

Book review

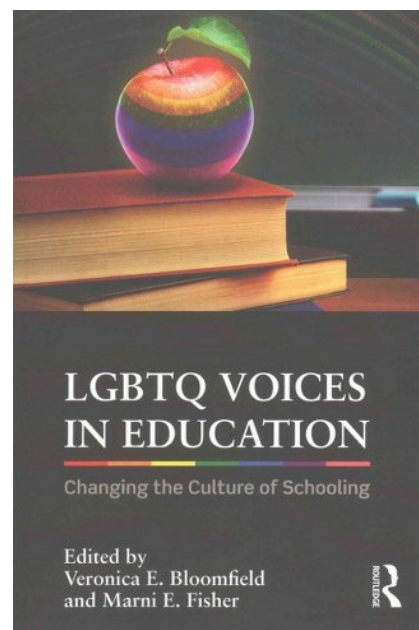
LGBTQ Voices in Education: Changing the Culture of Schooling

Edited by Veronica E. Bloomfield and Marni E. Fisher, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group New York and London, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-138-18708-5 (hbk); ISBN: 978-1-138-18709-2 (pbk); ISBN: 978-1-315-64340-3

LGBTQ Voices in Education: Changing the Culture of Schooling by Veronica E. Bloomfield and Marni E. Fisher is a Routledge edited collection divided into three sections, offering in total 12 chapters, a Foreword, a Preface, two Interludes and a Dénouement. The book draws the reader's attention to gender, sexuality and identity issues, particularly in educational environments.

The foreword, by Kris De Pedro, provides an insightful and personal view regarding LGBTQ issues and policies within and outside the school. De Pedro, a school practitioner, also connects his personal experiences with LGBTQ culture, media and school. In the Preface, Bloomfield and Fisher offer a brief historical background on LGBTQ issues along with key concepts such as transgender, transsexual, intersex, questioning, among others.

Section I, "Raising Awareness: Troubling the Waters" comprises four chapters and Interlude I. Each chapter addresses LGBTQ issues as seen from different perspectives, but, at the same time, as having the same concern: LGBTQ students' needs, emphasizing one major theme across the section *dialogue*. In chapter 1, Michael Sadowski presents data from the GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) survey about anti-LGBTQ language at schools. Moreover, the writer points to the GLSEN findings which correspond to students' perception of school climate concerning LGBTQ issues. In chapter 2, Lynda Wiest engages in a dialogue about LGBTQ issues at school with a group of female graduate students, mainly teachers. The discussion intends to facilitate ways of addressing LGBTQ topics in pre-service and in-service education. Chapter 3, by Veronica Bloomfield, provides the readers with the writer's own experience concerning questions, queries and situations related not only to her sexuality but also that of those around her. Furthermore, the writer discusses several issues such as diversity, gender roles, sexuality and how they are dealt with



in the classroom. Chapter 4, by Marni E. Fisher and Kevin Stockbridge, discusses the importance of teachers creating safe spaces for those outside the heteronormative norms. Interlude I, by Stacy E. Schupmann, offers an inspiring collection of texts about the writer's personal life and experiences as a lesbian, including a poem, reflections about religion, politics and the story of her own coming out.

Session II, "Climate and Culture: Fostering Positive Identities" consists of four chapters and Interlude II. Each chapter contains four research reports which deal with the integration of LGBTQ topics in schools and the impact this integration may have. The major theme of this section is *school climate*. In Chapter 5, Melisa J. Smith and Elizabeth Payne present address anti-bullying discourses regarding LGBTQ students and the impact these discourses have on schools. The writers also discuss the normalization of homophobic language on the part of students as well as teachers and school authorities. In Chapter 6, Elise Paradis attempts to shed some light on the *Cyberqueer* phenomenon and on how North American LGBTQ youth make use of the internet and concludes that, as schools are not providing safe spaces for LGBTQ students, it is natural that they turn to other places where they could find a sense of community. In Chapter 7, Markus Bidell reports on an investigation based on the importance of schools having *Gay-Straight alliances* (GSAs). Throughout his report, Bidell pinpoints the positive impact of schools with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on LGBTQ students. In Chapter 8, Danné E. Davis states that youngsters are aware of sexual diversity and, therefore, it is important to include queer children's literature in the curriculum. According to Davis, children are coming out at younger ages and working with such narratives can help them challenge the heteronormativity existing in the classroom. Interlude II, "Do you Need my Queerness to Define your Straightness? The Pedagogy of Queering-Deviance in the Academy" by Anna Wilson. Based on the format of the Babylonian Talmud method of study, in which a central theme is at the centre of the page and surrounded by the teaching of rabbis, the writer presents intertwined topics such as religion, sexuality, race and ethnicity

The last section, "Transformative Practices", comprises the remaining four chapters. The section deals with teachers' experiences and, at the same time, offers more optimistic expectations as regards teaching practices. Chapter 9, by Julia Heffernan and Tina Gutierrez-Schmich, recounts the implementation of anti-oppressive pedagogies and students' reflection, to further analyse a college course on diversity and multiculturalism. In Chapter 10, Sean Robinson examines how the use of media literacy in the classroom may encourage teachers as well as students to reflect and criticise schools, communities and society. Chapter 11, by J. Spencer Clark and James S. Brown, argue in favour of the importance of developing students' skills to discuss delicate issues. Furthermore, the writers discuss the relevance of promoting dialogue among students, particularly among those of different cultures. In Chapter 12, by drawing her attention to binaries such as rural/urban, human/non-human, Marna Hauk reflects on the benefits of *ecopedagogies*, which seek to re-educate

planetary citizens; in this case, applying these pedagogies to gender stereotypes.

Finally, in the Dénouement, “Speaking Up”, hoping that the book encourages readers to become actively involved with the LGBTQ community, Marni E. Fisher and Veronica E. Bloomfield engage in a dialogue summarising the topics covered in the book and leaving a door open to actively continuing the discussion of the issues presented in the book.

In conclusion, *LGBTQ Voices in Education: Changing the Culture of Schooling* offers an insightful, motivating collection of experiences which invite the reader to reflect upon delicate LGBTQ issues such as bullying, acceptance, coming out, tolerance and so forth. The contributors stress the pedagogical implication each chapter has and invite us to review our practices. As a teacher, I highly recommend this book because it provides teacher educators with tools, ideas and examples that may help them create a safer and more inclusive school climate for LGBTQ students.

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