would improve the situation for queer youth at school. The FRA study offers clear policy recommendations. These include the need for teaching materials on diverse gender and sexual realities, role models in schools, as well as training for teachers on how to deal with incidents of homophobic and transphobic bullying and harassment (FRA, 2013, p. 12; Schönpflug et al., 2015, p. 5). When asked what might improve their situation, students responded with the desire for role models, increased representation, and teachers to support them in instances of anti-LGBTIQ bullying. Hardly any LGBTIQ teachers in Vienna are out to their colleagues and students (Schönpflug et al., 2015, p. 68).<sup>9</sup> This exacerbates the lack of LGBTIQ role models. LGBTIQ youth also feel the need to obtain information that can make it easier for them to explain their situation and to use appropriate arguments. Many young queer people have to educate their peers, correct false assumptions, and deal with derogatory stereotypes.

This situation illustrates that there is indeed a necessity for education for and about the (queer) other (Francis, 2017; Kumashiro, 2002) in Austria. Addressing this need has always been a motivation for *queerconnection*'s LGBTIQ activists, as many have had such experiences in their own lives. The group's outreach work does not focus on more inclusive school structures, teacher education, or the production of diverse teaching materials. While the group acknowledges the importance of these tasks, its specific focus is on the representation of gender and sexual diversity in schools through autobiographical storytelling. Its outreach work aims to critique heteronormativity and the normalization of privileged identities. The Sexual Education Act explicitly states that teachers should seek support from external experts in order to cope with difficult challenges appropriate to the age and needs of individual pupils and the class as a whole (BmBWF, 2018, p. 6). As external experts, the activists do not evaluate the students' work, as they are situated outside of school hierarchies, allowing for a different kind of learning environment. Since autumn 2018, when the right-wing conservative government initiated additional restrictions on sex education, the access of external experts to Austrian

schools has been significantly reduced. As a consequence, the disputes have put the Sexual Education Act under review, which complicates the work of LGBTIQ activists.<sup>10</sup> Although LGBTIQ activism is not the same as sexual education—despite the thematic overlap between the two—the new directive directly affects both fields of work.

### QUEERCONNEXION: PROJECT, ORGANIZATION, AND ACTIVISTS

The LGBTIQ activists from *queerconnexion* counter these problems by doing outreach work at secondary schools and autobiographical storytelling. The workshops last three to five hours and are aimed at young people between the ages of 12 and 18. Most workshops take place in secondary school. Over the last three years there has been an increasing number of inquiries from other educational institutions and youth centers as well. In 2013, experienced team members drew up the concept for *queerconnexion* with the aim of ensuring the quality of the workshops. Conceptually, *queerconnexion* bears a resemblance to the quality standards of the umbrella organization for queer educational work in Germany called *Queere Bildung e. V.*<sup>11</sup> Its standards stipulate mandatory in-depth training before the activists are permitted to participate in the outreach work, training sessions every six months, as well as regular team meetings and supervision. The team members receive training on issues, such as intersex, sexual education, and faith and queerness. In addition, each workshop is prepared and followed-up by the respective team.

As an organization, *queerconnexion* relies on donations as there is no regular funding so far. If schools can afford to do so, the team asks for allowances. Offering the workshops free of charge means that all of *queerconnexion's* proceeds (donations, funding for short projects) are used for further education, supervision, and for buying workshop materials. Team members or individual workshop leaders are not paid. The decision to offer the workshops for free is political, as school budgets for external activities are often bound to the support from parents' associations. This decision also affects how many workshops can be held, the team's configuration, and the issues covered by the autobiographical storytelling approach. Over the last three years, there have been more workshop requests than *queerconnexion* has been able to respond to. Responding to the requests for as many workshops as possible runs the risk of team members depleting their own resources, which in turn compromises

their health. This is a recurring issue and requires a constant balancing act, which is all too familiar for numerous volunteer-run organizations. An ongoing debate within *queerconnexion* concerns the issue that people qualified to hold a workshop often find themselves in precarious situations and are dependent on wage labor, and are therefore unable to or find it difficult to consistently be part of the team. This particularly concerns people affected by multiple discrimination. In any case, this is one of the reasons that the team consists almost exclusively of white, non-disabled university students.

For the *queerconnexion* team members, the main motivations to participate in the association and hold workshops is the wish to fight prejudices and carry out anti-discrimination work, with the specific aim to empower queer youth and address non-queer youth as allies. The majority of the volunteers also want to be able to give a positive prospect for struggling queer adolescents just by being there, and being a living, breathing queer person. Many team members are in their 20s, hence they can be perceived by the students as representing their own near future. Doing this work requires a high degree of willingness for self-reflection and the development of a pedagogical attitude. Some members are in study programs related to social or educational professions, but most of them are not, which is why *queerconnexion* has an intensive process of introducing new activists and an ongoing program of reflection. In this way, the activists become equipped with the educational skills necessary to negotiate this dynamic educational situation.

At the moment, anyone who considers themselves part of the queer spectrum can become a member of *queerconnexion*. Usually, the team members are open to sharing this information with the adolescents. The organization believes that each activist is an expert in their own living environment and life reality. For that reason, each member of *queerconnexion* may have a different understanding of what it means to be queer or to live a queer life. As long as these different understandings do not marginalize or discriminate other (queer) persons, the team allows these differences to be a central message of the workshops: being queer is and can be an important aspect of your life, but it can also have a different meaning for each and every one. As pointed out above, a key factor of the educational setting that *queerconnexion* creates is that the activists share their own experiences. Here, the activists' personalities, attitudes, and narrations become the central tools they use to identify and question heteronormativity. The queer activists can provide a positive outlook (not

only) for queer youth possibly struggling with life perspectives. For some adolescents, it may even be the first time they get in touch with a person who is openly queer. For others, the team members might be (desperately needed) role models. Other queer adolescents are already involved in the queer community and very open about that in their class or peer group. So, what should queer activists consider and how can the different demands and needs of young LGBTIQ people be met?

### SCHOOL VISITS AND PRACTICES IN SCHOOL

Usually, teachers or those in charge of extracurricular youth programs ask *queerconnexion* about their outreach work and workshops. After giving detailed information about the youth group or class in question, the organization nominates a team of activists that consists of at least two people, who are assembled as gender and sexuality diverse as possible. In order not to reaffirm binary gender norms, classes are not separated into gendered groups, unlike most sex education programs in Austria (Mart Enzendorfer & Paul Haller, this book).

In order to create space for discussion and to broach delicate topics, such as sexuality and gender identity, it can be helpful if students are able to talk about these issues with people from outside their institution, rather than only with the school's or youth institution's educational staff (Martin & Nitschke, 2017, p. 15). As students only meet the workshop facilitators only once or twice, the atmosphere is more anonymous, which can make it easier for them to express shameful, controversial, or stereotypical ideas. The team works to create an atmosphere where this is possible.

At the beginning of every workshop the team introduces themselves and the organization. First they introduce the general terms of the workshop and agree on guidelines for the discussion with the students, for example, to speak about their own experiences, or other issues in an anonymous manner. This aims to prevent unwanted outing of persons during the process. The workshops take place during class time, but participation is voluntary and students are permitted to leave the classroom at any time. After the modes of communication are commonly agreed upon, the *queerconnexion* members first get an overview of the students' knowledge of queer issues, their level of interest in the workshop, and if they are

aware of recent legal changes in rights of homo/bi/trans/intersex individuals. Two methods *queerconnexion* always uses, but can vary in practice, are a method for terms related to sex, gender, and desire; and autobiographical storytelling. Depending on time available and the students' interest, a variety of methods are employed. The workshops close with providing information about different LGBTIQ organizations in Vienna and their specific focus, so that students know where they can go to receive information and counseling. The students are also invited to give feedback. So far, *queerconnexion* has received positive responses to the method of autobiographical storytelling. The openness and opportunity for discussion have been highlighted and well received.

### EMBEDDING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STORYTELLING IN OUTREACH WORK

Using the method of clarifying terms, the team tries to show the students the difference between physical sex characteristics, gender identity, sexuality, and romantic attraction. A focus lies on explaining that gender cannot be extrapolated from sexual or romantic attraction (or vice versa). In the process of discussing the terms, the adolescents write different terms on small cards, which the workshop facilitators add to and arrange. The categories are not considered to be rigid. Arranging the cards helps illustrate the differences between sex, gender, and desire and how they are related. Talking about terms is necessary in order to clarify ambiguities, to make differences visible, and to try to convey a preliminary understanding of what being queer might mean and the spectrum of the term. With the focus on categorizations of identities, from a queer perspective, this method includes problematic aspects (Lehtonen, 2017). Nonetheless, it has some advantages. There is a tension that needs to be negotiated between finding the appropriate language, one that is easy to understand and refers to (stereotypical) knowledge, on the one hand, as well as to community terms that might not be easy to understand, on the other hand. The topics of inter\*, trans, nonbinary, and asexual/aromantic are explained in detail, as the students usually have hardly any knowledge about them. This is particularly important, because providing insight into realities of marginalized gender identities makes it a lot easier to discuss these topics when it comes to autobiographical narrations. Making LGBTIQ people and their varying experiences visible in the classroom disrupts heteronormative thinking, especially, when

touching silenced aspects of LGBTIQ issues (Francis, 2017). This method graphically illustrates how heteronormativity narrows socially intelligible bodies, identities and desires, and sets it in contrast to the great variety of LGBTIQ realities. Alongside this, the discussions can then also address critical concepts from Queer Studies such as heteronormativity, *queer*, and critiques of normalization processes.

In addition to the autobiographical remarks throughout the entire workshop, the outreach work frames the way autobiographical narrations are addressed with additional exercises. *Queerconnexion's* outreach work starts with students asking questions anonymously and, later, openly.<sup>12</sup> Some questions are generally about LGBTIQ people, like "how many people are gay?". Many questions are addressed heterocentrically, but the curiosity they entail allows to challenge heteronormative limitation (Francis, 2017). Due to this, the facilitators answer to the questions in a strategic way, including aspects that generate curiosity. Many such questions generate narratives, which open up space for the LGBTIQ activists to share more detailed autobiographical narratives. This is important, because the activists facilitating the workshop always adapt their narratives to the students' specific needs, interests, and language. The questions mainly include the issues related to internal and external coming out, family, future, laws, sex, relationships, community, discrimination, gender roles, and transition. *Queerconnexion* tries to engage with all questions or statements in a respectful manner. Every question is answered, but no question is read out loud directly to avoid speculation or involuntarily outing students. The activists conducting the outreach workshops never judge questions or statements, even if they contain stereotypical content, instead they are answered in an age-appropriate and factual manner (Recla & Schmitz-Weicht, 2015). Critical questions and prejudices are put up for discussion, since in most of the cases, these can be used to spark a discussion and therefore help to establish a culture for discussing gender and sexual identities among the students. Still, the facilitating team makes it a point to mark violent and openly demeaning statements as such, and to utilize language in a way that is gender sensitive and avoids discrimination as much as possible.

Autobiographical storytelling allows personal experiences to simultaneously be shared in an authentic and pedagogically reflected manner. It is very challenging, because it takes place in a highly dynamic educational setting. In principle, every question is checked to ensure that the question is decoded in terms of the underlying concepts and content. The



workshop facilitators also assess how they feel about answering a personal question as well as how the young people might feel about it. Questions concerning sexual practices are not answered personally, because this would violate personal boundaries.

This method of autobiographical storytelling gives the young people an opportunity to engage in a conversation about being queer and to ask questions they might have about it. The method has been chosen, because it allows the activists facilitating the workshops to include topics that they consider relevant, such as discussing the use of words such as ‘gay’ and ‘disabled’ within the context of discrimination. By working with autobiographical storytelling and answering the students’ questions, the *queer-connexion* team explains how it feels when they hear people use “gay” and “disabled” pejoratively. This creates a basis for both those attending and facilitating the workshop to select together what they consider funny, ok, and unwelcome and insulting. Furthermore, by building up an understanding for and recognizing terms of identity chosen by a community itself (of any oppressed group), the activist facilitators invite learners to not only recognize this, but to take it as a first step toward acting in solidarity with the “Other” (LesMigraS, 2012).

Although this method is capable of opening spaces for discussion and addressing many issues, there are a few things that should be considered. Queer students in the workshops may be experiencing a variety of different situations in their lives. Some may be suffering due to the situation in school or at home, while others have more positive experiences. As a consequence, their expectations also greatly vary. Some try not to relate the topic too much and remain as far removed from it as possible, while others use the workshop as a possibility to out themselves and talk about what they expect from their fellow classmates, while others seek answers to pressing issues. For example, queer students might use the space to come out at school. Delving deeper into the subject depends on the atmosphere and the skills of the activist facilitators, but the focus generally remains on the activists’ narrations, as mentioned above. The goal of the outreach work is not for LGBTIQ students to out themselves. Because *queerconnexion*’s outreach work usually is a one-time instance, the LGBTIQ activist facilitators would not be able to take the responsibility to go through such a process with the student and class. In accordance with the standards Queere Bildung, e. V. has laid out for queer education, the focus should remain on the queer activists facilitating, who serve as a focal point for the participants to project their ideas upon (Bundesverband

Queere Bildung, e. V., 2018, p. 13). From time to time, students want to talk with the LGBTIQ activists after the workshop. The students might ask advice for themselves or for a person they are close to, or to come out as LGBTIQ. The workshop facilitators always assume that queer students are present in the classroom. *Queerconnexion* surmises that the presence and authority of the (adult) queer activists alters the power relations in the classroom, at least for the duration of the workshop. This might provide a safer environment for queer youth to express difficult opinions as well. In most cases, the students have a good sense of their classmates' opinions already, so those expressing possibly discriminatory statements often come as no surprise. Instead, such a setting can give the students an opportunity to challenge discriminatory statements or opinions, and possibly transform them due to the (temporary) change and questioning of the normative framework due to the presence and actions of the *queerconnexion* facilitators.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIONS

Learning processes that are critical of heteronormativity can be initiated when autobiographical narratives question the students' assumptions about gender and sexuality, and connect them to power dynamics within society. The activists facilitating the workshops therefore adapt their ways of narrating and the experiences shared according to the respective classroom situation.

Although learning processes rely on moments of crises (Kumashiro, 2002), students still have a need for security, clarity, and stability (Hartmann, 2015). Critiquing heteronormativity and essentialist identities must offer space to respond to the young people's questions about (current) identity questions, especially of LGBTIQ youth who are more vulnerable in a heteronormative society. In order to underscore that the use of labels also serve an important function during different stages in one's life, the autobiographical narrations that the facilitators share might include stories about how they felt when they were wrongly labeled, or about moments of relief and delight of coming to terms with their identity. In doing so, they give the students the possibility to understand that terms for sexual and gender identities as such, which emerge from discussions within the communities, are also a kind of response to oppression and the associated harmful experiences (Sedgwick, 1990).

An important point of (auto)biographical narratives, which critique heteronormative assumptions, is that they clearly show the ruptures and ambivalences within biographies and identities. Furthermore, all identities (not only LGBTIQ identities) should be portrayed as fluid and changeable, yet intelligible. The aim is to point out that biographies do not always fit into heteronormative narratives. Jack Halberstam points out that queerness opens up the possibility for temporalities to run opposite to heteronormative timelines, and that queer lives offer a “break from heterosexual life narratives” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 70). The workshop facilitators offer various different responses to the question as to whether the team members will be gay, lesbian, bisexual their whole lives. For example, some answers include that they don’t think that their sexuality or gender identity will change, but that it is always possible, and that they are fine with that. Others say very clearly that they cannot say how long which a term will feel right for them. In any case, none of the facilitators claim that identities and sexualities will always remain stable, as they try to keep the idea open-ended, rather than catering to a desire for closure. This brings up a difficulty with this method. In this activist approach, which *queer-connexion* employs in their workshops, only LGBTIQ people tell their stories (and not cis-hetero people). For the reasons already described, we attach importance to telling these stories as flexible, entailing contradictions, changes, and discursive limitations. The risk of this approach is that it might strengthen processes of Othering by addressing in detail only “deviant” sexualities and gender identities, which are changeable, which may make LGBTIQ identities appear to be the only flexible identities, or that are not “real” identities at all. In order to destabilize heteronormative assumptions, it is also important to point out to the fragility and ambivalences of cis-dyadic-heterosexual concepts of identity. These risks point to a general problematic of the autobiographical approach, particularly from an intersectional point of view. Because autobiographic storytelling also always includes aspects of privileged and oppressed experiences, the question of its power-critical potential needs to be considered from the perspective of the Other and of privileged identities.

Working as a team allows for a diversification of strategies aiming at inclusion. Because two or three people usually hold the workshop, different perspectives on the students’ questions can be presented. Thus, each activist facilitator opts for a different narration strategy: deconstruction, empowerment, and normalization (Boger, 2015). The LGBTIQ activists strategically adapt the strategy based on which might be most effective

and needed regarding the question and context at hand (Boger, 2015). For example, with some questions such as “when did you decide to be homosexual?”, “how can you be sure,” “is homosexuality curable” and “why don’t you prefer to be heterosexual,” it is important to normalize being LGBTIQ and empower queer youth. In the empowerment approach, it is important to note that this might present a dilemma: if critical feminist and queer narratives open up spaces up for young people who, for example, live at home under patriarchal conditions, this might present difficulties for the learners (Francis & DePalma, 2015). Therefore, in outreach work it is immensely important to consider ways of dealing with practical dilemmas. This can be done by openly addressing the different normative expectations and orientations students are confronted with by their relatives and authority figures, and by including coping strategies students have already developed themselves. Furthermore, *queerconnexion* aims to include pleasure, joy, creativity, and (collective) agency in the narratives about LGBTIQ lives and people, as well as problematic aspects such as violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ people (Hartmann, 2018, p. 30). This choice is in line with affective theory, which highlights the relevance of approaches and topics chosen regarding the affective responses to the respective issues (Baier, Binswanger, & Häberlein, 2014; Hartmann, 2018). Focusing strongly on experiences of violence and discrimination may evoke empathy, but it can also have the effect of stabilizing the dichotomy of accepted and oppressed identities (Hartmann, 2018). Thus, experiences of violence and discrimination are included in the autobiographical narrations, but in a nuanced manner, and highlighted as only one aspect of LGBTIQ experience, and not as the starting point of a narrative.

Apart from trying to counter discrimination on an organizational level, marginalized LGBTIQ voices can be included through the use of autobiographical and activist media and comics. The thematic focus on and comprehensive examination of the autobiographical within the *queerconnexion* team have led to in-depth reflections and to the development of innovative approaches. The *queerconnexion* team has compiled the comprehensive list of both frequent and rarely addressed topics and questions within the workshops. By sorting through these, the team obtained an overview of the topics that required a more active introduction, and those which were received too little attention due to the team’s composition. In response to this, *queerconnexion* has compiled a list of videos, comics, and texts in which queer persons with disabilities, queer BPOC persons,

rainbow families, and intersex individuals speak for themselves. These can be presented as autobiographical narrations themselves in workshops, whenever appropriate. In addition to this pragmatic approach of making marginalized groups visible within the queer community, the current team is called upon to change the conditions in a way that fundamentally challenges racist, classist, binary, and ableist structures.

There are various limitations to the autobiographical narrative approach, depending on who is involved in the workshop, how much space the method assumes, and the structural conditions of the workshop itself. As a currently predominantly white, academic and nondisabled group, *queerconnexion* is especially confronted with the issue that it does not represent the diverse spectrum of LGBTIQ communities. Therefore, throughout the entire process of the outreach work the members of *queerconnexion* must constantly question and counter different kinds of privilege. Including an intersectional perspective on processes of Othering and inequality is a key aspect of the autobiographical narrations. For example, in many workshops it is necessary to counter homonational discourses that champion successful Austrian LGBTIQ policies at the expense of upholding colonial and/or racist stereotypes and discrimination.

From the activist facilitators' perspective, the autobiographical approach is not always easy. Challenging situations might arise that might also become hurtful. Therefore, it is very important that the facilitators have an opportunity to speak about such things after a workshop and always have the option to cancel a workshop. In addition, the research made it clear that autobiographical storytelling affects the LGBTIQ activist facilitators as well, since they are repeatedly asked to tell their coming out story, or to talk about difficult and deeply personal topics. Telling (aspects of) "your" story again and again in a classroom has an affect. During the first few workshops at schools, many LGBTI activists were nervous about telling their stories to young people, and about being open about those issues, which often include hurtful experiences. Many of them had a tough time at school themselves, which made going back to that same institution a difficult thing to do for many. However, the activists now enter the classroom as adults and backed by the power of the institution (or at least, of the teacher who invited them). Becoming familiar with the outreach work and autobiographical storytelling allowed many activists to develop something of a "professional narrative" in the course of the outreach work, which could also be adapted to certain other

classroom situations. Still, several activists reported that doing autobiographical storytelling had an influence on their private identities as well. To some activists, telling their story again and again led them to distance themselves from certain events in their lives, such as the legal process of obtaining the appropriate gender identity. By perceiving an event as a story, the experience became detached from their emotional life. For others, the process of storytelling and answering questions led them to challenge identity labels and intensified the transformation of their own sexual or gender identity. The somewhat anonymous setting of the classroom allows the activists to develop a playful relationship to the autobiographical aspects disclosed during the outreach work.

Bearing the limitations mentioned here in mind, *queerconnexion* sees the autobiographical method as a possibility to build understanding and connections to the students (Hartmann, 2018). Creating an open atmosphere for addressing sexuality and gender issues, LGBTIQ activists can address silences that arise from heteronormative discourses in schools (Francis, 2017; Martin & Nitschke, 2017). In a way though, this kind of activism “fills the gaps” (Lehtonen, 2017, p. 24) left by a heteronormative schooling system and is running the risk to serve as a relieve in the face of critiques instead as a challenge to heteronormative structures of schools (ibid.).

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have engaged with the question of what it takes for autobiographical storytelling by LGBTIQ activists to have a destabilizing effect on heteronormativity in schools. As a first sight, this kind of LGBTIQ activism in schools is restricted to contexts where LGBTIQ people are not criminalized by law. We argued that Austrian schools are heteronormative institutions and that autobiographical storytelling by LGBTIQ activists can disrupt heteronormative assumptions in schools. To do so, narratives used in queer educational contexts need to challenge closure, essentialist notions of identities, and to question the normalization of privileged identities. We also argued that autobiographical storytelling should be embedded in a professional framework in which gender and sexuality are understood as a dimension of structural power in society. This allows activists to understand their position as the Other in the classroom and to question their own privileges. Engaging with powerful heteronormative discourses, the method of autobiographical storytelling

is challenged by the impulses of both the activists and the students to present or assume coherent and intelligible identities. When LGBTIQ activists enter the classroom and share delicate and fluid narratives, there is a danger that these narratives do not destabilize essentialist thinking concerning gender and sexual identities, but that students might classify it as a characteristic of the Other, and fail to extend this critique to normalized identities. Activists have to consider such challenges and adapt their narrative and educational strategies accordingly. A further challenge is language, which not only limits thinking and understanding in itself, but can also be used to expand categories of thinking about gender and sexuality.

It would be interesting to take a more detailed look at the effects of activism in schools on LGBTIQ activists themselves. We could only describe our first impressions of how autobiographical storytelling affects the activists of *queerconnexion*. A more detailed discussion of the method with regard to (queer) narrative theory could provide interesting insights to conceptualization of autobiographical storytelling as it was presented in this chapter.

With the focus on the thoughts and experiences of the students, this kind of activism does not aim to change heteronormativity on other levels within the schooling system, such as teacher education or regular curricula. Therefore, cooperation with other LGBTIQ and educational organizations is important. In Austria, integrating LGBTIQ issues into educational programs, and especially into the teacher education, would be an important step. Apart from that, during the outreach work, LGBTIQ students often reached out to the activists and stated their need for a clear anti-oppressive stance among the staff at their school. This corresponds with the results of multiple studies that highlight with the need of LGBTIQ students for role models and adequate consulting and support possibilities (FRA, 2013; Schönplflug et al. 2015).

Current political developments that aim to regulate sexual education outside school also restrict the scope of action for LGBTIQ activism in Austrian schools. These restrictions, which have been ushered in by Austria's conservative right-wing government, are in line with a global trend toward anti-feminist and anti-LGBTIQ policies. Still, there is resistance to these restrictions, and it remains to be seen in how far their implementation will restrict LGBTIQ activism in Austrian schools.

Drawing on a long process of organizational growth, and in the face of limited funding, we hope that the discussion of *queerconnexion's* work

might stimulate other kinds of LGBTIQ activism in schools. This adds to the questioning of autobiographical-oriented LGBTIQ activism in schools from a queer and intersectional perspective (Lehtonen, 2017). With this contribution, we would like to highlight the possibilities that open up through employing autobiographical storytelling as a (queer and power critical) method, which needs to be learned, tested, critically reflected upon, and continuously further developed. While writing this chapter has had an impact on our activist practices, we hope this chapter can contribute to demonstrating the diversity of the scope and reach of LGBTIQ activism and its commitment to work toward anti-oppressive education in schools across the globe.

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## NOTES

1. Founded in 1979, the Homosexual Initiative Vienna (HOSI) is the longest-standing registered gay organization in Austria. It organizes the annual Pride Parade in Vienna and Rainbow Ball.
2. With the term dyadic identities we refer to people who are not intersex, with the term cisgender to people who are not trans-gender.
3. Kumashiro explicitly refers here to “students of color, students from under- or unemployed families, students who are female, or male but not stereotypically ‘masculine,’ and students who are or are perceived to be queer” (2002, p. 32).
4. For more information see also ILGA Europe (2019).
5. Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.
6. Grundsatzlerlasse reflexive gender pedagogy and equality, [https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/ministerium/rs/2018\\_21\\_lo.pdf?6ux5qe](https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/ministerium/rs/2018_21_lo.pdf?6ux5qe).
7. With regard to the FRA study, we omit the “I” as intersex people were not considered in this study. This will be changed in the upcoming FRA study, planned to be released in 2019 or 2020.
8. Historically, Austria and Germany are connected through centuries of history. Since neither Prussia nor the Habsburg Monarchy introduced the Napoleonic Code in the early nineteenth century, and continued to incriminate homosexual “practices,” the legal developments run parallel to one another. In addition, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, psychiatric discourse regarding homosexuality and gender dysphoria have been similar in both Germany and Austria. Furthermore, both the laws and the outcome of the FRA study nearly had identical results in the two



countries. Finally, it should be noted that queerconnexion works closely with other LGBTIQ education associations in Germany, particularly in terms of quality standards.

9. For several years the organization *Ausgesprochen!* has been committed to dismantling hierarchical structures, as well as supporting and increasing the visibility of LGBTIQ teachers.
10. For further information on this process see Mario Lindner and Sabine Hammerschmid (2018), BmBWF (2019), Parlamentsdirektion (2019), and Österreichisches Parlament (2019).
11. A key difference to groups in Germany that working using a similar approach, there are no age restrictions for the team members.
12. A similar procedure is commonly used in sex education, but without the autobiographical aspect of the answers.

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# “I Decided to Teach... Despite the Anger”: Using Forum Theatre to Connect Queer Activists, Teachers and School Leaders to Address Heterosexism in Schools

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## INTRODUCTION

Schools, specifically classrooms, can be important sites for addressing heterosexism (Clark & Blackburn, 2009; DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Thein, 2013). Although there is an expectation that teachers would interrupt homophobic-related bullying and heterosexism, studies reveal how

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inadequate and unsure teachers are about interrupting oppressive language and behavior (Ellis & High, 2004; Guasp, Ellison, & Satara, 2014; Schneider & Dimito, 2008). Even when many teachers hold positive, sympathetic views toward queer youth and issues, few are willing to take action to interrupt heterosexism, either in terms of advocating for changes in school policy or in terms of making authentic changes to what and how they teach (Thein, 2013). In fact, the international research shows that heterosexism remains an area of exclusion still largely unaddressed in schools (Carrara, Nascimento, Duque, & Tramontano, 2016; DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Elia & Eliason, 2010; Jones & Hillier, 2012; Kjaran & Kristinsdóttir, 2015; Smith, 2018; UNESCO, 2016). In South Africa, due to the lack of training and capacitation for teachers around issues of sexual and gender diversity, teachers may shut down discussion on this diversity and in some instances, have reinforced the marginalization of sexually nonnormative young people (Bhana, 2012; DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis, 2012; Msibi, 2012).

This chapter is concerned with exploring the ways in which school administrators and teachers connect with queer activists to address heterosexism in schools. It aims to explore how the democratic dialogic process of Freire alongside Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre may be used to bring different stakeholders together to address heterosexism in schools. We ask the following question: what potential do art-based methods offer in facilitating discussions and partnerships which address heterosexism in schools? The chapter, therefore, adds to the limited knowledge base on heterosexism, heteronormativity, and schooling and is significant to scholars, teachers, researchers, and activists who are interested in art for activism and critical performative pedagogy. We use the terms heterosexism and heteronormativity to describe the systemic scale of oppression and the privileging of heterosexuality as normative. Heterosexism maintains the dominance of heteronormativity which assumes that all "human experience is unquestionably and automatically heterosexual" (Yep, 2002, p. 167). Implicit in this norm, is a binaried form of sex and gender which delineates rigid physical, identity, and social norms in the form of male/female, man/woman, and masculine/feminine binaries. Through this "heterosexual matrix" a stable sex, expressed through a stable gender, is defined through the compulsory practices of heterosexuality. To be normal one needs to be part of the strict dichotomy of male/female with a gender performed to match the sexed body (masculine male, feminine female); with individuals desiring the opposite sex in particular ways.

According to this approach, heteronormativity needs to align with cis-normativity in order for each to function. Both terms are related in theory and practice, and because our chapter focuses both on the form of discrimination (heterosexism) and the value-laden norm (heteronormativity), we use the terms together or even interchangeably.

## QUEER CONTEXT IN SOUTH AFRICA

While South Africa is the only country on the African continent that recognizes same-sex relationships and prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity—discrimination against those perceived to be LGBTI is widespread (see HSRC, 2016; Judge, Manion, & De Waal, 2008; Matebeni, Monro, & Reddy, 2018 for example). There are high rates of prejudice-motivated violence against lesbian and gender nonconforming women; same-sex couples are often turned away from home affairs when they attempt to register their same-sex marriages, and LGBTI refugees and migrants face double discrimination both as foreign nationals and due to their sexual orientation and gender identity (Mdluli, 2019). In simple terms, the laws protecting LGBTI communities have little meaning when they do not protect LGBTI individuals in their home, communities, or to access services.

In South Africa, the experience of LGBTI people cannot be understood outside broader struggles against racism, patriarchy, and class-based injustices which have been inherited by the apartheid system. This is apparent in the way violence is manifest with black lesbian women who are often gender nonconforming from township areas experiencing physical and sexual violence while gay white men enjoy the fruit of legal change in South Africa (Hengeveld & Tallie, 2012; Matebeni et al., 2018; Swarr, 2004). Matebeni (2013) explains that violence against queer women fits into systems of racial and gendered injustice in South Africa—violence becomes a way to publicly punish gender-nonconforming woman, a way to “cure” or “correct” a same-sex attracted woman. While the Department of Justice in partnership with LGBTI nongovernmental organizations (NGO) has set up a task team to deal with hate crimes, Matebeni argues that hate crimes legislation doesn’t mean the criminal justice system would work any better for already marginalized groups (like LGBTI groups or black women for that matter). In simple terms adapting an already unfair system to include marginalized groups (LGBTI people for

that matter) will not change the way that system already marginalizes women, black people, or working-class people.

Queer social movements, such as the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE), have been working in South Africa to deal with discrimination and violence against LGBT communities. Historically these organizations have been instrumental in creating change at a policy and legislative level due to donor interest in this area. While Queer social movements have been successful in establishing a progressive constitutional and legislative framework which promises protections for LGBTI people, the legal framework has not ensured that LGBTI people are any safer (Hoad, Martin, & Reid, 2005; Isaack & Judge, 2006).

The challenges facing LGBTI people broadly in South Africa are replicated within education. South African schools are often hostile and exclusionary toward queer youth. Although there is an abundance of research that documents heterosexism and schooling in South Africa, contemporary scholarship has not paid attention to instances where teachers have addressed heterosexism via curricular, policy, or in everyday teaching. In fact, teacher uncertainty and a list of reasons why they do not intervene and interrupt homophobia are well-documented (Bhana, 2012, 2014; Francis & Reygan, 2016a). While South Africa's transformation agenda has encouraged educational institutions to respond to race and gender-based inequality (with mixed success), other forms of inequality, for example, sexual and gender diversity, have been left largely untouched. Bhana (2012) argues that while there is space within existing education policy statements to include conversations about sexual and gender diversity—these provisions are broad and at times ambiguous, leaving teachers and schools to interpret them in different ways.

The subject Life Orientation, for example, covers topics that focus on comprehensive sexuality, relationships, sexual diseases and there is an assumption (based on the literature see DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis, 2019a; Francis & DePalma, 2015; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014 for example) it is an appropriate subject area that will also focus on gender and sexuality diversity. Although other subject areas, might include LGBTQ content, the most obvious place for inclusion would be within the sexuality education section of the Life Orientation curriculum. This ambiguity is not helped by Life Orientation textbook and teacher resources which do not have positive representations of gender and sexual diversity (Francis, 2019b; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014, 2018), and teachers who view same-sex desire



as deviant and immoral (Francis, 2017, 2019b). This produces an environment in which LGBTI learners report experiencing high levels of verbal, sexual, and physical abuse—from other learners, school teachers, and school management (OUT LGBT Well-being, 2016; UNESCO, 2016). This context has associated LGBTI youth with high dropout rates from schools, an increase in drug and alcohol abuse and risky sexual behaviors (Butler, Alpaslan, Allen, & Astbury, 2003; Kowen & Davis, 2006). Queer youth are located in a system that reinforces heteronormativity; through the embedded nature of their experiences at home, school, and within their friendship circles. This leaves queer youth feeling silenced, isolated, and harassed (Butler et al., 2003; Kowen & Davis, 2006; McArthur, 2015; Msibi, 2012). While queer young youth have the potential to be agents of change (Francis & Reygan, 2016b), their lives are often entangled within the wider political, social, and economic struggles in South Africa.

## QUEER SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ART FOR ACTIVISM AND SCHOOLING

We argue that not all solutions to challenging heterosexism will be found in school-based education. Challenging heterosexism and homophobia have to focus broader than teachers and teaching. It has to explore how queer social movements, whose intervention and outreach can play a significant role in addressing heterosexism in schools. One challenge is the figurative rift between schools which focuses predominantly on the formal curriculum and social movements which engage in community activism and responding to social justice issues (Francis & Hemson, 2010; Gardner, 2007). This means that while heterosexism remains pervasive within education responses to bring about social change—within schools (through committed teachers and school leaders) and outside education (through the interventions of social movements)—often occur separately of each other.

In this chapter, we explore the utility of Art for Activism as a strategic intervention to connect LGBTI activists (with skills and knowledge about LGBTI experience), educational teachers, and school leaders through the use of creative methods to build safer and more affirming school environments. Art for Activism as facilitation practice emerged from the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) work with LGBTI youth. GALA developed and tested the use of creative methods to empower, enable,

and engage LGBTI youth, queer, and other organizations in southern Africa and these resources are currently available in the form of the Creative Resistance facilitation guide. Art for Activism can be understood as a pedagogical response to bring queer activist, teachers, and school leaders to make meaning of their everyday social realities and to cocreate a creative response to inequality. This section will explore how creative and other methods have been used to support LGBTI youth, foster discussions on sexual and gender diversity within education, and challenge discriminatory practices.

Globally there are organizations who draw specifically on creative methods within the context of sexual and gender diversity in education. Gendered Intelligence, for example, uses art-based methods to engage queer youth about their struggles about gender and sexuality and to explore safe and supportive spaces (Gendered Intelligence, 2019). *Belong To* is another example of a queer social movement using various visual campaigns (posters and YouTube) to create social awareness and safe spaces for LGBT youth (Belong To.org, 2014). Working closely with schools, Belong To develops useful resources and services (around safe-sex, drug abuse, and coming out) and reviews education policy regarding gender and sexuality diversity to create social awareness and change. Also in the UK, *The Sharing Tongues Project* (Ajamu & Campbell, 2012), part of a wider vision of representation and artistic practice, is both “an expression of defiance against queer invisibility and a celebration of personal history and triumph.” Capturing stories and experiences of Black LGBT individuals over the age of 45 in major British cities, the archive is aimed at queer youth. The Project uses a multimedia format—both a zine and DVD (which allows access for people with different levels of education and different modes of learning) (Ajamu & Campbell, 2012). Unlike other prominent global organizations, *Gendered Intelligence*, *Belong To*, and *The Sharing Tongues Project* do not work exclusively within existing curricular frames but propose and adopts alternate pedagogies such as art-based methods to connect social movements, communities, and schools to confront heterosexism. The approaches of *Belong To* and *The Sharing Tongues Project* influenced the development of the Art for Activism practice employed in the intervention of interest to this process.

In Africa, there are notable examples of Art for Activism that address heterosexism and heteronormativity too. *Invisible Stories from Kenya's Queer Community* is a collection of stories by journalist Kevin Mwachiro (2013). While not aimed at youth—the short stories and poems about

love, desire, and loss—lends itself to a youthful audience. Another example is *Out in Zimbabwe: Narratives of LGBTI Youth* (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe [GALZ], 2013) a collection of stories and poems written by youth about their experience and aimed at other young people. Both these examples allow for increased visibility of queer African narratives and work outside formal education. This is because LGBTI identities are criminalized in much of Africa, thereby limiting the possibility of work within the formal education curriculum. Musangi (2014) has shown that even with the criminalization of LGBTI identities, it is possible to provoke conversations about LGBTI identity. Musangi (2014) initiated a performance on a busy street in Nairobi to explore the link between struggles for liberation in Africa and struggles for queer liberation. Using invisible theatre, which included dressing and undressing in a gendered manner, Musangi (2014) dislocated the heteronormativity of public space and sparked discussion about gender and sexual diversity. Musangi’s pedagogical performance troubles the teaching and learning of gender and sexuality diversity through inciting conversation and dialogue.

In South Africa there are many queer activists using visual art and drama as tools to increase visibility or spark discussion including the works of Gabrielle le Roux (Feder, 2015), Jabulani Chen Pereira (BET.com, 2015), Dean Hutton (Elizabeth, 2015), and Zanele Muholi (Stevenson, 2015) among many others. While this chapter does not allow space to explore all of their work here—their creative interventions work with queer individuals and communities to reflect on their experience using photography, music, and performance. It is in this context that the Art for Activism intervention emerged in its current form. From a creative thrust in South Africa, which uses creative practices to engage, represent, and propose change within marginalized communities. While many of the contemporaries we cite, use these creative practices within the realm of formal artistic production—these practices still offer pedagogical opportunities to incite change in schools.

Examples of participatory art-based methods, in the form of Boalian Forum Theatre and photovoice, addressing social injustices have also made their way into schools (see De Lange, Mitchell, & Stuart, 2007; Francis, 2010, 2013; Hoosain Khan, 2013a, 2013b; Mitchell, Delange, Moletsane, Stuart, & Buthelezi, 2005). Francis (2013), for instance, explored whether Boal’s Forum Theatre is a sufficient enough construct to challenge heterosexism and heteronormativity among school learners. There are two useful Freirean (1970) concepts from Francis’s (2013)

intervention which have been adapted for the South African context. The first is that of codification, which refers to a process of creating a (newer) understanding of reality. This process allows individuals to grow their insights through reflecting on previous understandings of reality (Francis, 2013). The difference—between what the participant currently knows and what they previously knew—allows for awareness of change, and potentially active engagement in the process of change. This would be useful in tracking how the ideas of participants may change through a workshop process.

The second concept, naturalized discourse, highlights a potential obstacle in a learning space. It is a discourse which asserts how things should be or rather—*this is the way the world works*—and implies the *status quo* cannot change (see Francis, 2010). This concept is useful as it allows the researcher to reflect on what participants view as a norm. Relatedly, Khan (2013a, 2014) used interactive drama and visual art, respectively, to explore the potential of creative approaches to challenge discrimination and prejudice. The key concept in Khans work is dislocation—the potential for individuals through a process of building critical consciousness, to dislodge from their position within a system of injustice through disrupting some of the relational norms. While dislocation might be momentary, a short disruption of unjust system—movement, in the form of multiple and strategic dislocations, can lead to sustained change. For example, an art workshop might dislocate an attendee—during the workshop, they're able to reflect critically on their realities and even think of ways to respond. However, this is short-lived, once the attendee leaves the workshop. The everyday unjust social, material, and cultural realities return as the norm. However, if there are multiple dislocations (a series of workshops) and these are strategic (are likely to lead to impactful change) these may sustain new relation norms which are more fair and just. Collaborative art-based processes, therefore, allow for school communities to come together to reflect on their experiences, represent their stories and explore social action. Beyond these Freirean (1970) and Boalian (1979) concepts, which the authors have used and developed in their work, participatory art-based processes can be useful in linking the experiences of a community and activism.

## FREIREAN AND BOALIAN FRAMEWORKS

Freire (1970) maintains that education is a means to overcoming oppression, such as heterosexism by allowing people to analyze their circumstances in their own terms and propose solutions. Education that dismantles oppression is a collaborative creative process because it invites people to evade the circle of certainty or *naturalized discourse*, and in so doing to reinterpret their realities and to find new ways to resist oppression. Anti-oppressive education, therefore, is uncertain and uncomfortable, and even daunting, especially when generations of people have been excluded from democratic, participatory processes (Freire, 1970, p. 36). Freire's (1970) *conscientization*—a process of developing a critical awareness of how oppression is manifested structurally, learnt and intersects with other forms of oppression through reflection and action—is particularly useful for teachers, school leaders, and queer activists who seek social change in schools. *Conscientization* through the troubling and interrogating of structures and practices of power through art-based approaches such as Forum Theatre fits in perfectly with it means to teach queerly.

Boal, a Brazilian theatre director, writer, activist, and contemporary of Freire envisioned theatre as a space to promote social and political change through representing power and inequality. Boal's theatre techniques build on and allow for Freirean ideas to be realized in the workshop space. Boal envisaged theatre as a liberatory space where individuals can explore, dramatize, analyze, and change reality (Boal, 1979). For Boal, theatre is a space for participants to enact and resist injustice through representing their experience, responding to the experience of others, and imagining solutions. Within this practice, the facilitator becomes a neutral inciter or animator, one who leads the space but does not impose comment or an intercession. The audience or spect-actor is no longer a passive recipient of information, or drama but rather is an active player in the process. This allows the participant to actively create meaning within the workshop space and allows for the participant to control the sway and direction of the play (Boal, 1979).

Boal's theatre of the oppressed compliments Freire's theoretical positions on oppression and pedagogy. The practice encourages participants in this process to participate democratically and puts them on equal terms with the facilitator. Like Freire, Boal's practice aims to deconstruct the unequal balance of power between the teacher and student, or actor and

audience. Boal envisions a dynamic space where a facilitator incites dialogue providing structure and logistical support and participants are active players controlling the direction and the shape the outcomes of the process. Participants no longer delegate power to the facilitator but can think and act independently within the rules decided by the group (Boal, 1979).

Boal's Forum Theatre offers teachers and school leaders opportunity to improvise everyday examples of heterosexism and other forms of oppression they have seen in their classrooms and the school fields, to review these and to imagine change scenarios. Moreover, because teachers and school leaders bring their own experiences of heterosexism, whether privileged or disadvantage, is precisely what renders Boalian theatre so appealing in terms of the valuable insights it promises. Teachers, school leaders, and activists using various impromptu scenes and theatre games are enabled through the democratic forum space to discover and rehearse the multiple ways they might address a heterosexist episode at school.

## PROCESS

Listening to and acknowledging what teachers and school managers do and say is crucial for understanding how heterosexism manifests in schools. We designed the two-day workshop to allow educational personnel to show and teach us about their own learning about gender and sexuality diversity, local everyday examples of heterosexism in schools and where the opportunities and levers of change might lie. Dennis<sup>1</sup> and Gabriel,<sup>2</sup> both have an arts background and have also used art-based methods to lead social change processes, facilitated the workshop. For the workshop design, we used a range of art-based methods including Boal's Forum Theatre and visual arts methods to enable participants not only to express and process personal feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about same-sex sexualities and heterosexism but also to envisage and perform what social change solutions might look like. Needless to say, the two days generated large amounts of data in terms of visual arts, Forum Theatre scripts, and discussions. For this chapter, we explore specifically the utility of art-based methods in bringing together educational staff and queer activists to address heterosexism in schools.

In total, 12 participants—Life Orientation (LO) teachers, school administrators, teachers, and representatives from teacher unions and queer activists—attended. We included teachers who are broadly connected to the subject area LO because it is the only subject that includes

content related to sexuality diversity (Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2018). To access participants, we made contact with our personal networks, such as graduate students, teachers, school leaders, queer activists, and friends. Once participants were identified, we asked them to identify others. Our sample snowballed, enabling us to gain access to our participants, including those who could not participate. With the purpose of exploring the potential for educational staff and queer activists to work together in responding to homophobia and transphobia in schools, our two-day workshop was aimed at promoting the voices, perspectives, and active participation of these key stakeholders. Over the two days, participants worked individually and collectively to reflect on their own understanding of gender and sexuality, their own stories as teachers and educational leaders and the change scenarios they envisioned. The process was recorded by a note-taker, and photographs were taken. The analysis for this chapter draws on the scribed notes, photographs, and notes of the facilitators (Dennis and Gabriel). Thematic analysis, useful for revealing everyday discourse and practices and exploring the multiple relationships between the understanding of an issue, was used to interpret the participant’s stories, explanations, and Boalian theatre sketches. Moving beyond merely describing the sketches and accounts, thematic analysis offers a perspective to identifying potential areas of action which is necessary for participatory action research. Using Marshal and Rossman’s (1989) understanding of a theme as a category that relates to the research focus and which provides the basis for a theoretical understanding of the data, the transcribed data was read multiple times by the authors, and recurring motifs and themes were tracked, coded, collapsed where necessary and cross-referenced. Once this was complete, the emergent themes were interpreted against the Freirean and Boalian frameworks, concepts such as heteronormativity and heterosexism, and the literature that has guided this research.

The workshop process was structured as follows:

**Segment one:** Participant journeys, a visual art exercise which invited participants to share their journeys as teachers, school leaders, and activists.

**Segment two:** Understanding gender and sexual diversity, this exercise started with a brainstorm on the different words used to describe LGBTI people and myths associated with LGBTI people. This was

followed by a visual art exercise which unpacked sex, gender, and sexuality.

**Segment three:** Mapping needs, this exercise unpacked who the different stakeholders are, what roles they play and the ask we have of each of the stakeholders.

**Segment four:** Acting change in schools, this Forum Theatre exercise unpacked three examples of discrimination or prejudice in schools.

**Segment five:** Strategies for teaching gender and sexual diversity, this exercise explored the policies, forms of support, curriculum/text, and combatting isolation in building a more enabling and safe school environment for queer youth.

## OVERARCHING THEMES EMERGING FROM THE PROCESS

The section will include a description of the two themes which emerged as part of the overall process and a section on the themes which emerged specifically from the Forum Theatre exercise. The former highlights how teachers make sense of their own experiences related to sexuality and gender diversity and their journeys as teachers. While the latter explores how Forum Theatre fostered new conversations on sexuality and gender diversity.

### *Early Stories Related to Gender and Sexuality Diversity*

In talking about their early experiences regarding gender and sexually diverse persons, many of the participants were swift to volunteer stories of fear, distrust, and repulsion. One of the participants teaching at a rural school tells of his first experience of a gender diverse person—“I grew up with a gay in the same street. I hated him so much. He liked wearing girls’ clothes and playing with girl stuff.” Similar stories loaded with derogatory images and metaphors were generated as teachers and school leaders talked openly about what they had seen, heard or learnt about gender and sexually diverse from people they had grown up with or knew. Disparaging words or phrases—“stabane”,<sup>3</sup> “moffie”,<sup>4</sup> “faggot”, “trassie”,<sup>5</sup> “tomboy”, “koekstamper”,<sup>6</sup> “mattie”,<sup>7</sup> “gabedi”, “shemale” among others—were readily dispensed in the discussions suggesting the familiarity and normalcy of their usage. Implicit in these references are the strikingly stereotypical notions of “butchness” associated with lesbian



women, “effeminate gay man” or “confused bisexual.” These early experiences of prejudice and the absence of formal knowledge and resources (teaching, textbooks) are key to understanding how teachers and school leaders learnt about gender and sexuality diversity and in many instances, frame queer desire and expression as “abnormal.” This early socialization highlights the normalizing of heterosexuality and Othering LGBTI individuals setting up an (apparently) stable boundary between heterosexuality and same-sex sexualities. These experiences precede formal knowledge of sexual and gender diversity and reinforce a heteronormative circle of certainty (Freire, 1970).

### *Journey Towards Becoming Teachers*

In describing their journey toward becoming teachers, participants mentioned one of three reasons—(1) “teaching as an accident,” (2) teaching as supporting a fragile other, and (3) teaching justice, as facing off resistance.

Many participants did not intend to be teachers as one of the teachers from a private all-girl school tells—“*My journey was my accident. I thought I was going to be something else.*” Others, due to their own economic inequalities, teaching was an unintended choice as a school administrator from a township school notes “*my parents could not afford to send me to...become a teacher.*” From the stories told, teaching as a profession, for many was “not the first choice.” Teaching about sexuality and gender diversity for many of the participants, then, was not their intention or “choice.” The participants learnt early experiences of prejudice and discrimination together with their limited opportunities of formal knowledge and their secondary choice to becoming teachers suggests unlikely motivation and commitment to address heterosexism or teach about gender and sexuality diversity.

While teaching was “an accident” entry point for some, other teachers and school leaders saw their role “to support, enable and encourage the fragile other” as a school administrator from the city remarked “*I decided that if I become a teacher, then I can teach the learners that if you are different to others, you do not have to tease them.*” This supportive position was often related to participants’ own experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and bullying in schools. The participants used words and phrases like “grow,” “have a better experience,” “love and accept,” “motivate,” “focus on children that are different,” “develop pride,” and “touch their lives.”

While these all strongly frame a supportive environment that recognizes difference—the participants do frame the learners as fragile “*children*” or a silent “*they*” who require protection. While the first theme identifies how the teachers and school educators navigate a heteronormative circle of certainty, this theme highlights how they might struggle to manage other practices of power in the classroom. In their attempts, “to support, enable and encourage the fragile other,” teachers and school leaders position themselves as saviors, while also wielding power to reproduce other forms of dominance in the classroom. This theme highlights that gender and sexuality diversity, cannot be understood outside a broader analysis of power and therefore, inequality within schools.

One participant who played a more active role in struggles for equality within schools during apartheid shared examples of how leading change in schools will lead to resistance pushback. A teacher in a township school, he argued for the need for sexuality and gender diversity to be included in the curriculum regardless of anger and pushback. He recalls: “*I decided to teach about sexuality, despite the parent’s anger... I was being accused of teaching children the wrong thing.*” For him, the backlash will come from parents, colleagues, other learners, school leadership and in some cases, other sites of power outside the school such as the church leaders but change has to start somewhere. This echoes Freire and Boal’s own assertions—structures of power are reluctant to change and complex.

### *Forum Theatre as a Tool for Change*

While teachers described their experience of becoming a teacher as an accident, as a support structure or as a point of resistance—the role plays enabled the teachers and school leaders to act out their own and everyday experience of heterosexism. Three role-plays were devised based on examples of heterosexism the participants shared. Table 11.1 summarizes the Forum Theatre: the role-play, the participant’s attempts at problem-solving, analysis, and cocreated action responses. For the Forum Theatre exercise, participants were asked to write down a scene that depicts an everyday real-life example of heterosexism in schools and place in a bag. The participants are then placed in a group of five, choose a scenario from the hat and are given time to perform the scenario. At the end of the scene, the facilitator asks the audience spect-actors whether there were alternate ways to address the situation and a new audience spect-actor is invited to perform the scene with the onstage actors. Several audience

Table 11.1 Forum theatre

	<i>Description of the role play</i>	<i>Description of the Forum Theatre process</i>	<i>Analysis and reflection</i>
Role play 1	Miriam is an English teacher at Bloemhof primary school. Miriam notices that Thando and her friends keep wearing pants to school instead of a skirt. She keeps asking them to wear a skirt, but they refused—they say “but we are boys, Ma’am”. Miriam calls a meeting with fellow staff members to talk about this issue	At first Miriam (the teacher) storms out of the room in anger, she is deeply upset with the students In the next scene, the principal asks to speak to the teacher. He asks why the teacher interacted with the student in an agitated manner. Miriam (the teacher) responds “all the other learners know that Thando is a girl and so all the other girls will copy Thando” (wear pants as well)	This vignette not only highlights schools as heteronormative spaces but also the complex and multi-layered change that needs to occur Not only do the teachers and school leaders need to understand concepts related to gender identity and expression (in this case transgender), they also need the skills to talk about these issues in a way that doesn’t reinforce prejudice
Role play 2	A group of staff members from Bram Fischer high have created an innovative programme to teach sexual and gender diversity in their school. They call a meeting with parents and community members to share about the programme. The meeting gets heated when parents argue that teachers are recruiting their children into the gay lifestyle	Participants immediately inserted an ally into the role-play. They included a parent with a gay child as an attendee at the meeting In the next scene, parents get paranoid with the programme for sexual and gender diversity, assuming it would encourage sex Participants also cautioned each other about using language such as “normal parent” to refer to parents without gay children, as this is problematic	This vignette highlights the push back and resistance that progressive teachers face Participants expressed that choosing words carefully (even the name of the programme or the reason for the meeting), justifying the reason for the meeting and highlight how it may eradicate discrimination (in the form of bullying) could all work as strategies
Role play 3	John and Rahiem, two students at Bloemfontein high come to Meneer Jordaan. They would like to go to the Valentines dance together as a couple. Meneer Jordaan meets with Principal Coetzee to talk about allowing Rahiem and John to attend as a same-sex couple. Principal Coetzee is reluctant—she is unsure how other senior staff members would react	One participant asserted that conversations between teachers and school leaders should not include students. Others did not agree with this position Another participant highlighted that allowing a student to bring a same-sex partner would lead to discomfort It was agreed that using gender-blind rules—for example, a blanket no kissing rule for all students regardless of sexual orientation could be useful	This vignette highlights how teachers might not share consensus on how to deal with sexual and gender diversity in schools Further in adopting certain positions, for example, a gender-blind one, may not adequately unpack or resolve underlying inequalities related to gender that are implicated

spect-actors are invited to replay the scene and change the situation by expressing how they might support the targets of heterosexism and a discussion follows.

Forum Theatre provided participants with a space to disrupt their circle of certainty—through referencing stories of prejudice, discrimination, fear, and exclusion and problematizing, challenging, and envisaging change scenarios. The improvised sketches also enabled participants to acknowledge their own limitations in addressing gender and sexuality diversity in schools. For example, participants highlighted the normalizing practices of compulsory heterosexuality expressing fear of what their colleagues, school leaders, and parents will say if they did initiate change. Some of the teachers and school leaders were keen to point out that such regulation was also context-specific and as one participant remarked: “changes in small doses where possible.” For the teachers and school administrators, recognizing allies and change-makers, in the form of queer individuals, activists, and organizations as a key resource and allies emerged as a pivotal starting point to envisage dialogue and strategies for disrupting heterosexism. The gender nonconforming student, the proposal to teach about gender and sexuality diversity, and the gay couple at the Valentine’s dance were at first framed at the problem or challenges; but these queer tension points became opportunities for creating meaningful change. Even when not “invited” or “allowed” into a heterosexist space, queer individuals, activists, and organizations both disrupted heterosexism and become an ally in future or imagined strategies for transforming schools.

## DISCUSSION

Our chapter has inquired into how art-based methods might bring queer activists, teachers, and school managers together to address how heterosexism might be interrupted in schools. The democratic dialogic process of Freire together with the Augusto Boal’s Forum Theatre highlighted the gaps in teacher’s knowledge and imagined alternate ways to address gender and sexuality diversity. Using Forum Theatre in this way has benefits such as creating social awareness and exploring social change possibilities to interrupt heterosexism. The arts methods not only offered a structure for dealing with complex and challenging dialogue but a constructive platform to create forum sketches that show what anti-heterosexist and inclusive schools for LGBTI learners might look like.

There are some challenges and limitations related to using this approach. Firstly, Forum Theatre is practice with a particular language, politic, and ethos. In order to meaningfully utilize this approach, it's important to not only replicate the exercise—but the language and associated analytic tools, politic and associated analysis of inequality, and ethos or spirit. Secondly, while creative participatory workshops are useful in raisings awareness, they're difficult to sustain over long periods of time. If change is to be sustained, it needs to be iterative. That being said Forum Theatre provided our teachers and administrator participants with a stage to work together with activists, to try out different anti-heterosexist strategies in the form of images and short improvised scenes.

For the workshop, we were interested in how the participants were invested in a pedagogy of self-reflection, social awareness, the envisaging of social change in schools, and the potential they saw in building alliances with each other. As our findings indicate, teachers and school leaders are far from tackling heterosexism head-on, and change in schools will not happen overnight. From the Forum Theatre scenarios and discussions, teachers articulated the strong reaction from parents and school managers regarding the inclusion of LGBTI content in teaching and learning. What we learnt from the role plays, is the need for teachers to articulate a clear rationale, within and beyond the classroom, as to why issues related to gender and sexuality diversity need to be integrated into the curriculum. During the Forum Theatre performances, teachers drew on the Professional Code of Ethics of the South African Council of Educators, which stipulates that teachers “acknowledge, uphold and promote fundamental human rights, as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa” (South African Council for Educators, 2002). Moreover, teachers also cited their school codes or mission statements which in many instances included terms such as “human rights,” “respect,” and “diversity” as key values. During the role-play, teachers and school leaders used the school codes to strengthen their arguments for teaching about gender and sexuality diversity.

Finally, we also saw the utility of Forum Theatre to initiate coalitions in bringing together teachers, school administrators, and queer activists to create action agendas to address heterosexism. Strikingly, the Forum Theatre sessions revealed how isolated schools are from local community organizations. Community organizations such as clinics, recreational facilities, faith-based organizations and NGOs—are all valuable interlocutors to create safer and more affirming schools. The Forum Theatre also

revealed how ill-equipped teachers and school leaders are to deal with sexual and gender diversity and their yearning for support. The Forum Theatre discussions highlight the critical need for schools to establish connections with community organizations, specifically with queer NGOs and activists who have the knowledge and resources to address heterosexism in schools. For instance, queer activists have the necessary knowledge and skills to support school leaders and teachers to develop policy, create networks of support, think expansively about sexualities (beyond Life Orientation) and create educational institutions beyond isolation. We noticed how many of the participants shifted from singular voices to “we” suggesting that queer social movement and school personnel can coalesce and collaborate in anti-oppressive work. What seemed like an awkward gathering at the start, did end with participants changing contact details and committing to communicate more and work together. Boal’s method, Forum Theatre does provide an exemplar of a democratic, participatory method that certainly has utility to deepen and strengthen any possible coalition between teachers, school leaders, and queer social movements.

## NOTES

1. At the time of the workshop, Dennis was a professor and dean of education at the University of the Free State.
2. Gabriel Hoosain Khan was the coordinator of the Youth and Education Project at Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA). GALA is a Johannesburg-based organization that studies, preserves, and promotes the history and contemporary experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people in Africa.
3. Term to refer to same-sex attracted or gender nonconforming individuals.
4. Term used to refer to same-sex attracted or effeminate man.
5. Term used to refer to an effeminate or androgynous man.
6. Term used to refer to a same-sex attracted or masculine-presenting woman.
7. Term to refer to same-sex attracted or gender nonconforming individuals.

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# Intersex and Education: What Can Schools and Queer School Projects Learn from Current Discourses on Intersex in Austria?

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## INTRODUCTION

Binary conceptions of gender, sex, and sex characteristics are omnipresent in society and consistently (re)produced in educational systems (Butler, 2012; Schütze, 2010). The existence of intersex bodies and identities radically challenges these conceptions. Intersex individuals are born with sex characteristics (chromosomes, genitals, hormonal structure, and/or secondary sex characteristics) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

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Because their bodies are seen as different, intersex children and adults are often stigmatized and subjected to multiple human rights violations, including violations of their rights to health and physical integrity, to be free from torture and ill-treatment, and to equality and non-discrimination. (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015)

Worldwide, these human rights violations not only threaten the bodily integrity and health of intersex people but are also highly relevant to the experiences that intersex people have in school.

Intersex is still largely invisible in educational contexts. Inter\*<sup>1</sup> voices are systematically silenced and rarely recognized. Due to a research gap, hardly anything is known about the situation of intersex people at schools in Austria or globally. Intersex is also largely invisible in pedagogical theories and educational discourses. Barbara Schütze describes inter\* (and trans\*) people as the “forgotten subjects” (2010, p. 69) of pedagogical gender discourses.

Queer organizations undertaking outreach work at schools through queer school projects aim at challenging binary conceptions of gender and sexuality as well as narrow-body norms that exclude LGBTIQAP+<sup>2</sup> people. In order to do so, they need to include and reflect on the experiences of inter\* students and listen to the voices of intersex people.

In this chapter, we use data from current research on the experiences of intersex people in educational contexts in Austria. This data was collected as part of an ongoing Ph.D. project at the University of Vienna by M. Enzendorfer, the first author of this chapter. From 2015 to 2016, biographical narrative interviews were conducted with five intersex people aged 23–39. The interviews and their analysis focus on experiences in educational contexts. Biographical narratives offer possibilities for listening to intersex voices, exploring critical perspectives on gender discourses in the educational system, and pointing out possibilities for nondiscriminatory, empowering inclusion of intersex topics and people in schools. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, we focus our analysis on the experiences of intersex students in schools as seen from their own perspective. Due to the lack of research on the experiences of intersex students in Austria, we draw on a quantitative study from Australia by Tiffany Jones et al. (2016), which is one of the very few studies on intersex people at school.

We start by critically discussing how intersex can be addressed from human rights perspectives in the context of a history of medicalization and pathologization. We therefore ask: Who is intersex and who defines it? We then continue by exploring what can be learned from intersex human rights movements, intersex activism, and the work of queer school projects in Austria that are trying to include intersex as a topic in their workshops. Based on our backgrounds in social work, educational research, intersex activism, and queer school projects, we discuss how queer organizations that do outreach work at schools deal with intersex issues. We start with the following questions: How can queer school projects contribute to opening up spaces for intersex people at school? What can these projects learn from intersex movements and the analysis of the school experiences of intersex people? What are potential obstacles to outreach work with students? We end with a conclusion pointing toward more inter\*-friendly school environments. The educational system, schools, and queer social movements have a lot of catching up to do on intersex issues. Through different approaches, we try to find ways to create necessary impulses for reflection and development for queer social movements in schools and educational systems in general.

## WHO IS INTERSEX AND WHO DEFINES IT?

*Intersex* is an umbrella term used by people with a wide range of bodily variations that do not fit into narrow medical and social norms of *male* and *female*. We understand intersex as a socially constructed category—like all gender categories (Butler, 1990). The term *intersex* makes sense only in a binary conception of sex (and gender). The implications of these categories are severe and harmful for intersex people, whose bodies fall outside of narrow medical and social norms and are systematically under a “medical gaze” (Foucault, 1994).

Whereas terms such as *bisexual*, *lesbian*, *gay*, or *heterosexual* refer to a person’s sexual orientation and terms such as *trans\**, *transgender*, or *non-binary* primarily refer to a person’s (relationship to) gender, gender identity, and gender expression, the term *intersex* primarily refers to a person’s sex characteristics. Intersex people may live and identify as cis or trans\* men or women, nonbinary, “in-between,” “both,” intersex, or with none of these categories. Markus Bauer and Daniela Truffer (2016, p. 154)

from the Swiss intersex organization *zwischenengeschlecht.info* describe intersex as a practical-political identity for self-empowerment; others have described it as a gender identity and bodily variation at the same time.

Intersex individuals often see their sexuality and their sexual identity denied, in mainstream society and queer communities alike. Like all people, intersex individuals may identify as straight, bisexual, gay, lesbian, asexual/aromantic, queer, or with any other sexual or romantic orientation. Intersex is not a medical condition. However, intersex bodies face a history of medicalization, stigmatization, and pathologization. “Intersex bodies became medicalized from the end of the nineteenth century, alongside the medicalization of women’s bodies and of homosexuality” (Carpenter, 2016, p. 75). Medical historian Ulrike Klöppel (2010) argues that for centuries, the question of sex assignment was a social rather than a medical question. In the 1950s, the so-called “optimal gender model” (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972) was inspired by the belief that intersex children could be and needed to be “fixed” by medical interventions in early childhood. In the 1970s, this model was adopted in German-speaking countries. Some doctors still hold on to it today (Klöppel, 2010, p. 336).

According to this medical model, intersex children should be raised in one (most often, “the” female<sup>3</sup>) gender. Starting at birth, gender changing and “normalizing” treatment should be carried out until adulthood. The model argues for this to be the only way to achieve an optimal and stable gender identity. The “treatment” is considered successful if the patient develops “normal” heterosexual desire and identifies with their assigned gender. Hence, homophobia and heteronormativity play a central role in the argument for medical interventions on intersex bodies (Voß, 2012).

Most intersex bodies are not recognized as such at birth. They may find out about their intersex status in adolescence or puberty, when their bodies either develop in a way that does not fit the social or medical expectations of their assigned sex or do not show such forms of development at all. As Carpenter (2016) points out, “numbers are vague, not only due to diagnostic challenges and the growing impact of genetic selection, but also stigma” (p. 74).

High suicide rates among intersex people are reported by intersex organizations (Hechler, 2015, p. 65; Jones, 2016, p. 608). Technologies such as (prenatal) hormonal treatment and abortions of intersex fetuses due to increased prenatal screening, often combined with medical counseling based on binary conceptions of sex characteristics, are part of a biopolitics

(Foucault, Bertani, Fontana, Ewald, & Macey, 2003), understood as the working of power “situated and exercised at the level of life” (Foucault, 1980, p. 137) and connecting the disciplining of the individual human body to the social reproduction of “the large-scale phenomena of population” (Foucault, 1980, p. 137). As the study by Joris Gregor points out, such medical treatments do not construct male or female bodies, but injured intersex bodies. The treatments are integrated as biographical experiences of injury and heteronomy (Gregor, 2015).

The power to define who “is” intersex should not be left to medicine alone. “Body states framed as medical conditions can only be spoken of in medical language because no other language is readily available for the purpose” (King, 2016, p. 363). It is therefore necessary to discuss intersex in educational discourses.

## INTERSEX IN EDUCATION

Intersex individuals and the topic of intersex in general often do not appear in educational curricula at all in Austria. “If [intersex people] are mentioned, they find themselves treated as an imaginative product of mythology (hermaphrodite), as an example of abnormality or viewed in a pathological way (in biology texts, medical handbooks or encyclopedias).” (Ghattas, 2015) The concept of heteronormativity offers explanations for this.

Heteronormativity is a concept developed in queer theory that describes the interdependence of heterosexuality and gender (Hark, 2009). It is the set of assumptions that privilege traditional gender roles and heterosexual orientations. The idea of two sexes that are physically and socially distinguishable from each other and whose sexual desire is directed only toward the respective other is inscribed in all social relationships. It regulates the production of knowledge, structures discourses and directs political action (Butler, 1993; Hark, 2009).

Even though trans\* and inter\* people undoubtedly strain the heteronormative order, they are themselves products of this order. Only through the heteronormative order do trans\* and inter\* identifications exist. We understand educational and gender discourses, drawing on Michel Foucault (1981), as systematized operations of power, knowledge and practice. Education as a discipline functions as a principle of control over the production of a binary gender discourse.



Although there is a broad supply of literature on pedagogical theories within the framework of gender studies in German, intersex is rarely mentioned. There are important educational studies that critically question heteronormativity in pedagogical discourses from a deconstructive perspective (e.g., Hartmann, 2012; Kleiner, 2015). Yet, intersex is usually not taken into account. Schütze (2010) identifies the topics trans\* and inter\* as forming a “pedagogical shadow discourse” and describes those affected as the “forgotten subjects” of pedagogical gender discourses (p. 69).

Based on Melanie Bittner’s analysis of gender constructions in current German schoolbooks, Bittner (2011) concludes that intersex is not mentioned at all in such textbooks (p. 81). Many educational theories and a major part of research produce dichotomic differentiations and fixations of gender norms, which form the basis for didactic concepts and strategies for teachers. The teaching of only two, strictly separate sexes does not only happen via the official curriculum, as, for example, in biology lessons. Gender education takes place across *all* school subjects and activities as part of a “hidden curriculum” (Jackson, 1968). The term “hidden curriculum” refers to the unspoken and internalized gender norms that students learn at school (for example in a mathematical problem question or in everyday conversation with the teacher) in addition to what they are being taught via the official curriculum.

The binary conception of gender as a *dispositif* of power (Foucault, 1981) produces exclusions. It is both cause and result of discrimination against intersex people, their invisibility, and the general lack of knowledge about intersex issues in education (Breu, 2009). The ambiguity and heterogeneity of gender categories is often ignored, which results in the exclusion of people or groups which do not belong to one of the binary gender categories (Butler, 1990, 1993).

The meaning of the category of gender has always been relevant and questioned in educational discourses. It is interwoven with the question of which concepts of humanity educational concepts are—and should be—based on. Scientific and public discourses are also effective in pedagogical fields of work, including schools. It is against this background that we ask: What contribution can school projects make to the field of gender and heteronormativity, to the analysis of the performative power of the gender binary and the constructive inclusion of intersex? Critically reflecting on a gender binary system opens up a range of issues and acknowledges forgotten subjects (Hartmann, 2012, p. 170).

The first comprehensive study concerning the experiences of intersex people at school known to us to date was conducted in Australia in 2015 (Jones et al., 2016), for which 272 intersex people answered an anonymous online survey. We will discuss this quantitative study together with narratives about intersex student's experiences collected by the first author of this chapter.

We are aware that the contexts of Australia and Austria are very different. However, the lack of research and data requires such comparisons. There is currently no other research on intersex school children or adolescents nor on intersex youth (as an age group). In addition to this quantitative research, biographical research methodologies offer the possibility to understand individual life histories and to gain an understanding of societal realities or the relationship between society and life history (Rosenthal, 2004). The analysis of biographical experiences and their effect on self-construction allows us to reconstruct discourses, social orders and power relations in individual cases (Dausien, 2000, p. 105).

Biographical narrative interviews aim for a self-directed and free narrative form. Interviewees are addressed as experts on themselves. Although we cannot include a detailed biographical analysis in the context of this article, the stories provided offer us insights into experiences in educational relations. The visibility of intersex in these narratives gives us opportunities to reflect on activities at schools and to ask for contributions to projects to include intersex in school contexts and open up educational discourses. We would like to start with a power-critical analysis of a biographical narrative, taken from a self-conducted biographical interview with Andrea Aigner. The interview was conducted in German and translated into English by the authors. The name of the interviewee has been anonymized.

Andrea Aigner is talking about her experience as an intersex person in a sex education workshop during her first year in high school:

And one thing I still remember, we had a puberty-workshop in first grade, so at about the age of eleven. So, just for the girls. Where all the girls from class and a social worker or educator – at least not a teacher – were in their own room and we had to fill out a questionnaire beforehand, which was anonymous, and there, we had to answer various questions. And I remember exactly that there was also the question “Have you already begun your menstruation?” And, respectively, “How old were you at your first menstruation?” And we were eleven, first grade, ten, eleven years at

this time. And I was, in a way, extremely curious and, of course, I just ticked n- n- no for me ((breathes in)) and then I looked at the others a little bit to see what they ticked. And most of them also checked no. I think two, three checked yes, and then I thought to myself, okay. Everything will be okay, there is no reason to worry, I am not the only one. Then, at twelve, roughly, all the others in class started their menstruation after all, slowly, and I was still the little child. And I was relatively small also. And I asked my parents once, ahm, if we could drive to the doctor. Because everyone in class is taller than me and I also still have no breasts and no menstruation, and my parents, they said, so I- I- don't know if I begged or something but, ahm, we went to the doctor. And it started then with the examinations and surgeries.

These experiences are an example of the general lack of knowledge about intersex people in educational contexts and of the way that schools contribute to the invisibility of intersex bodies and identities. As we can see, educational discourses cannot be understood as separate from or outside of gender-normalization interventions.

The above quote mentions a workshop for “just the girls” in the class. Such spaces give the impression of an exclusive room *only for girls*. However, as Melanie Plößer (2005) points out, in order to be able to address girls as such in the first place, a gendered distinction must be constructed. While many of these “just for girls” projects are described as “gender-reflected,” the gender difference that they are based on, however, builds on a binary conception of gender. This inevitably leads to exclusion by ignoring bodies and identities outside the dichotomy of male and female.

The question “Have you already begun your menstruation?” hides gendered body norms and is based on an unquestioned, taken-as-self-evident discourse that all girls begin menstruation. The choice of words “your menstruation” conveys that menstruation is something that belongs to you and is part of your identity. Following this reading, a part of identity is missing until you get “your menstruation.”

Andrea Aigner's statement about being “extremely curious” points to a great interest in comparing the body processes of others with one's own. Telling herself that she has “no reason to worry” is the conclusion that she comes to after looking at the checks in her classmates' questionnaires and not because of a clarification by the workshop leader.

The workshop setting creates an exclusive space for “the girls” as one specific unit. The students are asked about things that are seen as unfit for open discussion; a separate room and an anonymous questionnaire are

required. The questionnaire can be understood as an instrument of control, disciplining, and normalization (Foucault, 2003). Andrea Aigner's hope that "it will come soon" arises from the suggestive question "Have you already begun your menstruation?" There seems to be no option that menstruation will not come. This is a clear indication of a naturalization discourse among girls—if you are a girl, you will menstruate. If you do not comply with this, it will require an explanation or, in this case, a doctor. Andrea Aigner complies with this in her biographical narrative: The missing menstruation does not allow her to be a real woman in her understanding of identity, although she "would like to be one." She positions herself as a "little child" during puberty and later as "not a real woman."

Andrea Aigner's experiences indicate reproductions of binary concepts of gender and the systematic marginalization of intersex people: an uncritical understanding of a labeled group "girls" that (will) menstruate. Within social order systems and hegemonic definitions, Andrea Aigner's own understanding of her subject position is pathological. Therefore, we can understand her wish to see a doctor as a wish to fit the normative idea of the gendered body of a "girl."

Educational activities, as illustrated in the context of the workshop described by Andrea Aigner, are filled with the complexity of gender-normalizing power. This also affects the understanding of one's self and one's relationship with classmates, friends, and teachers. In the interviews, contacts with classmates are described as "dangerous contacts." One interviewee, for example, reports, "I withdrew from close contacts with other girls. I knew that these contacts would be dangerous for me." Self-descriptions as a "loner" or "outsider" were common in the interviews. Teachers were usually not informed about intersex students' situations. Nobody knew—and nobody was supposed to know—about their "otherness." The interviewees described a lack of words to talk about their situation and a lack of safe spaces for such conversations.

Similar results were found in the study by Jones et al. (2016) whereby 57% of the participants that answered the respective question did not tell their teachers about their intersex variation. Forty-eight percent did not tell their classmates. It is not surprising that in the study, school staff was described as unsupportive.

As Friederike Schmidt and Anne-Christin Schondelmayer (2015) have illustrated, generally, teachers do not consider LGBTI topics to be relevant. They justify this with the assumption that there are only a few LGBTI students, who are to be understood as single cases (Schmidt &

Schondelmayer, 2015, p. 227). This has the effect that intersex and other LGBTIQAP+ topics have to be introduced by students themselves or that students must refer to themselves, thereby being outed as an intersex person. This results in a large number of reports of “alibis,” “acting,” and “distraction strategies” being used to avoid being seen as different.

In the interviews by the first author, this was expressed by phrases such as “I cultivated my distraction strategies very intensively as soon as conversations reached dangerous topics and could always hide the fact that I am intersex” or “I remember that, at the age of sixteen, I was out with my best friend and asked her at medium volume for a tampon.” In this context, the tampon is not merely used as a sanitary product but as a gender marker, as a confirmation of being read as a woman. The fear of being “not normal” or being caught and exposed as “other” is a feeling that many inter\* people share throughout their school years and beyond. Additionally, there is the fear of being exposed to the “disgust” of others: “Even today, I still fight against the feeling of not being equal to other people. I am afraid that other people might be disgusted by me.” Most of the time, inter\* individuals are left alone with their struggles and put themselves in outsider positions in order to feel “safer.”

On the other hand, the inter\* people interviewed reported situations in which they were able to trust and speak openly to their teachers. This was possible when intersex topics were taken up in class. Others report that coming out as intersex was not necessary to become self-empowered or reduce feelings of isolation, loneliness, and otherness. Just hearing about intersex people can be an escape from taboo and loneliness and allow all students to gain a broader understanding of gender, sex, and sex characteristics. By contrast, 92% of the respondents in the study by Jones et al. (2016) did not receive information about intersex topics in a positive and inclusive manner.

Institutional reflexivity (Goffman, 1977) is also very important here. The interviews show that completely unnecessary differentiations occur on the basis of a binary gender understanding. For example, interviewees recount having to use the teachers’ toilets or being exempted from physical education so “as not to be exposed to even more difficulties.”

Jones et al. (2016) also report effects on schooling success. Eighteen percent of intersex people did not complete secondary school education, compared with 2% of the general Australian population, which is even “higher than the proportion for transgender populations documented in

recent studies” (Jones, 2016, p. 610). On the other hand, our analysis of the biographical interviews shows that for some intersex people, over-adapted and ambitious behavior can be a way to avoid attracting negative attention, at least in school performance, and can therefore be seen as a strategy to cope with feelings and fears of exclusion, isolation, and otherness. However, for some interviewees, this strategy was not as readily available because of the time they had to spend in hospitals or on weekly visits to doctors—an issue that is also pointed out by Jones (2016, p. 611). For many during their school days, submitting to the methods of doctors is the only conceivable way to appear “normal” as quickly as possible.

School activities are actively involved in the production and reproduction of systems of gender as well as in the question of which gendered subjects are privileged and which are marginalized. Pedagogy is not a silent servant of pre-discursive (gendered) reality, but also a gender-marker. However, this offers a chance for opening up schools to new topics and new understandings of gender.

### LEARNING FROM INTERSEX ACTIVISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

Since the 1990s, intersex individuals have come out publicly, criticizing medically unnecessary cosmetic surgeries on healthy intersex bodies (Carpenter, 2016) without fully informed and personal consent as Intersex Genital Mutilation (IGM). Since then, and particularly in recent years, inter\* movements have achieved a number of milestones toward the protection of intersex people’s human rights. These achievements—and their limitations in many places—constitute the legal framework for the treatment of inter\* people in schools.

In recent decades, intersex movements have challenged public, scientific, legal, and political debates worldwide. In 2013, Juan Ernesto Méndez, *United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*, condemned IGM as a human rights violation. More than 50 times to date, “UN bodies, regional and national human rights bodies have called on governments, policy makers and stakeholders to put an end to the human rights violations faced by intersex people” (Organisation Intersex International Europe, 2017). However, according to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, in at least 21 of the 28 EU member states, “sex ‘normalizing’ surgery is carried out

on intersex children” (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2015, p. 1). A recent study from Germany shows that these surgeries on intersex children are not declining (Hoenes, Januschke, & Klöppel, 2019).

In 2013, the *Third International Intersex Forum* in Valetta, Malta, adopted the *Malta Declaration*, a list of joint political demands from intersex-led human rights organizations and activists. The *Malta Declaration* includes the demand to “raise awareness around intersex issues and the rights of intersex people in society at large.” In 2017, it was followed by the *Vienna Statement*—the result of an international intersex conference in Vienna, Austria, hosted by the European intersex-led umbrella organization *OII Europe* and its national affiliate *OII Austria*. The *Vienna Statement* includes specific demands in the field of education:

In the field of education, we call on governments, universities and schools to take action to:

- Include intersex realities as a mandatory part of school curriculums, especially in biology and sex education.
- Inform professionals that play a role in intersex people’s lives, including but not limited to future physicians, surgeons, midwives, nurses, healthcare assistants, teachers and administrative officers about the existence of people with variations of sex characteristics and intersex realities. All training should be provided from a depathologizing and human rights perspective.
- Install intersex inclusive anti-bullying policies in schools. Schools should take into account that gendered activities may be difficult and exclusionary for some intersex youth (Organisation Intersex International Europe, 2017).

Legal actions protecting the bodily integrity of intersex people and intersex-inclusive anti-discriminatory legislation and policies are a crucial precondition for protecting intersex people and creating safe learning environments for all intersex students. The toolkit “Protecting Intersex People in Europe. A toolkit for law and policy makers,” published by OII Europe and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association ILGA-Europe, points out the direct connection between the violation of the bodily integrity of intersex children and youth and their achievements at school:

[I]ntersex individuals also face educational impairments directly linked to the violation of their bodily integrity and to the trauma related to intensive communication and mistreatment by medical practitioners, as well as to the taboo and shame that is inflicted on them. Most surgeries, which are performed at an early stage, lead to several follow-up operations over the years. Some children drop out of school as a result of this long-term recovery process. Unwanted hormonal treatment, in childhood or puberty, with the aim of altering the body towards the assigned sex has also been reported to coincide with a decrease in school grades. (Ghattas, 2019, p. 27)

In 2015, Malta became the first country to protect the bodily integrity of intersex children in law (Parliamentary Secretariat for Justice in the Office of the Prime Minister, Malta, 2015). By introducing the *Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy* in the same year, it also became the first country to implement a comprehensive educational policy that is inclusive and focused on the needs of trans, gender variant, and intersex students. The policy aims at ensuring “a school climate that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe for all students to further their successful learning development and well-being, including that of trans, gender variant and intersex persons” (Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta, 2015a, p. 5). The policy paper was accompanied by an additional paper focusing on procedures with the aim to “facilitate the implementation of the policy among the various stake holders” (Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta, 2015b). This paper gives guidelines on how to support trans, gender variant, and intersex students particularly during their transition to school.

In Austria, the activities of intersex activists, and particularly one individual’s fight for a legal recognition of a sex status other than “male” or “female,” have led to an increase in public awareness around intersex issues. In 2018, the Constitutional Court of Austria ruled that according to Article 8 of the Human Rights Charter, the intersex activist Alex Jürgen has the right to a positive legal sex recognition other than “male” or “female.” (This means that so far, a third legal sex category has been introduced in Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Denmark, India, Malta, Nepal, New Zealand, Portugal, and some states of the USA.)

Following the ruling of the Austrian Constitutional Court, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education issued a decree explaining the impact of the Court’s decision on Austrian schools. The decree mentions key areas of potential discrimination for intersex students: All-gender toilets



and suitable shower facilities need to be provided; in case of classes separated by gender—for example, in Austrian physical education, students are separated into boys’ and girls’ classes—intersex children should have the right to choose in which class they participate (Federal Ministry of Education, Austria, 2018). These measures are far from revolutionary, and it is yet to be seen how the Austrian Ministry of Education will ensure the protection of human rights regardless of sex characteristics and gender identity. It is too early to tell whether these actions really are a first step toward recognizing the rights of intersex individuals in schools or merely represent a missed chance. In any case, this example shows how intersex activists and queer social movements have not only shaped public discourses and increased the visibility of intersex in Austrian society, but have also led to legal changes influencing the educational system.

Despite the increase in intersex visibility, experiences in queer school projects suggest that knowledge about and acceptance of intersex is still far away from being mainstreamed in Austrian schools.

### INCLUDING INTERSEX IN QUEER SCHOOL PROJECTS

Queer school projects openly address the common experiences of discrimination and marginalization and the unequal distribution of power as well as the taboos and prejudices faced by LGBTIQAP+ people. These projects try to foster reflection on normative language and thinking and to assist in developing nondiscriminatory and empowering language on sexual and gender diversity. In these aspects, queer school projects address a gap in the current school system.

In the 1980s and 1990s, gay and lesbian organizations started to initiate school projects in a number of European countries (Timmermanns, 2003, p. 77). In Austria, a law against “gay propaganda” existed until 1997,<sup>4</sup> which criminalized, for example, informative material on homosexuality that sought to address young people. The first LG(BT) school projects in Austria emerged in the early 2000s. At that time, intersex was not yet represented in Austrian LG(BT) activism.<sup>5</sup>

Today, there are a handful of queer school projects, which are conducted by regional LGBT(IQAP +) organizations. These projects are trying to open up spaces for marginalized gendered subjects. One of their key objectives is to challenge heteronormative thinking. A variety of the workshop methods used aim at challenging binary and normative conceptions of sex characteristics, gender, and (hetero-) sexuality.

These include reflecting on the way we think about men and women and the attributions made to being male and female as well as making the experiences of marginalized LGBTIQAP+ people and perspectives visible and presenting potential LGBTIQAP+ role models. Autobiographical narratives are a central part of these workshops (see Arnold & Langer in this book). Workshop instructors use carefully chosen narrations of personal experiences to point out structural issues, such as issues around discrimination, rights or heteronormativity. These narrations may also depict strategies that can be used when dealing with negative experiences or overcoming stigma, shame, and self-devaluation. They may open up spaces for subject positions outside of binary conceptions of sex characteristics and gender identity.

However, intersex people who are “out” are highly underrepresented among workshop instructors, which is why the perspectives and experiences of intersex people are underrepresented in the autobiographical narratives used in the projects. In order to close this gap, intersex is sometimes addressed using biographical material (e.g., short clips from documentaries, news reports or comic strips) with the aim of fostering dialogue and reflection—or in the context of discussing human rights violations. For example, short clips might be used in which intersex activists appear to talk about their experiences and structural issues, such as discrimination, human rights violations, or the binary gender structure of society.

Our experiences as workshop instructors in the queer school projects organized by “queerconnexion” (Vienna) and “Schule der Vielfalt/School of Diversity” (Salzburg) suggest that while students often have some knowledge of LGBT issues, the mere existence of intersex people seems to be fairly new to many of them. Questions asked by students include, for example: Are intersex people male or female? Can intersex people have sex without surgery? If they love men or women, what is their sexual orientation? Can intersex people become pregnant? How do you know that you are intersex? If I am intersex, what is my gender identity?

Questions such as these offer the potential to discuss, openly and based on students’ interests, the experiences of intersex people, intersex human rights, or how to be an intersex ally. They also open up “spaces of existence” for intersex and non-intersex people who do not fit into narrow social or biological norms of male and female. On the basis of biographical narratives (such as the ones discussed in this article or biographical narratives from books, films, or documentaries), it is possible to take a

critical perspective on gender norms without losing reference to a personal reality. By talking about personal stories, the complexity of gender norms and intersex becomes understandable, comprehensible, and, in our experience, of great interest.

Letting intersex role models “speak” through video clips, comic strips, or images may further empower intersex individuals in the classroom. These methods may also contribute to a normalization of non-heteronormative identities and bodies.

In many LGBTIQ(AP+) organizations and queer school projects, there still is a need for capacity building on intersex issues. On the one hand, queer school projects have tried to include intersex issues into their work and their quality standards in recent years. Autobiographical work may open spaces for empowerment for young intersex individuals. Workshop instructors can serve as role models for LGBTIQAP+ students. On the other hand, there is a lack of intersex educators in these projects. This is not surprising, as shame, stigma, and silencing are central issues in the biographies of intersex people and many do not publicly speak about being intersex.<sup>6</sup> Queer social movements need to listen to intersex voices in order to have the experiences of intersex people fully represented in their educational work.

### COMMON PITFALLS

While addressing intersex topics at schools can be empowering for intersex individuals and may open up spaces for reflection on bodies, identities, and sexuality, there are also a number of pitfalls when working on intersex issues in educational or school settings. Drawing on literature on intersex in education and pedagogy and our experiences in queer school projects we would like to discuss a few of the most common pitfalls that we have observed in these contexts.

One common pitfall lies in talking about intersex bodies and sex characteristics as “conditions” and “diagnoses” and therefore falling into dominant discourses of medicalizing and pathologizing. Discussing intersex or single variations of intersex as “abnormity” may hinder intersex people in their development of a positive self-image (see also: Broemdal et al., 2017). School books (Bittner 2011, 2015) and educational material are often not intersex-inclusive and should therefore be used critically. Being aware that there might be intersex people present in the classroom and using empowering instead of pathologizing language is a good

start. “Without positive language, however, a positive self-image cannot be developed. Intersex persons need to, therefore, learn ways out of their speechlessness and to develop alternatives [/alternative language]” (Ghattas et al., 2015, p. 3, translated by authors).

Another potential pitfall lies in the reproduction of voyeurism. There is a broad set of voyeuristic experiences that intersex people may have faced in the medical system and in society. In medicine, these may include being treated as a “rare case,” being exposed and having to undress in front of medical teams multiple times, or having body parts photographed unnecessarily. Inside and outside of the medical system, intersex individuals may face experiences of being reduced to their sex characteristics or being asked about personal details in inappropriate ways or situations. It is possible to reproduce voyeurism in the classroom through too great a focus on the genitalia and sex characteristics of intersex people. Instead of talking about intersex sex characteristics, one could talk about the diversity of sex characteristics and bodies in general and do so in a positive way. This would be helpful for a lot of children and youth and could decrease the pressure of narrow-body and beauty norms (see also: Hechler, 2016, p. 175). Intersex should not only be addressed in the context of sex characteristics but also in the contexts of human rights, human rights violations and the experiences of intersex individuals. Also, intersex should not only be addressed in sex education and/or in biology classes (see also: Rosen, 2018).

The pitfall of using intersex as just an example or as a “good argument” for other purposes, e.g., the deconstruction of heteronormativity (see also: Hechler, 2016, pp. 165–166), is particularly relevant for queer school projects. Using intersex, for example, as a talking point to critique the gender dichotomy is problematic when the lived realities and experiences of intersex people are not recognized. Particularly, in the outreach work at school of queer social movements the struggles, experiences, life realities, and political demands<sup>7</sup> of intersex persons should be put in the center of discussions.

Presenting intersex as the “other” or “third gender,” as is often done in exoticizing or romanticizing public media coverage, is another pitfall. The idea of intersex being a third sex category is highly criticized by intersex organizations:

Third sex models of intersex assume homogeneity in identity and fail to explain how new classifications interact with medical practices. Indeed, new

classifications for infants and children have been opposed by intersex-led organizations in Australia and Europe, for adding to pressure promoting medical interventions in order to avoid perceived uncertainty and public disclosure. (Carpenter, 2018, p. 491)

Particularly queer social movements need to be cautious, when addressing intersex in the framework of heteronormativity, and to be able to distinguish between sex characteristics and gender identities in their political lobby work as well as in their outreach work at school. Otherwise, they are at risk of reproducing the idea that gender identities need to match sexed bodies:

Imputations of intersex as a third sex have been deployed to support legal recognition of non-binary persons (DLA Piper Australia 2014). Failing to recognize the distinctiveness and heterogeneity of intersex populations and often medicalizing intersex bodies in the process (Colangelo 2017), such actions paradoxically reinforce ideas that gendered identities need to match sexed bodies in order to be valid. Misconceptions around intersex as a third sex help to sustain medical authority over ‘disordered’ female or male children by maintaining a boundary between medical jurisdiction over bodies and socio-political influences over classifications of identities. (Carpenter, 2018, p. 493).

Exoticization may also come into play, when discussing intersex in the context of mythology (e.g., the ancient Greek myth of “Hermaphrodite”), which is problematic, because it portrays intersex in a distant sphere (Hechler, 2016, p. 166). Again, the focus should be on the experiences and lived realities of intersex people and on the critical reflection on binary gender norms and the exclusions they create. Emphasizing that intersex is “rare” or “uncommon” may lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation (International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation, Organisation Intersex International Europe, & European Parents’ Association, 2018, p. 19).

While it is helpful to know about common pitfalls and how to avoid them when addressing intersex in educational contexts, this should not lead to avoiding conversations about intersex out of fear of making mistakes, because not talking about intersex at all might be the most common pitfall. Creating spaces for intersex visibility and speaking about intersex people in a positive, nondiscriminatory, and empowering way is essential for the development of a positive self-image for intersex people—whether

or not intersex students decide to come out. For teachers and other educators, it might be helpful to think about how one might best support intersex individuals if they decide to come out individually or in class.

### HOW CAN SCHOOLS AND THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BECOME MORE INTER\*-FRIENDLY?

While intersex is becoming increasingly visible, there is much to suggest that knowledge and acceptance of intersex has not yet reached the mainstream of Austrian schools. Queer social organizations doing outreach work at schools are trying to open up spaces for marginalized gender subjects (and sexualities). In order to adequately address intersex issues, capacity building is needed in many queer social organizations.

Biographical research can enable a better understanding of the school experiences of intersex people. Queer organizations doing outreach work at schools through queer school projects need to learn from these experiences. Our analysis shows the need to open up spaces of existence for intersex students at school. Queer school projects need to develop a better understanding of intersex human rights struggles and of potential pitfalls when addressing intersex issues in school workshops. As we have discussed here, intersex people experience discrimination, stigmatization, and feelings of “isolation,” “loneliness,” and “otherness” at school. A lot of their energy is dedicated to developing strategies for hiding their intersex status and for being perceived as “normal.”

In the case of Andrea Aigner that we presented here, our analysis has shown how the (re)production of binary concepts of gender and sex characteristics at school may even hinder the development of a positive self-image and foster a pathological self-image. By creating visibility for intersex biographies and realities and by introducing non-stigmatizing self-empowering language, queer school projects may contribute to empowering people at school, encouraging them to question narrow binary norms of gender and sex characteristics and opening up new spaces of reflection on bodies, gender, and sexualities for all students.

Currently, intersex people in Austria do not have adequate support systems in schools. Intersex realities need to be included as a mandatory part of school curricula and in compulsory teacher training as well as in anti-discrimination and anti-bullying measures and monitoring. It is important to bear in mind that gender education takes place across all school subjects and activities as part of a “hidden curriculum.” Further research is

needed to learn about the situation of intersex people at school and in general.

Making education inclusive for intersex people is not just about increased acceptance. It would be a misunderstanding to analyze gender differences as exterior to schools and promote the view that teachers and other educators must simply find the “right,” nondiscriminatory way to deal with them. Schools are not “neutral” places in which social relations are suspended but institutions in which these relations are constantly (re)produced. However, this offers the chance to open up schools to new topics and new understandings of bodies, gender, and sexuality.

As we have demonstrated, normalization processes and the (re)reproduction of binary concepts of gender and sex characteristics often happen completely unreflected upon in schools. Orders of knowledge in discourse (Foucault, 1981) concerning the idea there are only two, clearly distinguishable sexes lead to complex experiences of discrimination and exclusion. From the very beginning, orders of knowledge and ways of speaking determine the experiences of intersex people and thereby also the framework of action and reflection for all gendered subjects.

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## NOTES

1. We use “intersex” and “inter\*” as synonymous positive, nonmedical terms.
2. In this chapter, we only use the acronym LGBTIQAP+ (Lesbian; Gay; Bisexual; Transgender; Queer; Intersex; Asexual; Pansexual; + not limited to), if we are sure that all of the identities represented by these letters are taken into account. We regret not being able to presuppose this in all references and contexts.
3. Birgit Michel Reiter (1997) summarized the point of the surgical practice on intersex bodies with the well-known title of the article: “It’s easier to make a hole than to build a pole.”
4. “Werbung für Unzucht mit Personen des gleichen Geschlechts oder mit Tieren”, section 220 of the Austrian penal code.
5. On an international level, ILGA officially included intersex in the organization’s name and mandate at the Vienna Conference in 2008.

6. Additionally, many intersex individuals do not consider themselves as part of the LGBTIQAP+ spectrum.
7. These include the “Malta Declaration” (Organisation Intersex International Europe, 2013), the “Statement of Riga” (Organisation Intersex International Europe, 2014) and the “Vienna Statement” (Organisation Intersex International Europe, 2017) (see also: Ghattas, 2015, 2017, 2019).

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## Conclusions: Queering “Politics of Pain” Through Activism and Educational Outreach Work

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and *Dennis A. Francis* 

Being a queer activist or queer researcher evokes a variety of emotions. One of those emotions is pain which is experienced in our interactions with other queer bodies and through our writings, reflections, embodied experiences, and activism. We feel the pain impacting on our bodies, touching our inner self, both as individual subjects, but also as members

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of a queer community, constituted by and through discourses of exclusion and marginalization. In that sense, queer pain is shared, even globally, creating a community of pain. Thus, through sharing of pain, pain becomes a “social construct,” the inner becomes the outer, and through the pain we feel the border between the inside and the outside, between the queer other and the heteronormative society (Ahmed, 2014). The pain enters politics and becomes part of a political struggle for social justice.

The edited book and its chapters are an attempt to respond to queer pain by giving examples of how pain can be mobilized but also queered through affectivity of pain, by which we give affective response to pain through queer activism and educational outreach work. However, it also draws attention to how we become invested in pain. In other words, the wound becomes part of our identity (Ahmed, 2014, p. 32), and it can either motivate or discourage us to act against the conditions that contribute to our pain and oppression.

The opening up of the wound, the impact of pain on the queer communal body, is today more evident in some global contexts than others, as discussed in some of the chapters. For example, in Brazil, the latest political changes have resulted in increased pain for the queer community, where the neo-conservative political movement under the leadership of the new homophobic president has undermined queer rights and previous work accomplished by queer activists. Poland is another example of pain inflicted upon the queer communal body, and due to this a contribution from Poland did not become part of this book. The difficulties to tackle with sexuality and gender diversity within education and the interconnections of these difficulties to problematic history and present situation of a country are also analyzed in the chapter by DePalma who describes in her historical analysis why it is not easy to talk about sexuality and gender diversity in schools in Spain despite the rather good situation concerning LGBTI rights. However, saying that, the chapters in this book contribute to the queering of the politics of pain by opening up new ways to connect queer activism to educational settings, and support queer youth in their quest for being themselves without experiencing homophobia, transphobia, or heterosexism. This becomes strikingly evident in the chapter by Kjaran on Iran. His analysis shows how queer or gay activists are able to do educational outreach for queer youth and adults via internet and social media in a country where same-sex sexual relationships are criminalized and can be punished by death.

Thus, the key themes running through the book, appearing in some chapters and not others, can be summarized under the headings: the hidden opportunities in educational policy, laws, and curricula; competing discourses in terms of sexuality and gender diversity in schools; and different approaches to outreach work. In the remaining of this chapter, these themes will be discussed and summarized, followed by a brief discussion on how we can take educational activism and outreach work further, and what challenges are there to overcome.

Some chapters address changes in the legal scape in terms of gender and sexuality diversity, and how these changes have opened up spaces, although liminal, for doing outreach work in schools. Kjaran and Lehtonen, drawing from the Nordic context, discuss in their chapter how recent changes in the curriculum and educational acts in terms of LGBTIQ inclusivity have both made it easier for an educational outreach worker to access schools, and do outreach work, but also set particular parameters for doing this kind of work. In other words, these changes have in some instances normalized some aspects of queer education, and what can be said and done during the outreach work, but at the same time other aspects are pushed out. In South Africa, LGBTIQ rights are stipulated in the constitution and other legal documents, which means that schools should be inclusive of sexuality and gender diversity. However, as Francis and Khan point out, there is a gap between policy and practice, and one way to work against heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia in schools is to educate teachers and make them aware of how to include these issues in the classroom spaces. They suggest art-based education to increase critical awareness regarding sexuality and gender diversity. Other chapters also address policy issues and how these have either made outreach work difficult or somehow opened up spaces of doing this kind work in schools.

For example, in Taiwan a rather progressive legislation in terms of sexuality and gender diversity has influenced schools and how they organize sex education. Thus, some schools have offered the representative of local LGBTIQ organizations to give talks at schools. This has, as explained in the chapter by Yang, however, raised some criticism from conservative groups that have organized their own initiatives and groups to counter the work done by queer activists. Other chapters give examples for these kinds of counter-narratives or discourses originating from conservative groups in which schools have been turned into a battleground for competing

ideologies. Tensions between different groups or between different people with various backgrounds doing educational outreach or social justice work with and in schools were also described in a chapter by Schmitt. In this chapter which focused on Canadian situation, experiences by several interest groups such as queer social movement activists, teachers with queer network background, and teachers with trade union or other community organizing background were analyzed and differences found.

The questions thus remain, what can be done and what schools can do to give their students education about sexuality and gender diversity, which is in line with the guidelines given by the UNESCO in terms of sex education (UNESCO, 2016). These guidelines demand sex education that should be inclusive to all students and age appropriate. The chapters presented in this book give some examples of how that can be done, drawing different approaches in doing outreach work and advocacy in schools and other educational settings. The approaches include norm critical pedagogy, mostly used in the Nordic context, in which the aim is to disrupt the dominant norms around heterosexuality and make students more aware of the privileges. These are often connected to the discussion on white, straight, able-bodied, cisgender, masculine men as normal and most valued. This perspective can be helpful in drawing attention to how identity categories can bring privileges to some, but disadvantages and oppression to others.

Related to norm critical pedagogy is the intersectional approach, which has been used in some parts of Latin America and Africa, to raise a critical awareness of how sexuality and gender intersect with other social categories such as race, class, and ethnicity, and creates new positions and subjectivities. In a racial and class segregated and diverse society such as Brazil, intersectional approach has been used in the outreach work as described by Nardi, Quartiero, and Rodrigues in their chapter. This has opened up opportunities to bring into classroom spaces diversity not only in terms of sexuality and gender, but also their intersections with ethnicity, race, and class. This has also been done in the Southern and Eastern African contexts, described by Reygan as well as Francis and Khan in their chapters. In South Africa, art-inspired workshops for teachers on sexuality and gender diversity have raised critical awareness around the intersections of race, sexuality, and gender diversity. Thus, by using art-inspired critical pedagogy the workshop had the aim of bridging the gap between policy and practice.

Autobiographical or narrative approach in doing outreach work is used in various cultural contexts, both in the global south and north. The chapter by Astudillo and Barrientos describes how a Chilean Catholic LGBTI organization, *Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual*, engages in outreach work mostly in Catholic schools by drawing on the testimony of its members. The aim of the group is to change attitudes towards sexuality and gender diversity in Chilean society through *confession of the self* (Foucault, 1978); using one’s own experience and embodied pain of belonging to the marginalized other to educate and transform the heterocisgender norms. Thus, as the authors demonstrate in their chapter, by sharing the embodied experiences, and by engaging in *politics of pain*, that it is possible to confront and disturb the same norms that are regulating and oppressing those bodies that are considered to be outside of the heterosexual matrix (Foucault, 1978).

This has particularly been true of intersex bodies that have been constituted historically through the discourse of medicalization and pathologization. Moreover, in outreach work, intersex people have often been left out and rendered invisible as members of the greater queer community. Or the I in the list of letters (LGBTIQ+) has been defined shortly without drawing critical attention to cisnormative understanding of gender and bodies, and more detailed information on intersex experiences. Thus, the chapter of Enzendorfer and Haller draws on autobiographical approach, by addressing the importance of including intersex voices in outreach work and queer school projects. By sharing their story, intersex activists not only talk about their own embodied experience but reflect critically upon society and particularly the binary structure of gender in most societies. Thus, this approach, which entails sharing of embodied experience by bringing in politics of pain, is also critical and in that sense in line with norm critical pedagogy used within the Nordic context. By focusing on binary thought and how this kind of ideology constitutes our bodies and subjectivities has the opportunities to queer heteronormativity within schools and educational institutions.

Queering through sharing embodied experiences is also discussed by Arnold and Langer. The authors argue that the presence of LGBTI activists as speakers and the use of autobiographical storytelling as a method help to shift the usual cis-heteronormative framework of most Austrian schools. However, it is not enough only to tell “your queer story” and engage in politics of pain in order to destabilize heteronormative assumptions and work against processes of Othering. These stories, as



the authors point out, need to be connected to critical reflections about gender and sexuality, in which the fluidity of identities and desires is highlighted.

To sum up, approaches and perspectives with regard to queer outreach work in schools discussed in this edited book are diverse, but at the same time they all engage with critical aspects of queering heteronormativity and the workings of Othering, heterosexism, and heterocisgender privileges. In that sense, outreach work in the global south and north draws attention to the importance of the queer activist movement in initiating changes and in fact, *working the cracks* (Collins, 2000) of the dominant discourses on sexuality and gender diversity in educational settings. Saying that, there are however some global challenges in doing outreach work that can be noticed throughout all the cultural settings discussed in the book.

Firstly, there is the issue of funding and resources in doing this kind of activist work in schools. Generally, those organizations and activist groups that work on these issues, and are referred to in this edited book, are mostly based on volunteer work, and are most often underfunded or have to rely on their members for funds. An exception here are some queer organizations in the Nordic countries who get some official funding. On the other hand, organizations that offer counter-narrative to the work done by these queer organizations are often financially well supported by various conservative and religious groups. In that sense there is an imbalance between these groups.

Secondly, to gain access to schools and educational spaces is often difficult and need to be negotiated. In some countries, there is a good cooperation between schools and queer activists, but even where that is the case the outreach work is more than often limited to schools located in bigger urban locations. Thus, the main challenge here for many queer outreach workers is to enlarge their network and gain access to educational spaces. In order to guarantee that, schools need to have an official policy to refer to when it comes to outreach work given by outsiders. In many cases, this is not at hand and thus as in the case of Taiwan, educational spaces are open to groups that work against sexuality and gender diversity by invoking homophobic and transphobic discourse, and to those groups that try to counter this kind of narrative and discourse.

To sum up, the findings presented in the chapters throughout the book have a number of potential implications and opportunities for the development of outreach work and queer activism in educational settings, both

in the global north and south. They also give some examples of how it is possible to queer or disrupt heteronormativity, gender binary and cisgender ideology, and homophobia in educational spaces through outreach work. We hope that this book gives ideas for future research projects and international co-operation in analyzing and developing new approaches, methods, and ideas of educational outreach work with schools by civil society organizations and queer activists on sexuality and gender diversity issues, and in finding ways of doing meaningful educational outreach work around the globe.

However, it needs to be emphasized that this volume is, by necessity, selective and does not make any claims to global “representations” or solutions. That being said, there is clearly the potential for transforming schools globally in terms of sexuality and gender diversity, through outreach work and queer activism, even though we are experiencing backlash in some countries with regard to LGBTIQ+ rights. This reminds us of the need to engage in politics of pain, and through that pain we can make changes and transform schools by queering heteronormativity. Thus, in line with Muñoz (2009), there is a hope of queer futurity or utopias within schools, both in the global north and south. These queer futurities can be defined as transformative, imaginary spaces or spaces in becoming, wherein all students can be included irrespective of how they identify on the basis of their gender or sexuality. In that kind of futurity, outreach work might not even be needed, and schools can focus on what they are supposed to do: Educate students, give them hope, and make them feel welcome and included.

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