EDITORIAL

The challenge of this number of LES Online was to reflect upon lesbianism and education.

The term “education” directs us to a comprehensive and complex reality. It may refer to school and curricular contents, but it reaches far beyond that specific context. Education is present in everyday contexts and interactions of human life. There is no such thing as ‘no’ education. Whether it is in a formal, informal or non-formal context, education is a significant and determinant part of growing up and a lifelong activity.

Notwithstanding this global approach to education, nowadays, formal education has a relevant role in our society and in everyone’s life. Formal education leaves an enduring and significant impression on each individual. School context, as well as curricular contents and pedagogical approaches, can either contribute to develop or to restrict the emotional and cognitive potential of students. This significant influence on the growth and development of youngsters is particularly relevant when we consider people that in some way are discriminated on any ground. In this publication we aim to address the specificities of lesbians and education.

To be part of a discriminated group is on itself a disturbing and challenging experience. Educational contexts should provide equal opportunities for all and promote each and every individual’s right for dignity and respect. This is a multidimensional task that includes interpersonal relations as well as formal issues of educational organization, such as curricular contents and pedagogical approaches.

The papers submitted to this number of LES Online are mainly concerned with interpersonal relations, prejudice and discrimination. Since research on formal aspects of educational organization can also contribute to the understanding of the potentials and limitations of educational contexts, a future number of LES Online on these specific topics will be proposed.

Notwithstanding the major role of families and parents on education matters, the present situation of post same-sex marriage approval with the remaining discrimination on parental issues in Portugal, can be one of the reasons for the significant presence of homoparentality issues in this number of LES Online.

It is interesting to underline that the diverse approaches of the papers included in this number reveal the intersectional aspects of identity. The presented papers are not only about sexual orientation; they address other issues, such as: the social role as a mother, age, physical aspect and gender.

The paper “The educational experiences of lesbian-mother families: a south Australian study” from Damien W. Riggs addresses experiences of discrimination of a sample of lesbian mothers and their children in an educational context of South Australia. The age of the child, the outness of the mother, the socio-economic level, the rating of the school and the degree of comfort within school spaces, were related to the occurrence of experiences of discrimination. It
is particularly interesting the highlight on the very subtle ways in which negative messages are transmitted to lesbian mothers and their children in educational spaces.

“Deconstructing prejudices about lesbian and gay parenting”, written by Jorge Gato and Anne Marie Fontaine, proposes a literature review on the psychological development of children raised mainly by lesbian mothers. It compares the results of these studies with the attitudes toward lesbian and gay parenting held by students and professionals from psychosocial areas, based on data from an ongoing Portuguese study. Some implications in terms of the education and training of psychosocial workers are outlined.

Internalized homophobia and suicidal ideation in lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) and heterosexual adolescents are addressed in “Internalized homophobia and suicidality in LGB and non LGB youngsters” by Patrícia Rodrigues. This research collected data of a significant number of participants using virtual communities, mailing lists and online portals worldwide, and presents some preliminary results.

Homophobic bullying and breaking the rules of what it means to be a man or a woman are the main topics of the paper presented by Raquel Platero “Coping strategies against bullying: a closer look at masculine girls”. Coping strategies of masculine young women are presented as an example in order to argue for an intersectional perspective concerning the research on bullying.

A more transversal and ever-present topic is lesbians’ invisibility. The paper “So far, only ghosts” of São José de Almeida presents us a comprehensive analysis of lesbians’ invisibility not only in society, public spaces, discourses, media etc, but on the LGBT movement itself. This author raises a set of interesting and very pertinent questions that challenge our understanding of discriminated groups.

In the Book Reviews section, there are two reviews on books that are relevant works on lesbian issues: Anabela Rocha writes about the book of Beatriz Preciado “Testo Junkie: sexe, drogue et biopolitique”, and Sara Lafuente Funes presents the book coordinated by Raquel Platero “Lesbianas, discursos y representaciones”.