CHAPTER 12

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

Martina Enzendorfer and Paul Haller

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.

M. Enzendorfer (✉)
Department of Education, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria
e-mail: martina.enzendorfer@univie.ac.at

P. Haller
HOSI Salzburg, Salzburg, Austria
e-mail: paul.haller@hosi.or.at

D. A. Francis et al. (eds.), *Queer Social Movements and Outreach Work in Schools*, Queer Studies and Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41610-2_12

> 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*[1] 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+[2] 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 *nonbinary* 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 *zwischengeschlecht.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[3]) 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 abnormity 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,[4] 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.[5]

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.[6] 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[7] 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.

Acknowledgements We thank Andrea Arnold (queerconnexion), Dan Christian Ghattas (OII Europe/OII Germany) and Luan Pertl (OII Europe/OII Austria) for their valuable feedback.

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).

References

Bauer, M., & Truffer, D. (2016). Intersex und selbstbestimmung. In M. Katzer & H.-J. Voß (Eds.), *Geschlechtliche, sexuelle und reproduktive Selbstbestimmung* (pp. 137–159). Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag.

Bittner, M. (2011). *Geschlechterkonstruktionen und die Darstellung von Lesben, Schwulen, Bisexuellen, Trans* und Inter* (LSBTI) in Schulbüchern. Eine gleichstellungsorientierte Analyse*. Frankfurt: Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft.

Bittner, M. (2015). Die Ordnung der Geschlechter in Schulbüchern. Heteronormativität und Geschlechterkonstruktionen in Englisch- und Biologiebüchern. In F. Schmidt, A.-C. Schondelmayer, & U. B. Schröder (Eds.), *Selbstbestimmung und Anerkennung sexueller und geschlechtlicher Vielfalt* (pp. 247–260). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Breu, C. (2009). Middlesex meditations: Understanding and teaching intersex. *The English Journal, 98*(4), 102–108.

Bromdal, A., Rasmussen, M. L., Sanjakdar, F., Allen, L. E., & Quinlivan, K. A. (2017). Intersex bodies in sexuality education: On the edge of cultural difference. In L. Allen & M. L. Rasmussen (Eds.), *The palgrave handbook of sexuality education* (pp. 369–390). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex"*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2012). Gender and Education. In N. Ricken & N. Balzer (Eds.), *Judith butler: Pädagogische lektüren* (pp. 15–28). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Carpenter, M. (2016). The human rights of intersex people: Addressing harmful practices and rhetoric of change. *Reproductive Health Matters, 24*(47), 74–84. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rhm.2016.06.003.

Carpenter, M. (2018). The "normalization" of intersex bodies and "othering" of intersex identities in Australia. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry, 15*(4), 487–495.

Dausien, B. (2000). „Biographie" als rekonstruktiver Zugang zu „Geschlecht"—Perspektiven der Biographieforschung. In D. Lemmermöhle, D. Fischer,

D. Klika, & A. Schlüter (Eds.), *Lesearten des Geschlechts. Zur De-Konstruktionsdebatte in der erziehungswissenschaftlichen Geschlechterforschung* (pp. 96–115). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Federal Ministry of Education, Austria. (2018). *Informationsschreiben zum Recht intersexueller Menschen gem. VfGH-Erkenntnis G 77/2018–9*. Salzburg: Bildungsdirektion Salzburg.

Foucault, M. (1980). *The history of sexuality, Vol. 1: An introduction*. (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1981). The order of discourse. In R. Young (Ed.), *Untying the text: A post-structuralist reader* (pp. 48–78). Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Foucault, M. (1994). *The birth of the clinic: An archaeology of medical perception*. New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M., Bertani, M., Fontana, A., Ewald, F., & Macey, D. (2003). *"Society must be defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*. New York: Picador.

Fundamental Rights Agency. (2015). The fundamental rights situation of intersex people. *FRA Focus 04*. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2015-focus-04-intersex.pdf.

Ghattas, D. C. (2015). *Standing up for the human rights of intersex people-how can you help?* Brussels: ILGA Europe & Berlin and OII Europe.

Ghattas, D. C. (2017). *Die Menschenrechte intergeschlechtlicher Menschen schützen—Wie können Sie helfen?* (E. Köper, Trans.) OII Europe. https://oiieurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Menschenrechte_intergeschlechtlicher_Menschen_schuetzen.pdf.

Ghattas, D. C. (2019). *Protecting intersex people in Europe: A toolkit for law and policy makers. With Digital Appendix and Checklist*. OII Europe & ILGA-Europe. https://oiieurope.org/protecting-intersex-people-in-europe-a-toolkit-for-law-and-policy-makers.

Ghattas, D. Ch., Kromminga, I. A., Matthigack, E. B., Mosel, E. T, et al. (2015). *Inter* & Sprache. Von » Angeboren « bis » Zwitter «* . Berlin: Das TransInterQueer-Projekt » Antidiskriminierungsarbeit & Empowerment für Inter*«.

Gregor, A. (2015). *Constructing intersex: Intergeschlechtlichkeit als soziale Kategorie*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Goffman, E. (1977). The arrangement between the sexes. *Theory and Society, 4*(3), 301–331.

Hark, S. (2009). Heteronormativität revisited. Komplexität und Grenzen einer Kategorie. In A. Kraß (Ed.), *Queerstudies in Deutschland. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur kritischen Heteronormativitätsforschung* (pp. 23–40). Berlin: trafo.

Hartmann, J. (2012). Improvisation im Rahmen des Zwangs. Gendertheoretische Herausforderungen der Schriften Judith Butlers für pädagogische Theorie und Praxis. In N. Balzer & N. Ricken (Eds.), *Judith Butler: Pädagogische Lektüren* (pp. 149–178). Wiesbaden: Springer Verlag.

Hechler, A. (2015). Intergeschlechtlichkeit in Bildung, Pädagogik und Sozialer Arbeit. In Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Eds.), *Gutachten: Begrifflichkeiten, Definitionen und disziplinäre Zugänge zu Trans- und Intergeschlechtlichkeiten* (pp. 63–75). Berlin: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend.

Hechler, A. (2016). "Was ist es denn?" Intergeschlechtlichkeit in Bildung, Pädagogik und Sozialer Arbeit. In M. Katzer & H.-J. Voß (Eds.), *Geschlechtliche, sexuelle und reproduktive Selbstbestimmung. Praxisorientierte Zugänge* (pp. 161–185). Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag.

Hoenes, J., Januschke, E., & Klöppel, U. (2019). *Häufigkeit normangleichender Operationen „uneindeutiger" Genitalien im Kindesalter. Follow Up-Studie*. Bochum: Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation, Organisation Intersex International Europe, & European Parents' Association (2018). *Supporting your intersex child*. https://oiieurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Supporting-your-intersex-child_WEB_final.pdf.

Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.

Jones, T. (2016). The needs of students with intersex variations. *Sex Education, 16*(6), 602–618.

Jones, T., Hart, B., Carpenter, M., Ansara, G., Leonard, W., & Lucke, J. (2016). *Intersex: Stories and statistics from Australia*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.

King, B. W. (2016). Becoming the intelligible other: Speaking intersex bodies against the grain. *Critical Discourse Studies, 13*(4), 359–378.

Kleiner, B. (2015). *Subjekt bildung heteronormativität: Rekonstruktion schulischer Differenzerfahrungen lesbischer, schwuler, bisexueller und trans*Jugendlicher*. Opladen: Budrich.

Klöppel, U. (2010). *XX0XY ungelöst. Hermaphroditismus, Sex und Gender in der deutschen Medizin: Eine historische Studie zur Intersexualität*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta. (2015a). *Trans, gender variant and intersex students in schools: Policy*. https://tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Malta-Education-Policy.pdf.

Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta. (2015b). *Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools. Procedures*. Ministry of Education and Employment. https://tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Malta-Education-Procedures.pdf.

Money, J., & Ehrhardt, A. A. (1972). *Man and woman, boy and girl: The differentiation and dimorphism of gender identity from conception to maturity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2015). *Free & equal campaign fact sheet: Intersex*. United Nations. https://www.unfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/UNFE-Intersex.pdf.

Organisation Intersex International Europe. (2013). *Malta Declaration*. https://oiieurope.org/malta-declaration/.

Organisation Intersex International Europe. (2014). *Statement of Riga*. https://oiieurope.org/statement-of-riga/.

Organisation Intersex International Europe. (2017). *STATEMENT of the 1st European intersex community event (Vienna, 30st—31st of March 2017)*. https://oiieurope.org/statement-1st-european-intersex-community-event-vienna-30st-31st-March-2017.

Parliamentary Secretariat for Justice in the Office of the Prime Minister, Malta. (2015). *Gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics act*.

Plößer, M. (2005). *Dekonstruktion—Feminismus—Pädagogik*. Königstein/Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag.

Reiter, B. M. (1997). It's easier to make a hole than to build a pole. *Genitale Korrekturen an Intersexuellen Menschen. Koryphäe, 21*, 47–51.

Rosen, U. (2018). Inter* im Unterricht. Intergeschlechtlichkeit als Unterrichtsthema in der Schule. In A. J. Spahn & J. Wedl (Eds.), *Schule lehrt/lernt Vielfalt. Praxisorientiertes Basiswissen und Tipps für Homo-, Bi-, Trans- und Inter*freundlichkeit in der Schule* (pp. 172–174). Göttingen: Waldschlösschen Verlag.

Rosenthal, G. (2004). Biographical research. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium, & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 48–64). London: Sage.

Schmidt, F. & Schondelmayer, A.-C. (2015). Sexuelle und geschlechtliche Vielfalt—(k)ein pädagogisches Thema? Pädagogische Perspektiven und Erfahrungen mit LSBTI. In F. Schmidt, A.-C. Schondelmayer, & U. B. Schröder (Eds.), *Selbstbestimmung und Anerkennung sexueller und geschlechtlicher Vielfalt. Lebenswirklichkeiten, Forschungsergebnisse und Bildungsbausteine* (pp. 223–240). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Schütze, B. (2010). *Neo-Essentialismus in der Gender-Debatte. Transsexualismus als Schattendiskurs pädagogischer Geschlechterforschung*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Timmermanns, S. (2003). *"Keine Angst, die beißen nicht!"—Evaluation schwul-lesbischer Aufklärungsprojekte in Schulen*. Norderstedt: Books on Demand.

Voß, H.-J. (2012). *Intersexualität—Intersex. Eine Intervention*. Münster: Unrast.