The significance of empowering social relations: Challenges for LGBTIQ students in Vienna

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of a quantitative online survey of nearly 700 LGBTIQ youth in Vienna, Austria, on the living situations of LGBTIQs, this article contests the expectation of queer students necessarily experiencing mental or physical health problems based on minority stress. Even though the responses show substantial rates of bullying and violence in the education context as well as very high numbers of street harassment, especially for gender non- conforming young LGBTIQs, our findings suggests that positive experiences of peer, family or school support may play a largely ameliorative role in the relationship between minority stress and well-being. Against the common trope of the "young queer victim" our respondents seem happier than we expected them to be, which may largely be due to empowering environments and affirmative social relationships.

Introduction

Against the backdrop of a substantial body of research on the living situations of LGBTIQ students in Europe, it remains uncontested that due to heterosexist violence and experiences of discrimination this group faces much tougher situations as their heterosexual counterparts at school, in leisure contexts and in their families. The term LGBTIQ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning as forms of self-definition, self-articulation and social modes of existence. We use "queer" both as an umbrella term for non-normative sexual and gender subjects, but also in the sense of "questioning" one's position in a sex/gender/desire-continuum that may allow the inclusion of other possible forms of non-normative identities in a process of self-identification (such as transsexual, pansexual, non-binary etc.). Peer violence (Barron and Bradford, 2007), experiences of bullying and stigmatization in schools and at home cause so called "minority stress" which a large body of research connects with an increased rate of suicidality (see for instance Plöderl and Fartacek, 2009), mental (Russel and Fish, 2016) and physical health problems and homelessness among young LGBTIQs (Reck, 2009) especially in the case of gender non-conformity (see for instance Bauermeister et al., 2017; Gordon et al., 2017). Because of these harsh realities for LGBTIQ youth, research as well as policy and LGBTIQ community

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programs have largely focused on the trope of the "young queer victim" and to a much lesser extent on possible structures of empowerment or resilience, particularly with regard to schools. This resonates with what Daniel Marshall (2010, 65) described as general "victim orientated characterizations of queer youth in contemporary culture" and what Erica Ciszek (2017, 2) problematizes as the indication of young LGBTIQs as always being "at-risk". For instance, the well-intended "It gets better project" is in this spirit aiming at preventing teenage suicides by promising a brighter future (only) in adult gay life (see Ciszek, 2014; It gets better, 2018).

However, while our empirical data on the living situations of LGBTIQ students in Vienna confirms an alarming prevalence of discrimination, mobbing, harassment and physical violence against young queers, our findings also suggest that affirmative environments and empowerment structures, particularly in the context of schools and educational settings, can compensate for negative experiences. Therefore, the first part of our article provides empirical data on the experiences of LGBTIQ students in Vienna, particularly (but not solely) focusing on schools and educational settings. In the second part, we will present some of our results regarding feelings of "happiness" of LGBTIQ students in Vienna and demonstrate the importance of supportive networks and social environments for LGBTIQ youth well-being.

Methodology and Sampling

In 2015 we conducted an online survey for the *City of Vienna's Antidiscrimination Unit*

for Lesbian, Gay and Transgender Issues on the living situations of LGBTIQs in the city

of Vienna focusing on the socio-economic standing and discrimination experiences in

institutions such as the education and health care system, work places and in public

spaces (see Schönpflug et al., 2015). The participants were asked to contribute in the

online survey via adverts and calls by the major LGBTIQ organizations in Austria as well

as the LGBTIQ media in a process of snowball sampling. The questionnaire included a

mixture of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Thus, the answers not only

generated quantitative data (such as data on income or number of discrimination

experiences in the workplace, schools and public places), the open-ended questions

also allowed for very detailed qualitative accounts and descriptions on the nature of

incidences experienced by the respondents as well as their counter actions and

solutions. In order to gain more information on underrepresented groups or topics,

particularly LGBTIQs under the age of 18, the online study was supplemented by three

focus group interviews, from which one was conducted with queer youth. This article is

based on the data of the 618 respondents in the survey (of 3.161 respondents) who

were under the age of 30 and also in one of three different education contexts:

secondary or tertiary schools (which are partly compulsory education, partly commercial

schools, gymnasiums, academies, technical or applied colleges), apprentice education

(where they are learning practical skills in private or public companies but are also enrolled in professional schools) or universities. Amongst the 618 young people in education in our sample were 84 secondary and tertiary schools students, 499 university students and 35 apprentices. In relation to the complete sample 3% were secondary or tertiary students (where 12% of the total population of Vienna are such students); 1.3% of the sample were apprentices which corresponds to 1.2% apprentices in all of Vienna; 21% in the sample were university students, thus over-representing the general population of 11% students in all of Vienna. A quarter of the students in our sample are defining as lesbian*, a third is defining as gay*, nearly a third is defining as bisexual, pansexual or of other non-normative identities (an asterisk indicates that these groups consist also of trans and intersex individuals). 4% are transgender or intersex (186 persons identified as lesbian*, 231 as gay*, 194 as bisexual*, pansexual*, or other non-normative identities, 25 identified as transgender [either homosexual or heterosexual] and 2 as intersex. A control group of 73 heterosexual youth also completed the survey). Overall 27% have a migratory background (that is compared to 37% of Vienna's total population). 31% of secondary or tertiary students have migratory backgrounds, 24% of apprentices and 27% of university students. The respondents answered over 200 multiple choice and open-ended questions on their life as LGBTIQ students in Vienna.

Based on the responses of this sample and drawing on critical insights and discussions from queer, trans* and lesbian studies, we wanted to learn about their experiences related to being visible as LGBTIQs in the education system and in the public space. We aimed to estimate the extent of violence and discrimination and compare negative experiences with also positive and affirmative experiences of support and resilience and find out how happy or unhappy those factors made our sample group. In that process we wanted to identify concrete negative and positive examples shaping LGBTIQ persons' adulthoods that may help us formulate practical advice for educators, teachers, parents and also peers to function as effective allies for young LGBTIQs. Therefore the data analysis took place on several levels: The quantitative data were in a first step analyzed with descriptive statistics. The qualitative answers were partly coded and quoted as illustrative examples. In order to comprehend their quality of life next to unpleasant experiences we integrated an analysis based on a standard happiness scale (see Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999). In a second step the quantitative data was used to test hypotheses about relevant factors that would increase the happiness for LGBTIQ youth in the Queer in Vienna sample via applying a simple least square regression analysis.

However, against the backdrop of critical discussions from the field of trans*, queer and gender studies it is necessary to make the examination of the living situations of LGBTIQs an intersectional project. Analyzing and understanding discrimination of and

violence against LGBTIQs means that one has to take into account that gender norms are related to particular ideas of (hetero-)sexuality, or, following Judith Butler, that the gender binary and gender identities are itself the materialized effects of a normative and compulsory regime of heterosexuality (Butler, 1990). Hence, violence against LGBTIQs cannot fully be grasped without acknowledging the complex interplay and intersections of gender (norms) with heteronormative assumptions about relationships and sexuality, and what 'passes' as gender conforming representations of 'femininity' or 'masculinity'. Moreover, as postcolonial theorist Anne McClintock and Ann Laura Stoler have shown in their analysis of colonial policies and iconographies, constructions of race (or ethnicity) and class are per se sexualized and gendered, for instance manifested in the figure of the 'hypersexual Black man', the 'black rapist' or the effeminization (or hypermasculinization) of colonized people of color (McClintock, 1995; Stoler, 1989).

Experiences of violence and discrimination: Being "out" at schools, universities and as an apprentice

While the term 'coming out' has come into scrutiny and was challenged from different theoretical and political angels, particularly from postcolonial and queer theory, we consider questions of 'coming' and 'being out' as vital for our research aim in this particular case. However, following a queer theoretical and poststructuralist approach, 'coming out' in our reading is not an acknowledgment of a previously 'hidden truth' or a

'discovery' of a 'real' inner self, but rather a process of "becoming" (Blasius, 1992;

Phelan, 1993) and thus a constant negotiation and mediation of the, often violent,

workings of heteronormative social configurations in a particular historical moment.

Hence, 'coming out' can be the personal acknowledgment of ones sexuality, desire or

gender identity that does not comply with the normative blueprint, and the start of an

articulation, performance or public life in certain contexts. Against the background of

insights from the field of trans*, queer and lesbian studies it is also important to notice,

that for some queers (e.g. butches, trans*, inter* and non-binary persons) becoming or

being 'visible' is not so much a 'choice' or 'decision', but rather an experienced everyday

reality. Intersectionality in this specific case enables to take particular account of the

complex entanglements of gender, gender norms and lived or felt gender identities with

and sexuality and sexual identities as well as examining how these dimensions interact

with race, age and educational settings.

Our findings on coming out as LGBTIQ in education makes evident, that being out at

schools or other educational settings is still a problematic experience for most young

queer people: Not even one third of the young respondents of our sample reported to be

completely open about their sexual or gender identity at school, as an apprentice or a

university student. More than 40% of apprentices chose to remain completely closeted,

while pupils chose to be most selective about coming out to only specific persons. 37%

of gay and 25% of lesbian identified youth are not completely out, but gender seemed

unimportant for those 40% who decided to remain fully closeted. In the open answer

section some respondents' replies clarified the choice to remain closeted:

"My coming out would change too much and I am afraid to lose my friends again and to be mobbed again."

"I am afraid of the reactions of the persons around me."

"I want to avoid problems with other boys at my school."

"My father would kill me."

"There is no reason to say it; this way I can avoid unnecessary difficulties."

"One does not know how people would react; being visible is not always cool."

"I don't want everything I say to be disregarded as 'lesbian opinion'."

"There have been homophobic remarks."

"I am afraid that colleagues from the country-side will be embarrassed, especially in the shower rooms."

However, most respondents also reported that coming out at school, as an apprentice

or at their university improved the relationship with their peers, while others confirmed

that it was the better option for them to remain secluded. Young people seem to have a

very good understanding of the specific contexts they are in and of the opportunities and risks of being out in their specific environments.

"Bullying" is a terminology for violence in schools that occurs between students. The term is used by the WHO in its regular survey "Health Behaviour in School-aged Children" (HBSC) survey (see World Health Organization Regional Office Europe, 2018) and also by the queer community in an international study/program on bullying with homophobic motives called "schoolmates" (see Wien.gv.at., 2018). In our survey we did not use this term, but asked students whether they experienced *discrimination or mobbing* at school. Under that sub header we also asked in detail about certain forms of harassment, including whether they had been ridiculed, were called names, were treated worse than others, were psychologically pressured, physically attacked or whether their sexual or gender identity was incidentally being talked about in a derogative way. Regarding public spaces in Vienna (which we specified as e.g. streets, shops, events…) we asked about *experiences of discrimination or violence*. Under that sub header we asked in detail, again whether they had been ridiculed, were called names, were treated worse than others (unfair treatment), were psychologically pressured, physically attacked and also whether they had experienced sexualized attacks or sexualized violence. We did not specify what psychological pressuring entails, the open answers allowed us to see that survey participants understood it as mobbing per se (including threats of violence, physical avoidance, name calling,

exclusionary practices…). We also did not specify what sexual violence entails, but from the open answer comments it became clear that the participants in the survey understood it within a range of "staring, gawking, suggestive comments, groping, beating for refusing to engage in sexual acts, but also peers refusing to change in the same locker room". When we analyzed the results of the survey, we talked about any experiences of discrimination or violence in the streets of Vienna as a location as "street harassment", when we talked about experiences of being ridiculed, name calling and being talked about in a derogative way we termed this "hate speech".

In the survey the fears of experiencing discrimination were juxtaposed with concrete incidents of discrimination and mobbing at school in the last 12 months: 16% of all students answered "yes" and 9% "unsure" whether they had experienced such situations. Most reported on the prevalence of hate speech: Their sexual or gender identity was marginalized by subtle comments; nearly 40% responded that this happened more than 5 times in that year. Next often "being ridiculed" was reported (by 25%) and being called names and unfair treatment (each 20%). Psychological pressure was reported by a fifth. Approximately 10% reported both physical and sexualized violence. When asked for the potential reasons of experiencing discrimination or mobbing, nearly three quarters of the victims named their sexual orientation/identity, more than 40% their gender expression, a quarter their gender, 17% their migratory background, 13% their class or financial background.

When asked about the perpetrators, 80% named male peers, 65% female peers, 35% male teachers and 25% female teachers. The open answer fields explained the nature of the incidents in detail. Teacher related comments were:

"Teachers are joking about LGBTI* teachers in a provocative/insulting way"

"Gay is a common derogative word for everything that is badly or not functioning."

"Mobbing because of my outing, no help from the teachers at all."

"Disapproving/distancing glances from teachers/colleagues"

Comments relating to peer violence were:

"Being pushed down the stairs."

"I was pierced in the throat with scissors."

"I was tied to the lantern in the yard."

"Recurrent prejudice and clichés, such as the gay best friend."

"First I was threatened with violence because of an 'imaginary penis' which has no place in female toilets, then I was beaten and forcefully pushed out."

"You cannot be a lesbian with your looks."

"Insulting statements about LGBTQs (e.g. there should be a country for homosexuals, so that they cannot have children; homosexuals are not people etc.)."

"After my outing some of my comrades refused to get changed before gym class, if I was in the same room."

Aside from the stress experienced at schools, young (LGBTIQ) people are also targets of discrimination and violence in their free time as they are the segment of the population who most frequently tend to go out at night for leisure and fun. A study by Austria's Gay Cops (Hart, 2015) found that most victims of street crime are young people, at times between 9 and 3 am, on weekends, and in certain hotspots of the city. This corresponds with 42% of our respondents claiming to avoid certain places in Vienna because of fear of violence based on their sexual orientation/gender identity. Analyzed by identity it is 51% of gay men*, 50% of heterosexual transgender and inter people, 43% of lesbian women*, 32% of bi*- or pansexuals* (in contrast to "bisexual" [which refers to sexual and romantic preferences for both men and women] the term "pansexual" refers to sexual and romantic preferences for persons of all genders identities, gender expressions and biological sex, in that way including persons who identify as male, female, androgynous, transgender, or intersex. Where bisexuality may imply a dichotomy, pansexuality suggests fluidity and a possibility of attraction to a spectrum of identities. The term pansexual has become popular with the millennial

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generation who are more likely to identify as pansexual over bisexual as a growing

number of celebrities have started to publicly self-identify as pansexual. See Schütze,

2018) and other identities* and 24% of the cis-sexual heterosexual control group who

are reporting to avoid certain places in Vienna ("cis" or "cis-sexual" as used in this text

refers to a sexual identity which matches the sex assigned at birth; for example,

identifying as female, as was listed in one's birth certificate. The term was coined by the

trans* community to refer to non-trans* persons. In this way cis-sexual denotes a lack of

gender dysphoria, a feeling of "rightness" with one's sexed body and a personal life with

a coherent gender history. Even though the term "cis-gender" is often used

interchangeably with cis-sexual, cis-gender refers to an alignment between perceived

gender and gender identity, a cultural/mental rather than a biological/mental

congruence. (See McNabb, 2018)). When asked about having actually experienced

violence in the public space in the last 12 months, the same number (50%) of straight

trans and inter people had experienced violence, followed by 45% lesbians* (more than

expected from their avoidance behavior), 34% bi*- or pansexuals* and others, 31% gay

men* (less than expected) and 30% of the cis straight group (who in some cases

reported having experienced violence in the company of their queer friends). Overall,

36% reported experiencing violent incidents in the last year because of their sexual

orientation/identity. Nearly 80% named streets (street harassment), 54% public

transport and 32% bars and clubs as the locations. Nearly 80% experienced name

calling and being ridiculed, nearly a quarter was physically attacked or sexually

assaulted. This becomes more evident in the responses in the open answer section

regarding the young LGBTIQs experiences of violence in public spaces:

"Often it was men, who were attracted to me. They got aggressive if I turned them

down, or who groped me and my girlfriend, if we went out together."

"My face was cut with a carpet knife."

"I was called a 'homosexual'."

"The manager of 'Sand in the City' [a summer venue for tourists] wanted to throw me

and my boyfriend out, because we had kissed each other once."

"Heterosexual men stared/gawked at me and assaulted me verbally and sexualized."

"Very often I get asked if I am in the right bathroom, or I am sent to the other bathroom."

"I was in the subway station with my girlfriend, we kissed, but definitely not blatantly when

an older man approached us and loudly threatened to call the police, because this type

of relationship is forbidden."

"Being looked at can also be discriminating."

"They were insulting gays while I was present."

"My partner and I were holding hands when passer byes took pictures of us and then

threatened to find us and kill us."

"Because of a hug a waiter 'told us off'."

Reading those reports it becomes obvious that certain signifiers need to be present to

tip off the fact that a person may be LGBTIQ. Interacting with a partner (holding hands,

hugging, kissing, or simply smiling) may be such a signal. Another signal is gender non-

conformity in behavior or looks, which often serves as a marker for assumed

homosexuality. These visible signs are most often the prompt that will initiate

specifically street harassment (see Feinberg, 1992; Valentine, 1993; Namaste, 1996;

Doan, 2010) but also bullying in schools. In our survey, 20% of the students who cannot

pass as heterosexual and 35% of students who cannot pass as clearly male or female

in a heteronormative way report experiencing violence at school and alarming rates of

52% and 64% respectively report experiencing violence in public places in the last year,

either in the form of hate speech, physical or sexualized violence. The combination of

discrimination and violence in schools and also during leisure times is a worrisome

stress factor as it prevents the opportunity for relaxing and recovering from unpleasant

experiences.

Thus, it is important to situate violence and discrimination against young LGBTIQs in

the context of schools and other educational settings within a broader framework. Kull

(2016) for instance, stresses that anti-discrimination policies and regulations within a certain political district have a huge impact on LGBTIQ youth experiences in schools. It is therefore important to address the greater environment of young queers, since they not only have negative experiences within schools but also in their leisure time, when being on the streets, when using public transport etc. Discrimination within the school setting can thus trigger or reinforce experiences of discrimination or violence, or on the other hand provide empowering resources in order to help young queers to cope with these heteronormative environments. Likewise, anti-discriminatory policies and regulations can improve the larger school climate and young LGBTIQ feelings of acceptance and safety. Hence, as Payne and Smith (2013) point out, discussing violence against LGBTIQs in schools must be linked to "systemic marginalization" and "institutionalized heteronormativity", taking in account that schools are not neutral sites where all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Happiness despite discrimination: The importance of empowerment structures

Even though our study shows a high intensity of violence, discrimination and mobbing which demonstrates that negative experiences of prejudice, discrimination and violence are frequent for the LGBTIQ youth in our sample, these incidents are even more frequently overcome by positive experiences of support by peers, community, family and schools. Against the widespread discourse of the traumatized young queer victim, the

young LGBTIQs in the survey were happier than expected. We asked our respondents to indicate in a standard happiness scale ranging from values of 1 (completely happy) to 9 (completely unhappy) (see Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999 on measuring subjective happiness) how satisfied they were overall with their life in Vienna. Surprisingly, the LGBTIQ youth had better outcomes on the happiness scale than the young people in the survey who reported to be cis-gendered and heterosexual and functioned as a control group. The average score of the LGBTIQs as a group was better than the average of the control group, the score for gay men* was best, followed by bi*- and pansexuals* and lesbians*(The numbers for heterosexual transgender individuals is too small to allow reliable outcomes). Also, university students scored highest for happiness, followed by apprentices and pupils.

We also allowed respondents to indicate details for 17 factors of happiness or unhappiness, the most relevant results are the following: Most important was that more than 90% of LGBTIQ youth stated that they were happy with their circle of friends. Also, more than three quarters of the university students and apprentices are happy with their partner relationships and sex lives. Around 60% are also pleased with LGBTIQ specific cultural events and community places (bars and cafés, parties, counselling, sports) and possibilities for finding partners. Pupils are slightly less happy about their relationships, their sex lives and also finding partners than university students or apprentices. It is worrisome that 12% of them report not having anyone to talk to in a crisis, while only 4%

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of apprentices and 3% of university students are on their own when in trouble. Still,

more than 80% on average of all youth will tell their friends if they are in a situation of

crisis, more than 50% of university students will talk to their partners, between one third

and a half will consult with their mothers. Our data also shows no correlation with being

young and LGBTIQ and taking antidepressants, smoking, or drinking excessively or

having eating disorders.

Overall, support, empowerment structures and positive relationships seem more

important for positive correlation with the happiness of LGBTIQs youth. The hypothesis

that a young person's identification as LGBTIQ will most likely equal a status of

victimization, connected with negative health effects and a lower quality of life does

therefore not necessarily hold, in contrary, the respondents in our survey show an

unexpectedly high rate of happiness and life satisfaction.

These results can be linked to broader theoretical discussions in queer and trans*

studies and political claims in LGBTIQ and feminist activism. Those are arguing that

living a queer life does have the potential to open up new possibilities regarding

relationships, family organization, love, desire, gender performance etc. because of a

critical perception of heteronormative expectations. This is also what Jack Halberstam

discussed as the "queer art of failure", the fact that queer lives produce alternatives to

conventional understandings of "success" in a heteronormative society (Halberstam,

2011). However, following Sara Ahmed's critique of a neoliberal "promise of happiness", these queer alternatives may not necessarily lead to overall and total happiness in a traditional sense (Ahmed, 2009). Hence, by pointing to possibilities and conditions of happiness for young LGBTIQs, we do not necessarily see violence and discrimination as opposed to happiness, nor do we define happiness as merely individual 'achievement' or 'responsibility' in a neoliberal sense. Feelings of un/happiness are entangled with the particular social conditions and possibilities of living a queer life, thus juxtaposing experiences of being/becoming a victim, being at risk, coping with violence and discrimination and feeling 'happy'.

Thus, comparing the significance of the individual factors influencing the respondents' happiness, we found that a good circle of friends, stress-free partner relationships, being out with one's mother and feeling safe in public spaces are most significant for the experience of happiness of LGBTIQs.

Table 1: Factors increasing happiness index for LGBTIQ youth in the Queer in

Vienna sample

LGBTIQ youth happiness correlations	Std. Error	Sig.
Happy with circle of friends	0.130	0.000
Stress free partner relationship	0.057	0.008
Experience of safety in public spaces	0.122	0.000
Being out with one's mother	0.109	0.026
Being completely out at school	0.103	0.819
Being gender conforming	0.075	0.023

a. dark grey: $p<0.01$; light grey: $p<0.05$; b. Adjusted R^2: 13%

However, our data also suggests that feelings of happiness are also intertwined with

whether one is able or willing to follow what Sara Ahmed terms established "happiness

scripts" (Ahmed, 2009). She therefore suggests to differentiate the "happy queer" from

the "happily queer" (Ahmed, 2009: 112f.): While the "happily queer" is allowed to also

feel unhappy due to heteronormative violence and discrimination, the „happy queer"

requires to minimize signs of queerness and to approximate as far as possible those

social forms that are already inscribed as "happiness causes": family, marriage, or

straightness. Our data confirms that gender-conforming seems to be a significant factor

contributing to better happiness scores as cis-sexual persons are happier than trans*

and intersex persons.

That experiences of happiness are related to the institutional and social constraints of

living a queer life, and particularly to the material effects of patriarchal gender norms,

which is also manifested in our data: We found that persons with male identities are

happier than persons with female identities, due to women's further experiences of

discrimination and violence based on sexism and also a reported gender pay gap in our

data. A migratory background also deducted from happiness scores, due to other

experiences of harassment based on racism and xenophobia.

Interestingly, an increase in the respondents' age improved happiness scores, so our

data does support claim that "it gets better" after all. Still, it may be too quick to claim

that LGBTIQ youth as a group are generally victims, leading unhappier lives, facing

emotional stress and hardship. Also, queerness is not enough of a demographic

marker; not all young LGBTIQ people are equally affected by a homophobic

environment. Intersectional discrimination merging racism, sexism, transphobia and

homophobia will affect young people from unalike backgrounds differently. For instance,

the "It gets better project" has been criticized for employing neoliberal paternalism and

favoring the most privileged LGBT youth by only "calling on those who can document how their lives have improved." (Meyer, 2017: 124)

However, what our data nevertheless shows, is that even though the responses show substantial rates of bullying and violence in the education context as well as very high numbers of street harassment, positive experiences of peer and family support may play a largely ameliorative role in the relationship between minority stress and well-being. Against the common trope of the "young queer victim" our respondents seem happier than we expected them to be, which may largely be due to empowering environments and affirmative social relationships.

Schools and educational settings as sites of empowerment

Next to private support networks, school and education backgrounds can be important sites of positive life experiences, empowerment, support and personal growth - even in light of potential harm. When our respondents were asked about particularly positive events in the last two years in their school/education institution the following open answers were provided:

"My class made a theater play about homophobia last year and this year we are making one about transphobia."

"All my friends are behind me."

"My teachers were very tolerant when they found out about me and tried to educate my peers as best as they could."

"I could come out with everyone since I had my boyfriend's support."

"In a class on ethics same sex couples were completely integrated in discussions of family, sexuality and partnership."

"My peers and lectors are treating me as an equal I feel well supported and taken care of. At our campus an initiative for LGBTI persons was recently founded which organizes meetings."

"I was voted as spokesperson for my class as a reward for my self-confidence."

"Support from another homosexual who did not dare to come out. After I did it he immediately followed."

"Some teachers are taking great care to avoid discriminating language and examples. This is really rare and therefore very remarkable".

These examples suggest that supportive environments can help LGBTIQ youth to ameliorate the negative effects of frequent experiences of violence in education institutions and public places. Thus, resilience in our understanding is not the effect of a 'successful' and individualized self-management of homo- and transphobic discrimination and forms of violence in schools and other educational contexts, but

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rather the outcome of supportive structures and sites of enablement. Thus, for queer youth to thrive in schools and communities, affirmative environments and empowering social relationships play a crucial role. Schools should provide supportive structures for LGBTIQs youth, for instance, as Russel and Fish (2016) suggest, by developing inclusive curricula that include positive images of LGBTIQ individuals, history, and events and by hiring educated teachers and staff that identifies themselves as supporters and allies of LGBTIQ youth and is able to support them in their coming out and if they become victims of harassment. Schools should also aim to support gay-straight alliances between the students as well as the parents of LGBTIQs and their kids. In order to make schools safe places for LGBTIQ students to come out or experience their first romantic relationships without hiding, LGBTIQ inclusive sex education policies as well as the implementation of comprehensive bullying/harassment policies that specifically addresses sexual orientation and gender identity may help to do so. However, while there exists a wide range of strategies and recommendations for making schools more safe for LGBTIQ youth, there is still a research desiderate testing the impact of particular approaches on the well-being and resilience of students: How can the 'risk' to experience bullying, harassment and discrimination be minimized particularly with regard to the different needs, resources and situatedness of LGBTIQ youth based on gender, gender performance, class, race and other intersectionalities? Which institutional and emotional configurations support resilience and happiness

among queer youth? Moreover, there is also not enough research on those positive factors for strengthening solidarity between parents and kids, teachers and students but also different minority groups and different groups of students. It would be highly recommendable to engage in more research in that area. For example, to find out how people with broad experiences in handling inequality, like labor unions, could support LGBTIQ apprentices? What are effective means to combat violence and discrimination in an intersectional way in places of learning and education? What resources do teachers still need to work with LGBTIQ students? How can teachers better support parents? How can communities make streets and areas for adolescents safer places to be in? But also, how can LGBTIQ students become effective allies of Black and POC students and vice versa? How can LGBTIQ students be more supportive of members in their groups who have migratory backgrounds? How can cis and trans kids support each other and reach out for help from grown-ups? There are very few studies on intersectional solidarity and support; aside from very few qualitative studies, we are not aware of much quantitative data at all. With good data on experiences and best practice better resources can be provided for those working in the field and acting as allies.

Conclusion

Our data on the living situations for LGBTIQs students in Vienna does suggest an alarming rate of discrimination and violence in educational institutions and the public

sphere, especially for gender non-conforming youth. These findings are, however not surprising and are in line with the results of a wider range of other studies for continental Europe (and also beyond) which likewise point to a high rate of discrimination and violence experienced by young LGBTIQs, particularly by trans* and gender-non-conforming youths. Still, it becomes obvious that young LGBTIQs can nevertheless cope with heteronormative violence due to empowering environments and affirmative social relationships. The happiness factor of the students in our sample was therefore higher than expected given the frequency of negative effects which is also described in other studies: Krell and Oldemeier (2017) support the findings for our survey in their quantitative and qualitative study of young people under 27 in Germany on Coming Out and consequences. They report that support of the family, relationships and friends will significantly influence the Coming Out process. Bowleg et al. (2003) were also focusing on "emotional support from partners, friends, family, or other members of one's community to explain resilience against trauma and stress in Black lesbians, which they find to interact to "buffer or exacerbate negative impact" of "stressors or challenges, such as those posed by racism, sexism and/or heterosexism" (Bowleg et al., 2003: 90) Most of the interviewed women in their study also accredit friends (58%) and intimate partners (21%) for the support necessary for resilience. Frost and Meyer's findings are stressing the importance of being connected to the LGBT community in order to ameliorative minority stress and wellbeing (Frost and Meyer, 2012).

This is echoed in our data where 60% of the youth are happy with LGBTIQs cultural events and community places. Reed and Valenti point to the importance of coping strategies and show how support from self-created gay families, passing and fighting back (physically and verbally) in the event of isolated instances of sexual prejudice are strategies which enable young African American lesbians to overcome being victims and further enhance their quality of life (Reed and Valenti, 2012).

Furthermore, findings from studies focusing on connectedness show that there are definitely factors that may compensate for a hostile homophobic and heteronormative society. Frost and Meyer (2012) are creating a way to measure how "connectedness to the LGBT community may play an ameliorative role in the relationship between minority stress (i.e., stigmatization, prejudice, and discrimination) [and well-being]" (Frost and Meyer, 2012, 40). This resonates with a study entitled "What's good about being Gay?" by Harper, Brodsky and Bruce (2012) which shows that young people are also gaining strength from having non-normative sexual relationships or attractions, particularly because of feeling connected to the gay community and, what seems to be especially important for lesbians, by being able to navigate gender stereotypes and choose your own style and appearance beyond heteronormative feminine traits. Furthermore they demonstrate, how resisting heteronormativity can also support resiliency among young queers, because they felt empowered by their coming out and gained strength from not concealing their sexual orientation (ibid.).Reed and Valenti in 2012 show that "It Ain't All

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as Bad as it May Seem" in a study on young black lesbians' responses to sexual

prejudice (Reed and Valenti, 2012). Bowleg et al. (2003) document resilience against

multiple minority stress among Black lesbians. Furthermore other studies (e.g. Bouris et

al., 2010) look at the relevance of parental influences on the health and well-being of

lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. However, while it is important to draw attention to the

real risks of living a queer life, and that young LGBTIQ people become targets of

bullying in school, of hate speech and street harassment, we have dismantled the

hypothesis that a young person's identification as LGBTIQ will most likely equal a status

of victimization, connected with negative health effects and a lower quality of life. In

contrary, we are seeing an unexpectedly high rate of happiness and life satisfaction.

Thus, it is important for researchers and policy makers to also focus on factors for

resilience of young LGBTIQs and explore systems and possibilities of support and

solidarity in an intersectional and complex matter.

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