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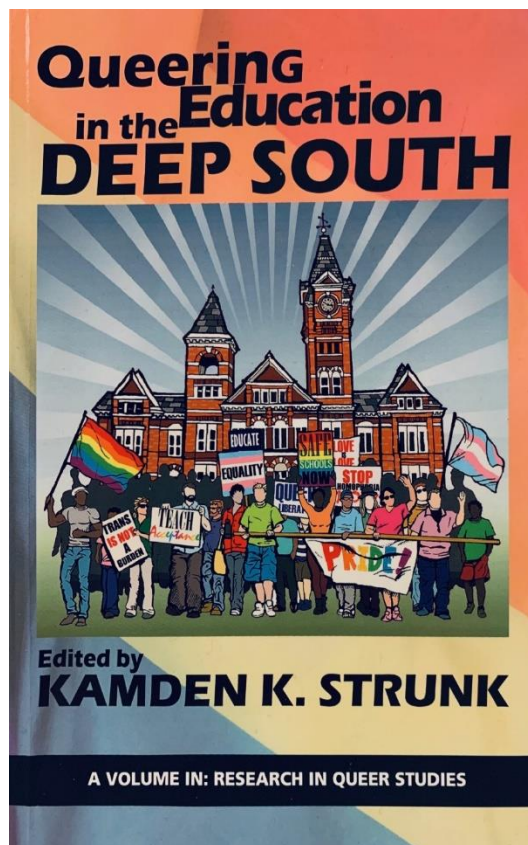
Strunk, K. K. (Ed.). (2018). *Queering education in the deep South*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

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I am queer. I am an educator. I have been an out, queer, public high school teacher in the South. I was immediately drawn to *Queering Education in the Deep South* both for its title and its cover. The cover, seemingly wrapped in a rainbow flag – a long-time symbol of the LGBTQ+¹ community – prominently features an illustration of demonstrators with pride flags and protest signs in front of a traditional-looking, red brick schoolhouse. The first two words of the title, “queering education,” evokes in me a sense of pride in being a queer educator and a feeling that the perspective queer people bring to education is not only welcomed, but necessary, particularly in the South. According to the 2017 School Climate Survey Report by the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), 77% of students surveyed in the South reported frequently hearing anti-LGBTQ language in schools, 76% have been victims of harassment or assault for their sexual orientation, and only 6% of schools have comprehensive and inclusive anti-bullying/harassment policies



¹ The author has chosen to vacillate between the use of LGBTQ+ and queer as all-inclusive and synonymous umbrella terms.

(Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018, p. 165). For many of the students whom I taught in the South, I was the first, and possibly only, openly queer teacher they had ever met. *Queering Education in the Deep South* is the first book I have read about queer education in the South, and it is one volume in a series about queer issues in the South, including *Queering Public Health and Public Policy in the Deep South* and *Queering Spirituality and Community in the Deep South*.

The editor, Kamden K. Strunk, is currently an assistant professor of educational research at Auburn University in Alabama. His research interests include social justice and equity in education, with a particular focus on queer inclusion in higher education, as well as education research methodology, all of which makes him well-positioned to have edited this collection. In this slim volume, Strunk has compiled 11 scholarly essays containing ideas from a multitude of authors, with the common threads of queerness, education, and the Deep South.

Both the queer community and the field of education research is composed of diverse people, identities, specialties, and methodologies. The contributing authors of *Queering Education in the Deep South* are professors, graduate students, archivists, historians, storytellers, and school administrators, all of whom represent an array of field specialties such as education, psychology, literary and cultural studies, nonprofit management, social work, counseling services, critical theory studies, anthropology, community organizing, engineering, philosophy, and sociology. The essays themselves also exhibit a variety of methods from quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods to historical and document analysis and personal narrative. By assembling these authors and essays into a single collection, Strunk has captured the diversity in both communities, while also recognizing a broad range of what an educational space is

and can be. Beyond the traditional educational spaces of K-12 schools and institutions of higher education, Strunk's collection also recognizes preservice teacher training, advocacy coalitions, libraries, and archival collections as spaces and places where education happens. Diversity is present in every aspect of this book.

An overarching message of the book is that there is much work to be done in the southern region of the US in terms of LGBTQ+ inclusivity for teachers and students in terms of policies and within education settings. The essays represent a small sample of what can be done, how it can be done, and why it needs to be done. The geographical focus is particularly important for the topic. In the introduction, Strunk points out that schools are places where queer folks often feel marginalized and "othered" by the "hidden curriculum steeped in white supremacist heteropatriarchy," and that this oppressive system has been especially resilient to change in the South. Some authors work within the broad landscape of the South as outlined by the U.S. Census Bureau, while others focus on a specific state or region. The general consensus among them, though, is that there are many impediments to LGBTQ+ progress and equity in the South and in Southern education.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on teaching, the second on policy and practice, and the final section discusses archives and libraries. Each section features three to five related articles in which the authors contribute to making space for queer folks in vastly different ways. Part One begins by addressing issues of supporting pre-service teachers in their efforts to express their "ally-ship" with queer students and to extinguish homophobic bullying in schools. It ends with a recounting of the experiences of a college professor teaching a queer theory class in Tennessee. Part two is mostly focused on queer college life, including an historical

analysis of the progress of queer inclusivity at a Southern university, stories of college administrators vying for more progressive and inclusive policy, and a quantitative study describing college campus climate for queer students. This section also includes articles about the creation of Safe Schools Coalitions and the K-12 queer student experience, which seem out of place in this part of the book, given their connection to K-12 education rather than college. Nevertheless, they add a necessary dimension of student advocacy and student voice to the collection. Part three features personal narratives about the creation and compilation of two queer archives in the South, and an essay on queer literature for children and young adults.

A key theme throughout is how educational spaces are failing queer students, particularly in the South. Some authors featured in this text explain the ways in which queer students are slighted, while others highlight the resilience and slow, but steady progress of the LGBTQ+ community. There is certainly value in both. As a resource guide, *Queering Education in the Deep South*, is a useful compilation. What this book gains through showcasing such variety in authors, methods,

and topics, it lacks in cohesion. The chapters feel disconnected from one another and the introduction and conclusion do little to tie them together. However, each chapter explores a different aspect of the ways in which education can be “queered.” With such a plethora of voices and perspectives, cohesion may not be a valuable goal for this collection.

Queering Education in the Deep South brings to the foreground the fact that inclusion and equity in education for the LGBTQ+ community are lacking in the South. It highlights the efforts of a few folks who recognize that and are trying to change it. As a queer person, as a former Southern public school teacher, as a current educator of preservice teachers, and as a queer educational scholar, this book’s existence means a lot to me. I often felt alone in my experiences as an openly queer person in the South, fighting hard for inclusivity and equity for not only myself, but the many queer students in my school and in my region. Reading this book gave me a sense of community and hope that educational equity and inclusion in the South are improving and will get better.

References

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation’s schools*. New York: GLSEN.

About the Reviewer


Sin R. Guanci, is a Ph.D. student in the Philosophy and History of Education program at The Ohio State University, where they teach a social foundations of education course to undergraduate students. Their main areas of research are sex education, particularly as a means to forward social justice objectives, and teaching training; they are also interested in hip-hop based education, including reality pedagogy and youth culture pedagogy. Prior to beginning their doctoral studies, they earned their MA in Latin from the University of Georgia and spent several years teaching Latin and Technical Theater in public middle and high schools in South Carolina.



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