Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review

Editor
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The Review is a peer-reviewed publication that is available online through the Australian Psychological Society website. Its remit is to encourage research that challenges the stereotypes and assumptions of pathology that have often inhered to research on lesbians and gay men (amongst others). The aim of the Review is thus to facilitate discussion over the direction of lesbian and gay psychology in Australia, and to provide a forum within which academics, practitioners and lay people may publish.

The Review is open to a broad range of material, and especially welcomes research, commentary and reviews that critically evaluate the status quo in regards to lesbian and gay issues. The Review also seeks papers that redress the imbalance that has thus far focused on the issues facing white lesbians and gay men, to the exclusion of other sexual and racial groups.

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EDITORIAL

DAMIEN W. RIGGS

As I write today following the election here in South Australia, I am reminded of the continued importance of research in the area of lesbian and gay psychology. Prior to the election the local queer rights lobby, the *Let's Get Equal* campaign, circulated a document outlining the commitment of each party to queer rights legislation. The Labor party was ranked third in its commitment to queer rights (behind Democrats first and Greens second). In this sense it has been heartening to see such a strong swing within the election towards both the Greens and the Labor party, and one can only hope that these parties will continue to support a queer rights agenda.

Sadly, however, there was also a swing towards the Family First party, ranked at the bottom of the list in the aforementioned document. Indeed, in my own electorate the Family First party captured a little over 4% of the vote, coming just behind the Democrats. Whilst 4% may seem like a small number, it is nonetheless important to keep in mind that there was approximately a 3 point swing *towards* the Family First party across the entire state of South Australia. Much like the phenomenon of the One Nation party that rose to relative power back in the late 90s, the Family First party is one that is not going to simply go away by ignoring it. Campaigns that raise awareness and challenge discrimination, and research that seeks to examine what it is that motivates the types of sentiment that informs parties such as Family First, are of vital importance within the broader picture of lesbian and gay psychology.

I must say that I cannot wait for the Family First placards bearing the slogan 'Protect your family' to come down. As I drive past them everyday, often on the way to dropping off or picking up the child I care for, it offends me to see such slogans which tell me that I am one of the 'elements' from which the families referred to in the placards (i.e., heterosexual nuclear families) require protection. Of course on the one hand it may be potentially useful to examine why it is that parties such as Family First consider themselves to be 'on the run' from, or

'threatened' by, the challenge that queer families may present to the heterosexual nuclear family. Nonetheless, it is offensive to see placards on a daily basis that implicitly tell me (and other queer people) that we are a threat to someone else's safety.

My response to this is of course not a desire to be 'included' within the rhetoric of the family promoted by Family First. Nor however is it to claim some point of 'essential difference' outside of commonsense notions of 'the family'. Rather, I think one of the aims of research within lesbian and gay psychology that focuses on families and parenting is to continue to map out the specificities of queer family forms, whether these challenge, conform or otherwise to the types of rhetoric promoted by parties such as Family First. Examples of these types of research appear in the new issue of the *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, which focuses on 'Lesbian, gay, polyamorous and queer families' (Riggs, 2006).

The role of lesbian and gay psychology in continuing to challenge particular norms around queer identities and experience is also the focus of the two upcoming issues of the *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*. As you will see in the calls for papers at the end of this issue, we are seeking papers that focus on issues pertaining to LGBT ageing, and issues relating to research methods and theory within lesbian and gay psychology. These are two important, and often overlooked areas, within lesbian and gay psychology, and we look forward to these issues generating plenty of debate over future directions for the field.

The current issue of the *Review* includes four excellent papers that again demonstrate the breadth of research within the field of lesbian and gay psychology. One is a commentary on research on same-sex attraction more broadly, one is a keenly theoretical examination of gendered identities, whilst the other two present empirical research findings in regards to same-sex attracted youth and schooling.

The issue begins with a paper by Luisa Batalha, the first of two papers within this issue written by authors living outside of Australia. Writing from within the context of Sweden, Luisa examines how gendered identities are constructed through the measurement of 'personalities', and she proposes a discursive approach to understanding identity that focuses on the ways in which language is formative of experience.

In the second paper Russell Pratt and Simone Buzwell report on research conducted with same-sex attracted youth in regards to their experiences of schooling and in particular their connectedness to peers and their social context. Through a focus on qualitative reports of experiences of being 'out' at school, Russell and Simone provide a rich account of what is means to be a young person living in a context of heterosexism and homophobia.

The questions at the end of the second paper in regards to what can be done to support young same-sex attracted people segues neatly into the third paper in the issue. Written by Judie Alison, Jo Belgrave and Robin Duff, this paper focuses on the education system in New Zealand, and in particular on how queer staff and students are represented and engaged with. Their paper, which is an initial report of quantitative data gathered from a nationwide survey, highlights the shortfall in support for queer staff and students, and proposes a number of measures to counter this shortfall.

In this final paper of this issue, Vivienne Cass provides a follow up commentary to her paper published last year in volume one, number two of the *Review.* In this latest paper Vivienne focuses on how the study of same-sex attraction has been undertaken within the discipline of psychology. Originally presented at the 2003 conference organised by the Interest Group entitled 'Changing our minds', this paper is a salutary reminder of the work that is still required in the area of identity.

The issue also features two book reviews, one by Lynne Hillier on lesbian sexual health, and the other by Georgia Ovenden, which is a review of the Interest Group's edited collection *Out in the Antipodes.*

Together, the papers and reviews in this issue demonstrate the high standard of research within the field of lesbian and gay psychology, both within Australia and abroad. Readers should note that the *Review* itself continues to garner praise for the quality of the publication, and is now indexed in Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, which will assist authors in securing research points for papers published within the *Review.* On that note, we continue to welcome research that broadly falls within the field of lesbian and gay psychology, and research that seeks to further our understanding of the lives of LGBTIQ people.

References

Riggs, D.W. (Ed.) (2006). Lesbian, gay, polyamorous and queer families. *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review, 7.*

THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDERED IDENTITIES THROUGH PERSONALITY TRAITS: A POST-STRUCTURALIST CRITIQUE

LUISA BATALHA

Abstract

This paper seeks to contrast a traditional psychological understanding of personality with a post-structuralist interpretation of how personalities are enacted within particular power relationships configured under heteropatriarchy. It is proposed that 'gender differences' in 'personality types' reflect not 'internal' realities that are consistent across time and location, but are rather reflective of particular dominant realities that shape the ways in which we relate to one another. The use of a post-structuralist approach to personality, through an application of discursive psychological approaches, may enable us to better understand how power operates in the service of gender and sexual norms, and how these norms may be resisted or challenged.

Introduction

In quantitative measurements of the person, variables that contribute to the results but that cannot be explained in the light of the theoretical framework are typically interpreted as error variance (see Anastasi & Urbina, 1997; McBurney, 1998). Everything that the researcher cannot explain in an individuals' behaviour is thus understood as *error*. A different interpretation, however, could be that an individuals' complex embeddedness in social structures makes it impossible to isolate variables and peel them off from the surrounding world. Controlled laboratory experiments aimed at keeping out nuisance variables are therefore doomed to failure because the 'individual' is intimately enmeshed with/in the 'outside world', and as such can never be separated out. Indeed, following Derrida (1991a, 1991b), one could argue that what is believed to be excluded is that which actually, at least partially, produces the results. In other words, while psychologists believe they are studying individual or group differences objectively in self-contained individuals, they are in fact studying ideology as reiterated in individual subjects' expressions (see also Riggs,

2005, in regards to how psychology produces such effects).

An interesting issue to examine from this perspective is how power structures permeate and feed modernist psychology's essentialist theories that render personality traits as innate. One means of doing this is to examine the discourses and unconscious processes that produce gendered personalities. A way to do this is through the examination of gender stereotypes, which have been shown to reveal great consonance with personality traits (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz & Vogel, 1970) and mental disorders (Landrine, 1989) that are differently 'displayed' among the 'two genders'. Essentialist theories such as the Five-Factor model (McCrae, Costa & 1992) claim that culture and environmental experiences have no effect on personality development (McCrae, 2004), and that personality traits are "an empirical fact" (McCrae & Costa, 1999, p. 147); that "the same five factors are found cross-culturally" and that "personality traits are endogenous basic tendencies" (McCrae & Costa, 1999, p. 144). Indeed empirical work conducted using the Five Factor Personality Inventory has 'shown' gender differences in personality traits (e.g., Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Feingold, 1994; Goodwin & Gotlib, 2004). These results consistently show that, among other traits, women are higher in neuroticism than men. Similarly a study by Lynn and Martin (1997) using the Eysenck Personality Inventory showed that women are higher in neuroticism whereas men score higher in psychoticism.

If assuming that personality traits are comprised by a few basic factors that are genetically given and therefore endogenous to the person, the answer to the differing deployments of personality traits between men and women would be that women have an innate tendency for neuroticism with the following tendency to states of anxiety and depression while men have an innate tendency for psychoticism and tendencies to aggressivity. However, as suggested above,

gender stereotypes are consonant with personality traits and, being the ideological discourses they are (see Augoustinos & Walker, 1998), they are part of the power structures in any society. Their analysis would, therefore, provide not only a means for emancipation, but may also provide ways of uncovering how power relations are exerted and maintained.

This endeavour can hardly be achieved through the adoption of propositions that assert that personality traits are genetically given and stable through the life span (McCrae, 2004). And, in fact, other lines of research have shown that personality traits are not only unstable through the life course (Cramer, 2003; Helson, Jones, & Kwan, 2002; Helson, Kwan, John, & Jones, 2002; Piedmont, 2001), but contingent to social experience (Roberts, Wood, & Smith, 2005). In addition to this kind of research I would suggest that a discourse analytic approach (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) to the study of personality traits and their relationship with stereotypes in general and gender stereotypes in particular would contribute to a deeper understand of the power processes occuring in any social relation and their contribution to the maintenance of a patriarchal, hierarchical and heteronormative social order.

Empirical studies (e.g., Francis & Wilcox, 1998; Marušic & Bratko, 1998) have shown that 'femininity', as measured by the Bem Sex Role Inventory, correlates positively with neuroticism, while masculinity yielded a negative correlation with the same trait. These results were held regardless of gender. That is, both men and women tend to show higher levels of neuroticism when they display traits consonant with the female stereotype. Without denying innate genetic configurations, these studies suggest that the gender roles and identities that individuals identify with are, to a great part, determinant of their personality traits. A study by Singer (1995) that examined thousands of college students' self-stories showed that their narratives carried poignant similarities, suggesting that the way people perceive themselves and their life-events is, in a large part, determined by culture, language and the discourses available to account for such events. According to poststructuralist thought, as soon as we start to use language our experiences become mediated and complicated by it (Parker, 1999). Thus, the discourses and practices current in a culture make the understanding of

our selves ambiguous and not as straightforward as personality questionnaires assume they are.

Foucault's work on sexuality (1981) demonstrates that the idea that sex was repressed in earlier centuries is erroneous. Instead a large amount of discourse about sex was created with the effect of controlling it. By talking about it, sexual behaviour became normalised. In a Foucaultian vein it could be questioned whether claims to the truth of personality traits are a reflection of reality, or if they instead have generative effects at the personal, social and cultural levels.

Poststructuralist considerations of personality

As was suggested in the introduction, in most quarters one of psychology's goals is to describe behaviour objectively. Using Austin's (1962) terms, it could be said that many psychologists carry out their science in the illusion that the statements they make are merely substantive. That is, the words they use simply describe empirical facts and thus are a mirror of reality. However, as has been shown by scholars in other fields (e.g, Butler, 1990, 1997; MacKinnon, 1993, Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993), discourse does much more than that. Psychological discourse is no exception and, as with most other discourses, it is normative of people's behaviour and thinking.

In his work *La psychoanalyse, son image et son public,* Moscovici (cited in Purkhart, 1993) showed how the terms of psychoanalysis entered French language and became part of ordinary people's vocabulary, in that they talked of themselves in terms of id, ego etc. Other psychological terms current in lay people's vocabularies are, for example, self-realisation, performance anxiety etc. Clearly, psychology as a science has created a new language with which to categorise people. By psychology's popularisation this language becomes available to the public. From here we may see how people begin to talk of and understand themselves and others in terms of these categories. Moreover, because psychology is classified as a science, and as such a social institution, it is thus a powerful ideological tool for social engineering. With this in mind, results yielded from personality

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inventories should be questioned as to whether they are objective representations of innate traits. Instead I suggest that they should be understood as scientific artefacts and ideological devices mirroring the individuals' internalisation of and identification with normative gender identities.

Personality questionnaires are constructed from the standpoint that individuals are able to look 'inside' themselves, and objectively see what is 'in there'. Their reports are then interpreted as an objective truth. Moreover, this truth is understood as intrinsic to the individual. However, matters are not that simple. Butler (1990; 1997), Cameron and Kulick (2003), to some extent inspired by psychoanalytic thinking, propose that the subject's identity is not so much an innate entity as it is constituted by a series of identifications with significant others. Although these identifications are at play in determining the subjects' identity, we are, in general, not aware of this. In trait theory these unconscious identifications constitute the present absence that is relegated to a subordinate position. They are not acknowledged, but nevertheless govern, the subject's actions just as much as his/her conscious attitudes, beliefs and thoughts.

If we are to accept that this line of thinking contains a good deal of explanatory value, personality theory, in the form of the Big Five and its assertion that traits are endogenous to the individual, can be seen as serving nothing but the status quo, contributing to the maintenance of the longstanding patriarchal and heteronormative order regulating human social relations. Moreover, the western world's dualistic philosophy, that allows only either/or conceptions of the person, demands that we be either feminine or masculine (Butler, 1990). Because neuroticism is considered to be more prevalent in women and 'feminine persons', it could instead be suggested that it is an effect of the lower social status of feminine traits in a society that venerates the masculine (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997).

Foucault (1981) has shown that language and discourses are not representations of reality but rather the other way around. That is, discourses are productive of the reality they express. Language constructs reality in that it reproduces categories that position individuals differently in the social structure (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Individuals identify with the subject positions that socially constructed discourses have determined for them, and take these identities as though they were representative of their inner and truthful nature. Althusser (1971) suggests that we are born into ideological state apparatuses that mould our experience and that interpellate us into subjecthood from the moment we are born. Hence, as much as we wish to believe that we are the owners of our ideas and beliefs, these are in fact already created in discourse and ready for us to step into them. Hence, before we are born we are already subjects embedded in discourse. We are already classified as being one gender or another with all that follows from it in terms of personality traits, sexuality and social expectations.

According to Althusser (1971), ideology is eternal in that the existence of a society presupposes the existence of ideology. A society would not function without beliefs of what a good society should be and should function like and the practice of these same beliefs. Individuals, thus could be said to breathe ideology, but just as for the most part we are not conscious of the air we breathe, we are not conscious of the constitutive effect ideology has on our personality. In Western societies we most often understand ourselves as separated from the surrounding world and believe that our thoughts have their origin in ourselves and that our behaviour is simply a material expression of inner individual traits. Following a poststructuralist line of thought I would instead suggest that these beliefs are nothing but the products of an internalisation of ideology.

Power and subjecthood

Here we are led to the question of power and in what ways it is exerted through ideological discourses. Through ideology power acts on the subject; it exerts its force in every relationship including the individual's relationship to and understanding of him/herself. Thus, self-reports on personality questionnaires are, inescapably, imbued with power relations and ideology. Given the heteronormative, hierarchical and patriarchal structure of most Western societies, it is no wonder that results yielded by personality inventories consistently show gender

differences that are consonant with gender stereotypes.

Heteronormative and patriarchal hegemonic discourse conceives the gender system as dichotomous and hierarchical, where women are subordinated to men, non-heterosexual (or queer) people to heterosexual people. Gender and sexual stereotypes are thus one of the axes that sustain this hierarchical dichotomy and determine personality. It is striking that one of the gender stereotypes is that femininity represents irrationality (Geis, 1993), which is seen to be in opposition to masculinity, which in turn is associated with rationality. One could say that psychology's insistence in measuring people 'objectively' is to a great extent reliant upon the presumed rationality of individuals. My intention here is not to deny people's capacity for rational thinking. However, most of mainstream psychology's methodological apparatus requires a rational being (see Leahey, 1992), hence taking rationality for granted as one of the marks of the individual may be to the detriment of individuals' subjectivity. It follows that because women are conceived as irrational, one consequence is that they must be understood as an anomaly, a deviance to the norm. Having in mind that 'feminine' persons, regardless of gender, also are suggested to be more prone to neuroticism (Francis & Wilcox, 1998; Marušic & Bratko, 1998) with all its implications in terms of 'irrational' feelings, it is not unreasonable to assume that this label of 'anomaly' or deviance to the norm will apply not only to women only but to all 'feminine' persons of both genders.

However, the categorisation of individuals as rational or irrational, and I would say, as feminine or masculine, is a biased understanding set up by a patriarchal social order. Thus, this understanding serves patriarchal power interests. As long as the feminine is seen as irrational, and irrationality in its turn is regarded as undesirable, then changes in the status quo will be difficult to achieve. Thus it is legitimate to argue that psychological discourse constructs the subject in ways that meet patriarchal power interests. Moreover, psychology's persistence in studying the rational Cartesian subject will serve the status quo instead of being an emancipatory science that aims at individual liberation.

It must be noted, however that a line of thinking that identifies patriarchy as the cause of women's subjugation could, too easily, lead to an understanding of men as the cause of women's subordination. A literal acceptance of this idea would only have the effect of blaming one group, which, whilst potentially resulting in a shift in power positions, may achieve little in terms of understanding and the development of more stable and equal relations. Moreover, it would contribute little to the understanding that it is not only women that are oppressed under a patriarchal order.

According to Foucault (1981), power is not something that is exerted by one person over another. Instead, it is everywhere in the discourses we use to make sense of reality. Thus, patriarchy is a hierarchical system in which we all exist, both as constrainer and constrained. We are both the cause and the effect of ideological moulds that delineate the norms by which we live. That is not to say, however, that all power positions are equally strong. Some discourses are more hegemonic than others. However, another of Foucault's insights was that power also entails resistance and, as Derrida (1991b) has shown, every performative carries the potential to break with its context, suggesting that hegemonic discourse can be disrupted. Hence, a great deal of personality theory is a power discourse that positions men and women differently in relation to the behaviours and feelings that are 'congruent' with each gender. It is understandable that when men are denied the expression of distress they turn to aggressive behaviours, in whatever form, because they are in accordance with the male stereotype. Likewise it is also understandable that when aggressive feelings in women are censured they may take the form of depression. This is not to say that *the* explanation for such problems is given. Humans are more complex that that, but as Freud (1978) has shown, undesirable feelings are often displaced and disguised as something else.

A linguistic turn in personality theory?

Within the humanities and some disciplines in the social sciences there has been a 'turn to language' in the past three decades. The reception of this new paradigm has been strikingly slow in psychology and it is still not acknowledge in most quarters. This new paradigm entails that researchers turn their attention to the way that language is

constitutive of reality. According to this paradigm language does not stand in a one to one relationship to reality. That is, words are not merely representations of objects in the outside world (Austin, 1962; Butler, 1997, Matsuda et al., 1993). This new line of thought is derived from the structuralist account of language, mainly represented by the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. According to Saussure (1992), apart from onomatopoeic words, signs are arbitrary in that they lack a direct correspondence to the objects in the world. Moreover, a sign does not have meaning in itself but acquires meaning through the differences that distinguish it from every other sign. Thus, instead of being defined by the correspondence between word and referent, meaning is to be found in the relative position of one sign to other signs. It is the structure of language that gives signs their meaning.

Relation and context are key words in structuralism. Thus, we already have a tool with which to break the Western metaphysical thought that dominates psychology, which takes the sign as an unproblematic objective representation of the referent. In respect to personality it suggests that traits are not the signifier of a given referent with an existence prior to themselves. Instead, they should be seen as formed through meaning constructions that are a result of the power relations in which people are positioned which, in their turn, leads to specific understandings of one's own and other's subjectivity.

While agreeing with Saussure, in that meanings are established by the system of signs surrounding us, Derrida (1991a, 1991b) takes things a step further. He asserts that the reification of meaning is materialised in logocentric expressions that are dependent on subordination for their existence (Derrida, 1991a). Logocentrism denotes the invocation of some ultimate foundational authority that explains something's *raison d'être*. The structuralist view of meaning as relative to a sign's position in a linguistic context can be considered as a relativist logocentric paradigm and is thus problematic. Instead Derrida asserts that it is through the operation of binary oppositions in hierarchical relations that authority can be invoked and the foundations of knowledge grounded. Thus, one term (e.g., man, white, heterosexual) of the binary is grounded in authority or logos whereas its

opposite is subordinated and deviant. One of Derrida's (1991b) insights is that because we are inserted in a linguistic heritage we have to borrow from that heritage in order to disrupt it. One way to do it is to look at how performatives sustain power differences between subjects and maintain them differentially positioned in social relations.

Derrida (1991b) elaborated on Austin's (1962) work on performatives and extended it by suggesting that signs carry unlimited possibilities of meaning and thus convey the potential to break with context. Performatives are utterances that perform what they say. Thus, the utterance is itself the action. One of Austin's type examples is the "I do" (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife). Derrida (1991b) partly disagrees with Austin both about the intention of the individual and the dependence on conventional procedures in order for performatives to be felicitous. While for Austin, failures due to lack of intention and appropriate conventional contexts are accidents, for Derrida they are the very site where performatives can act in order to break and disrupt conventional order. Instead of regarding intention and convention as the guarantee for successful performatives, Derrida proposes that performatives work because they are iterable. Language works performatively because its force is associated with established rules that already exist and are therefore recognisable. Thus a performative is a repetition of an established discourse that is recognisable for all interlocutors and therefore it can have material effects.

However, the identification of the conventional procedures that are needed in order for performatives to be felicitous can be used to disrupt the performative's perloucutionary force. Butler (1991) gives an example of such a disruption in the term *queer,* which once was used to offend homosexuals. It has now been appropriated by the same people that once constituted its target, and as such has largely been decontextualised from its pejorative meanings, and is now used with pride by those it was used against. Thus, Derrida (1991a, 1991b) bestows us with a way of thinking that accounts both for metaphysical foundations and their disruption. He thus provides a critique of truth as centred

within individuals, which is one of the central tenets of current mainstream psychology.

An appropriate question is, how can Derridian thought contribute to the empirical study of personality? His theoretical work suggests that identities and social categories are construed through processes of exclusion, particularly the exclusion of the binary other. The concept of personality needs the social for its existence and vice-versa. The centralisation of traits like neuroticism within the individual excludes its social nature. Taking recourse to Lacan's (1977) elaboration on the emergence of subjectivity in the mirror stage, it means that the individual has the social integrated in him/herself. Thus, individual subjectivity is formed through the social identities and categories available in a culture. This does not deny genetic configurations of the person. What it suggests, however, is that a person's understanding of him/herself is deeply impregnated with their subjective understanding.

Assuming that this view has explanatory value, discourses that propagate the idea of inner traits innately wired in the individual (McCrae & Costa, 1999) are in stark disagreement with this proposal. Instead, the individual's personality is constructed through identifications with others, with all that entails in terms of ideology, power differences and social identities. But we are told that our behaviour is, basically, a result of inner traits. Thus if a women feels anxious or depressed this is because she is innately prone to neuroticism. If a man feels aggressive it is because aggressiveness is originally wired into his genes. At stake here is, however, the individual's wellbeing in that an opportunity for psychological integration, understanding and emancipation is never offered. The only winner in this kind of arrangement is the status quo. Patriarchal social hierarchies are kept intact, the gender dichotomy is not questioned and individuals are kept alienated.

Both a Lacanian and an Althusserian point of view would suggest that we can never free ourselves from alienation. Nevertheless, they offer a ground on which a deeper understanding of human action can be possible. Understanding is the very pre-condition for change. We cannot change the order of things if we don't even know what that order looks like. Discourse is pivotal in producing social order, therefore, its

analysis is crucial in order to understand that same order.

With regards to personality, one path to follow would be to look for the way in which traits are constructed through their association with gender and sexual stereotypes. These are pervasive in social discourse and constrain individuals' emergence and their field of action. Butler (1990, 1997) and Billig (1997) have shown that norms which direct what we should do also have implied in them what we must not do and vice-versa. Here a connection is made with Derrida's work in that binary oppositions imply one another. Thus, it could be suggested that gender and sexual stereotypes become inscribed in the body as language on a sheet of paper. However, the different traits for the different genders and sexualities comprised in the stereotypes also imply their opposites. These opposites are viable ways of being for both genders. By looking at our gender and sexual discourses we can shed light into the ways we construe ourselves as men and women through the use of stereotypes.

As Butler (1991, 1997) has shown, binary oppositions contain a seed of disruption. A breaking with gender norms would entail a destabilisation of the gender system. What would happen to gendered personality traits if repressed traits gradually became less repressed? What would happen to personality traits if we started to study how personality is created in discourse, instead of conducting a science according to the bell curve that creates normal and deviant populations? Would there still be error variance to be explained? The 'error variance' of human condition would be incorporated instead of being statistically disregarded.

In his work *Signature Event Context* (1991), Derrida makes a case of Austin's (1997) idea that failures in performatives are accidents. It could be argued that Austin committed the same mistake as psychologists when they talk of error variance in that for Austin infelicitous performatives had nothing to teach us. Likewise, for modern psychologists, error variance is considered a nuisance and something to be avoided. Derrida (1991b) shows that a great deal of understanding can be found in exactly what is left out. Following this line of thought, a suggestion is then that

the conception of error variance, found in all psychological quantitative studies, contains in itself some keys to understanding. Here one parallel can be drawn to the heteronormative society in which we live and where non-heterosexuals, as a minority, could, metaphorically, be considered as the error variance. However, their very existence can contribute to uncovering structures of the patriarchal social system to which gender dichotomy and heteronormativity is a guarantee for its survival. That is, non-heterosexuals can constitute a disruptive seed that would contribute to destabilise patriarchy.

Conclusions

As shown earlier, mainstream psychology offers one particular discourse of the person. Central to this discourse is normality and deviance. Moreover, psychology aims at finding the 'normal' individual. Once s/he is found through statistical methods the deviant individual, that is, the opposite to the norm, also becomes constructed. However, the always-pervasive Error is the very disrupting sign embedded in the norm. Psychologists' dismissal of it as nuisance, noise, or something to control is a stubborn attempt to hold back the water that keeps running through one's fingers. An individual's complexity cannot be caught in statistical terms. As alluded to earlier in this paper, psychology stands on an uneasy dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity. Quantitative studies can be said to stand on one side of the scale unable to account for the other side. That is, subjectivity is left unaddressed and error will always be present in statistical results that try to normalise people under the shape of the bell curve.

Instead, a different approach could be to give accounts of people's subjectivities in their own terms. Such an approach would seek to show that norms and deviations are a social construction (e.g., Riggs, 2005; Harwood & Rasmussen, 2004). Discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) offers us a tool to analyse the hierarchical binaries normal/deviant, order/disorder, healthy/ill, rational/irrational, man/woman. By showing what is included and excluded when trait theory pretends to capture the essence of particular phenomena, researchers would demonstrate what discourses are at work and what realities are being ignored. For example, in personality theory, although they might show that two people have similar profiles in a trait inventory, the meanings and intentions attached to the actions associated to the trait dimensions are so different that it becomes impossible to say that they have similar personalities. Aggressiveness in one person might lead him/her to help the poor while in another might lead to pugnaciousness. Thus, a clear lesson to learn from poststructuralist thought is that psychological experience and identity cannot be studied as pure phenomena as though they were outside of culture.

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"IT IS WHO I AM": EXPERIENCES OF SAME SEX ATTRACTED YOUTH WITHIN AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In the present research same-sex attracted youths' (SSAYs) connectedness to schools, families and peers was investigated. One hundred and fifty nine SSAY aged between 13 and 19 years of age responded to a questionnaire of both open-ended and closed-ended questions, providing qualitative and quantitative material. The results presented here suggest that SSAY often develop a number of strategies to negotiate difficult situations in their school environments. Also, responses suggested strong levels of resilience and coping. Unfortunately, SSAY live in a world where they have to utilise these coping and resilience strategies to combat discrimination that should not be occurring. The results of the current study indicate that a homophobic environment results in a negative school experience, regardless of whether a young person is out or not. Positive experiences were mediated by supportive fellow students and teaching staff. It is suggested that schools take a more systemic response to deal with homophobic attitudes and behaviours.

Introduction

An adolescent who becomes aware that they are same-sex attracted faces personal challenges of enormous magnitude (Goggin, 1993). Although recent research investigating attitudes towards and beliefs of same sex attracted youth (SSAY)[1] indicates a better understanding of the problems that this group of young people face (Hillier, Kurdas & Horsley, 2001), it is only in the past decade that gay and lesbian adolescence has emerged from being a relatively under-represented concept in the field of adolescent sexuality. This means that the majority of systems aimed at supporting and educating young people, including schools, families, sporting and youth-focused bodies still presume that

[1] SSAY: Youth who experience same sex attraction have been defined under this collective term by Hillier et al., 1998.

heterosexuality is the norm. The context of heterosexism is thus a conduit through which SSAY often experience injustices and oppression as they remain silenced and disadvantaged (Boulden, 1996; Butler, 1996; Crowhurst, 1999; Friend, 1993; Misson, 1999; Sparkes, 1994; VGLRL, 2000).

How does this impact upon SSAY? Whilst being silenced and disadvantaged are serious issues, far more serious is the abuse suffered by SSAY in schools. In two national reports investigating the sexuality, health and well being of SSAY (Hillier et al., 1998; Hillier, Turner & Mitchell, 2005), schools were found to be the most dangerous places to be in terms of verbal and physical homophobic abuse. A strong link between abuse and negative health outcomes was reported in these studies, and concerns were raised about youth 'dropping out' of school as a result of this abuse. Thus it is paramount to find out more about how SSAY experience the school system so that changes can be introduced with a view to improving young peoples' school lives.

Within the context of the school environment, which is the focus of the present study, SSAY often have to contend with comments and images which suggest that they are abnormal and/or perverted (Mills, 1999). The Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (VGLRL) and Hillier et al. (1998, 2005) report high levels of homophobia towards gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. SSAY recognise the stigma attached to their sexuality by family, peers and school staff (Rotheram-Borus & Langabeer, 2001) which may result in a loss of "…the opportunities that heterosexual young people enjoy" (Emslie, 1999, p. 161). While heterosexual youth have greater opportunities to formulate positive identities, which include social, emotional, cultural, and sexual identity components, SSAY may learn that homosexuality is not valued or accepted, and that identifying as same-sex attracted may restrict access to the privileges that heterosexual youth take for granted.

In the present research project, a questionnaire was used to examine the relationships that SSAY experience within school and with family and peers. This article presents a small section of the findings regarding the experience of SSAY within schools.

Method

Participants

The sample (N=159) comprised approximately two-thirds same-sex attracted males and one-third same sex attracted females, aged between 13 and 19 years of age, with a mean age of 17 years. The majority of the young people were still at school, and came from New South Wales, Victoria or Western Australia. Of those who had left school, 15 had left before completing Year 12. The majority of young people were Australian born, as were their parents. Ninety-eight of the young people (62%) stated they were attracted only to their own sex, with 52 (33%) attracted to both sexes and nine young people (6%) indicating they were unsure who they were attracted to.

Materials

The questionnaire comprised six sections and investigated connectedness of SSAY to families, peers, and schools through the use of both qualitative and quantitative questions. The six sections comprised an introductory page, general demographic information, sexuality and sexual feelings, schooling experiences, family experiences and friendships and peers experiences. The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993), the Family Connectedness Measure (adapted from Resnick et al., 1993) and the UCLA Loneliness Scale - Revised (Russell, Peplau & Cutrona, 1980) were used as measures of school, family and peer connectedness respectively. The questionnaire can be accessed by contacting the principal author of this paper. The questionnaire was completed by participants either online or in hard copy, both versions containing identical questions in identical format.

The difficulties that can often arise when attempting to access minority groups (such as SSAY) led to the questionnaire being distributed via a number of methods, including mail-outs to gay, lesbian and bisexual-friendly organisations sourced through the ALSO Foundation Handbook (2002) and several gay, lesbian and bisexual-friendly websites. The questionnaire was also placed on the Swinburne University of Technology hosted web-based survey tool 'Surveyor' (2002). An email publicising the survey was sent to gay and lesbian friendly organisations sourced from websites and the ALSO Foundation handbook. Finally, the questionnaire was advertised on a gay and lesbian specific website, *pinkandblue.com.au,* with a direct link to the survey being provided.

Overall, 214 surveys were received via mail or through Internet response of which 159 were deemed valid (invalid surveys were generally not completely filled out and as such could not be included). No significant response differences were found between web-responses and pencil-and-paper responses. Qualitative data were analysed through a three-step process, similar to that described by Neuman (1994).

Results and Discussion

The young people in the study were asked about whether they were 'out' at school and what their experience of school was like. The results and discussion presented in this section focus on the qualitative data gathered from the questionnaires in order to enhance our understanding of, and insight into, young peoples' experiences of connectedness, and to ascertain whether these experiences were instrumental in students staying at or leaving school.

A number of combined factors may encourage some SSAY to leave school. The quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires indicated that whilst a majority (43%) of students reported school as being a positive experience, a substantial minority (22%) reported strongly disliking or even hating school. Overall, forty-five females (73% of all females) and 73 males (75% of all males) provided qualitative information about their school experience. The qualitative data were sorted by the authors into what are intended to be meaningful categories, as presented below in Table 1. All categories are mutually exclusive.

Table 1
Written comments regarding the impact of sexuality on schooling sorted into conceptually meaningful categories according to gender

Meaning	%M	%F
Out at school/school positive experience	15	38
Not out at school/school positive experience	10	2
Out at school/ school negative experience	28	16
Not out at school/school negative experience	21	11
Out at school/mixed experience	11	20
Not out at school/mixed experience	6	2
Wasn't aware I was SSA when at school	3	2
Other*	6	9

N = 117, 72 males and 45 females
*Responses are so diverse they cannot be classified into meaningful groupings.

The trends as indicated in Table 1 suggest that almost 50% of males reported a negative school experience compared to 27% of female respondents. Additionally, a substantially larger percentage of females reported a positive school experience compared to males. The reason for this is unclear. Young men and women may have different responses to negative treatment at the hands of others, based on their supposed gender roles (Berk, 1994). Regardless of the reasons for this difference, it is unacceptable for such a large percentage of students to experience school as a negative experience as a result of homophobia.

In their qualitative responses, a number of young people indicated they were either unaware of who they were sexually attracted to, or were not thinking about sexuality when they were at school. When writing how his sexuality had impacted his school experience, nineteen-year-Simon[2] wrote of having had a mixed experience of school. Simon states that he was somewhat unaware of his sexuality at the time, saying "I was in denial back then, and didn't understand my sexual feelings." Sandra, aged 19, who described school as

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[2] All names changed to ensure anonymity

'quite good', was also unaware of her sexual attractions. In the following passage, she reflects on feeling different, but not having an understanding of how, or why:

> While I was at school, I don't think I thought about being different, possibly being lesbian or anything like that. I realised I was 'different' but didn't know 'how' I was different. I wasn't into boys, unlike some of my classmates, but there were also others who were not 'into boys' and were really interested in studying, so it was 'OK' to be different that way. I don't know if it would have been 'OK' to be different, because I was in a Catholic School and the teachings are very clear about these things.

Sandra's statement suggests that it may have been problematic for her to delve too deeply into 'how' it was that she was different, due to the 'teachings' within her Catholic school. She appears to have found safety through being with other students who were more interested in study than boys. This is seen through her comment about it being OK to be different 'that way' (in regards to study), rather than expressing different sexual interests.

Within the group of young people who indicated they were not out at school were several who stated that this was due to fear of the consequences. Jackson, aged 18, was not out, and reported a positive school experience, stating, "In secondary school I never came out to anyone because of all the homophobic issues that surrounded the school, so I decided to wait until I'd finish because I was a little frightened of what might happen to me".

Schools have a duty of care to provide safe environments for all students and staff (Hillier et al., 1999a) such that students should not be afraid – of whom they are, or of their peers' attitudes and beliefs. Nonetheless, it seems that many young people who are same-sex attracted regard schools as unsafe. Feeling unsafe was expressed in terms of the threat of physical violence, through the fear of being ostracised and isolated by former friends, and in the actual experience of violence and harassment at the hands of students, and at times, school staff. Schools must act to ensure their duty of care is honored in real life situations, thus ensuring the safety of their students, or face the threat of legal consequences (Tharinger & Wells, 2000).

Robert, 17, who was not out, and reported a positive school experience, wrote about the reasons he chose to not be 'out' about his sexuality:

> At my school, no one ever knew my true sexual preference, they all just presumed I was heterosexual. Though I would have liked to be open about my sexuality, and there were people who would have supported me, I earnestly felt – from the comments made about such people – that it would just be too difficult to come out. There was too much oppression and discrimination against from shallow minded people towards others who [were] different.

Robert made the difficult decision not to expose himself to what he felt would be an intolerable situation. Even with the acknowledgement that some would have provided support, those that would not have supported him – and perhaps even discriminated against him – encouraged him to hide his sexual preference.

Chris, aged 17, and still at school, was out to some but not all. He reported a mixed experience at school, and wrote about the impact of homophobia upon his school experience:

> There are lots of days I really don't want to go to school – I make excuses not to go sometimes, like pretending to be sick or wag classes but not as much as in high school. It's been a lot easier changing schools where no one knows me but it's still hard. There's several other kids who get teased for being gay so I'm still not totally open about it. The person I live with has been very supportive. If I was still living with my parents I think I would have left school by now. There's lots in the papers and on TV about bullying at schools and how they want to stop it but it still happens and I don't know how it could be stopped. My first high school was a real nightmare – my best friend was also gay – he was very open about it but because of the bullying he left in grade 8.

Again, we can see that others' intolerance, and the fear that the bullying will not be controlled by the school, results in students keeping their sexuality a secret. For some, when they are out, the discrimination turns to violence. Ronald, aged 16, was out and reported a mixed school experience. He had experienced more than teasing and bullying. Interestingly,

he wrote that the violence against him was based on someone's perception of his sexuality (who didn't know he was gay), rather than his disclosed sexuality, "Hmmm… is this the place where I write about having my head smashed into a locker and punched in the head coz somebody thought I was gay??"

Whilst physical violence need not be described further for the purposes of understanding its impact, the more subtle forms of harassment and violence do. A number of respondents wrote about other students, and occasionally teaching staff using homophobic language, or descriptive sexuality terminology (e.g., 'gay', 'poof', 'lesbian') as 'put downs'. Another form of harassment that was experienced and described were isolating techniques, such as silencing, subtle derogatory messages within the context of class lessons, and labeling same-sex attraction as sinful or unnatural. In many of these cases, SSAY felt humiliated, angry, and isolated as a result of these experiences. Notable in the responses was the substantial number of references to religious schools teaching that homosexuality was wrong, such as by Stephanie, aged 18, who was out and reported hating school, due to the homophobia she experienced. She wrote that "…being at a Catholic all girls school where the compulsory Year 12 religious unit preaches against homosexuality is hard. I have learnt simply to ignore the standard prejudice…" Other young people expressed that their experiences within schools whose "…homophobic atmosphere is encouraged by the religious nature of … school…" led them to remain isolated and insular, rather than risk the consequences of disclosure in a non-supportive institutional environment.

Prue, aged 18, reported that she was out and liked school. She wrote about being labeled and the consequences of that for her. Prue's story also highlights the mixed impacts of homophobia and sexuality on school experience:

> I was ostracised from my group of friends in early year 8, and labeled a lesbian by my entire form… they actually had no idea of my bisexuality… Because of the labeling… I kept my head (and eyes) down for the next two years. I forced myself to *never* look at another female in the hall, forced myself to ogle the males – to *prove* to my classmates (who never

spoke to me anyway) that I wasn't attracted to women.

I started going to university while in year 12 (an extended subject for gifted students)… I went to visit the Queer Lounge at Uni. I skipped a lecture and went to 'discover' the world of queerness that I was so alien from, yet belonged to. It was the best thing I could ever have done! I eventually gathered up enough courage to see the student welfare coordinator at school and became quite an activist at school… He and I were both keen to get a support group for SSA students running at school, but the logistics of running such a sensitive group without outing the students or placing them at risk with other students was a nightmare.

Prue noted the difficulties of supporting SSAY without exposing them to harassment and violence. Her experience of school seemed to have been influenced by her exposure to another environment whilst she was still in high school. By being exposed to a more supportive environment within a university, Prue was able to take on an activism-role within her high school.

Nineteen-year-old Rebecca's response indicated that she had escaped an awful experience. Rebecca reported being out and hating school. In the following passage, she talks about the pressures she felt from her peers in school:

Pressure to engage in heterosexual mindfuck games was tremendous, i.e.: to have a boyfriend at any cost – the human being involved as the 'boyfriend' mattered very little, what mattered was that you had one… There was also that fabulous portion of time where I'd just come out and the vile fascist bitches I called my friends recalled those lessons they'd learned about girl/girl being really appealing to boy, and made use of my sexuality and gullibility to appeal to the Neanderthal males hanging in the wings. It was all class. I try never to think of 'sexuality' and 'high school' in the same sentence, it makes me feel sick. Sometimes I feel like starting solidarity vigils for those poor kids who are still going through that high school hell…

Rebecca reports the pressures, and also expresses the anger against those she felt used and betrayed her. Her response gives some idea of the impact that negativity and abuse of ones core being can create.

For those young people within the current study who felt pressured or coerced by the messages they received about same-sex attraction, this negativity affected the way they experienced schooling. For some, a common theme was one of being 'unsettled' and experiencing fear that they would lose good friends if their sexuality became known. Thus it was not unusual for young people to write about 'pretending to be straight', either to avoid confrontation, or for fear of experiencing rejection. These respondents wrote about dealing with sexuality issues in other arenas of their lives, such as in the home environment, or in friendships outside of school. This effectively meant that in one major part of their life (school), they put an integral part of themselves on hold (Morrow, 1997).

Brian, aged 19, was one respondent who chose the above course and was not out whilst at high school. He indicated that he had experienced difficult times, and reported that his school experience was negative: "Throughout much of year 12 I battled depression due to my sexuality. I never came out at school." Another student, Peter, aged 16, who also was not out and reported disliking school, wrote that, "I had a constant fear in going to my school as it was seen as straight and bullying/harassment were big. The teachers and staff were great and I hope to keep in contact with them." Thus for Peter, it seems his experience of high school was shaped in negative ways by his peers, but also by some positive interactions with teaching staff.

Responses highlighted that protective factors identified by Morrow (1997) such as SSA-friendly classrooms, role modeling by teaching staff and positive, open discussions regarding harassment were unavailable to the SSAY in this study. Certainly in the current study, a number of respondents clearly pointed out that their schools did not act against homophobic language, harassment or violence, and in several instances, taught curriculum in which same-sex attraction was presented as evil, unnatural, or invisible. This was put succinctly by Alistair, aged 18, who was not out and hated school. He wrote that "being at an all boys' school meant that, despite the fact that since school has finished about five people out of a grade of 180 have

come out, there was no such thing as a homosexual."

As negative or hostile school environments create learning difficulties for students (Tharinger & Wells, 2000), it is troubling to have such a large percentage of students indicating that their days are spent in such hostile environments. Schools need to invest more into understanding their role in determining whether youth who are same-sex attracted transition from adolescence to early adulthood in positive or negative ways.

Whilst the above passages suggest that a negative experience of school is the norm for young people who are same-sex attracted, a substantial number of responses indicated that many SSAY viewed their school experiences as positive, with many indicating that this was the case when they were open regarding their sexuality at school. Following is a typical response from Zoe, aged 17, who was out and reported liking school:

> By the time year 12 retreat came around, I was out to everybody, no secret at all. We had this activity where everybody had to write a letter to a person saying something good about them and put it in an envelope. The religious education coordinator wrote me a letter addressing my homosexuality, encouraging me to be an individual. Halfway through this year the first person I ever came out to told me that she was homophobic until I outed myself. That struck me, because I realised what I had done to this girl, and probably most of my form… change their opinion.

For Zoe, the support of this teacher – encouraging her individuality – as well as the response of a formerly homophobic student, led to a realisation that whilst others had influenced her experience, she had also influenced theirs – in positive ways.

The way in which respondents framed issues of sexuality and homophobia also impacted heavily on their experience of school as positive, mixed or negative. An example of this framing came from Joe, aged 17, who reported being out and liking school. Joe wrote about experiencing harassment from others within his school. When describing the harassment he had experienced Joe stated that "…instead of being able to put me down when they call me queer or gay – they are just validating a major part of who I am". This

stance was also reflected by other young people writing about their "strong personality" or their lack of concern about "…what others outside [my social] group think". To withstand homophobia and harassment on a regular, ongoing basis certainly would require a strong personality, and these responses indicated the presence of just that. However, this is not to suggest that respondents who were out at school and reporting negative experiences did not also possess 'strong' personalities. Many of those experiencing negative experiences reported great anger and indignation at the way they and others in a similar situation were treated within the school system. For the large numbers of SSAY who were on the receiving end of poor treatment, school became a means to an end, rather than a desirable social experience. They reported keeping to themselves as much as possible, enduring the negative experience until they could leave and move on to another stage of life.

Rebecca, aged 19 was out and liked school. She wrote: "My school life is not impacted at all by my sexuality. It is who I am. I've had no problems with anyone so far and it wouldn't bother me the slightest if someone did have a problem with me." Similarly, Luke, aged 19 was also out and liked school. He wrote about his positive experience of high school, stating:

> Being at school was great. I was very lucky to have a great school with very good teachers. I was surrounded with and surrounded myself with people who didn't have a problem with diverse sexualities. I was just myself and excelled.

In the final quote in this section, Ian, aged 17, who was out at school, wrote about his extremely positive school experience at school, and the way it buffered a difficult home life:

> At my school they have been very open about it and because of that it has been a relief for me. Somewhere I can be myself, open and out without worrying about my parents' homophobic opinions. On issues of sexuality there have been numerous health-ed classes dealing with the nature of GBLT and things related and I have also helped to introduce these classes to younger year levels.

Ian found a haven at school, and was able to pass on some of his knowledge to others at his school. This is likely to have contributed to

his positive school experience, even whilst he was experiencing difficulties in the home environment.

Throughout this section, the experiences of same sex attracted young people who were out, not out and unaware of their sexuality at school were presented. Some reported positive experiences, some negative and some mixed experiences. A range of the qualitative responses were quoted and commented upon. In the following section, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations made, as to how schools and individuals can support same sex attracted young people, and enhance their safety and school experiences.

Conclusion

The results of the current study suggest that SSAY develop many strategies to negotiate their difficult worlds. Whilst often these strategies include hiding or ignoring a fundamental part of their selves – their sexuality – these young peoples' responses to difficulties suggested high level of resilience and coping. Unfortunately, they live in a world where they have to utilise these coping and resilience strategies to combat discrimination that should not be occurring.

The lack of structural, systemic school responses to homophobia were evidenced through individual responses in the current research, with a range of good and bad school experiences being reported by young people. What was striking about these experiences is that on the whole they highlighted the individual's power to make a difference – or not – within their schools, rather than reflecting any structural school approach to equity or safety. Whilst it is inferred in some responses that there are teachers and school counseling staff who are either empathetic or sympathetic to the plight of SSAY, it seems they generally do not have the support of the school system, or feel powerless to make a difference. An example of this was Prue's attempt to run a support group with the student welfare coordinator from her school. Both Prue and the welfare co-ordinator wanted to do something, but "…the logistics of running such a sensitive group without outing the students or placing them at risk with other students was a nightmare". Why was this so? Surely schools have duties of care to not only

recognise diversity, but also to recognise the rights of individual students to choose a way of being.

The reported experiences of same sex attracted young people in this study suggest that a homophobic environment tends to make the school experience a negative one – and this is regardless of whether the young person is out or not, male or female, older or younger. It seems a simple fact that good experiences are mediated by supportive fellow students, supportive teachers, or both. But this is not good enough. What is needed is a systemic response from schools to the issue of homophobic attitudes and behaviours by students, teachers and school systems.

A number of writers have suggested changes to enhance safety and quality of life within schools for same-sex attracted young people (for example: Besner & Spungen, 1995; Butler, 1996; Crowhurst, 1999; Epstein & Johnson, 1994; Friend, 1993, Hillier et al, 1999a). Perhaps there are changes beginning to occur. Open support is one way that schools can act in public ways. An example of open support for students (and teachers) who are same-sex attracted was witnessed by the one of the authors when recently a high school and a primary school were seen participating (and marching) in the 2006 Melbourne Pride March. This type of exposure provides a public message of support and should be welcomed.

Schools must consider issues of sexual diversity in a similar way to gender and age issues. In the same ways that there are specific, successful policies and practices in regards to addressing gender differences and issues, schools must also keep their same-sex attracted students safe from harassment and violence. Rather than ignoring the fact that students are same sex attracted, specific training for teachers and counseling staff could be undertaken to ensure that SSAY have their needs met in ethically viable ways. Only if, and when this occurs, will schools potentially become a comfortable place for SSAY to be open with others, and develop their preferred identity to the fullest potential.

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THE POWER OF WE – TĀTOU, NOT MĀTOU

JUDIE ALISON, JO BELGRAVE & ROBIN DUFF

Abstract

How safe is it to be a queer teacher in a New Zealand school today? Despite school employment and anti-harassment policies which specifically announce, in accordance with the Human Rights Act (1993), that all members of our diverse society are equally welcome, the reality often falls short of this. Schools vary widely, both in their choice of staff, and in their support for employees who may identify as (or are perceived to be) LGBTI. Some schools are pro-active and welcome diversity of all kinds, seeing this as a strength in that it reflects their community and provides role models for students who may be struggling with their own identities. Other schools are less welcoming: non-heterosexual staff employed in these institutions may find that they are disregarded, not supported in times of conflict (whether with other staff, or with students and their families), may be blocked from opportunities for promotion, and even become the target for harassment. This study briefly examines the situation in a small cross-section of New Zealand schools and assesses the degree to which a safe environment for queer teachers is provided. It also includes some suggestions from respondents as to how schools could be made more welcoming places for queer students.

Introduction

There are two words for 'we' in the Māori language. They are differentiated from each other by a linguistic manipulation of notions of the speaker, the listener, the active audience and the passive audience. 'Mātou' is an exclusionary term that refers to the 'we' who hold the balance of power as opposed to those not immediately recognisable as members of the powerful group. Those peripheral to the central balance of power are identified as 'they'. 'Tātou' also means 'we', but it has a broader application that includes everyone. The nearest English translation is probably 'all of us'. This is the aim of the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association Safe Schools Task Force: to ensure that when a member of the school community refers to

'we' they mean 'tātou' – everybody in that community regardless of diversity. Within a tātou system, diversity is embraced. Within a tātou system, all are equal.[3]

The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association Safe Schools Task Force has been working since 1993 to attempt to educate school boards and key personnel on ways in which schools can be made places where teachers of all sexualities are safe and valued. Recent awareness raising initiatives have included the publication in 2001 (revised 2003) of a kit consisting of *Affirming Diversity Of Sexualities In the School Community, Affirming Diversity Of Sexualities In the School Community* and *Making Schools Safe For People Of Every Sexuality (a pamphlet for teachers)*; seminars run in some schools by Safe Schools personnel; and articles in publications such as the *PPTA News*. The Task Force reports back to the PPTA Annual Conference every second year, and ensures that the concerns of LGBTI teachers remain visible within the union. Members of the Task Force supported the establishment of an *Out @ Work* network within the Council of Trade Unions, and attended Kamps in Wellington, New Zealand (2003 and 2005), where they had the opportunity to exchange information and ideas with representatives from other unions. There was also a Task Force presence at the 2002 Gay Games in Sydney, where further opportunities for networking arose, and one of the authors attended the Education International forum in Brazil in 2004, where a declaration on LGBT issues was agreed.

To extend the work of the Task Force and to make it possible for heterosexual colleagues to offer their support, PPTA members were asked at the 2003 Annual Conference to sign up for an

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[3] Since the 1970s there has been a steadily increasing acknowledgement of the diversity of New Zealand's population – both formally, through the legal and education systems, and informally, through whānau (extended family) networks. Many Maori words are in common use alongside their English counterparts, and are often the preferred term when the concept alluded to does not easily match a word's Western European implications.

associated Reference Group. This group would correspond by email, and would be able to offer comment on new initiatives, provide fresh ideas on how to make our schools safer, and seek (or offer) support from other group members. In 2005 PPTA was involved in the organization of the first *Safe Schools For Queers* (SS4Q) conference in Wellington; members of the Task Force attended, together with some of the Reference Group. A new publication (*Safety In Our Schools*) produced by the Out There organisation was launched in February 2005 at the Grand Hall of Parliament, and distributed to all delegates at the PPTA Annual Conference in September 2005.

With this amount of activity, one could expect the situation in New Zealand schools to be greatly improved. Teachers working in queer-positive environments should be able to be out in their schools and thus potentially become role-models for their students, who in turn would benefit from the enhanced environment. But is this really the case? How far along the continuum have we really come? To examine the situation, we chose a representative sample of twenty-six schools (varying by size, geographical location, and type), and asked one person (normally the Guidance Counsellor who might be expected to have an overview of the situation among the staff) to complete a short questionnaire. Although the selection is not sufficient to be statistically significant or reliable, it does provide us with a snapshot of the current situation. Of the original 26 schools approached, five chose not to respond. These five were all private schools. The remaining 21, who did return their questionnaires, were all state schools.[4]

Question one: Queer visibility

Are the queer teachers out in your school?

Schools in rural areas were much more likely to have no out staff. Urban schools varied: in some, teachers were out to everyone; in others, they were out to staff but not to students. The decile rating (socio-economic

status) of the school did not appear to be a factor.

Teachers are out to everyone	5
Teachers out to other staff, not to students	4
Only one teacher is out	2
Teachers are out to some staff	7
Teachers are not out at all	2
Don't know	1

Question two: Support from senior management

Are the members of the senior management team in your school supportive of their queer teachers?

Most of the schools reported that their Senior Management team was either reasonably or very supportive. This is encouraging: it appears from this that some schools have certainly taken up the challenge. The two schools who did not know whether or not there was a supportive environment had also reported that they were not aware of any LGBTI staff at their schools. The schools who reported that their Management Team was not supportive also indicated that there was no in-school training on harassment prevention, and that negative behaviour from students towards staff members or their peers was a common occurrence.

Very supportive	7
Reasonably supportive	10
Not supportive	2
Uncomfortable that they have queer teachers on the staff	0
Don't know	2

Question three: Colleagues' support for sexual diversity

Is the staff in general encouraging and affirming of sexual diversity?

Most reported that fellow staff members were either very or reasonably supportive. Three said they did not know - two of them were the same two who answered Don't Know to Question Two. Four felt, however, that their colleagues were either not supportive or actually uncomfortable in the presence of queer colleagues.

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[4] Please contact the authors if you would like to view the full data tables and questionnaire forms.

Very supportive	4
Reasonably supportive	10
Not supportive	3
Uncomfortable that there are queer staff	1
Don't know	3

Question four: policies and procedures to deal with general sexual harassment

Does your school have policies and procedures to deal with sexual harassment?

It is a legal requirement for schools in New Zealand to have policies and procedures to deal with sexual harassment. Just under half of the schools in the study reported that there were policies and procedures in place and that the staff were familiar with them. It is interesting that in the other eleven schools there is doubt about the extent to which these policies and procedures are familiar to staff, or even if they exist.

The school has policies and procedures and the staff are familiar with them	10
The school has policies and procedures but not all the staff are familiar with them	6
The school may have policies and procedures but I have never seen them	5

Question five: Guidelines to deal with sexual and/or gender based harassment

Do these policies include specific guidelines on dealing with harassment on the basis of sexuality or gender identity?

The responses to Question Five were even less positive than those to Question Four. Only two of the twenty agreed that their schools had well-publicised policies and procedures that included harassment on the basis of sexual or gender identity. At the other end of the continuum, two reported that there were *no* specific guidelines for preventing harassment on these grounds. The remaining seventeen either believed that staff were not familiar with these policies and procedures, or that they might not actually exist.

The school has policies and procedures and the staff are familiar with them	2
The school has policies and procedures but not all the staff are familiar with them	10
The school may have policies and procedures but I have never seen them	7
The school does not have any specific guidelines	2

Question six: Staff training for dealing with sexual harassment

Does your school provide training for staff on dealing with sexual harassment?

Schools varied in the amount of training offered to their staff. Most schools offered at least occasional training, with five schools running a programme at least once each year. However, a further seven schools offer no training at all, one justifying this on the grounds that it is unnecessary.

Annually or more	1
Annually	4
Less than annually	8
Never	6
There is no sexual harassment in this school	1
(No response)	1

Question seven: Type of training provided

What kind of training does this include? Please circle all that apply.

Clearly those seven schools that reported they did not offer sexual harassment prevention training to their staff were unable to answer this question. On the other hand, some schools offer more than one form of training/access to information. It would seem that compulsory staff development and the availability of reading material are the two most common ways in which information is disseminated to the staff. (Some respondents chose more than one option.)

Internal Staff Development (compulsory)	7
Internal Staff Development (optional)	3
Reading Material Available	8
Outside provider	6
Unspecified	1

Question eight: Queer teacher safety

Do members of the queer community feel safe at school?

This question included respondents' perceptions of the attitudes of both staff and students, so both sets of data are included in these figures. It appears that teachers are perceived to be slightly safer than students, although neither group is well represented in the 'safe' categories. Only nine schools are reasonably or completely safe for their queer teachers; for students, only five schools are reasonably safe. What is also of concern is that many of the schools where staff and students feel unsafe are those with policies and procedures in place and a reportedly supportive Senior Management team.

	Staff	Students
Completely	1	0
Reasonably	8	5
Not really	5	5
Sometimes	4	6
They feel really unsafe	-	1
Don't know	-	4

Question nine: Negativity towards queer staff members

Are you aware of any members of the school community who have been negative towards queer staff members? Please circle the frequency for each group.

The responses to this question were intriguing. The question asked the respondents to rate various groups in the school community as to their negativity towards queer staff members. It was expected that students would rank as frequently or occasionally negative. It is disconcerting however that six of the 21 respondents report that Board Of Trustees members have been negative on one or more occasions – more than the senior management (four) or middle management (also four). PPTA's Safe Schools Guidelines were sent to Board of Trustees Chairs in 2001. This finding suggests that they need to be reissued to Boards, but preferably in a context where government agencies have been persuaded to emphasise to Boards their obligations under the New Zealand Human Rights Act and other legislative requirements.

Frequency of Incidents	Frequently	Occasionally	Once	Don't Know	Never
BOT Members	0	5	1	11	4
Senior Management	1	1	2	12	5
Middle Management	0	3	1	11	6
Other Teachers	1	5	5	7	3
Support Staff	2	1	1	12	5
Students	6	10	0	5	0

Question ten: Promotion prospects for queer teachers

Has any staff member missed out on a promotion because of actual or perceived non-heterosexuality?

20 of the 21 respondents reported that, as far as they were aware, nobody had ever missed out on a promotion on these grounds. One school, however, reported that there had been a case of a person being overlooked for promotion because of his/her sexuality. This school was also reported to be unsupportive of queer

staff, with members of the senior management team frequently harassing these teachers and being unwilling to provide opportunities for staff development in harassment prevention.

Question eleven: Support networks for queer teachers

Are you aware of any support networks available for queer staff in your school? Please specify.

Ten of the 21 respondents were either sure that there was no available network for queer staff or did not know of one. The other eleven believed that one or more networks were

available. Two commented that there was something for students but not for queer staff. (Some respondents indicated more than one option.)

PPTA Contacts/Safe Schools Taskforce	3
School counsellor	2
Informal support by colleagues	4
Outside groups	3
Student groups only	2
No support networks	5
Don't know	3

Questions twelve and thirteen: Where to from here?

What would make your school a more welcoming place for queer teachers? Any other comments?

In Questions 12 and 13 respondents were asked what would make their schools a more welcoming place for queer teachers. From their feedback, it is clear that there are key issues that need to be urgently addressed. Several commented that it is important that queer teachers are regarded in the same way as heterosexual teachers: the higher the visibility, the more queer teachers will be seen as 'mainstream'. The opportunity to attend school functions with a partner, the recognition that they are teachers first and queer teachers second, and the freedom to choose to be honest with their students are all vital rights that should be extended to all teachers in all schools.

The support of the management team and the members of the Board of Trustees were seen as pivotal if things are to improve: clear statements of school policy which include specific references towards zero tolerance of any aspect of homophobia or any other forms of prejudice are essential. Support which is top down and seen as part of the school culture goes a long way towards affirming diversity among members of the school community. Libraries can be encouraged to stock queer positive books, both fiction and non-fiction; newsletters can feature items of interest to all of the school community, including information for queer staff, students and extended families along

with other notices and reports. Outside groups using school facilities should be required to respect the school culture by not imposing their own beliefs or attitudes within the grounds.

A crucial element in raising staff awareness is the provision of professional development centred around queer issues and concerns. In many staffrooms heteronormativity is the standard – and often this is not because teachers are necessarily homophobic, it is that they are ignorant of the damage that can be caused by an unthinking remark. Acknowledgement of the power of words and the damage an ill chosen comment can do is fundamental to staff acceptance and subsequent celebration of diversity. Ostensibly innocent (but unprofessional) remarks about teachers' perceived or actual sexuality (to other staff or even to students) are unacceptable in a school context. Queer teachers have the same rights as heterosexual teachers to privacy in their personal life. Even more importantly, perceptions of paedophilia and other aberrant behaviours being linked to queer sexuality are poisonous and need to be challenged.

There are other sources of support for queer teachers – the outside provider, the school guidance counsellor (although not all of these were perceived to be queer-friendly!), the support group, and of course the Post Primary Teachers' Association branch team and queer network. All of these are helpful, but they do not replace the school which is prepared to become proactive in supporting *all* of its teachers. That school can legitimately refer to its teachers as 'Tātou'.

Conclusions

We have come a long way in New Zealand towards making our schools safe for queer teachers, but there is still much work to be done. Furthermore, the interests of queer teachers and students in schools are clearly intertwined. Policies need to address both groups.

Educating the educators is the key: there needs to be ongoing work with other agencies, both government and non-government. The *Out There* queer youth development project is working well for students in some schools, but until queer teachers can stand alongside their

heterosexual colleagues without fear of prejudice or harassment, their queer students will never be really safe. Staff members who are diverse with regards to sexuality and/or gender as well as racially and culturally will reflect the composition of their communities and serve as robust role models for their students.

Author notes

Judie Alison has been a policy advisor at New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association since 2002; she is responsible for professional issues including issues for queer staff and students. Judie was a secondary school teacher for 27 years, and a member of the NZPPTA Executive 1994-2000. She was a founding member of Rainbow Labour, the queer network of New Zealand's Labour Party, and is currently secretary of its national co-ordinating body. Judie is a member of the SS4Q (Safe Schools For Queers) co-ordinating group. jalison@ppta.org.nz

Jo Belgrave is a high school teacher, freelance writer and union activist who lives in New Zealand. Since 1999 she has been one of five members of the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association Safe Schools Task Force, an initiative which is dedicated to making New Zealand schools safer and more inclusive for LGBTI members, whether staff, students, or extended family. Jo is the regional chairperson for PPTA Waikato and also a PPTA delegate to the CTU Local Affiliate Council (Waikato region). raggy@ihug.co.nz

Robin Duff is a teacher who has been involved in queer issues most of his life. He was the co-founder of the Gay Liberation Front in Christchurch (1972), coordinator of the NZ National Gay Rights Coalition (1978-79), and the co-founder of GLEE (Gays and Lesbians in Education) in 1984. Currently he is the assistant HOD English at Burnside High School, the convenor of the PPTA National Safe Schools Task Force, the PPTA National Junior Vice-President, and one of two PPTA executive members for Canterbury. robinduff@clear.net.nz

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SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND THE PLACE OF PSYCHOLOGY: SIDE-LINED, SIDE-TRACKED OR SHOULD THAT BE SIDE-SWIPED?

VIVIENNE CASS

Abstract

Since the early twentieth century, there has been considerable change in the level and quality of psychology's involvement in the area of sexual orientation development and homosexuality. Previously, psychoanalysis drew attention away from the notion of inherited biological factors as being able to account for homosexuality, and placed the focus on psychological factors. Although continuing to adopt a pathological position, it gave psychology a significant voice in the issue of causation of homosexuality. As the influence of psychoanalysis waned, behaviourism took its place, continuing psychology's involvement in the discussion until the 'homophile' movement of the 1960s began a radical campaign of criticism against the psychiatric and psychological 'propaganda' on homosexuality. This campaign was a significant factor in bringing about the changes that led to removal of homosexuality from the DSM in 1974, and to psychology's loss of influence in the area of sexual orientation development. Psychology's place was soon filled with the voices of biologists, and to a lesser extent, sociologists. However, the approach of each of these disciplines takes a superficial approach to understanding human behaviour, ignoring the depth of existing psychological knowledge. Unfortunately, modern psychologists have not found a suitable critical voice to identify the contribution their discipline could make. Some suggestions are made in regard to what a psychological approach would look like if such a voice were to be found. Social constructionist psychology is discussed as a suitable basis upon which to develop such an approach.

Introduction

One of the advantages of having worked in a discipline such as psychology for many years is that one has a chance to watch the changes that can occur over time. One such trend has increasingly occupied my attention, namely the shrinking significance of psychology in the study of sexual orientation, and in particular, the understanding of how sexual orientation may develop.

In the 1970s and 80s I was a young clinical psychologist who was also a lesbian activist, educator of the general public on homosexuality and media face for the gay and lesbian communities of Perth. As such I was directly involved in the movement to improve the lot of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals in the world at large and within my own profession of psychology. I came to this just as the DSM was being attacked by lesbian and gay activists in America for including homosexuality within its classification system of mental illnesses. It was both a frustrating and exciting time for a fledgling psychologist.

While I wasn't in America at the time, I received newspapers such as The Advocate and a lesbian one, the name of which I can't recall, and in them read of the debates between psychoanalysts, Bieber and Socarides (whom we saw as the arch enemies for their psychoanalytically-based opposition to homosexuals), and the new breed of activist psychiatrists who showed enormous bravery in coming out to their conservative colleagues. On the other side of the world, I lived the American battle as if it were my own, for my experiences with the narrow homophobia of psychology and psychiatry were identical and the frustration, despair and rage I felt equally overwhelming.

On several occasions, for example, I had to work with individuals who had been traumatised by extreme homophobic reactions from fellow psychologists. To be fair, my colleagues had mostly been educated on a diet of homophobic psychology manuals which drew upon the DSM's perspective.

At this time, a few books began to appear that suggested alternative approaches to homosexuality. I recall buying books by Dr Hendrik Ruitenbeek titled, '*Homosexuality A Changing Picture*' (1973) and '*The New*

Sexuality (1974), purchased from the Dr Duncan Revolution Bookshop for $7.50 and $4.95 respectively. These books were life-savers to anyone drowning in the negative views of traditional psychology and psychiatry.

By current standards, Ruitenbeek was still conventional, as evidenced by chapter headings such as 'A more positive view of perversions'; 'Overt homosexuals in continued group and individual treatment'; 'My homosexuality and my psychotherapy'; 'The experience of intimacy in group psychotherapy with male homosexuals' (one dare not think too deeply about what exactly went on in those groups); and 'The accursed race', from which I'd like to offer the following quote:

> The experts continue to prove that the homosexual is "sick", "regressed", "immature", "polymorphous perverse", "orally fixated", and forever doomed by his "passive feminine identification". With all this, it is a wonder that the poor fellow can make it to the nearest bar. (Seidenberg, in Ruitenbeek, 1973, p. 159).

There was also Evelyn Hooker's 1957 paper, *The adjustment of the male overt homosexual*. I was fortunate enough to meet Evelyn on several occasions. I last saw her in the mid-eighties, in her apartment in Los Angeles, as I recall aged somewhere in her seventies, smoking, as she always did, like a chimney, the floor around her covered by columns (they could not accurately be called 'piles') of books and articles waiting to be read.

On this occasion we were talking about how she had come to do her famous study which provided the first psychological data to show that gay men could not be identified as any more psychologically disordered than heterosexual men: apparently she was having dinner with some gay male friends who, upset with outlandish and homophobic statements made in the media by several psychiatrists, pleaded with her to do a study to show how wrong these so-called professionals were. Fortunately for us all, their pleas did not fall on deaf ears.

I remember Evelyn chuckling as she described the reactions of those psychologists and psychiatrists who did a blind rating of the study data, having no access to information on the subject's sexual orientation.

So convinced were they, she said, of being able to distinguish gay from straight, that on hearing that no difference was found, they begged her to show them the test results again, just in case they'd missed something. Of course, they had not, and I like to think that some of them were forced to change their views of lesbians and gay men on the strength of this.

The new thinking on homosexuality that was beginning to be evident in the 1970s could also be seen in the publication of Saghir and Robins, titled *Male and Female Homosexuality: A comprehensive investigation* (1973), an early psychological study of lesbians and gay men, which carried sub-headings such as "Sissiness, or the girl-like syndrome", "Peculiarities of physique", and "Who is the husband? Who is the wife?", a book which wavered precariously between the older notion of homosexuality as pathology and the emerging radical thought that it may *not* be pathology after all, settling uneasily in the mid-position of homosexuality *with* pathology.

With its array of tables and statistics on everything from attempted suicide and drug abuse to thoughts about growing old, it was both a blessing and a curse, providing useful information that I could draw upon while appearing as an 'expert witness' in the Family Court, while at the same time reinforcing existing prejudices by its attention to standard psychiatric and psychological 'problem areas'.

Many a time I was confronted in the court room by an opposition lawyer, *selectively* briefed on the findings of Saghir and Robins by fellow psychologists and psychiatrists, usually of psychoanalytic persuasion, who was hell-bent (this applies to both the lawyer and the psychologist) on proving the unfitness of a lesbian mother. Fortunately, with its jumble of statistics, it was not too difficult to choose *another* finding from the Saghir and Robins study to back up my argument. The only problem was that no-one was particularly interested in facts at that stage, since blind prejudice was the order of the day.

Nor was the situation improved by a certain professor of psychiatry whose only reference material was (a) an old psychiatric text dating back to the 1940s and, (b) his house cleaner, a psychologically tortured lesbian mother who

had never recovered from losing complete contact with her four children as a result of her sexual orientation.

I can still hear the judge today,

> Are you telling me, Miss Cass [unfortunately I did not have a PhD in those days to elevate my status anywhere near that of 'professor'] that Professor X, a professor of psychiatry has provided information to this court that is outdated and incorrect?

What was he to do when my answer could only be, "Yes, your honour". His solution to this dilemma was to ignore the professional witnesses. His feedback to the lawyers was that he would make up his own mind on the pathology or otherwise of lesbians, since the professionals clearly could not agree. Needless to say, that mother did *not* retain custody of her children, despite the father being an unemployed alcoholic!

Fortunately the Saghir and Robins study was replaced by others, the most notable from my point of view as a reluctant 'expert witness' being the study by Alan Bell, Martin Weinberg and Sue Hammersmith, titled *Sexual Preference: Its development in men and women* (1981). Amazing to think that 'sexual preference' was the term used back then to refer to homosexuality, when 'orientation is now so embedded in our thinking. The debates amongst academics that accompanied the gradual replacement of preference with orientation were fascinating and intense, as one would expect when such a major conceptual shift is underway.

The areas of investigation in the Bell, Weinberg and Hammersmith study tells us a great deal about the focus of psychologists at that time: mother-son and father-son relationships, peer group relationships, dating experiences, gender conformity, parental attitudes, sibling sex play, birth order, puberty. These were, of course, traditional areas for psychological study, areas that underscored the concerns of mainstream, that is, homophobic, psychology, areas that had to be tackled first in order to lay to rest those prejudiced beliefs that psychology traditionally held about homosexuality.

The contrast between these areas and those I've recently reviewed for the *Journal of*

Homosexuality indicates the shift that has taken place. The papers I've reviewed cover topics such as 'Sexual dysfunction and relationship difficulties among lesbians', 'The effects of narrative therapy on gay men recovering from sexual abuse', 'The attitudes of lesbian mothers towards male role models', – clearly the modern psychology student (whose research topics drive many of these publications) does not feel compelled to prove the 'normality' of the homosexual, as did the early studies.

This trip down memory lane highlights a trend which requires much more consideration than it has been given, that is, the changing and often conflicted place of psychology in the understanding of homosexuality. This trend is, I believe, just as relevant now as it was some years ago.

If I were a young, fresh-out-of-university psychologist looking at where psychology fits *now* into the study of sexual orientation as a whole, let alone homosexuality, I think I would be feeling despairing at my insignificance, my lack of voice, and at the relatively minor role allowed our discipline. Perhaps I am being overly pessimistic, but in scanning the last fifty years, it appears to me that psychology has been relegated to the side-lines of the main game.

By 'main game' I mean the strong and persistent research focus on trying to explain how a homosexual orientation evolves. Let me say that I am not suggesting that this necessarily *should* be the area that takes all our interest, nor that the primary question of the main game researchers (i.e., 'what is the cause of homosexuality') is even an appropriate question. And nor am I discounting the valuable research carried out in the myriad of other areas that have nothing to do with causation.

However, the fact is that the research world as well as the general community (not to mention the gay community) is fascinated with the question of causality, whether we like it or not. Media interest in this area is strong and will always ensure that it gets plenty of air-play and print coverage.

But where is psychology in all this? As I said before, we have been relegated to the side-

lines. Not only are we sitting on the benches, hopefully waiting our turn to play, we've actually become distracted by some B-grade games over on the next field, and are fooling ourselves into thinking that we'll get equally noticed by playing for the B-grade teams as we would playing for the A-grade.

I would like to use the remainder of my paper to elaborate on this point, my central thesis being that we have been effectively side-lined from the study of sexual orientation by the biological 'big-boys'. Being reduced to the level of a B-grade player, we have turned our gaze onto the small detail aspects of homosexuality and sexual orientation and allowed ourselves to be side-tracked away from the main game. Although, I believe, we have our own unique skills necessary to play the main game effectively, and, more importantly, to *improve* the way the main game is played, we have put up little argument for being considered for the A-grade team. Not surprisingly, therefore, our voice carries little weight. More importantly, by not fighting to be included in the A-grade team, we have unwittingly fed into a view of psychology as ineffective.

In effect, there is, at this time, almost no psychological input into the study of what leads individuals to develop persistent sexual-romantic attractions for others, whether these be persistent over a life-time or over a shorter period. Boosted by the force of the Human Genome Project, much of the literature is focused on genetic and other biological factors, despite research findings persistently revealing that biological factors are never enough on their own to explain homosexual orientation, and indeed, that studies proposing that they are, are highly suspect (Stein, 1999).

Whenever I read a research conclusion referring to the possibility of non-biological influences, I eagerly read on, wanting to see that the researcher understands psychology's deep understanding of behaviour and, heaven forbid, might even have read up on the impact culture has on our perceptions and behaviours. Alas, I always reach the last full-stop without detecting any such understanding. So, I then wait, with, I must say, diminishing anticipation, some response from academic psychologists, hoping they will bring the biologists to task on their narrow

view of human behaviour. I want someone to offer a proposal that will encourage researchers to consider the complex ways in which biological, psychological and cultural factors might all play a part in sexual orientation. Sadly, there has been no critical voice from psychology, and indeed it could be said that there has been no voice at all. Only a silence that tells me of the weak and ineffective position psychology now holds.

Yet, our position has not always been so bleak. When Freud proposed, in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, that homosexuality was the result of a combination of inherited factors and environmental influences, he drew attention to the psychological. Although the kernel of this idea had existed previously, Freud's detailed proposal, coupled with the rising strength of psychology as a profession and psychoanalysis as a sub-set of this profession, seemed to strengthen interest in the psychology of homosexuality.

A growing interest in familial relationships and upbringing soon gave psychoanalysts and psychologists plenty to get their professional teeth into, albeit teeth that were largely honed on the notion of homosexuality as pathology. While Freud himself did not perceive homosexuality as pathological, many of his followers did.

As the influence and status of psychoanalysis began to wane in the 1950s and 60s, other schools of psychological thought stepped in to fill the gap. I vividly recall attending lectures in third and fourth year psychology in the late 60s and early 70s where aversive therapy, the behaviourist's replacement of the psychoanalytic couch as preferred method for converting homosexuals into heterosexuals, was described in detail. Just as psychoanalysts had filled their journals with lengthy articles on the pathology of homosexuality, so now, behaviourists began to fill theirs with the behavioural equivalent.

This was psychology's heyday. The study of homosexuality had seemingly been wrested from the biologists and was now claimed as psychological territory.

Of course, few psychologists of today are likely to see this claim as something to be

proud of, since psychology had simply adopted the historical stance of religion, the law and medicine in proclaiming homosexuality as 'faulty' psychological development. But, at least psychology was 'in there', actively involved in the study of homosexuality and assuming it had a 'right' to be there.

But, just as psychology was beginning to puff up it's chest with importance at what it had to say about the causes of homosexuality, other forces were coming into play. The so-called 'homophile' movement, the early gay liberation movement was emerging during the 1960s, and by the late 60s was vigorously attacking the psychiatric and psychological position on homosexuality.

This attack was spearheaded by Frank Kameny, who was president of the gay liberation organisation, Mattachine Society, in Washington. Kameny pushed the (then) radical view that homosexuality was a normal variant of sexual behaviour. He criticised psychiatric and psychological research as being flawed on methodological grounds, identified the assumption of homosexual as pathology as nothing more than a 'theological position', stated that the scientific community had forfeited it's right to speak on homosexuality, having shown itself to be incompetent and compromised by prejudiced value systems, and criticised therapists for upholding society's heterosexual bias in their claim to help homosexuals when the real purpose was to cure them of their homosexuality. Additionally, he criticised the stance taken by the homophile movement, at that time, of aligning itself with the scientific community in order to promote research on homosexuality aimed at showing that gay men and lesbians were not 'sick'. "Those who allege sickness", Kameny stated, "have created *their* need for *their* research. Let *them* do it." (1965, The Ladder, in Bayer, 1981).

Kameny's arguments soon led to increasing verbal and written attacks on psychologists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists over what was perceived to be their illegitimate power in the area of homosexuality. Political protests were also organised in the form of interruptions to conferences where proponents of the pathology model were speaking, and to

strident demands that homosexuals be invited to participate in panel discussions on homosexuality. Leaflets railed against 'psychiatric propaganda'. Psychology and medical courses that used unfavourable reference material were picketed until they adopted gay-affirmative material. Therapists who advocated homosexuality as sickness were boycotted.

The position taken by the gay liberation movement was that traditional psychiatry and psychology were no longer relevant in the way they depicted the homosexual. The intention was not, however, to simply side-line psychology and psychiatry from the discussion; rather it was to dismiss them totally from the job of trying to understand homosexuality. Traditional psychiatry and psychology were being told to butt out, to take their Rorschach and aversion bats and go play in someone else's backyard.

In 1970, first in San Francisco at an American Psychiatric conference, and then in Los Angeles, at the second annual Behaviour Modification Conference, homosexuals disrupted the showing of a film depicting aversive conditioning techniques (aimed at eliminating homosexual attractions) with cries of 'barbarism' and 'medieval torture'. Philip Feldman (the aversion therapist in the film) attempted to justify his work by arguing that he was simply responding to the needs of those who wanted to achieve a heterosexual 'adjustment'. He was shouted down. At the Los Angeles conference a demonstrator announced to a startled audience,

> We are going to reconstitute this session into small groups with equal numbers of Gay Liberation Front members and members of your profession and we are going to talk as you have probably never talked with homosexuals before, as equals. We're going to talk about such things as homosexuality as an alternative life style. (In Bayer, 1981)

An account of these events was later recorded in The Advocate under the heading, 'Psychologists get gay lib therapy'!

Gradually the confrontation of psychiatric and psychological influence by the gay liberationists began to hit home, in some quarters at least. Individual psychiatrists and psychologists began to hear the message and

to rethink their views on the pathology model of homosexuality. Clearly, the militant actions I've described had been the opening salvo in what was to be a three-year battle that would eventually see psychiatry change it's classification of homosexuality as a disorder, as indeed it did in 1973/1974.

A similar change was occurring in psychology, leading to a shift in research attention away from causation and onto areas related to the way gay men and lesbians dealt with their sexual orientation. Homophobia, identity, parenting, stigma management, isolation, gay-affirmative therapy and so on were the new areas for research interest, replacing concerns with early childhood experiences, family dynamics and childhood gender roles. Actually, the reality was that these new areas for research interest were largely being examined among the growing numbers of openly lesbian and gay psychologists. Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that mainstream psychology suddenly saw the error of its ways and decided to place 'understanding the modern homosexual' on its list of 'must-do' research.

As one of those openly lesbian psychologists, I vividly recall this period as one of transition, of conflicting views and reactions. For example, despite positive support from other young clinical psychologists, I spent two years at one university in Western Australia in the late 70s trying to get a PhD proposal on gay and lesbian identity formation accepted (amid comments such as "it's pretentious for the student to think she can develop a model"), until my supervisor suggested I try another university that had just been established. However, despite being welcomed into this new university, when it came time to submit my thesis, my supervisor carefully selected, as thesis markers, three individuals whose relevance to my thesis appeared to almost non-existent, an attempt to protect his and the university's reputation. And the academic career I had looked forward to: well, as a feminist therapist, teaching in sexual therapy and with a PhD on homosexuality, I was clearly whistling in the wind with that one.

The new research areas that began to take the place of pathology research in psychological journals proved to be both a blessing and a curse. While psychology researchers turned their attention to the newer issues such as identity and discrimination, providing some valuable insights into the way the modern gay man and lesbian lived their lives, researchers from the biological sciences began to reassert themselves in the study of causation issues. This was often done in dramatic ways, with claims of gay genes and the like dominating media and community attention.

Often the researchers had come from an entirely different background, lured, I would suggest, by research money and fame. I recall a meeting in 1995 with one researcher, now well-known, who, having received considerable research funding in a way he hadn't been able to before turning to the study of homosexuality, appeared to revel in the sensationalist media attention he received following publication of his results. I might add, he also proudly told me he'd read *a* book on psychology in the course of doing his research. I cannot tell you how despairing I felt, knowing how his ignorance of psychology, and hence, human behaviour, was being fed into his blinkered view of sexual orientation and, hence, his research.

With the biological taking centre-stage, old psychological theories of sexual orientation quickly became unpopular. In no time, psychology had not only been side-lined from the action, but was also attacked for fuelling the arguments of right wing groups who latched onto the non-biological accounts to push their position that individuals 'choose' homosexuality. In the wake of dramatic accounts of 'gay genes', 'gay fingerprints' and 'lesbian ears', psychology was essentially discredited .

The question is, how did this happen? How did *we* let it happen? Where were our protests at this development? Aside from Daryl Bem's theory of sexual orientation development (1996), known, unfortunately, as 'the exotic becomes erotic' theory, which was soon criticised for its poor understanding of female sexuality, there has been almost nothing of note.

How could this be, considering that, we, of all people, understand the complexities of human behaviour; we, of all disciplines know that human behaviour, especially behaviour as

richly faceted as sexual orientation, cannot be explained in simple, single-causation and reductionist terms. Was it intimidation in the face of the arrogance of biology? Was it an inability on our part to make the transition from pathological notions of causation to something more positive? Or was it that we simply did not have the theoretical direction for taking up the task? I would suggest that an element of all three has been present.

In marked contrast to psychology, sociologists seemed to readily throw off the mantle of 'sexual deviance' that characterised their discipline's approach to sexual orientation, stridently countering the biological 'take-over' with the voice of constructionism. Emphasising cultural and anthropological data, sociology proposed that sexual orientations are socially constructed entities and that sexual orientation behaviours are shaped by culture, rather than being natural and universal. For many, this theoretical perspective provided a compelling and empowering argument against biological determinism. In no time, it seemed to fill the gap left by psychology.

But, while the sociologists were expressing their frustration with the narrow biological approach, imagine what we psychologists were feeling. For now we were faced with the unenviable position of being *spectators*, much like an audience watching a tennis match, as sociologists and biologists hit their opposing viewpoints backwards and forwards in the so-called constructionist versus essentialist debate of the 1990s. The Essentialists believed that everyone, regardless of culture, has a sexual orientation that is an inner quality possessed by individuals. Sexual orientations are considered natural *things* and the terms homosexual, heterosexual and bisexual simply describe these realities. The Constructionists, on the other hand, believed that sexual orientation categories have been created from the cultural environment and people behave in accordance with these types.

A couple of sharp-witted theorists referred to both these approaches as the 'fax' model of human behaviour (D'Andrade, 1992; Strauss, 1992), where one supposedly became a lesbian, heterosexual or whatever simply because either the culture taught this or biology directed it.

Throughout the 1990s, we psychologists watched the debate as the opponents, sociocultural determinism and biological determinism batted their balls backwards and forwards. But the problem for me was that both positions made me extremely uncomfortable.

Whichever way I looked at it, psychology was still being side-lined. Little attempt was made by either side of the debate to address psychological aspects of behaviour. The way sexual orientation was taken into the private functioning of the individual, into people's thoughts, actions, feelings, sexual arousal patterns and social interactions, was ignored. It seemed to me that even a biological or cultural predisposition could not account for the development of patterns of sexual-romantic attractions without drawing upon the areas of cognition, needs, emotion, motivations, social influence and so on. It was as if the weight of theory and research that was the foundation of *my* discipline did not exist.

And as a feminist and sexuality specialist, I was equally uneasy with the focus on what I saw as an essentially male view of sexuality. Without the female or lesbian voice in the discussion, notions of fixed and unwavering sexual desires seemed to rule the research agenda. While some of my clients experienced their sexual orientation in this way, others clearly did not.

I began to wonders what a psychological perspective of the development of sexual orientation would look like. Clearly, it could not rest upon an assumption of pathology. And, heterosexuality, similarly, should not be the starting point against which other patterns of sexual-romantic attractions would be judged. Nevertheless, throughout history and cultures, attractions for the opposite sex predominate, and this fact must be acknowledged and explained.

I knew I would also feel more comfortable if a psychological position focused its gaze, not on labels, but on the behaviour which is considered at the core of sexual orientations, that is, the attractions, desires and emotional connections experienced by individuals towards each other. However, the sexual orientation labels we use so readily, and the

identities that arise from these, cannot be ignored either, since they are a significant part of our psychological reality.

And we need to stop feeling defensive, as many of us seem to be, about possible biological and cultural influences on the development of sexual-romantic attractions. Surely we can find a theoretical model that will accommodate these possibilities while at the same time giving weight to psychological influences. In doing this, we need to try and explain, not only persistent patterns of sexual-romantic attractions that occur over a lifetime, but also intermittent and varying patterns that may occur.

I feel the literature on *social constructionist psychology* is the most suitable starting point (e.g., Bond 1988; D'Andrade & Strauss 1992; Gergen, 1977; 1984; 1985; Sampson 1977; Semin & Gergen 1990; Shotter 1989; 1991; Shweder & LeVine 1992; Shweder & Sullivan 1993). While this does not give me the specific model for understanding sexual-romantic attractions, it certainly provides a significant foundation upon which I can build my own ideas.

Social constructionist psychology, as a theoretical approach, does not ask me to decide between constructionist and essentialist ideas. The essentialist beliefs and experiences of many of my clients who felt strongly that their homosexual orientation was a natural part of themselves, can be acknowledged, as can the notion that culture plays a big part in the way we conceptualise sexuality. Most importantly, it gives psychology a place in the development of behaviour.

While there is no space in this paper to give you a detailed outline of this theoretical perspective (though see Cass, 1996; 2005), I would like to briefly summarise some areas where it offers psychology the chance to play a relevant part in the study of sexual orientation.

Firstly, social constructionist psychology proposes that human sexual behaviour, including sexual orientation behaviour, is the product of a complex process engaged in between individuals (including their biological and psychological capacities and experiences)

and their sociocultural environments (including their indigenous psychologies) (Gergen, 1985).

These three variables – biological capacities and experiences, psychological capacities and experiences, and sociocultural environment – are seen to interact with each other in a reciprocal way. By this I mean individuals and their environments simultaneously influence and are influenced by the other (Berger & Luckmann, 1975) in a seamless relationship.

In this sense, persistent sexual-romantic attractions are considered an outcome of these reciprocal interactional processes. Several people have used the analogy of baking a cake to depict what I've outlined so far – that is, several different ingredients are mixed together, and a process of cooking blends these into a new entity, the cake, in this case, the sexual orientation. However, the cake analogy is too simplistic to be applied to any behaviour as complex as sexual behaviour, especially when we recognise that each of the 'ingredients' in the reciprocal interaction process has several levels of complexity, any of which can become engaged in the interaction process.

Nevertheless, the model is significant because it treats all elements of the interaction process equally, and hence offers psychologists the chance to contribute to our understanding of sexual orientation. There is no longer a place for one discipline taking the high ground about its ability to explain homosexuality or any other expression of sexual-romantic attractions.

Now the question is not whether sexual orientation can be explained by biological *or* cultural *or* psychological factors, but rather, to what degree, and in what way, each of these plays a part in the process of reciprocal interaction to produce sexual-romantic attractions. With little effort, we can imagine countless different combinations of the three variables which could work to produce either quite different sexual orientation behaviours or apparently similar ones.

Another aspect of the social constructionist psychology approach which will appeal to psychologists is its focus on the idea that human beings *actively and intentionally*

participate in the construction of their psychological, and hence sexual, realities. Human beings, as we know very well, are not passive creatures who simply react to their environment or submit to their biology. Rather, they have the capacity to monitor, attend to, select, organise, ignore, or in some way act upon their environmental and biological givens (Gergen & Semin, 1990; Shweder, 1992), and do so quite readily at all times. In fact, both individuals and environments can be said to have intentionality; they can act with purpose towards each other. How this can happen in the area of sexual-romantic attractions should be fertile ground for psychology researchers.

A key concept for social constructionist psychology is the indigenous psychology that serves as a foundation stone of each sociocultural environment. As I mentioned earlier, it is one element of the environment factor which feeds into the reciprocal interaction process.

An indigenous psychology can be described as a network or body of psychological knowledge that exists within each sociocultural world (Heelas & Lock, 1981; Smith & Bond, 1993). It includes all the information that each sociocultural environment takes to be the truth about human 'nature' or psychology, and covers everything from psychological concepts and processes to the reasons why people act the way they do and the problems they will experience. In other words, the indigenous psychology defines the psychological reality for those living within each culture.

The concept of sexual orientation is part of our own Western indigenous psychology, leading us to assume without question the existence of something called 'sexual orientation'. In our minds, we just 'know' what it is, the behaviours which define it, how it develops, and what people with specific orientations will do, think and feel. Without realising it, we're 'set' to see sexual orientation in our world.

Here is another possibility for psychological theorising and research. The question that comes to mind is: how do individuals acquire, manage, influence and become influenced by the knowledge of their indigenous psychology? I've touched on this in a previous publication

(Cass, 1996) in regard to the acquisition of identity, suggesting that my theory of gay and lesbian identity formation is an attempt to document the constructed nature of identity, specifically how people translate our indigenous, everyday understanding of lesbian and gay identity and identity acquisition into self-knowledge, behaviours, beliefs and experiences via the reciprocal interaction process.

However, for some years now I've also been keen to try and account for the development of persistent patterns of sexual-romantic attractions (that is, so-called sexual orientations) by exploring what happens in the reciprocal interactional process. I am firmly of the belief that psychological theory and research knowledge has something important to offer in our understanding of this process. In fact, I would go so far to say that without psychology's input here, drawing on areas as diverse as language acquisition, cognitive schemas and interpersonal interactions, we can never fully understand the development of sexual-romantic attractions.

In saying this, I am not trying to simply make us more relevant by staking out psychology's 'territory'. Yes, we have been side-lined and our discipline's integrity has been questioned. And, yes, we have been decidedly unassertive in the situation, and need to take a stronger stance about the part psychology can play in understanding sexual orientation development.

But, I don't want us striving to become relevant simply to promote 'egos' or provide interesting PhD topics. My point is that psychology actually has a rich knowledge base that needs to be employed if we are to fully understand sexual orientation.

However, the initiative must be taken by ourselves to get back into the main game, an initiative that should include attempts to theorise the part psychology might play in the processes of sexual orientation development. This won't be easy. Because of psychology's past history in this area, we cannot piggyback on early thinking. Instead we must start from scratch. How refreshing! A clean slate upon which to place new ideas. A chance to think outside the existing square. An opportunity to reverse the superficiality of existing

perspectives on human sexual behaviour. Surely we can do that. Indeed, we must do it if we truly believe that psychology has something important to say.

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BOOK REVIEW

REVIEWED BY LYNNE HILLIER

Kathleen A. Dolan (2005). Lesbian women and sexual health: The social construction of risk and susceptibility. New York: The Haworth Press. 122pp. (pbk) ISBN 0-7890-2479-9

Notwithstanding a number of pamphlets and one or two books in the last decade which provide accurate guides to lesbian safe sex and sexual health, books about lesbian sexual health are rare. This book *Lesbian women and sexual health: the social construction of risk and susceptibility* by Kathleen Dolan joins a small select group. It is a very important and timely book because it challenges what have been deep-seated assumptions about lesbian sexual risk in the wider community and to some degree in the health professions. In particular, its importance rests on the challenges it presents to beliefs about lesbian invulnerability to sexually transmissible diseases (STIs). The invulnerability assumption is supported by two misconceptions. The first is that women who call themselves lesbians do not have sex with men and are therefore not at risk of contracting STIs. The second belief is that that it is not possible for STIs to be passed from one woman to another during sex. The combination of these two beliefs has meant that the health community in general, and many lesbians in particular, believe that they need not concern themselves with safe sex practices. This book challenges these beliefs.

The author used triangulated methodologies, including surveys, focus groups and interviews, to document the sexual lives of 162 non-heterosexual women from a south eastern city in the United States of America, including how they understood sexuality and risk in their lives. In the introduction, Dolan describes a number of tasks she sets out to achieve in the book including: a better understanding of lesbian health; understanding risk and protection regarding lesbian health and identifying possible barriers to lesbian health care. The methodology of the project and profile of the participants are also described here. In chapter two, research on STI incidence in lesbian populations is presented as well as a description of the

theoretical framework to be used – a combination of symbolic interaction and social constructionism. Chapter three explores the relationships between non-heterosexual women's sexual identity and sexual behaviour and includes the women's voices. Chapter four presents women's perceptions of risk for STIs and perceived barriers to protection while Chapter five describes their risk and protective behaviours. Chapter six discusses the findings. The book is specifically about lesbian sexuality and risks of STIs. It does not deal in general with sexual health and there is no inclusion of reproductive health.

In this book we learn that lesbian sexuality is complex terrain and a woman's lesbian identity does not necessarily predict her sexual behaviour. This is in line with recent research with same sex attracted young women in Australia and the US that sexual attraction, identity and behaviour can bear little resemblance to each other. In fact choice of identity can be based on reasoning that does not directly take into account sexual attraction and sexual behaviour. This research tells us a similar story about lesbian adults. Non-heterosexual women are likely to choose their sexual identity for many different reasons, many of which have little to do with the gender of their sexual partners. Some who only have sex with women may choose the term bisexual because their parents and the heterosexual community will deal with it better. Others choose the term lesbian because of political reasons or because it suits their friends better. As well, some choose to call themselves lesbian because they are exclusively attracted to, and only have sex with, women. What is important is that a sexual identity is not necessarily a good indicator of sexual behaviour and sexual risk. The idea that lesbians don't need Pap Tests came out of the belief that lesbians never have and never will have sex with men. In response to this, low rates of pap testing among lesbians in Australia several years ago led to a campaign with the motto *Lesbians need Pap Tests too*.

The second belief that the book challenges is about woman to woman immunity from STIs. Dolan rightly points out, backed by some of the women's experiences that in fact it is possible to contract a number of STIs through having woman to woman sex though less probable than heterosexual or male to male sex. Herpes is one example. Given the focus of the project, it is surprising that we did not find out how many of the women had an STI at the time of the study.

Though I feel the challenges the book presents are important, I also feel ambivalent about its message which is less about lesbian sexual health than the risks to lesbian sexual health. There is also the sense in which the risk is over-stated because this is not a representative sample of lesbians. As Tamsin Wilton rightly points out in the Foreword, 88% of the sample had been tested for HIV. These women must believe that they are at risk if they are having the test.

Nevertheless the book is valuable first because it challenges existing beliefs and raises important questions in an accessible way and second because there are so few books on the topic. I hope it extends conversation spaces and encourages new ways of thinking about lesbian sexual health.

Author note

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BOOK REVIEW

REVIEWED BY GEORGIA OVENDEN

Out in the antipodes: Australian and New Zealand perspectives on gay and lesbian issues in psychology. Edited by Damien W. Riggs and Gordon Walker. Perth: Brightfire Press, 2004, 447 pp., IBSN: 0-9750777

Addressing the dearth of literature concerning lesbian and gay issues in mainstream psychology, this extensive collection of readings critically examines the ways in which heteronormative constructions inform clinical practice and individual experiences of sexual identity in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

In their introduction the editors are careful to elaborate on the double meanings evident in the book's title; 'antipodes' is defined as both a 'country on the other side of the globe' and 'anything opposite or contrary'. The deconstruction of the title is used to reveal both the cultural context in which the perspectives are drawn, and its 'contrary' theoretical position in challenging those 'disordered' understandings of gay and lesbian identifications in psychology's 'old paradigm'.

The scope of the book's chapters - which include reflexive pieces from clinicians 'on the couch' to participant's responses and stories of 'coming out' - enables readers to engage in perspectives both 'within and without' the bounds of psychology as a discipline. Although the editors appeal to wider political aims concerning the marginalisation and oppression of gay, lesbian and bisexual populations, the primary aim of the book is to encourage the development of a 'new paradigm' that reflects the diversity of lesbian and gay identities and prompts the further discussion of these issues in this region.

The chapter by Rogers and Booth maps out the central liberations, and the less celebrated 'diagnoses' of homosexuality, which have shaped the gay and lesbian identity in psychology. Interestingly, while the authors recognise the success of the queer movement in rallying for a more visible *expression* of sexual difference, they argue that a "deeply felt sense of identity" as homosexual men is often

best explained by biological origin (p. 32). Not surprisingly, their review of the latest 'evidence' concerning the genetic difference of the homosexual (man) and the potential misuse of this 'new biology,' only leads readers back to the dangers in seeking a biological 'origin' to explain sexual difference. Even still, while the authors remain cautious about the difficulties in speaking about gay and lesbian identity outside a socially constructed context, their appeal to a biologically determined identity might have been better supported by a more extensive discussion of the debates in this area.

Moving from the genealogy of lesbian and gay psychology, the first section points to some of the contemporary 'psy-discourses' that have structured mainstream psychological thought. Semp draws on interviews to demonstrate how some clinicians view the risks of disclosing their sexuality inside the therapeutic context, and the issues surrounding increasing 'queer visibility' during private therapy. Taking up a somewhat different position, Kane recollects his experience of self-disclosure and the positive results gained from following the APA and APS guidelines for working with lesbian and gay clients. Kane's thoughtful account of the sessions preceding his client's 'coming out,' and the caution taken in regard to his own disclosure, highlight some of the challenges faced by clinicians when weighing up the potential risks and benefits of self-disclosure.

Section two looks more closely at gay and lesbian challenges to the (nuclear) family structure. Higgins's chapter explores some of the dilemmas faced by men who have lived, or are currently living, in-between heterosexual and gay relationships. While Higgins underlines his role as a 'translator' of the participant's narratives and experiences, he does point to some of the potential dangers (in regard to safe sex practices) which may arise from men who chose to 'liv[e] with contradiction'. However, this chapter, which is interspersed with extracts from Higgins's own personal experience of marriage/ denial/coming out, succeeds in presenting a more intimate account of the some of the reservations and contemplations faced by men currently living

in-and-out of gay-and-straight identities. Drawing on interviews as well as his own experience as a gay donor to six children, van Reyk's chapter takes a more political stance on the current discriminations affecting gay male donor fathers. Defending criticisms that his donor role is "hardly the stuff of real fatherhood", van Reyk underlines the importance of gay men's involvement (and lesbians too, though not in the same ways) in reconstructing notions of 'the family' in Australia (p. 148).

In the following section, the authors examine the ways in which presupposed notions of 'risk' and 'deviancy' in health psychology have operated, albeit in different ways, to limit gay men and lesbians access to the (heterosexual) 'healthy body'. Engaging readers in a critical analysis of policy documents on gay men's health in New Zealand, Adam's, Braun and McCreanor underline the dangers in colligating gay men's health in terms of 'risk' and their health issues as exclusively HIV/AIDS related. Boldero's chapter on gay Asian-Australian men draws attention to the positive relationship between homosexual identification and safe sex practices as well as the problems faced by many Asian, gay men who have attempted to gain significance in both of these communities.'

The final two sections engage more closely in issues surrounding identity by addressing the ways sexual orientation is invariably constructed, 'staged' and *realised* in response to heteronormative understandings of sexuality and gender. Drawing on some intriguing interviews with lesbian women, MacBride-Stewart attempts to uncover why it is that many of her participant's had 'never heard' of dental dams. In her belief, the lack of awareness and access of the dental dam in lesbian communities draws attention to the monopoly of hetero-safe-sex in the public health discourses.

Following Cass's revised articulation of a stage model of homosexual-identity acceptance,

Jensen's chapter points to the potential benefits of using narrative to explore the more fluid and reflexive aspects of gay and lesbian identity formation. Following from this, Harwood and Rasmussen call on queer theory and Butler's notion of performativity to problematise essentialist notions of gender and sex that are often reified in clinical practice.

In the final chapter, Riggs and Riggs reflect on an 'everyday conversation' to demonstrate how gay and lesbian identities are caught up in the heterosexual matrix, and the binaries of 'us and them'. After some discussion on the politics surrounding gay and lesbian identity, they suggest that the 'doing of typically heterosexual things' (such as parenting) by queer people may work to challenge or subvert essentialist assumptions that surround what it means to be heterosexual or queer (p. 427).

Working through the broad terrain of both clinical and research-driven perspectives in psychology, this book opens a space for a more integrative and multidimensional conceptualisation of lesbian and gay sexualities. Locating themselves within their work as lesbian, gay and heterosexual clinicians and academics, the contributors rigorously address the ways in which psychological discourse may both interact and engage with wider cultural understandings of lesbian and gay sexual identities.

While this book achieves a great deal in questioning the *real* impact of normative understandings of sexuality on a broader social level, it also underlines the importance of fostering the new and emerging voice of lesbian and gay psychology in this region.

Author note

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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Special Issue of *Gay & Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*

GLBTI Ageing

Edited by Jo Harrison and Damien Riggs

This special issue of the Review, to be published in August 2006, will focus on issues of GLBTI ageing. Some topic areas that may be appropriate for the issue include:

*What does ageing mean to GLBTI people from different age cohorts?
*Are there particular concerns which impact on GLBTI people in relation to ageing, in addition to those which impact on heterosexual people?
*How has psychology addressed GLBTI ageing to date? Is there potential for psychology to address relevant concerns – in clinical practice, in research, in other arenas?
*How can/do theories of ageing and GLBTI/queer experience inform ageing research and action?
*How do homophobia/transphobia and discrimination impact on GLBTI experiences of ageing?
*In what way does ageism impact on GLBTI older people?
*What are the experiences and needs of those providing informal care for older GLBTI people?
*What are the attitudes, experiences and concerns of those providing clinical or other direct services to GLBTI older people?
*How do matters of invisibility and life histories impact on the GLBTI ageing experience?
*How have activists responded to GLBTI ageing concerns in Australia and/or overseas?
*Are there useful models for the provision of clinical interventions, community services, advocacy, education, policy and law reform around GLBTI ageing?
*How do GLBTI support networks and community organizations address ageing issues?

The special issue editors invite research and theoretical articles (maximum 3000 words) and short commentaries and 'opinion pieces' (maximum 1500 words) which address these questions. In particular, papers are called for that draw out the strengths and weaknesses of psychology in relation to GLBTI individuals and ageing. Contributors are encouraged to introduce personal, political and professional narratives into their submissions where appropriate. All article submissions will be peer-reviewed.

The deadline for submissions is 15th May 2006. Please contact the journal Editor if this deadline needs to be negotiated. Informal enquiries and submissions should be sent to (preferably via email):

Damien Riggs
School of Psychology
The University of Adelaide
South Australia
5005
damien.riggs@adelaide.edu.au

Call for Papers

Research methods and theoretical approaches in lesbian and gay psychology

This issue of the Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review will focus specifically on issues of research method and theory within the field of lesbian and gay psychology. The field continues to draw upon a broad range of approaches to research, and continues to be at the cutting edge of theory within the discipline of psychology. At the same time, however, the field of lesbian and gay psychology requires its practitioners to develop new and innovative ways of researching the lives of same-sex attracted people.

Contributions may focus on (but are not limited to):

* Methods for accessing hard to reach communities

* Methodological and ethical issues in working with same-sex attracted people

* Theoretical models or approaches for valuing the experiences of same-sex attracted people

* Critiques or challenges to established theories and research methods within lesbian and gay psychology

* Case/field notes on current research and the methodological issues it presents

* Overviews of lesbian and gay psychological research methods and theories

* Methods/theories for exploring intersecting identities

* Experiential approaches to theorising and researching

* Applications of methods and theories to practice and public policy settings

Submissions may be sent to the Editor, Damien Riggs, at damien.riggs@adelaide.edu.au

Submission deadline, October 1st, 2006

Issue to be published in December 2006

The Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review is a peer-reviewed publication and as such is eligible for DEST points.

Call for Papers

Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association Journal

Special issue: 'Queer Race'

Edited by Damien W. Riggs

Taking its leave from a book of the same name by Ian Barnard (2003), this special issue of the ACRAWSA Journal focuses on issues of race, racism and race privilege in relation to the lives of queer people living in 'postcolonising' (Moreton-Robinson, 2003) nations such as Australia. Whilst considerable media, academic and activist attention continues to be paid to the rights claims of people variously identified as queer, little attendant attention has been paid to the intersections of queer identities with other concurrent identities in relation to race, ethnicity, religion, gender and class. This special issue thus invites contributions that explore the *simultaneous* ways in which queer people are racialised, classed etc. Moreover, it seeks to explore what it means to identify in these ways within the context of Australia, a nation currently configured through particular investments in white hegemony.

Contributions may focus on (but are not limited to):

* The privileges held by particular groups of queer people

* The implications of employing particular forms of rhetoric when pushing for rights

* The intersecting/multiple ways in which queer identities are experienced

* Theoretical/experiential accounts of 'queer race'

* International comparisons of queer identities

* Historical analyses of the cultural locations of queer identities

* Papers deconstructing notions of 'queer race'

* Queer race and media technologies

Submission deadlines:

Initial submissions: July 15th

Reviews back to authors: August 30th

Finalised papers due: October 15th

Publication date: November 15th 2006

The ACRAWSA Journal is a peer-reviewed publication and as such is eligible for DEST points. www.journal.acrawsa.org.au

All inquiries/proposals/papers should be sent to damien.riggs@adelaide.edu.au

Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review

Preparation, submission and publication guidelines

Types of articles that we typically consider:

A)
• Empirical articles (2500 word max)
• Theoretical pieces
• Commentary on LGBTI issues and psychology

• Research in brief: Reviews of a favourite or troublesome article/book chapter that you have read and would like to comment on

B)
• Conference reports/conference abstracts
• Practitioner's reports/field notes
• Political/media style reports of relevant issues

• Book reviews (please contact the Editor for a list of books available & review guidelines)
• Promotional material for LGBT relevant issues

The Review also welcomes proposals for special issues and guest Editors.

Each submission in section A should be prepared for blind peer-review if the author wishes. If not, submissions will still be reviewed, but the identity of the author may be known to the reviewer. Submissions for blind review should contain a title page that has all of the author(s) information, along with the title of the submission, a short author note (50 words or less), a word count and up to 5 key words. The remainder of the submission should not identify the author in any way, and should start on a new page with the submission title followed by an abstract and then the body of the text. Authors who do not require blind review should submit papers as per the above instructions, the difference being that the body text may start directly after the key words.

Each submission in section B should contain the author(s) information, title of submission (if relevant), a short author note (50 words or less) and a word count, but need not be prepared for blind review.

All submissions must adhere to the rules set out in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (fifth edition), and contributors are encouraged to contact the Editor should they have any concerns with this format as it relates to their submission. Spelling should be Australian (e.g., 'ise') rather than American ('ize'), and submissions should be accompanied with a letter stating any conflicts of interest in regards to publication or competing interests. Footnotes should be kept to a minimum. References should be listed alphabetically by author at the end of the paper. For example:

Journal Articles: Riggs, D.W. (2004). The politics of scientific knowledge: Constructions of sexuality and ethics in the conversion therapy literature. *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, 5, 16-24.
Books: Kitzinger, C. (1987). *The social construction of lesbianism.* London: Sage.
Edited Books: Coyle, A. & Kitzinger, C. (Eds.) (2002). *Lesbian & gay psychology: New perspectives*. Oxford: BPS Blackwell.
Book Chapters: MacBride-Stewart, S. (2004). Dental dams: A parody of straight expectations in the promotion of 'safer' lesbian sex. In D.W. Riggs & G.A. Walker (Eds.), *Out in the antipodes: Australian and New Zealand perspectives on gay and lesbian issue in psychology* (pp.393-416). Perth: Brightfire Press.

References within the text should be listed in alphabetical order separated by a semi-colon, page numbers following year. For example:

(Clarke, 2001; Peel, 2001; Riggs & Walker, 2004)
(Clarke, 2002a; b)
(MacBride-Stewart, 2004, p. 398)

Authors should avoid the use of *sexist, racist* and *heterosexist language.* Authors should follow the guidelines for the use of non-sexist language provided by the American Psychological Society.

Papers should be submitted in Word format: title bold 12 points, author bold 11 points (with footnote including affiliation/address), abstract 10 points left aligned, article text 10 points left aligned. All other identifying information on title page for section A articles should be 10 points and left aligned.

All submissions should be sent to the Editor, either via email (preferred): damien.riggs@adelaide.edu.au, or via post: School of Psychology, The University of Adelaide, South Australia, 5005.

Deadlines

January 30 for April edition   May 30 for August edition   September 30 for December edition