

LGBTQ+ HISTORIES OF EDUCATION INTRODUCTION.

Historias de la Educación LGTBQ+. Introducción

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Education (through formal schooling and other cultural institutions) has been a central factor regarding the ways marginalized communities are challenged and identities realized within a social context that presents multiple barriers to seeking justice in our daily lives. In the last three decades education historians have ventured into Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ+) studies, seeking to document the ways schools, historically, have reflected and shaped larger cultural perceptions of sexuality and gender. The field has gained some traction in recent years, benefitting from the establishment of LGBTQ+ archives and advances in queer studies more broadly. However, to our knowledge, no history of education journal has yet published a dedicated volume on LGBTQ+ issues. Our aim with this project is two-fold. We take stock of the current status of international research on LGBTQ+ issues in history of education. In addition, we hope this special issue prompts new scholarly work that advances our understanding of the roles that gender and sexual identities have played in educational institutions across time, and the ways that educators and their school communities have contributed to or opposed civil rights movements for LGBTQ+ people. These essays remind us of the work that still needs to be done to ensure that our field is continuing to include the stories and histories often relegated to the margins of history.

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We are reminded of how state policies are informed by the cultural narratives framing spaces, especially in schools. We see this in the growing scholarship on LGBTQ+ education and educators and the roles individuals and organizations played in shaping schools and schooling in the twentieth century and beyond, from communities around the globe. Much of the early research on this topic addressed school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender teachers and students and this remains a productive area of study, particularly in North America. Three essays in this volume address the recovery work necessary to understanding more about what might be considered LGBTQ+ forebears in the education profession; the history of one of the first LGBTQ+ student organizations in the United States to press for their legal right to exist alongside other student organizations on their college campus; and the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers in the 1990s as they navigated school and community spaces in conservative parts of the US. Some historians address broader cultural themes regarding gender and sexual identity that intersect with education. In this volume scholars from South America discuss social fixations on bodies as a form of control through essays that examine the emergence of binary definitions of sex, gender, and sexuality in Argentina as revealed through a study of the introduction of toilets in primary schools in Buenos Aires; and teacher training in physical education in Uruguay during the 1950s. Other scholarship, most notably that produced by researchers in Asia, Europe, and South America, focuses on curriculum and textbooks. Along those lines, contributors to this volume address changes regarding sexualities in curriculum guidelines and school textbooks in Japan from 1958 to 2017; and historical pedagogical discourses regarding sexuality and gender in Argentina during the 1990s. The essays are presented in three sections, concentrating on these topics in a chronological order within each section. To reflect a field of study rooted in the historical experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, and expanded to consider issues, themes, and concepts consonant with queer theory more broadly we use «LGBTQ+» as a unifying descriptor in this volume although individual authors write in terms specific to their studies. These stories highlight the rich and at times complicated ways populations respond when their identities or positionalities are challenged, and their humanity ignored. Misplaced or misconstrued conversations on morality

in a variety of contexts remind us of the vulnerable status of LGBTQ+ students and teachers, whose everyday existence has been challenged by policies seeking to limit their relationship to schools.

In seeking contributors to this special issue of *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* we consulted databases for relevant publications in the history of education, programs for recent conferences of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), and shared news of the special issue with members of Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Canadian History of Education Association/ Association canadienne d'histoire de l'éducation, ISCHE, History of Education Society (UK), History of Education Society (USA), Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação, Sociedad Española de Historia de la Educación, Sociedad Mexicana de la Historia de Educación, Sociedad Uruguaya de Historia de la Educación, and Division F: History and Historiography of the American Educational Research Association.

Our database search indicated that the study of LGBTQ+ histories of education is still very much in its early stages. While not exhaustive, one bibliography of work centered on LGBTQ+ histories of education (and limited to English language publications) lists only 82 entries, most focused on studies in the U.S.¹ In commissioning this special issue, the editors of *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* have taken a significant step. Not only have they allowed for the publication of emerging work that will enrich a nascent field of study—they have provided an international platform to invite scholarly discourse on what issues, questions, and resources education historians might tap next.

While a careful reader might identify any number of points of intersection among the essays in this volume, two themes are salient: silences and agency. The writers employ a variety of approaches to their research,

¹ Karen Graves has maintained a bibliography of publications on LGBTQ+ histories of education since 2006, relying primarily on research highlighted through the resources of the American Educational Research Association, the Canadian History of Education Association/ Association canadienne d'histoire de l'éducation, the History of Education Society (USA), and the International Standing Conference for the History of Education as well as multiple searches using *Exe Libris*, «the UK History of Education Society's Online Bibliography». *Exe Libris* reaches leading historical journals in the British Isles and selected international journals on the history of education. See <https://www.hes-exelibris.org.uk/>.

engaging archives, oral histories, text analyses, aspects of material culture, and crossing into the work of biography and legal studies.

The opening essay by Jackie M. Blount anchors the collection by articulating the challenges in writing LGBTQ+ histories. Author of the first comprehensive history of LGBTQ+ educators in the United States, she offers a perspective forged over the arc of a ground-breaking career.² Like many contributors to this volume, Blount's early research began with gender analysis. Noting that teaching was the first public profession to welcome women who desired other women, Blount shows how biographical study can, carefully, without overreach, parse the silences in the historical record regarding our LGBTQ+ forebears.

Paola Dogliotti and Evelise Quitzau take a different tack, relying on theoretical references of sex deconstruction, critique of sex-gender binarism, and Michel Foucault's sexuality device to navigate the silences regarding sexuality in mainstream curricular texts for physical education teachers in Uruguay in the 1950s. Their nuanced treatment of the heteronormative social matrix in this study illustrates how direct or indirect condemnation of gender performance can invalidate the existence of LGBTQ+ people even when sources do not take up the issue explicitly.

Similarly, Lucila da Silva reads between the lines of nineteenth-century architectural plans for primary school toilets to excavate technologies that established binary definitions of sex, gender, and sexuality in Argentina's capitol city. Like other authors in this volume who scrutinize policies related to coeducation to gain insight into implicit views on sexuality, she relates identity practices and discourses to the spatial sex segregation of school toilets. da Silva argues that this particular sanitary issue paralleled the hygienist moral in the minds of early-twentieth-century educators regarding the «sexual awakening» of youth.

In his study of the 1990s battle over curriculum reform in Argentina, Santiago Zemaitis traces the historical-pedagogical discourse involving the Ministry of Culture and Education, representatives of the Catholic Church, and academic feminists in the Program for Equal Opportunities for Women. His thorough analysis of shifting currents in the federal sex

² See Jackie M. Blount, *Fit to teach: same-sex desire, gender, and school work in the twentieth century*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005).

education curriculum that followed the emergence of AIDS takes into account the pattern of silences, inclusion, and exclusion that marked institutional mechanisms of heteronormativity. Zemaitis characterizes this period of reform as a struggle to define which subjects and sexualities had a place in the public school curriculum.

To some extent, all the essays in this volume consider the concept of agency. Blount, for example, connects the twentieth-century, about-face attack on LGBTQ+ educators with reactionary responses to women's emerging political influence in the United States. Zemaitis casts the struggle for visibility of historically repudiated, stigmatized, silenced identities as ongoing. Other essays give more sustained attention to the issue of agency.

In their essay on the Gay Alliance of Students at Virginia Commonwealth University, Michael S. Hevel and Timothy Reese Cain identify the rise of LGBTQ+ student organizations on college campuses as a key turning point in higher education student experiences writ large as well as the broader LGBTQ+ civil rights movement. In this case study we see how the larger political-economic context influenced institutional decision-making, and how student activists transformed the legal landscape regarding LGBTQ+ rights.

Jason Mayernick covers a complex terrain in his study of how LGBTQ+ teachers navigated geographies of safety in conservative communities. His essay illuminates the relative strengths of inadvertent and contested activism, the critical role that national resources began to play in the protection of LGBTQ+ teachers' jobs in the 1990s, and the strategic use of silence by targeted teachers. In each case that Mayernick examines, teachers who successfully rebuffed attacks against them leveraged knowledge of local politics and social norms in their defense. They also shared a sense of self-knowledge that they were «good» teachers.

Ami Kobayashi and Aline Henninger weigh the impact of political culture on textbook reform in Japan. They review changes in national curriculum guidelines regarding gender and sexual orientation in the wake of the international gay rights movement that began in the late-twentieth century. Their detailed study reveals some incremental progress in broadening the curriculum to be more inclusive in terms of

gender and sexuality, even as textbook publishers remain strictly bound to Ministry of Education guidelines that promote heteronormativity. Knowing that what we study matters, Kobayashi and Henninger's study indicates that there is a long way to go between eliminating homophobic content and embracing sexual diversities in the curriculum.

These essays were written during the taxing, difficult years of the Covid-19 pandemic. The co-editors of the special issue recognize the authors' notable work in the most challenging of circumstances and thank them for their contributions to the project. The context is also one in which the academy is confronting multiple questions regarding its purpose and pride of place in global political economies; the study of history itself is threatened in some quarters. Recent gains in civil rights for LGBTQ+ citizens are under renewed threat. This roiling political context makes David A. Bell's recent statement on the value of historical research even more astute: «There is nothing more potentially liberating than the sense of endless possibility that great history can open up—the sense that categories of thought and practice are not fixed, that the world can be made to change in all sorts of strange and unexpected ways».³ The fact that these essays span decades reminds us of the longstanding struggles of LGBTQ+ teachers and students to achieve a sense of justice in their schooling lives, and the myriad ways their humanity continues to be challenged. Emma Pérez tells us, «A historian must remain within the boundaries, the borders, the confines of the debate as it has been conceptualized if she/he is to be legitimate heir to the field».⁴ Perhaps, in being in conversation across space and time as these essays demonstrate, we can undo the borders that our research and field sometimes create, and welcome in new conversations, voices, and histories that not only guide us forward but also demonstrate our commitment to the communities from which we come and write about.

³ David A. Bell, «Two cheers for presentism», *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 23, 2022, https://www.chronicle.com/article/two-cheers-for-presentism?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_4936578_nl_Academe-Today_date_20220824&cid=at&source=ams&sourceid=.

⁴ Emma Pérez, *The decolonial imaginary: writing Chicanas into history*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xiii.

It is our hope that the essays in this volume open up thoughtful reflection on the kinships, heretofore faintly perceived, that cross time regarding LGBTQ+ people in education; that this issue provides new points of perspective regarding the work educators do in challenging socio-political contexts; and that, as scholars in the National Program for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Women in Argentina advocated, «...knowledge becomes an ally in the search for a fairer society».⁵

⁵ We thank Santiago Zemaitis for acquainting us with this reference. See: Gloria Bonder, “Programa Nacional de Promoción de la Igualdad de Oportunidades para la Mujer en el Área Educativa. 1991-1995”, in Panel: “La ESI y la perspectiva de género en educación: antecedentes, debates y negociaciones”. Prosecretaría de Géneros y Feminismos. Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación. UNLP. 28 September 2020.