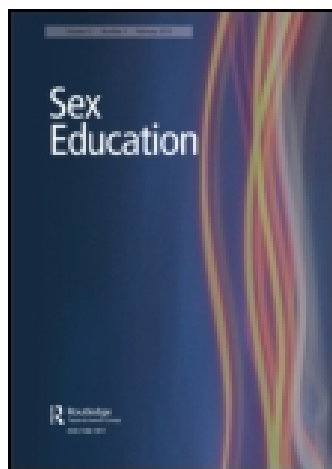


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How sex education research methodologies frame GLBTIQ students

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The ‘bullied’ gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and otherwise Queer (GLBTIQ) student is a fairly recent figure in the sexuality education research literature. GLBTIQ students have previously been problematised by sex education research in a range of different ways and have been the subjects of varying methodological interventions. This paper explores how the different ways in which GLBTIQ students have been constructed by research, have been to some extent interdependent on the research questions behind the inquiries and the methodologies and methods employed to explore them. To achieve this, the paper draws on a Foucaultian view of research as discursive and the GLBTIQ subject as an entry point for considering different research discourses. It reviews constructions of GLBTIQ students in past, recent and emerging research projects through post-structuralist reflection on the key research reports, studies and peer-reviewed journal articles that have shaped the field of contemporary research. Rather than asserting a dichotomy between sex education research that contributes to constructions of the ‘deviant homosexual student’ and studies that contribute to ‘bullying victim’ tropes, the paper considers both the usefulness and limitations of the many different types of inquiries being pursued and the diverse constructions of GLBTIQ students they offer. Future research approaches for particular contexts and audiences are identified.

Keywords: GLBTIQ students; bullying; representations; research

Introduction

The sexuality education research literature increasingly considers issues related to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and otherwise Queer (GLBTIQ) school students. The research generally promotes education policy as a potential solution to the problems faced by GLBTIQ students in schools such as homophobic bullying. A range of education leadership bodies have released sexuality education guidelines in response – including UNESCO (2012). However, the ‘bullied’ GLBTIQ student is a fairly recent figure in research. GLBTIQ students have certainly previously been the subject of education research, but they have emerged, and been problematised, in a range of different ways historically. In this paper, I consider both the usefulness and limitations of the different constructions present in contemporary sex education research.

GLBTIQ issues in education research

Half a century ago, issues of sexual ‘inversion’ were framed by psychiatry. Sears (2005) describes how in Western education research (particularly in the USA) there was parallel concern for the seduction of students by ‘deviant’ teachers. By the early 1970s, ‘homosexual’ issues were framed largely by psychology, benefiting from a reversal of

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illness classifications by key psychiatry bodies, but there remained an interest in clinical studies concerning the mentality of individual homosexual ‘cases’ (Sears 2005). In such studies, the participants had generally been directed to the researcher for assistance for their identity ‘problems’, creating a dynamic whereby the ‘sick subject/object’ was studied by the apparently objective, removed expert clinician. In the late 1970s, gay academics from the fields of linguistics and history considered sexual orientation (Crew 1978). By the 1980s, the incidence of HIV among some gay male populations contributed to an increased interest in ‘gay and lesbian’ scholarship in the social and health sciences, with studies being conducted on college students, their risk behaviour and issues of internalised homophobia using interviews, surveys and focus groups (Tierney and Dilley 1998). In 1987, several key academic organisations formed networks around ‘LGBT’¹ research within education, leading to a stronger sense of this research as a ‘field’ with its own conferences and seminal texts (Harbeck 1992). The collection of anecdotal, interview and narrative data on the experience of being gay or lesbian in educational contexts (particularly around this issue of negotiating a ‘public’ or ‘private’ identity) increased. By the 1990s, sexualities scholarship was more widely embraced including LGBT studies and Queer studies. Nowadays, GLBTIQ-based sex education research can be found in numerous journals and dissertations, and GLBTIQ education networks² are increasingly involved in advocacy-based research. The research methodologies employed by these networks and other researchers have developed on the basis of changed assumptions and beliefs about GLBTIQ people, replacing earlier psychiatric and psychological framings. However, the extent to which these conceptualisations of GLBTIQ students are actually linked to, or the products of, these research methodologies is unclear. Foucauldian views of research as discursive may offer purchase on this issue.

Theory: sexuality education research as discursive

In his writing, Foucault (1970) showed how different eras establish the conditions for so-called ‘truths’ concerning sexuality as expressed as discourse (culture, science and knowledge(s) on sexuality). Foucault’s ‘social theory of discourse’ evolved through this work, ultimately understanding ‘orders of discourse’ as the ideologies and practices in a society or institution, and the relationships among them (Foucault 1981). Foucault’s work focused not only on dominant discourses but also on the less common discourses that did not enter into cultural hegemony yet clarified ‘what’ hegemony entailed (Foucault 1981). His work offered transferable techniques of discourse recognition that can be used in different contexts – I use them here to explore contemporary sexuality education research methodologies around GLBTIQ students as discursive. I additionally draw on Foucault’s rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses (1981, 100); theorising sexuality education research as ‘a multiplicity of discursive elements’ rather than divided between one dominant discourse and ‘a dominated one’. This allows me to argue that there can be ‘different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy’ and unchanged discourses in ‘opposing’ strategies (102). Discourses within sexuality education research are thus considered ‘tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations’ (101).

GLBTIQ student subjectivity: reflected in and reflecting research

Foucault defined his work as an analysis of the processes by which humans or subjects become understood as knowledge objects (Foucault in Peters 2004, 54). For Foucault,

the history of the human subject was closely linked to the development of knowledge and truth in the human sciences through research; there was a (false) 'dividing' of subject as research object and knowledge produced by research about subjects. For both Foucault and, later, Butler (1990), a subject was not just a noun position in language (such as is connoted by the symbol 'I') but is also drawn on as a verb; individuals could occupy subject positions within discourses only by being 'subjected' to power. Butler (1990) further posited that the natural-seeming coherence of the categories of sex, gender and sexuality, is culturally constructed through the repetition of temporal and stylised bodily acts. These acts, through their 'performative' repetition, establish the appearance of an ontological 'essential' identity. This (re)enactment was not proposed as a daily choice, but a ritualised production, reiterated under and through the constraint of social policing that compelled the shape of the production without determining it in advance. Iterability makes the production of subjectivity appear 'natural', yet potentially reveals incoherence.

However, Foucault and Butler also saw subjects as the effects of power:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others must recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. (in Halperin 1995, 175)

Social norms do not deterministically decide identities, but provide frameworks of recognition from which subsequent resistances or decisions can be made, and predetermine the possibilities of sexual identities permitted as 'real' (Butler 2005, 22–24). Thus, research frameworks for GLBTIQ subjectivity can make students' characteristics and traits seem intelligible (or otherwise). Foucault's view is that opposition to discursive regulation is not liberation from this power, but resistance to it. Butler argued that people's (intentional or unintentional) manifestation of identity elements that are 'unrecognisable' within specific discourses constitutes a form of resistance to those discourses, because the unrecognisable calls the identifying power of discourse into crisis (Butler 2005, 24–25). Frameworks of recognition for GLBTIQ students' sexual subjectivities in sexuality education research can thus be enacted by GLBTIQ students during and in response to the research, but they can also be directly resisted by these students (critiquing research) or called into crisis (through their unrecognisable features).

Reviewing and reflecting on research

Peters (2004), in line with early Foucaultian work, has argued that educational research might best be understood as:

a set of practices [...] which shape the conditions of possibility for educational knowledge and determine the 'rules of formation' for discursive rationalities that operate beneath the level of the researcher's subjective awareness. (Peters 2004, 56)

A Foucaultian account would critically analyse 'emerging systems of research practices' within which stakeholders were socially embedded (Peters 2004, 57). In this understanding, both the researchers and the researched are constituted beings; effects of discourse around research methodologies and their regimes of truth. Drawing upon such a perspective, in this paper I want to consider both (i) how the methodologies of sexuality education research on GLBTIQ students are shaped by discursive shifts, and (ii) how GLBTIQ students themselves can be the effects of research methodologies.

A post-structuralist perspective informed the work, which analysed contemporary research in the field by considering and reflecting on the methodologies contained in 30 influential contemporary research reports, books and journal articles (see Appendix 1). In selecting the texts for inclusion, I first chose a number of widely cited publications by researchers ‘known’ in the field from Western contexts such as Australia, the UK and the USA, including some documents that have been key in informing (or being cited within) UNESCO polity and transnational GLBTIQ education activism efforts.

However, to more fully contour the field, I then made an effort (using databases, journals and word-of-mouth at international conferences) to seek influential pieces that differed from these conceptually, or were from less active research contexts. Each of the texts was read in full, and then read repeatedly for information about their methodologies (‘problem’ and theoretical frame, methods used and specific questions/surveys/analytical procedures), findings (data and assumptions made about data and narrations about GLBTIQ students) and constructions of GLBTIQ students (characterisation of individuals and groups, interpretations of quotes and data, conclusions, statements and comparisons made to other groups). I then grouped the texts together into five categories according to commonalities across all three themes (methodologies, findings and identity constructions), although a few were relevant to two groupings. A few discourses distinctly active in each research group emerged from these processes; these were identified using a framework of 28 sexuality education discourses previously described (Jones 2011, 377–380).

Contemporary sexuality education methodologies concerning GLBTIQ students

The review revealed five main methodological groups, to which the particular contemporary research examined on issues of sex education and GLBTIQ students belonged. These included research studies surveying demographics, investigating correlations, analysing texts, evaluating interventions and deconstructing meanings (see Table 1). There were commonalities within these groupings, and particular discursive framings, methods and

Table 1. Contemporary sexuality education research methodologies and the construction of GLBTIQ students.

Sexuality education research discourses	Research methods	GLBTIQ student constructs
Liberal progressive/comprehensive	Surveying demographics: comparative sex education research on GLBTIQ sub-groups compared to ‘the norm’	Overlooked other
Critical/liberationist	Investigating correlations: GLBTIQ-specific surveys, interviews and focus groups linking bullying and well-being	At risk victims
Cultural semiotic	Analysing texts: semiotic or cultural analysis of texts and resources. Content analysis and thematic analysis	Invisible/visible semantic group
Inclusionist/safe and supportive schools	Evaluating interventions: evaluative research considering interventions, sexuality education programmes and support structures for GLBTIQ students	Special needs group
Deconstructive/Queer	Deconstructing meanings: Queer textual deconstructions, post-structuralist and critical historical investigations on sexuality education discourses and lingua-centric studies of classroom talk	Disruptive sexual subjects

themes within their findings. Each grouping had particular benefits and limitations linked to its discursive function and was associated with a distinct construction of GLBTIQ students.

'Overlooked others'

Some contemporary education research on GLBTIQ students (four studies) took the form of comparative research using national surveys; all conducted from Euro-centric or Western perspectives. These studies included both general sexuality education surveys that included one or two questions on sexual behaviours or experiences, and youth studies in which GLBTIQ young people formed a specific subgroup which emerged through a question on sexual preference or identity (Hillier, Warr, and Haste 1996; Smith et al. 2008; Rivers and Noret 2008; California Safe Schools Coalition and 4-H Centre for Youth Development 2004). The researchers' stated objectives in including such questions (where reported) were to combat a sense of GLBTIQ students as 'invisible' or overlooked in research. The research thus functioned to establish a sense of the number of GLBTIQ students in a given context, or to build a case for considering this 'overlooked other', within a liberal progressive/comprehensive approach to sexuality education based on showing tolerance for individuals.

The comparisons that these studies generally offered between GLBTIQ students more generally highlighted a lack of appropriate sexuality education offerings or the ways in which increased risks for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among GLBTIQ youth may be overlooked in educational campaigns. Less commonly, the research highlighted the lack of preparation of educational staff to meet this group's needs. For example, Rivers and Noret (2008) conducted a comparative study of 53 'solely or primarily' same-sex attracted students and 53 opposite-sex attracted students from 14 schools (in grades 7–9) using secondary data from a large-scale 2003 survey on adolescent health in the UK. The same-sex attracted group was described as more likely to seek support from a member of school staff and to worry about their sexual identity. One comparative study, the California Safe Schools Coalition and 4-H Centre for Youth Development's (2004) analysis of an online survey on secondary students, focussed on homophobic bullying. Overall, 7.5% of the 237,544 participants reported having been bullied because they were gay or lesbian, or were *perceived to be*. These students were over three times more likely than others to seriously consider suicide. Here, the GLBTIQ student was framed not only as the 'overlooked other' in terms of bullying protection but also as 'at risk victims' (see below).

Such survey work can be useful in combating claims by educational leaders that GLBTIQ students need not be considered. It has sometimes allowed the first national demographic information on GLBTIQ students to be recorded (in Australia this was achieved for same-sex attracted youth in the 'Rural Mural' study: Hillier, Warr, and Haste 1996). However, this style of research tends to define GLBTIQ youth on the basis of one feature/identifier only (same-sex attraction, a current relationship, gender history and being bullied on the basis of homophobia) that misses key aspects of GLBTIQ situatedness and identity. In addition, the surveys in question were often administered in school settings, which may have reduced the ability or willingness of GLBTIQ students to engage with them (fearing exposure). Externally imposed limitations were also a problem for researchers supported by funding bodies requiring a focus on other areas. For example, the 2008 run of the *Australian Secondary Students Survey* excluded entire sections on GLBTIQ issues featured in previous runs, yet expanded the STI items which were then important to its funding source, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (Smith et al. 2008). Like most surveys examined, the study was organised around

male/female sex binaries, asking only ‘Are You? Male (1)/Female (2)’, and limiting discussion of sexual feelings to attraction within this binary model to ‘opposite sex, both sexes, my own sex or none’ (Smith et al. 2008). Reporting on same- and both-sex attracted students comprised just five lines (27). This is not to criticise the researchers, but to underline that it would be unwise to rely on comparative studies alone as a source of information due to their overly simple understanding (and portrayal) of GLBTIQ students, and inescapable positioning of these students as ‘others’ against a ‘norm’.

‘At risk victims’

A large portion of the research reviewed (seven studies) comprised descriptive, correlational or mixed (both descriptive and correlational) studies based on GLBTIQ-specific surveys, interviews and focus groups. Such methodologies often identified links between GLBTIQ students’ experiences of homophobic bullying and problematic mental and sexual health, well-being and educational outcomes (Hillier et al. 2010; Jones and Hillier 2012; Kosciw et al. 2009; Hunt and Jensen 2009). Commonly stated study objectives behind these studies included responding to anecdotal evidence of connections between GLBTIQ identities and increased risks. The research thus operated within a critical/gay liberationist discourse highlighting the specific identities used in GLBTIQ identity politics and the ways in which they were associated with marginalisation to promote the ‘visibility’ of these identities and associated problems (Jones 2011, 379). The studies were often linked to GLBTIQ education networks interested in humanising the GLBTIQ student as a ‘victim’ of schools. Research tools frequently asked whether participants had experienced verbal and physical homophobic bullying, depression, suicidal intentions and self-harm in a way that created a kind of ‘expected narrative’ for the GLBTIQ student.

These studies provided a space that acknowledged various types of GLBTIQ identities (although this was less the case for gender Queer and intersex identities, non-Euro-centric identities or even indigenous identities – which were indirectly explored at best). They also acknowledged the suffering of young people, suggesting that this could be ameliorated or deterred. They often offered clear policy implications for government, political and educational leadership. Their dramatic findings garnered media coverage with their detailed descriptions of violence and easy to understand statistics, and some reports from Western countries showed how the accumulation and dissemination of data on student well-being had over time assisted activists to obtain funding for GLBTIQ-specific educational interventions (Jones and Hillier 2012; Kosciw et al. 2009; Hunt and Jensen 2009).

But these studies almost constructed GLBTIQ students within an emancipatory paradigm, highlighting their marginalisation. Monk (2011) has critiqued the anti-homophobic bullying movement for replacing old constructions of GLBTIQ students as the tragic victims of pathological sexuality with a construction of them as tragic victims of violence. He argues that this limits the opportunity for representation of more radical and sexualised aspects of GLBTIQ identity. Harwood and Rasmussen (2004) argued that the focus on GLBTIQ youth discrimination and suicide encouraged students to express GLBTIQ identity using a conflated woundedness through risky behaviours, neediness or creating appropriate ‘adolescence horror stories’. The seven studies did not require a ‘performative pathology of identification’ by GLBTIQ students – students could report a lack of bullying or suicidal feelings. However, they privileged the bullied, depressed and suicidal position by repeatedly enquiring, and ultimately reporting on, this aspect of GLBTIQ life. For example, an Australian survey’s list of impacts for a question on how homophobia impacted GLBTIQ

students' schooling did offer participants the opportunity to say it had no impact, or had inspired activism, but 10 of 13 impacts offered were educational deficits:

In what ways, if at all, has homophobia impacted on your schooling? (Please tick all boxes that apply).

1. I couldn't concentrate in class.
2. My marks dropped.
3. I moved schools.
4. I left school altogether.
5. I missed classes.
6. I missed days.
7. I hid at recess/lunch.
8. I couldn't go to the toilet.
9. I couldn't use the change-rooms.
10. I dropped out of a sport/extra-curricular activity.
11. I became involved in activism.
12. It hasn't affected me at all.
13. Other (please specify)
([Hillier et al. 2010, 116](#))

A stress on victimhood and endangered well-being can also be supported by research participation processes, whereby students may be repeatedly asked to select, to describe and express their feelings about experiences of bullying and thoughts of suicide or to repeatedly describe their moods (particularly if repetitive 'depression index' question sets are used). Research can further emphasise at-risk GLBTIQ identities through recruitment processes privileging support groups and services for 'struggling' youth, through selective reporting of results or through research-into-practice dissemination programmes, which train education staff to see GLBTIQ students as potential victims. Indeed, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation ([GLAAD 2011](#)) warned staff against perpetuating 'suicide contagion' among GLBTIQ youth. They argued for a stress on help-seeking, support and acceptance among youth instead – all topics warranting research. Research could also consider what GLBTIQ students want to discuss. Given the option of write-in narratives at the end of an Australian survey, when provided with the opportunity to do so, GLBTIQ students tellingly discussed activism and their goals for marriage equality ([Hillier and Jones 2011](#)) – not just the victimhood that other questions emphasised.

'Invisible/visible' semantic groups

Seven projects took the form of semiotic or cultural investigation of policies, textbooks and other resources. These studies generally used content analysis, semiotic theory, discourse analysis and sometimes feminist or gay liberationist frames ([Macgillivray and Jennings 2008](#); [Russo 2006](#); [GLSEN 2004](#); [Goldman 2010](#); [Farrelly, O'Brien, and Prain 2007](#)). The stated study objectives tended to be to investigate barriers to effective sexuality education (with GLBTIQ issues an attendant concern) or to reveal the visibility (or presence) of GLBTIQ students specifically in sexuality education-related texts or policy protections.

These reports often revealed an absence of content relevant to GLBTIQ students using content analysis with a focus on same-sex attraction – and more rarely gender diversity – as 'present or not'. For example, [Goldman's \(2010\)](#) textual analysis of Queensland's primary sexuality education curriculum found no mention of same-sex attraction (61). US studies of anti-discrimination policies for students summarised laws and policy protections

as present or absent to varying extents (Russo 2006; GLSEN 2004). Two US studies (Macgillivray and Jennings 2008; Young and Middleton 2002) considered textbook guidelines for addressing LGBT educational content using content analysis. Young and Middleton (2002) analysed 23 teacher education textbooks on developmental psychology and foundations in education. The 16 developmental psychology texts included LGBT issues to some extent, but only two of seven foundations in education texts included them. The problematisation of LGBT issues (around HIV, suicide and drug abuse) and the marginalising of LGBT identity (holding it as against the norm) were common themes. Macgillivray and Jennings (2008) analysed eight widely used US textbooks on education foundations, and reached similar findings concerning the problematisation of LGBT identity. Both studies revealed little or no mention of transgendered and intersex people in the texts.

A benefit of these methodologies is the fact that the textual analysis methods they used could be, to some extent, useful in policy and curricula critique, in that they generally identified what was ‘missing’ (in a gay liberationist discourse) for educational activism. The research findings supported both academic dissemination and mainstream media ‘sound-bites’ – sexuality education texts did or did not cover a topic. However, most of these studies problematically considered provisions and protections for students as present and necessarily good, or as absent – and therefore bad.

Discussion of GLBTIQ students (and thus GLBTIQ visibility more generally) was usually constructed as a positive feature of texts and sexuality education – regardless of whether these descriptions were problematic (in terms of portraying students as potential victims, for example). Russo’s study identified a number of aspects of policy assumed to be useful (see Figure 1), but on the whole, texts were considered either liberationist or repressive in a tick-box manner with little conceptual or discursive analysis. Furthermore, textually oriented analysis such as Russo’s can overlook the diversity of ways in which readers interpret and (re)appropriate texts, and the resistant engagements possible in educational practices (whereby staff or students speak or act ‘against’ the text’s assertions). In framing GLBTIQ students as visible or not in texts, the studies simplistically cast students as visible or not in classrooms with visibility seen as inherently superior and valuable (a view typical of gay liberationist discourse where ‘coming out’ supports identity politics, Jones 2011). This perspective, however, can limit constructions of GLBTIQ student identity to more easily identifiable positions. It overlooks the fluctuations, interpretative aspects and difficulties to ‘outness’ and ‘visible stable identity’ in classrooms.

Anti-Homophobia Policy Taxonomy (APT) Matrix

APT	1. Guarantee Equality	2. Create Safe Environment	3. Do Not Assume Heterosexuality	4. Provide Training to School Personnel	5. Provide Information in School Libraries for Gay and Lesbian Adolescents	6. Implement Curriculum That Includes Gay and Lesbian Issues	7. Provide School-Based Support Groups for Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexual Students	8. Provide Access to Appropriate Education and Care
Name of 51 states	X		X		X		X	

NOTE: X = education policy evidences compliance with one or more of the APT.

Figure 1. Policy analysis matrix. Source: Russo (2006, 129).

'Special needs groups'

Seven studies involved evaluative research on interventions, sexuality education programmes and support structures for GLBTIQ students. There were both quantitative and qualitative studies on education's capacity to minimise homophobia (Larrabee and Morehead 2010), and studies on classroom intervention and staff willingness to engage in anti-homophobia interventions (Athanases and Larrabee 2003; Dankmeijer, Olders, and Schouten 2009). Some studies used focus groups and online surveys to evaluate students' experiences of sexuality education and gay-straight alliances (GSAs) (Szalacha 2003) or the implementation of policy-based or research-based recommendations in meeting GLBTIQ students' needs (Hillier et al. 2010; Rienzo et al. 2006). Across many of these projects, stated study objectives were cited as responding practically to health-based or risk-based constructions of GLBTIQ students seen in other research, framing schools as needing to recognise their 'special needs' – for protection, representation, inclusion, support or access to mental or sexual health services.

The benefits and problems of these approaches varied. Some of the studies took the form of scoping exercises – as in surveys and telephone interviews with school staff that questioned their support for anti-homophobia action in schools (e.g. Dankmeijer, Olders, and Schouten 2009) – and thus their value lay in identifying possibilities for future action-research. Engagement with the research could potentially encourage some participating staff to engage more with GLBTIQ issues, and specifically to consider the different forms of lack of support listed in the research tool as being appropriate for a 'special needs group'.

Other researchers used their studies to develop and promote usable models of educational interventions around GLBTIQ issues and sexuality education (Ollis 2007; Athanases and Larrabee 2003). The testing of these models allowed approaches to be revised or showed their usefulness and limitations. Yet there were issues with maintaining the interventions beyond the sphere of the researcher's influence. This difficulty was compounded in contexts without policy or structural support reflecting the kind of 'Safe and Supportive Schools/Inclusionist' discourses with which researchers were engaged (which assume that schools should actively become safe and supportive spaces affirming diverse sexualities: Jones 2011, 379).

These studies require participation from educational bodies and staff to test how education can meet the 'special needs' of GLBTIQ students; yet institutionalised homophobia can mean potential participants resist the research and limit the findings. For example, Rienzo et al. (2006) explored the extent to which public school districts across the USA implemented health professionals' recommendations regarding GLBT students. They conducted a web-based national survey of 124 US public school districts that inquired into policy contexts, provisions of education about sexual orientation and services. The project's reliance on representatives from the selected districts choosing to engage in the survey whilst in their professional roles limited the number of participants (only 124 of 400 district representatives participated). The researchers admitted that districts that considered GLBT issues too controversial to engage with refused representation (Rienzo et al. 2006, 96). Secular schools with inclusion and safety frames (which supported notions of GLBTIQ students as having special educational needs) were therefore over-represented. This was similarly the case for research examining the value of GSAs (e.g. Szalacha 2003) – which took place in Massachusetts and California, where Safe and Supportive Spaces/Inclusion Discourses (and notions of GLBTIQ students as having particular needs) were already mobilised in policy. Researchers conducting evaluative studies need to consider ideal levels of involvement for educational bodies, their contextual bias and possibilities for alternate

data. They should acknowledge any contextual limitations (around access to participants, sites or open communication) on their findings.

'Disruptive sexual subjects'

Six studies comprised deconstructions of representations of youth sexual identities, in which GLBTIQ students were either secondary or primary considerations. These included post-structuralist and critical historical investigations of sexuality education discourses in Western countries (Egan and Hawkes 2010; Angelides 2008), and studies that applied Queer theory to various texts (from media to research) on sexuality and education (Rasmussen 2006; Monk 2011; Nelson 2012; Harwood and Rasmussen 2004). There were also applications of Queer Linguistics or lingua-centric/semiotic frames to the examination of classroom talk and socio-sexual and multi-literacies in bilingual classrooms. For example, Rasmussen's (2004) study of how sexual-identity signifiers manifest in high schools applied Queer Linguistics to deconstruct the meanings of sex, gender and sexual identity terms in GLBTIQ students' self-referencing.

Applied linguistics studies included explorations of second and foreign language pedagogies and Queer pedagogies in classroom talk and sexual identity navigations (Nelson 2012). Whether the researchers were responding to constructions of GLBTIQ students as 'recruits' seduced into sinful/unnatural lifestyles by deviant adults (e.g. Angelides 2008), or constructions of GLBTIQ students as victims that were reflecting/reflected by some of the other contemporary research discussed (e.g. Monk 2011; Harwood and Rasmussen 2004), there was regardless a common strategic function to their methodology. The strategy was to use linguistic data to disrupt, and point to instances of the disruption(s) of, biased and partial understandings of youth sexual identities (or meaning systems for identity that see this as 'real', objective and decontextualised). These studies instead showed that identities were socio-culturally and historically specific, perspectival and sometimes even performative. For example, Egan and Hawkes (2010) achieved this by contrasting constructions of children in books on English sex education from different historic periods from 1840 to 1940; including constructions of children as asexual or as having untamed precocious urges. Rasmussen (2006) conducted a post-structuralist analysis of media case studies on GLBTIQ students. She argued that education stakeholders could unsettle the norms and privileges associated with heterosexuality through exposure and subversion. She showed how a 'butch out dyke' (228) did this by disrupting the discursive expectations of 'prom king' identity at the Ferndale High Prom, by being voted into the role and parodying the way in which proms generally affirm heterosexual identity.

Benefits of these projects were that they allowed GLBTIQ students – and students more generally – to be understood as constructions; discursive points in which sets of beliefs about sex, gender and sexuality are embodied, enacted and interpreted. This promoted a disruption of some of the clichés concerning GLBTIQ students in classroom talk, the media and education research. These projects cast students as 'sexual subjects' constructed through their emergence within culture; they specifically cast GLBTIQ students as 'Disruptive Sexual Subjects', who disturb the established expectations of mainstream educational culture. For example, an analysis of classroom transcripts highlighted how GLBTIQ students' identities were misinterpreted and could not fit expectations (Nelson 2012) and an analysis of their behaviours in educational contexts showed how they broke with general student norms (Rasmussen 2004, 2006).

Research can thus be used to combat not only traditionally negative discourses of GLBTIQ students but also gay liberationist framings of GLBTIQ identities (the pressure to

appear 'out' and marginalised). This vexes some of the terminology around GLBTIQs in new and interesting ways, contesting definitions and identity concepts often taken for granted in sex education research and creating understanding of 'social knowledges' as research outputs. The detailed analytical attention paid to everyday contexts and texts enhances the practical relevance of Queer and cultural research. As a result, the problematic or in some cases, the subversive potential of particular speech acts, vocabulary use and silences (by teachers, students, researchers, authors, journalists and other education stakeholders) becomes visible. In the Queer linguistic studies reviewed, sexuality education becomes a complex and multi-site field with implicit and explicit aspects impacted by many stakeholders (not just teachers).

Unfortunately, Queer linguistics have not yet been widely recognised in education or in linguistic fields (Nelson 2012). There are therefore no established paths for learning this educational methodology, which is in keeping with how Queer studies actively avoids being co-opted by established paradigms. In addition, the media, policy-makers, curriculum designers and school staff may struggle to understand deconstructive or Queer concepts.

Conclusion

In this study, methodological framings appeared to (cor)respond to shifts in traditional educational discourses in which GLBTIQs were invisible or framed as aberrant, and to build on or resist pre-existing research-based constructions of GLBTIQ students. The different sexuality education research methodologies examined here were both useful and problematic in how they framed GLBTIQ students. Research to improve sexuality education and make schools supportive spaces for GLBTIQ students is certainly important for informing advocacy for students experiencing violence and discrimination, and encouraging more/better sex education which could be beneficial for all students.

Both modernist/positivist and critical research frames, which rely on essentialist notions of identity, have some value here. Quantitative data on health and well-being outcomes, interviews and written responses that offer humanising narratives allowing audiences to make affective connections to GLBTIQ marginalisation, and textual and evaluative projects can all impact on educational policies, programming and funding. The relevance of such research may be particularly important in countries and states where anti-homophobia policies have not yet emerged, as well as those with actively homophobic policies. However, in the latter contexts, religious and cultural taboos preventing the direct discussion of sexual themes in schools can combine with punitive anti-gay legislation to create dangerous contexts for GLBTIQ students and those who would work with them, such that research participation could mean risking exposure to violence, incarceration or even capital punishment. Although external researchers may assist by attempting to research these contexts from 'safer' external sites, they should also consider the tendency of research to impose/export established critical/liberationist and inclusionist discourses with 'at risk' and 'special needs' constructions of GLBTIQ students, which may not fit the contexts any more than they fit the subjects they create. Researchers must also strive to be especially sensitive to localised nuances in sexuality and gender identity.

Methods engaging with educational institutions directly can be useful, where some traction around GLBTIQ advocacy has already been gained. For example, in schooling systems where there is policy- or programme-based support for the discussion of GLBTIQ issues, it may be possible to gain research clearance from both schools and universities to observe, experiment with or evaluate the usefulness of particular sexuality education methods and anti-homophobia interventions. However, education and school policies can

make it difficult to access data on GLBTIQ-related concerns, based on out-dated notions about GLBTIQ issues not being age-appropriate, requiring parents' approval or being too controversial. Methods allowing access to GLBTIQ students themselves (like anonymous online surveys) can side-step school systems' institutional limitations and be more covert, circumventing contexts in which homosexual themes are banned, where sexuality research is not supported or where students may face difficulty in discussing sexuality issues. Ideally, such research on GLBTIQ students should allow space for participants to tell their own stories and comment on research tools, so methodological bias can be challenged.

The methodologies underpinning the representation of GLBTIQ students as at-risk victims constitute a dominant discourse in Western research on GLBTIQ students, and because of their negativity may be starting to impact on the experiences of students in the West. Research examining the resilience and activism of GLBTIQ students in the form of surveys and interviews on how students stay positive, seek support, consider their identities in affirming ways or use personal and broader social activism like marriage rights movements may be more useful for youth audiences and incorporation into staff training.

UNESCO's (2012) recent approach to GLBTIQ issues in education has been informed by a review of critical research emphasising notions of GLBTIQ students as 'at risk victims' and the contributions of researchers invited to the First International Consultation on Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying in Schools held in Brazil, 2011. Through international guidance and policy forming ventures, alongside conferences in a range of contexts and attempts to develop new projects in Asia and elsewhere, UNESCO ensured these conceptualisations travelled widely throughout 2012; however, their impacts are as yet unknown. Research evaluating UNESCO or country-specific anti-homophobic bullying efforts within the critical frames in which they were conceived is important, but so is Queer and post-structuralist critique of such ideals and their tendency to contribute to current globalising efforts. Data and GLBTIQ student assemblies in research are *made*. This is not to say they are false, but they are partially constructed from aspects of persons' potentialities. Their use as technologies of knowledge, truth and governance and frameworks of identity must be taken seriously. The potential impacts of research-based constructions of GLBTIQ students should be of ethical concern to researchers considering their methodological stance. Research involves an allocation of values and the construction of representation and identity for both participants and their 'demographic peers'. We need variety in research to ensure that one partial representation does not come to be understood and experienced as the only 'truth'.

Notes

1. LGBT: lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender studies.
2. Including the US Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Stonewall in the UK, Australia's Rainbow Network and China's *aibai*.

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Appendix 1. 30 key texts reviewed

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