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Uplifting Gender and Sexuality Education Research

Edited by Tiffany Jones · Leanne Coll
Lisa van Leent · Yvette Taylor

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Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education

Series Editor
Yvette Taylor
School of Education
University of Strathclyde
Glasgow, UK

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Lisa van Leent · Yvette Taylor
Editors

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Editors

Tiffany Jones
Department of Educational Studies
Macquarie University
Sydney, NSW, Australia

Leanne Coll
Faculty of Arts and Education
Deakin University
Waurin Ponds, VIC, Australia

Lisa van Leent
Faculty of Education
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Yvette Taylor
School of Education
University of Strathclyde
Glasgow, UK

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Preface

Introducing '*Uplifting Gender and Sexuality Education Research*'

Working in gender and sexuality (G&S) education and research can be a meaningful, impactful and ultimately uplifting experience. However, efforts at stymying G&S work, research and research careers have been seen both historically and recently amongst multiple contexts for many different reasons. This backlash to G&S education and research work exists for example in:

- Extremes of conservative policies, politics, court decision-making, and media backlash attacking or restricting our work;
- Well-intended feedback from general academic supervisors, not necessarily in the field, and promotion process or reward structures which push researchers to fit traditionally 'safe' education or policy fields and the achievements they most value over newer pathways with more creative impacts; and
- The scarcity mentalities and win-lose thinking about grant assessment and publication peer-review responses amongst G&S researchers

themselves who can believe that the limits on their own opportunities mean limiting others in their own field would somehow ensure ‘more opportunity’ was available to only themselves.

This publication came out of a 2018 seminar event in which G&S researchers and educators from various parts of the world came together to discuss their successes and failures, and the complexities in their chosen careers organised by several members of the editorial team and their research peers. The book aims to build on the momentum around the goal we discovered we all shared at that event: to combat the negative discourses on G&S work in education and research. It aims to encourage or ‘uplift’, showcase and celebrate *as* emotionally ‘uplifting’ the important and innovative work now being done in this quickly expanding international field. It proactively envisions G&S education workers, researchers and stakeholders as collectively helping each other to shatter the ceilings on how we as peers in a shared field think about the value of the work done in this area and the exciting impacts it can have on societies. It calls for, affirms and offers examples of pathways towards exciting and dynamic collaborative work in G&S in education, research and policy... whilst also acknowledging the complexities of this work in detail and being very clear about the context-specific barriers people face in these fields.

The publication brings together papers from diverse G&S research generators and workers at early and advanced career points, government and non-government organisations, educators and students, peer-reviewers and assessors, stakeholders and end users of work in the area. It includes work from multiple contexts including global work and work or experiences specific to Australia, Germany, Israel, Kenya, Norway, Russia, Taiwan, the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and many other locations. It includes work from people who are female, male, cisgender, transgender, queer, straight, of various class backgrounds, of various sex characteristics (with and without intersex variations), open or closed about their diversity, and so on. The editors draw together the information, examples and advice from cross-sector experts to set an agenda of ensuring G&S education workers and researchers’ mutual supportiveness and to encourage

smoother pathways to future collaborations. Parts of the book model collaborative co-authoring in a proactive effort to establish mentoring in the field and cross-sector partnerships and alliances, to create a more cohesive field and strategically lift up and connect people in different parts of the G&S education and research field. We offered newer researchers more access to well-established research peers through encouraging different collaborations or methods of working together, to enhance researchers' future opportunities, expand their interests and grow their readerships. The publication includes considerations for both emerging and more established researchers of starting and developing G&S research and education work; enabling factors and barriers to progressing & not progressing in G&S education or research work; mentoring of G&S researchers and career success stories & secrets; and ensuring policy and program impacts and outcomes in the field.

Ultimately this book is a love letter from the field of G&S Education Work and Research to itself, with the strong and much-needed message at its heart that together, *we can and must uplift each other's efforts to be the very changes we want to see for our field*. We need to engage in big field mentalities to grow this field and ensure more opportunities for everyone in it: we need to support each other's promotions through mentoring; support each other's publications through co-authoring, co-editing and helpful rather than dismissive peer reviews; and ensure each other's grant successes through collaborations and useful rather than crushing assessments of the quality and value of our peers' work. People who work in this field are attacked enough already from outside it—we should never seek to attack our peers or be used by the media to denounce work done in this field, but always seek to better it discretely and from the inside with genuine intentions towards growing more opportunities for everyone in this complex area of work. The authors, educators, researchers and young people in this book were identified by the editors as experts in a field related to or within G&S issues in education and research which we wanted to lift up and share with the field. They were all given rough guidelines and tips for their chapters; however, the contributors all had their own personal styles and ideas for what was important to the uplifting of their shared field and were free to negotiate alternative ideas with the editorial team for what their

contribution to the book could be. Some worked individually, some in pairs or small groups with their editorial team members and translators. The chapters were peer-reviewed and then collated by the editors into themed collections in the three parts of this book considering the different influences on G&S education and research:

1. Part I ‘The Landscapes of Gender & Sexuality Education Research’;
2. Part II ‘Doing Gender & Sexuality Education Research Differently’; and
3. Part III ‘Carving Out Careers in Gender & Sexuality Education Research’.

A brief outline is provided for each of these parts introducing their central concepts, and summaries of key chapter contributions. Within each chapter, a 100-word abstract and some keywords are also provided for readers, along with a list of references for further reading on the topics they explore.

Outlining Part I ‘The Landscapes of Gender & Sexuality Education Research’

Multiple, sometimes clashing and sometimes constraining landscapes form the background to gender and sexuality (G&S) education research. These especially include:

- Conceptualisation landscapes;
- Social landscapes;
- Media landscapes;
- Developmental landscapes; and
- Legal landscapes.

These landscapes also shape what is possible in G&S education research. However, these landscapes are in turn shaped by the G&S education research work performed within them or reported across them.

In Part I, ‘The Landscapes of Gender & Sexuality Education Research’ of *Uplifting Gender and Sexuality Education Research*, five chapters explore five different research landscapes to aid emerging and establishing researchers in developing their work in G&S education research. All of the chapters seek to offer advice to various people in the field, and to move towards ways of uplifting G&S education and research uplifting the (im)possibilities and of these landscapes.

In Chapter 1, Tiffany Jones discusses conceptualisation landscapes, urging researchers to understand both the globally imported ideas on G&S in operation in education and research; and the contextually specific ideas on gender, sexuality and sex characteristics which may affect what identities and experiences are even possible to conceptualise. In Chapter 2, Dmitrii S. Tolkachev and Varvara M. Vasileva discuss social landscapes, and how these can differ somewhat from what a policy landscape may appear to suggest or enforce. They particularly explore the case study of Russia and its propaganda policies, and traditional approach to G&S, and how younger Russian educators and the Russian population are influenced by global ideas and local debates. In Chapter 3, Debbie Ollis discusses media landscapes, including how they impact research on G&S in education, and also its translation into practice. She gives a detailed personal account of her experiences with media backlash to her research-based programs and resources, and considers how researchers and educators should respond to media influences in seeking to make an impact. Chapter 4 provides a discussion of developmental landscapes for youth which needs to be considered in G&S education, research and supportive interventions by Uri Eick, Guy Shilo, Shai Hertz, Inbal Ketzef and Aylon Slater. They explore both theory and data on these landscapes, and describe the differences in development by age groups and sexual orientation groups over time in Israel, and how changes should be modernising educational and research responses. Finally, Tiffany Jones broadly outlines the international, regional, national and other legal landscapes to be considered in G&S education and research work. Detailed tables of policy texts is offered to help researchers navigate their ideas with consideration for the restraints and opportunities in the specific locations of their work.

Outlining Part II 'Doing Gender & Sexuality Education Research Differently'

A broad agenda has been set by contemporary gender and sexuality (G&S) education research for doing things differently. These especially include:

- Re-doing institutional and social rules and hierarchies in education and curricula and the practices surrounding them;
- Re-doing teacher education and the values surrounding it;
- Re-doing teaching on G&S and the curricula surrounding it; and
- Re-doing research directly addressing G&S in education studies.

Innovations are desperately needed in these areas of work to break down the reproduction of broader hegemonies of sexuality and gender in schools and other educational institutions. In Part II 'Doing Gender & Sexuality Education Research Differently' of *Uplifting Gender and Sexuality Education Research*, four chapters explore these four different areas of practice and research in which problematic hegemonies have been identified. Each offers innovative strategies have been employed to uplift current G&S research and work in its specific topic area. All of the chapters seek to illustrate practical methods of uplifting G&S education and research by clear example. They explore the affective, emotional and psychological 'uplift'—the sheer joy—of doing so; and provide pleasurable, 'uplifting' or provocative reading.

In Chapter 6, Emma Renold describes how researchers, educators, activists and young people can creatively re-do institutionalised rules both formal and informal. Renold describes how a group of young girls are re-doing their response to institutionalised gender rules, after experiencing prolific sexism, up-skirting (the uplifting of their skirts by boys using rulers) and other forms of sexual abuse and violence in their small Welsh town which had been providing a victimising position for them to step into. The girls invented and wore empowering 'ruler skirts' to draw attention to and subvert the gender dynamics in play in their school and local community. They captured their experiences, feelings

and activism in exciting displays of poetry and art. In Chapter 7, Emily Gray considers how the possibilities for finding spaces to teach within, for and about social justice—for ‘doing teacher education differently’—are being increasingly constrained. Gray uses the case of the prescriptive teaching standards reducing teaching to technocratic skills in Australia. However, she points out that there are unique possibilities inherent in the situation when considered from the perspective of Berlant’s ‘cruel optimism’ and data from Queer teacher educators expressing joy at being on the margins. Gray considers the opportunities for more generative pedagogical spaces and how being ‘on the edge’ of G&S work and spaces can also inspire pleasure, joy and a sense of freedom. In Chapter 8, Lisa van Leent examines the possibilities for doing G&S education and research differently by re-doing teaching. Specifically, it challenges teachers’ conceptions of their work in this area, and the common assumption that the best approach to G&S is to not engage with these phenomena at all. The chapter argues cisgender and heterosexual norms are so inherently promoted in schools and engaged with by teachers; that non-engagement implicitly supports traditional G&S positions. It outlines relevant curricula and policies on sex education endorsing a critical teaching approach, and data showing some teachers take pleasure in a critical approach regardless of curriculum requirements. Finally, Tiffany Jones proposes re-doing research on G&S in more inclusive ways. She explains best-practice guidelines developed for a 2018 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) technical brief used for advising governments and transnational survey directors on the monitoring of violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex (SOGIE) status and education sectors’ responses. She details the history of her development of the key standard questions on G&S for education studies, which were recommended in the brief (including for both student and staff surveys, focus groups and interviews). She then outlines the reasons it is important to consider issues of G&S in schools in relation to violence and other topics, the development of questions on G&S over the years and the complications of cultural and other differences. Jones argues that increasingly uplifting, positive pleasurable and activist experiences and

exploration will become possible over time in G&S education research; as it reflects and creates new realities. She asserts the need to ‘re-do’ best practice conceptualisations of research over time and continually challenge existing and past hegemonies.

Outlining Part III ‘Carving Out Careers in Gender & Sexuality Education Research’

Carving out careers can involve many different steps or pathways, and no two careers in gender and sexuality (G&S) education and/or research need look the same. However, goals for people carving out careers in the scholarly field broadly include:

- Carving out qualifications;
- Carving out pathways; and
- Carving out successes.

These are complex goals to achieve and require overcoming numerous challenges. In Part III ‘Carving Out Careers in Gender & Sexuality Education Research’ of *Uplifting Gender and Sexuality Education Research*, three chapters explore the three different goals to aid emerging and establishing researchers in developing their work in G&S education research. All of the chapters seek to offer a diversity in advice and the understanding that different options work for different individuals, but helping each other and collaborating as a field can lift everybody up.

In Chapter 10, a group of eight research collaborators consider the difficulties of studying gender and sexualities and carving out qualifications in their field. The chapter recalls their current and past experiences as higher degree research (HDR) students—including Honours, Masters and Ph.D. candidates. It first reviews the literature on working in this area and second provides a series of individuals’ most difficult experiences of being an HDR in G&S research: senior bias, studying controversial or psychologically sensitive topics, recruitment difficulties, being insiders or outsiders to the communities they studied or even to the norms of academia itself. The collaborators discuss both how they

creatively overcame key obstacles as individuals, and themes they see as valuable across their experiences. In Chapter 11, a group of professors and associate professors/readers discuss carving out a pathway in academia or related G&S careers: wedging your foot in the door, using it to open that door and keeping that door open to yourself. The experts answer eight questions about G&S careers in research and education. All experts have held or hold academic roles in research-only institutions and teaching faculty roles, professional research roles, related professional/corporate/government roles, and engaged in both theoretical and empirical studies. All questions were submitted by early career and student researchers and workers in sexuality and gender in education from a range of countries around the world, and deal with key issues of concern to ECRs and students. The diverse answers show that context, experience and personality traits all have a role to play in the approaches taken to key career questions we face; for experts as well as for those starting out. In Chapter 12, Annette Brömdal, Leanne Coll and Lisa van Leent address carving out successes in gender, sexuality, education and research careers. The three lead authors have worked in collaboration with a dozen established ‘star scholars’ in the field to bring together a collection of impressive career memoirs and manifestos. These pieces are written directly for early career and mid-career researchers. These memoirs and manifestos outline advice, creative strategies, defining moments, inspirations, unique turning points and positive stories. It is envisioned that this chapter will inspire different ways of being, becoming and relating to gender and sexualities research in education as an uplifting possibility.

The editors sincerely hope this book is of value to a range of stakeholders in G&S education, research and related areas. We thank you for sharing in this work and hope to share in reports of your own as you progress in our shared field, uplifting it together.

Sydney, Australia
 Waurin Ponds, Australia
 Brisbane, Australia
 Glasgow, UK

Tiffany Jones
 Leanne Coll
 Lisa van Leent
 Yvette Taylor

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We want to thank and encourage our peers in the field of gender and sexuality (G&S) education research around the world for your inspirational work, ideas and bravery. We thank our predecessors who challenged the hegemonies in related fields in myriad ways, who persisted often without any personal or career security, and who insisted on the importance of these issues thus bringing this area of study into being.

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Notes on Contributors

Uri Eick has an M.Sc. of Statistics and M.Sc. in Social Work from the University of Haifa. Statistician, software guide, social worker, and volunteer for over 15 yrs in Hoshen—Education and Shinui, Levinsky Clinic of the Ministry of Health and the Center for Assistance to Victims of Sexual Assault.

Annette Brömdal is a Senior Lecturer in Sport, Health and Physical Education at USQ. Her research interests fall within the areas of bodies, gender and sexuality in elite sports, medicine, contemporary sexuality education and the corrective service system. Annette is currently leading a research project investigating the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated Transgender people in Queensland.

Leanne Coll is a Lecturer in Health & Physical Education at Deakin University. Her research interests with young people centre on the conditions of possibility for transformational learning related to gender and sexualities in schooling. She is particularly interested in the promotion of meaningful student involvement in education research through queer, activist and participatory research methodologies.

Raewyn Connell is a highly cited Australian sociologist. She gained prominence as an intellectual of the Australian New Left. She is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Sydney, known for the concept of hegemonic masculinity and southern theory. She is the author of several books and many journal publications.

Carolyn D’Cruz is a Senior Lecturer in Gender, Sexuality and Diversity Studies at La Trobe University. She is author of *Identity Politics in Deconstruction: Calculating with the Incalculable*, co-editor of *After Homosexual: The Legacies of Gay Liberation*. She loves to think, read and write about connections between activism and academia.

Andrea del Pozo de Bolger has broad research interests including environmental factors as moderators of early childhood risks for developmental outcomes; complex trauma; and transgender issues in education and psychology. Her work has been published in a book and several journals. She is also qualified as a clinical psychologist.

Paulina Ezer is from Ontario Canada, a research assistant and a Ph.D. candidate. Her thesis focuses on exploring teachers’ perceptions of sexuality education approaches in the national curricula. She has previously published from a study on Canadian heterosexual female adolescents’ decision-making about sexual intercourse and pregnancy in rural Ontario.

Emily Gray hails from Walsall, UK and is a lecturer in Education Studies at RMIT’s School of Education. Her interests within both research and teaching are interdisciplinary and include sociology, cultural studies and education. She considers how G&S identity categories are lived by individuals and experienced within institutions.

Mandy Henningham studies at the Discipline of Child and Adolescent Health, Sydney Medical School at the University of Sydney. She completed her Master of Health Science (Sexual Health) at the Health Science campus at the University of Sydney. She is currently completing her Ph.D. at Sydney University.

Shai Hertz lives in Tel Aviv with his spouse and daughter, a computer scientist and a musician. He holds a M.Sc. degree in Computer Science

from Tel Aviv University and develops algorithms for natural language processing using machine learning. Since 2006, he has worked to build research teams.

Jessica Ison is a Ph.D. candidate in Social Sciences at La Trobe University, where she is currently working on projects around issues related to queer identities and animal rights. She is also an Institute for Critical Animal Studies Oceania Representative. She describes herself as queer, vegan and a writer.

Tiffany Jones is ARC DECRA Fellow at Macquarie University Australia and an Associate Professor at La Trobe University. She researches and publishes on GLBTIQ issues in education and health policy. She is editor of several peer-reviewed and literary publications, a consultant for UNESCO and a range of government and non-government bodies.

Inbal Ketzeff lives in Tel Aviv with her partner and children. State employee, graduate of the Technion in economics and management and a volunteer at Hoshana—Education and Shinui since 2007, Keffar is on the board of directors and leading training workshops for new volunteers in the organization.

Lucille Kerr is a Ph.D. student at La Trobe University, and a Specialist Cancer Nurse. Her research investigates cancer and the trans and gender diverse community. It considers the ways the community's strengths can best be utilised, via one-on-one interviews to explore the experiences of trans and gender diverse individuals.

Victor Minichiello is an Adjunct Professor at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, School of Public Health and Human Biosciences, La Trobe University, Australia. He researches public health, men's health, gerontology and sexualities. He has written books on both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, in-depth interviews and surveys.

Anne Mitchell Emeritus Professor AO has been working in sexuality education for over thirty years. She was a founding staff member of ARCSHS La Trobe and was part of the research team on the five-yearly studies of Secondary Students and Sexual Health. She co-wrote the national Talking Sexual Health materials.

Debbie Ollis is an Associate Professor in Education at Deakin University where she teaches and researches in the fields of gender, relationships and sexuality education. Debbie has worked in the health and sexuality education field for over 30 years as a teacher, policy officer, curriculum consultant, teacher educator and researcher.

Chloe Parkinson recently completed her Ph.D. at the School of Education, University of New England. Her thesis explored issues for indigenous people in education and curricula, including issues of gender diversity. Her work has been published in a book and various journals and she has since worked at Griffith University.

Alison Rahn is completing her Ph.D. at the University of New England on the extent to which the needs of couples have the potential to be met in institutions, including issues of privacy, sexual relationships and other factors. She has previously worked as an architect and a sex therapist.

Emma Renold is a Professor of Childhood Studies at the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, Wales. She is the author of *Girls, Boys and Junior Sexualities* (2005), *Children, Sexuality and Sexualisation* and co-editor of *Routledge Critical Studies in Gender and Sexuality in Education* series. Inspired by feminist, queer and new materialist post-humanist theory, her research investigates how gender and sexuality come to matter in children and young people's everyday lives and the affordances of co-productive, creative and affective methodologies to engage social and political change with young people; including the co-production of the creative-activist resource 'AGENDA' (see www.agendaonline.co.uk). In 2018 she was winner of the ESRC Impact in Society Prize—a landmark achievement for how feminist-queer qualitative research-activisms can inform policy and practice.

Kerry Robinson is a Professor in the School of Social Sciences and Psychology at the University of Western Sydney and leader of the Sexualities & Genders Research cluster. Her research explores childhood studies; diversity and difference in educational contexts; gender equity; G&S studies; sexual citizenship and feminism.

Guy Shilo is a Senior Lecturer at the Bob Shapell School of Social Work, Tel Aviv University. Dr. Shilo's research deals with the effects of environmental pressures and LGBT health. Dr. Shilo's research has been published in his book *Life in Bordeaux—Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth and Youth*.

Aylon Slater has an M.A. in Social-Organizational Psychology, Columbia University, New York. He is a faculty member of the group facilitation program at Tel Aviv University and is a consultant, mentor, and instructor. Choshen—Education and Change Volunteer since 2003.

Yvette Taylor is Professor of Education, University of Strathclyde. Publications include: *Working-class Lesbian Life* (2007); *Lesbian and Gay Parenting* (2009); *Fitting Into Place* (2012) and *Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth* (2015). Yvette is now working on 'Comparing Intersectional Life-course Inequalities amongst LGBTQI+ Citizens in Four European Countries'.

Dmitrii S. Tolkachev is a Master's student, Faculty of Social Sciences, Analyst, Laboratory for Anti-Corruption Policy at the Russian National Research University Higher School of Economics. His research interests include queer theory, sexual citizenship, political regulation of homosexuality, anti-corruption policy.

Lisa van Leent is a Lecturer in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership in QUT's Faculty of Education. She researches teacher support in relation to sex education, particularly in regards to diverse sexualities, and the improvement in support for LGBTIQ+ students in schools. She supports undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Varvara M. Vasileva is a Candidate of Sciences (Political Science), Associate Professor, School of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences at the Russian National Research University Higher School of Economics. Her research interests include governance and public policy, failed policy, corruption markets.

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Part I

**The Landscapes
of Gender & Sexuality
Education Research**



1

Conceptualisation Landscapes: Overview of Global Gender and Sexuality Constructions

Tiffany Jones

Introduction

Gender and sexuality (G&S) identity can be constructed variably around the globe, particularly in relation to marginal gender and sexual identities including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) identities. Whilst sometimes these stem from dominant Western globalising discourses, some identities are only known and used in ways which are ‘meaningful’ in the cultures from which they derived. This can make them harder to study and sometimes researchers avoid the task altogether. There is a need for researchers to provide objective internationalist LGBTI education issues knowledge to pre-service teachers; studies show teachers want this information [1]. This section collates literature and data towards supporting researchers to: globalise LGBTI conceptualisations, use reliable research and avoid unreliable sources.

T. Jones (✉)

Department of Educational Studies, Macquarie University,
Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: tiffany.jones@mq.edu.au

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Globalising LGBTI Conceptualisations

Researchers addressing LGBTI identities may first define them. When doing so they should combat the sense that concepts associated with LGBTI issues solely occur within ‘Western’ identity constructions, recalling diverse geographical histories of local LGBTI identity conceptualisations or social practices and emphasising their relevance to teachers of history, geography and social studies.

Sexual orientation variance including same-sex and multi-sex attraction or encounters are not limited to gay, lesbian, bisexual, fluid and queer ‘labels’—these are established in multiple nations’ pasts. Around 2500 years ago Vatsyayana’s *Kama Sutra* included an entire chapter on homosexuality; male same-sex relationships appeared in Tamil literature in the third century BC and female same-sex relationships were seen in 1700s Urdu poetry [2]. Same-sex sexual acts were documented as a normal facet of life prior to 1800s Western influence within the context of general male sexual craving in the Middle East [3]; and romantic relationships in Asia [4]. Whilst in early modern history British colonisation spread anti-sodomy laws throughout many countries and Western psychiatry pathologised what it labelled ‘homosexual’ attraction, evidence from researchers like Kinsey and members of the American Psychological Association (APA) informed the dominant contemporary view in the West that homosexuality is a common and healthy occurrence in both humans and animals [5]. Modern school psychology has moved from ‘fixing’ students to fit heterosexual norms; towards affirming approaches creating supportive school environments for LGBTIs [6]. Amongst secondary students globally, it is generally estimated that about 10% identify as gay or lesbian and bisexuality may count for over one-third of adolescents’ sexual experiences [7]. Most recognised their same-sex attraction [7] around puberty (11–16 years), over a third knew earlier [8, 9].

Gender identity variance (how a person identifies as being a masculine, feminine, neither, or both, or a combination, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth) and **gender expression variance** (how a person expresses their gender through manners, dress, social roles and other means) has been documented for thousands of years in African, Middle Eastern and other societies with varying levels of