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Sauntson, Helen ORCID:

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# Introduction: Schools as Queer Transformative Spaces

Helen Sauntson and Jón Ingvar Kjarran

In the field of gender, sexuality and education, much research to date has focused on homophobic/transphobic bullying and the negative consequences of expressing non-heterosexual and non-gender-conforming identities in school environments. Less attention has been paid to what may help LGBTQ+<sup>1</sup> students to experience school more positively and relatively little has been done to compare research across the global contexts. This book aims to go some way towards redressing these research gaps by bringing together ongoing research in a range of countries from around the world (Brazil, Chile, China, Croatia, Iceland, Spain, Australia, South-Africa and the UK). Chapters in this volume consider a range of global contexts and LGBTQ+ educational equality and diversity issues. Contributions from these nine countries were chosen for this book for three main reasons. Firstly, they were chosen because of their diversity in population, culture, education system and societal/political structures. For example, in terms of population, the book represents the smallest (Iceland) and largest (China) UN member state. Secondly, the aim was to incorporate cases from different cultural settings, both from the global south and north, especially from cultural contexts that have so far not been represented extensively in terms of LGBTQ+ youth, gender equality and education (e.g. China, Brazil and Chile) in the English-speaking world. Thirdly, all countries represented in the book have evolved considerably in terms of either attitudes or legal rights to their LGBTQ+ population. However, these changes have to lesser extent been translated into educational policy and taken up in schools. This applies to all the countries represented in this book, which makes it interesting to reflect upon and compare these issues between these nine countries. It can in fact be argued that heteronormativity, institutionalised homophobia/transphobia within schools and educational settings is a global problem, irrespective of the cultural/societal context. The tension between positive social and legal changes relating to LGBTQ+ rights and equalities and the concomitant ‘lag’ experiences by schools is, in fact, a key theme which emerges from a number of the chapters in this volume.

Many countries in around the world are currently experiencing socio-political transitions in the legal status of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities and relationships as well as attitudes towards them (useful up to date information is published annually by ILGA World - <https://ilga.org/maps-sexual-orientation-laws>). This applies to all the countries represented in this book, although there are variations in the scope and nature of these changes in terms of LGBTQ+ inclusivity (as explained in each chapter). All of them except China now acknowledge same-sex marriage or same-sex civil unions (as of January 2019), which have during the last decade been legalised. Generally, though, attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals are becoming more positive in all the respective countries. However, whilst some transitions are viewed as positive (e.g. the legalisation of same-sex marriage and rights for adoption), it is recognised that many inequalities remain, particularly for transgender subjects. ILGA World recognises education as a setting in which LGBTQ+ people encounter more structural levels of discrimination and a lack of representation in school curricula and textbooks. As a result, they identify young LGBTQ+ people as being particularly at risk of social exclusion in education. In Europe, a survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2013) found hate crime and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people to be prevalent in many EU member states. In relation to schooling, the survey found that 2 out of 3 LGBTQ+ respondents claimed to be disguising being ‘out’ at school and that over 80% recalled negative comments or bullying of LGBTQ+ youth. A report published in 2016 by UNESCO draws similar conclusion in terms of violence and bullying against LGBTQ+ students in educational settings globally. It

emphasises the need to address this problem effectively in order to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students, and thus meet human rights commitments, including the right to education.

These are compelling reasons for publishing a volume which explores these issues in a range of international contexts. To date, little work on sexuality and schooling has explored international perspectives and situations. One exception is van Dijk and van Driel's (2007) edited collection, published almost a decade ago, which focuses on challenging homophobia in international contexts. Van Dijk and van Driel's important volume brings together accounts of how educators in international contexts deal with prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping and sometimes overt violence against sexual minorities, particularly lesbian and gay youth and adults. Like much work in the field, the volume is very much focused upon the negative experiences of lesbian and gay students and teachers. This is valuable work but, in the present volume, we hope to contribute a different perspective by looking at some of the positive possibilities of re-constructing schools as queer transformative spaces.

In other work, international perspectives on gender and sexuality in schools are considered primarily or solely in relation to sex and relationships education, as in the publications by Alldred (2012) and Sundaram and Sauntson (2016). In Alldred's edited special issue of the journal *Sex Education*, interesting and useful insights are offered into sex and relationships education across a number of European countries (including UK, Spain, Norway and Ireland). Sundaram and Sauntson's (2016) edited volume draws together global perspectives on the topic of sex and relationships education. This current volume, on the other hand, aims to extend the field further by considering wider aspects of schooling (beyond sex and relationships education) from international perspectives, and by considering the potential of schools as queer transformative spaces in a positive way. We hope, therefore, that this book complements and extends already-published work.

Existing work in the field of gender, sexuality and education has extensively documented how and why schools are often experienced negatively by LGBTQ+ youth, teachers and other practitioners. Much of this literature has examined the role played by institutionalised heterosexism and how this prevails (to varying degrees) in the structure and culture of schools in a range of countries. We do not intend to discuss existing work focusing on the negative experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in this Introduction, partly because it has extensively been documented elsewhere across a range of disciplines, and also because the most relevant literature is picked up on in the contributions that follow. An aim of this book is also to contribute to thinking about how to move forward and transform school spaces in more positive ways rather than continuing to explore the pervasive heterosexism and homophobia which characterises schools (although it is important that this work also continues). In saying this, we are not diminishing the fact that heterosexism and homophobia/transphobia is prevalent in many educational contexts worldwide. In some cultural contexts, presented in this edited book, there has been some backlash in terms of gender and sexuality equality/justice recently, thus making it more important to draw attention to the various possibilities to resist heteronormativity and create transformative queer spaces in schools in order to make them more inclusive and diverse in terms of gender and sexuality identities.

This research need has been recognised by Jones *et al* (forthcoming) who, at the time of writing, call for more positively framed work to 'uplift' gender and sexuality education research. Whilst acknowledging the importance of continuing to document and explain negative experiences and practices around sexual and gender diversity in schools, they argue that it is also important moving forward to create more positive narratives which articulate possibilities for transformation and resistance. In their edited volume, Jones *et al* frame their positive approaches around creating different landscapes for and around schools, 're-doing'

particular school-based practices and ‘carving out’ spaces within existing school spaces for the emergence of counter-hegemonic practices and identities. Our volume shares this aim with a particular focus on transforming school spaces in ways that can be applied internationally.

With these overall themes in mind, chapters in this collection report on results of recent empirical research into school experiences of LGBTQ+ students, and the experiences and perspectives of teachers and parents. Different data sets are presented with each chapter focusing on a different aspect of LGBTQ+ school experience as well as providing a national overview of the situation in their respective country.

All of the chapters are theoretically informed by aspects of queer theory (Butler, 1990; 2004; Connell, 2005; Foucault, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1993), with additional insights from psychological, sociological and linguistic perspectives. An overriding principle of queer theory is its rejection of essentialised ideas about gender and/or sexuality categories and aims to destabilise and deconstruct existing categories and emphasise their discursive construction. In relation to this, a key concept in queer theory addressed in all chapters is that of ‘heteronormativity’ (introduced by Warner, 1993). Warner posits that hegemonic normativity is based on a foundation of heteronormativity for many societies. Importantly, Warner’s notion of normativity also includes ‘homonormativity’ – defined as the adaptation of heterosexual practices and models into non-heterosexual relationships, identities and communities. A number of the contributions in this volume refer to the concept of homonormativity in relation to the queering of school spaces. Homonormative practices, on the one hand, can be transformative in that they make spaces accessible to those who do not identify as heterosexual. On the other hand, they are restrictive because they offer only limited possibilities for transformation based on heterosexual hegemonic norms. A related concept from queer theory, and which is explored in a number of chapters in this book, is ‘heterosexism’ (proposed by Herek, 1990). Heterosexism refers to the presumption that everyone is and must be heterosexual. Research on sexuality and schools repeatedly finds institutionalized heterosexism manifesting in classroom practices, in interactions between students, and between students and teachers, as well as more broadly in a range of spaces within the school. Herek argues that this presumption creates the conditions for homophobia and other forms of sexuality-based discrimination. This, we argue, includes school contexts and, throughout the chapters, we repeatedly see the reporting of pervasive heterosexism in schools operating as a barrier to inclusion and transformation. The specific elements of feminist and queer theory used to inform analyses throughout each contribution is explained in further detail within each of the chapters.

In deploying various principles of queer theory, all chapters in the book consider how educational workers may question socially sanctioned concepts of normality in relation to gender and sexuality in ways that benefit all students and how they can ‘queer’ schools/classrooms to make them less oppressive in terms of gender and sexuality. Moreover, the question of sexual and gender equality and how these can possibly be achieved within schools around the world will be a recurring theme through all the chapters. A number of practical recommendations emerge from this approach which may be used to inform ongoing global policy and practice development. We revisit these recommendations in the concluding chapter. The following section of this Introduction discusses the utilisation of queer theories in conceptualisations of space and place – issues which are relevant to all of the chapters that follow.

## Schools as transformative social spaces

In applying elements of queer theory to the study of space, Kjaran (2016) proposes that queer spatialities can also be understood as ‘counter-publics’, a term coined by Nancy Fraser (1990), where new identities can be formed, alternative discourses and new worldviews nurtured. Fraser identifies counter-publics as ‘parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs’ (Fraser 1990: 67). Counter-publics can therefore be understood as transformative discursive spaces where counter-knowledge can be cultivated through critical engagement with the dominant norms and contexts of the cultural environment. It is in that sense that we use the concept of *counter-publics* in this book within educational settings and connect it to Vygotsky’s notion of transformative agency. In this book, we argue that constructions of queer transformative spaces are not an outcomes but processes. In line with Vygotskian thought, queer transformation can be achieved gradually by creating a particular condition, which then enables further learning, not linear but dialectically, moving between thesis and antithesis in creating a common understanding or synthesis of how it can be produced.

It is under these conditions that transformative spaces are produced, which resemble in some ways Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD). Within transformative spaces, counter-publics arise where different views and thoughts are put forward, with the aim of enhancing social justice and providing a counter-discourse. It can be argued that Vygotsky’s concept ZPD can be understood as a transformative space, which can be used to analyse creative actions for social justice in terms of gender and sexual diversity in and through education. This idea also relates to the work of Lefebvre (1991) who first proposed that space is actively produced by the individuals who inhabit it. According to Lefebvre, this often means that those individuals with power are able to produce space which is dominated by hegemonic values and meanings. However, because space is not fixed and is always under construction, this means that there are possibilities for transformation. Understanding space(s) as unstable and constantly changing on the one hand and as counter-publics on the other hand entails an opportunity to analyse the various spatial aspects of schools, from the classroom to the communal spaces, in order to draw attention to the processes of exclusion and inclusion based on gender and sexuality, as well as various possibilities of queering space(s) and creating queer spatialities.

*Transformation* is also a key word in Vygotskian theory, by which the trajectory of human development could be evidenced. Human development takes place in a transformative way, where the agents are aware of and take actions to some crisis. Vygotsky claimed that this transformative process takes place in ZPD. The ZPD is a space where the power of self-determination, or ‘active adaptation’ (Vygotsky 1981: 151–152) could be cultivated. At the same time, Vygotsky also argues that in individual and social evolution, linear progression is combined with non-linear moments or transformative leaps – a principle which could perhaps usefully be applied to the potential transformation of school spaces and school-based practices relating to gender and sexuality.

The significance of these aspects of Vygotskian theory is crystallised when connecting queer perspectives with the Vygotskian lens outlined above – a *transformative activist stance* could be proposed for goal-directed and purposeful transformation based on a commitment to social change. Drawing on elements of Vygotskian and queer theory, transformative spaces in schools may be defined as entailing:

- i) Dialectic processes of learning and unlearning with the aim of expanding previous knowledge/learning;
- ii) Critical awareness and reflexivity;

iii) Multiple voices and views within the classroom or particular learning space.

These characteristics of queer transformative space are exemplified in the chapters throughout this book. In our view, the concept of transformative spaces can be applied when analysing discourses in policy documents and curricula, or when narratives and practices within the classroom are studied. In that sense, transformative spaces can be discursive, symbolic, imaginative or physical.

Elements of queer theory also tell us that time and space are subjected to the same kinds of naturalisation processes as discursive practices (Halberstam 2005). According to Halberstam, 'queer time' can both construct and resist normative identities. Both Halberstam and Freeman (2010) argue that queer time produces 'queer space' and that the two are interlinked and relative. In fields such as linguistics, such ideas have led to a recent incorporation of examinations of space and time in relation to language and sexuality, and these insights, we argue, may helpfully be applied to education. The notion of queer space is, for example, explored by Hiramoto (2015: 185) who argues that '[...] subjectivity can shape and reshape one's social relation to a specific space'. Hiramoto introduces a special issue of *Journal of Language and Sexuality* in which contributions explore language and sexuality in public space. She argues that 'spaces' are conceptual, not just physical. This is as true of school spaces as it is of any other space. Although schools not considered as one of the 'spaces' in the issue, the ideas, arguments and analyses can be applied to schools. Milani (2014: 201) additionally argues that 'gender and sexuality are two important axes of power along which public spaces are structured, understood, negotiated and contested'.

Drawing on existing literature on space, King (2011) also points out that spaces cannot be assumed to have fixed characteristics. This is important for work in this volume and it opens up possibilities for transformation. Although most chapters in this book do not focus centrally on language and semiotics/signs (with the exception of Sauntson and Fabrício and Moita-Lopes), what language/signs and space reminds us is that the 'where' of sexuality is often related to linguistic performances of sexuality. As King argues, sexuality is about what we say and do, but it is also about where we are and how we feel. Spaces, therefore, can become gendered and sexualised through language. This echoes Thrift (2009) who proposed that space is seen as the product of social interactions.

Work on sexuality and space from linguistics, then, reminds us that spaces are materialised through discourse. Places do not pre-exist their performance (Gregson and Rose 2000) and are, in fact, performative. The links with Butler's (1990) performativity theory here are clear – performativity theory implies spaces are constantly being made and re-made. Therefore, space has the potential to be 'queered' through the performative enactment of non-heteronormative identities, desires and practices. Throughout this book, this argument is developed in the various contributions by exploring how schools, as both physical and ideological 'spaces', can be queered in ways which open up a range of possibilities for enacting gender and sexual identities, the result of which is a positively transformative social and learning experience for all students.

Kjarnan and Johannesson (2015) importantly point out, that queer space is often much more visible *outside* the school, as several of the contributions in this book point out. In fact, the tension emerges as a key theme throughout the book suggesting it is a global problem. LGBTQ+ visibility, legal rights and positive social attitudes are often strong outside school contexts. But things seem to change *inside* the space/s of the school – here, the heterosexist assumption that everyone is and should be straight is still pervasive. This perhaps links with the idea that schools should be de-sexualised spaces. But Epstein *et al* (2003) point out that this notion is always in tension with fact that schools are actually highly sexualised public spaces in which gender and sexuality identities and relationships are constantly being

negotiated. Furthermore, schools are not just singular spaces – they consist of multiple spaces which may differ and even contradict each other in terms of their queer transformative potential.

It is also important to remember that school spaces are not just gendered and sexualised. They are also classed, racialised and so on. It is therefore important to consider the intersectional dimension of school spaces. Looking at school spaces through an intersectional lens is important for this book as contributions all consider their respective national contexts in relation to ideologies of gender and sexuality in schools. Sometimes, this involves an analysis of race and how it intersects with gender and sexuality in school spaces (see, for example, chapters in this book by Kjaran *et al* and Bhana and Shefer).

### **Chapters in this volume**

The chapters which follow are all research focused and draw on a rich and diverse range of primary research (including interviews, surveys, observations, curriculum and educational policy documents). Given that contributions come from different areas of the world, we have allowed for some flexibility in writing style to reflect the academic generic conventions of the local contexts of each chapter. Unlike other edited volumes, we have made a deliberate decision to not insist on generic uniformity in writing style across chapters, as we believe this would go against the inclusive and pro-diversity ethos of the book. Likewise, whilst all chapters are clearly linked to the overall themes of the book, there is some flexibility which allows for different theoretical and pedagogic priorities to emerge in relation to each chapter's national context. And, because of the above, there is some variation in length across chapters with some dedicating more space to extended theoretical discussions and/or data analyses (e.g. Fabricio and Moita-Lopes), and others functioning more as shorter illustrative 'vignettes' of the context in question (e.g. Calvelhe, Wei). Whilst some chapters focus in more detail on the roles and experiences of educators, curriculum developers and parents in queering school spaces, others pay closer attention to the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people.

The chapters are organised so that the first five focus on the roles and perspectives of educators and curriculum developers in transforming schools. The chapter of Kjaran, Francis, and Oddsson starts by drawing attention to how schools in Iceland and South Africa rarely include any discussion and education about sexuality and gender diversity. They observe a gap between a progressive society on the one hand and more conservative schools on the other hand with regards to LGBTQ issues and rights. However, instead of focusing on what is lacking, the chapter draws on ethnographic research in different high schools in the respective countries with the aim of exploring the ways in which LGBTQ+-themed education can produce a queer counter-space in schools by using theatre work/drama. As queer teachers and activists for gender equality and social justice, the authors explore the utility of a Boalean drama workshop session for raising awareness of homophobia and explore if this kind of approach changed the attitudes of the students towards sexuality and gender diversity by which a queer/transformative counter-space was created.

The contribution from Fabricio and Moita Lopes is situated in a rather different national and political context – that of Brazil – which continues to experience a negative response to the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights by, for example, right-wing groups who engage in lobbying against what they have referred to as the insertion of 'gender ideology' in educational contexts. This includes some fundamentalist religious groups who have been trying to influence local educational authority decisions in connection with gender and sexuality issues. Despite these serious challenges, Fabricio and Moita Lopes positively report that increasing numbers of teachers in Brazilian high schools are committed to social justice, including the fair treatment of LGBTQ+ and/or queer-identifying young people. In their

chapter, the authors describe collaborative interventionist research carried out with a teacher in a high-school history literacy class, in which queer moments are created through processes of ‘entextualizing-decontextualizing-recontextualizing’ (Bauman and Briggs 2009) and sociolinguistic ‘scaling’ in blog narratives in which sexuality is discussed. These processes (explained in detail in the chapter) are an effective means of creating a (temporarily) queer space in the context of the literacy class.

China is, again, another very different context from Brazil or Iceland and this is where Wei’s research is situated in Chapter 3. Wei’s research explores teachers’ understandings of ‘genders’ and how the concept of gender is taught in their classrooms in China. Wei uses methods of narrative inquiry to investigate three Chinese teachers’ thinking and actions in their educational activities. Specifically, Wei focuses on three ‘narrative fragments’ focusing on particular topics (Chinese language, social science, and art) and looks at how the teachers report their experiences of employing their practical knowledge of these topics to promote gender equality in their respective school contexts. Overall, Wei’s narrative analysis suggests that, in a Chinese context, ‘teaching genders’ is always embedded with ‘teaching subject matter’ which is rather different from the approach explored by Kjaran *et al* in which the subject of ‘queer studies’ is explicitly introduced as a curriculum subject. Wei explains the benefits of the approach in his research by referring to Chinese culture which is more hierarchical and conservative than in other parts of the world. Although traditional ideas about gender (i.e. gender as a binary system based on biological sex) are still prevalent in public discourse, Wei observes that the Chinese teachers in his study can still create new spaces within school subjects for promoting gender equality for the young learners in everyday teaching and learning activities.

As with other chapters in the book, Pazos Leis and DePalma’s chapter starts by observing a tension between the legal advances made in society in relation to LGBTQ+ rights and equalities and the relatively slow pace of change in schools. Focusing on the context of Spain, Pazos Leis and DePalma observe a key problem in Spanish sexuality education: while ‘sexology’ is a relatively well-established academic field of study in Spain, it has done little to inform educational practice, therefore, there is also a disconnect between academic research and LGBTQ+-focused educational practice. In response to these issues, the authors investigate what science and social activism have to offer for schooling, specifically at the early childhood level. Drawing on data comprising semi-structured interviews with sexologists, therapists and equalities activists, the authors compile some insights and recommendations for addressing gender and sexuality diversity at the very early stages of education in Spain. The activist perspective is particularly useful and offers additional insights to those gained from teachers as explored in the previous chapters.

Chapter 5 (Coll, Ollis and O’Keefe) also focuses on the role of activists in enabling schools to achieve their queer transformative potential. They consider these possibilities within an Australian context. The authors note, importantly, that interrogating heteronormativity in schools is not only something that is done by adults, researchers and educators. Young people themselves are also active agents who interpret, negotiate and interrogate discourses of sex-gender-sexuality that permeate their everyday lives and schooling experiences. Using this observation as a starting point, Coll *et al* draw on data from an ongoing participatory activist research project with one urban Australian secondary school Feminist Collective (Fem Co). Fem Co consists of a group of 24 cisgender, queer, gender creative and transgender identified young people and their teacher ally, who engage in a bi-weekly school-based timetabled ‘feminist collective’ elective subject. Data for this project is produced through visual-arts-activist-based methods and supported by ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, interviews and focus groups. The authors analyse the data and its context to explore how the young people and their teacher ally are all

activists, and how they work to re-position the young people in the group as active agents in problematising, theorising and rupturing the boundaries of inequalities of gender, sexualities and schooling. They show how this process provides unique and necessary opportunities to account for the transformative potentiality of school spaces. Coll *et al*'s chapter, with its focus on young people activists and a teacher ally, provides a bridge to the next group of chapters which looks in greater detail at the perspectives and experiences of young people in schools.

In Chapter 6, Jugovic and Bezinovic's starting point for their work in Croatia is the Council of Europe's (2011) statement that schools should be a safe environment for LGBTQ+ students, and that teachers should be provided with tools to respond effectively to bullying of LGBTQ+ students. The authors subsequently focus on the role of teacher support of LGBTQ+ students as a means of creating a transformative school space in Croatia. Using data comprising questionnaire responses from high school students from Western Croatia, the authors specifically investigate if high-school students, who have felt same-sex attraction and those who have not, differ in their perceptions of support received from their teachers as well as their experiences of verbal and physical violence. A key finding was that both boys and girls who experienced same-sex attractions very often reported receiving less teacher support than the students who never, rarely or often felt same-sex attractions. Therefore, the findings point out that same-sex attracted students, who are in need of teachers' support due to violence experienced in schools, are the ones who receive it less. In this respect, the potentially transformative role that teachers could play is *not* being recognised in Croatian high schools. To address this issue, the authors recommend the implementation of comprehensive school bullying prevention policies addressing LGBTQ+ issues.

Similar problems of pervasive violence against LGBTQ+ youth are documented in the chapter by Barrientos *et al* who examine school contexts in Chile (a relatively under-researched context in gender, sexuality and education research). The authors draw on a range of data from an ethnographic study conducted in a Chilean public school which is particularly marked for gender and sexuality. The data is examined through the lens of 'homophobic violence' as an associated 'Sexual Behaviour Apparatus' framework which accounts for how homophobic violence is operationalised in the school. As well as documenting the serious challenges of violence faced by LGBT+ young people in Chilean schools, the study also shows some of the strategies the schools have for managing LGBTQ+-directed violence. The authors observe that the Chilean education system as a whole manages sexual diversity by promoting tolerance and argue that schools could do more to imagine schools as spaces which articulate knowledge about sexuality, including knowledge about non-heterosexual sexualities.

Bhana and Shefer offer an alternative approach of schools empowering young people themselves to become active agents of change in their research which takes place in South Africa. As in contexts examined in other chapters, the authors start by recognising a key tension in South Africa – while the South African Constitution guarantees equality on the basis of sexual orientation, the reality is that alternative gender and sexual practices remain marginalised and 'othered', including in schools. Drawing on local research on young school-going South Africans, the authors show how the assumption of heterosexuality as normative is not uncommon, amongst learners. However, Bhana and Shefer also present evidence of a more nuanced picture of how young people engage with sexuality in South African schools. They show that, despite the assumptions around the constancy of culture and the conflation of culture with heteronormativity, young Africans in the research are actively invested in changing sexual dynamics. In response to these findings, the authors consider how schools might develop a more positive engagement with young people's sexual agency that includes alternative pathways and imaginaries of sexual and gender practices, identities and

desires. This, they argue, is a key strategy for harnessing the transformative potential of schools in South Africa.

Whilst many of the chapters in this volume look at the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth collectively, Sauntson's chapter provides a more nuanced examination of the experiences of young lesbian and bisexual women in UK schools. The chapter uses data from interviews with lesbian and bisexual-identified young women in which they discuss their experiences of negotiating and enacting their sexual identities in the school environment. The interviews are analysed using Bucholtz and Hall's (2004; 2005) tactics of intersubjectivity framework and findings indicate that the frequent enactments of homophobia and biphobia through silence, ignoring and censoring in the school environment are particularly salient for young women. Furthermore, the interview analysis provides insight into some of the reasons for this gendered experience which relate to the UK school context and some specific strategies for challenging homophobia and biphobia targeted at young women. Ultimately, Sauntson argues if school policies are to be effective in transforming and queering school spaces, they need to pay close attention to the gendered dimensions of sexuality.

Whilst Sauntson focuses on the experiences of young lesbian and bisexual women in a UK context, Calvelhe turns his attention to the experiences of young gay men in a Spanish context. Calvelhe frames his research around a more holistic notion of education as something which can and does happen outside the school context but which, nevertheless, can offer insights into how school contexts may be transformatively 'queered'. Calvelhe's chapter explores the use of media and the Internet described by twelve young gay men in relation to their self-identification and socialisation as gay. The data comprises semi-structured interviews with each participant. Calvelhe's queer theory-informed analysis of the interviews examines how participants, via the media and the Internet, come to understand that to self-identify and socialise as gay is a legitimate possibility. Importantly, this realisation is something that happens *outside* school. But the media and internet practices that these young men engaged in could perhaps be incorporated more directly into school-based practices which promote positive attitudes towards sexual diversity. Calvelhe's chapter suggests that if schools adopt a pragmatist approach which cares for aesthetic experiences (such as those narrated by the young men in his study), this could help to develop a holistic and potentially transformative education for all.

In the final contribution, Ferfolja and Ullman take an important, but relatively under-researched, examination of the role of parents in helping to transform school spaces in a positive way for LGBTQ+ inclusion. Basing their work in Australia, the authors start by noting that Australia has an international reputation as being increasingly open to LGBTQ+ diversities. Despite this presence in the broader socio-political and cultural milieu of Australia, silence and invisibility in relation to LGBTQ+ inclusions prevail in school education just as they do elsewhere in the world. They argue that many factors contribute to this critical absence, including lack of curriculum direction and leadership, conflicting discourse in policy, and histories of public moral panic and hysterical debate about LGBTQ+ inclusion. Teachers, thus, avoid broaching LGBTQ+ content in the classroom for fear of negative repercussions from parents and the broader community. However, Ferfolja and Ullman point out that what parents actually desire for the education of their children is largely under-researched in Australia and unknown to teachers and schools; avoidance of the topic therefore appears to be based upon assumption that most parents would disapprove. In response to this, the chapter draws on research that asked parents about LGBTQ+ content inclusion in the curriculum. They find that many parents actually desire an inclusive education for their children and argue that this could provide an impetus for transforming schools so that they are more inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity.

Following the chapters by the volume contributors, we offer a short concluding chapter which summarises the key issues which have emerged from the research presented in preceding chapters. The Conclusion focuses particularly upon the common global issues relating to LGBTQ+ equality and diversity in education which are discussed in the contributions, as well as key points of difference across international contexts. We also consider what chapters in the volume can collectively contribute to developments in theories of queer transformative space(s), particularly in their applications to school contexts.

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<sup>i</sup> ‘LGBTQ+’ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning +) is a shorthand term for a range of non-heterosexual and non-gender-conforming sexual and gender identities. There are now various resources which provide extensive lists of ‘identity terms’, and the addition of the ‘plus’ sign (+) onto the end of ‘LGBTQ’ is an acknowledgement of the diversity of gender and sexuality identities, whilst at the same time realising that it is not feasible to iterate, or indeed, capture all of them when discussing gender and sexuality issues. The indeterminacy of the ‘+’ is also an attempt to go some way towards recognising that gender and sexual identities are fluid and difficult to define. For more information, see [www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms) and [www.stop-homophobia.com/lgbt-terms-and-definitions](http://www.stop-homophobia.com/lgbt-terms-and-definitions). Throughout this book, the default term for describing the populations who are the focus is ‘LGBTQ+’. However, other related terms are used in some chapters to more accurately reflect the identities of the research participants in each case, or when discussing literature which has used other terms or acronyms.