

GLIP News

Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology
An Interest Group of the Australian Psychological Society

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Editor's note	1
Call for Symposium Papers	1
Convener's Report	2
Book review by Graeme Kane	3
Book Review by Damien Riggs	3
Book Review by Gordon Walker	5

GLIP's National Breakfasts!

1. Attention Queensland Members

For details of the next Brisbane Breakfast, Contact Lynette on 07-3254 0304, 0403 369 242 or joostetherapy@bigpond.com

2. Attention Melbourne Members

Put this in your diary
Sunday 14th September 2003
10am BREAKFAST
VENUE: TBA
Contact Ela on elaexplore@today.com.au or 0419 155 707
Please bring pamphlets/flyers and business cards for show and tell :)

Editor's Note

Welcome to the second edition of GLIP News for 2003. It's been an incredibly busy 4 months with reviews of the GLIP Award, the Terms of Reference, the Tip Sheet, and planning for two conferences. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Damien, Vivienne, Daryl, Heather, Harriet, Julie, Robert and Vikki for all their hard work and helpful contributions.

Gordon's report on page two provides a summary of the work that we and other members been involved in over the past 4 months. This edition also includes three book reviews and a call for symposium papers.

I'm taking a well earned holiday overseas in August and will be catching up with members of the American Psychological Association's Division 44 and hopefully exploring possible collaborations.

Graeme Kane
National Secretary & Editor



Call for Symposium Papers

The Australian Psychological Society's Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Interest Group is planning a one-day conference/workshop on Saturday October 25th this year, at the Gryphon Gallery, Melbourne University.

The conference is called "Changing their minds: Celebrating our diversity" and marks the 30th anniversary of the removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders, commonly known as the DSM. Dr Vivienne Cass, a Western Australian psychologist who has had a strong profile in research and the media for many years, will be one of the keynote presenters, and the other will be Dr Lynne Hillier from the Latrobe University Centre for Sex, Health and Society. Graeme Kane will run a workshop for practitioners.

The conference organising committee is keen to have several research symposia to showcase the excellent

work of **Psychology** honours and postgraduate students (or recent graduates) on gay and lesbian issues. Contributions from other disciplines will also be considered. The final number of presentations selected will depend on the quality of submissions and the time and space available on the conference program. The symposia will be made up of 3 presenters with 20 minutes presentation each and 10 minutes question time.

Send abstracts and contact details to Graeme Kane at graeme.kane@iechs.org.au by the 11th September 2003.

For further information, email Harriet Radermacher Harriet.Radermacher@students.vu.edu.au during August and Graeme Kane graeme.kane@iechs.org.au during September.

National Executive:

Gordon Walker Convener gordon.walker@med.monash.edu.au
Graeme Kane Secretary graeme.kane@iechs.org.au
03 - 9810 3087
Robert Morris Treasurer robross@netspace.net.au

DOES THE APS HAVE YOUR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS?

DON'T MISS OUT ON UPDATES, NETWORKING ACTIVITIES AND THE SAMPLE JOURNALS AND BOOKS.

National Convener's Report



National Convener's Report

It is my pleasure to bring you up to date on various matters that have been occupying the National Executive. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing interest and to welcome any new members for whom this is your first newsletter

The APS Conference 2003 – Perth

I'm pleased to report that the organising committee of the annual conference has once again accepted our symposium for inclusion in its program. It's an extra grand symposium this time with no less than five presenters. Damien Riggs, who will chair the symposium, has done an excellent job putting it together. Given the content, I think it is more than likely to attract some media attention. The symposium will be held 1.30pm - 4.30pm on Saturday, 4 October. GLIP drinks will be held 5.30pm-6.30pm on the Friday evening. Last year we found that having GLIP drinks after the Society's AGM was not a good idea, and so it has been moved to Friday this year. Note that also on Saturday (8.30am-10.30am) is a symposium entitled 'What about me? Issues of belonging, parenting and suicide for gay and lesbian Australians' chaired by Dr. Suzanne McLaren from the University of Ballarat. Members of the College of Community Psychologists will accrue specialist points by attending these symposia.

Register before 15 August to get the early bird rate!!

National Psychology Week 2003:

'Good Thinking' November 9-15

See June edition of InPsych (p.22) for details

On the basis of recent contacts from the print media, I've become aware of issues that journalists feel could make a 'good' story, and as a result I've discussed with the Director of Communications, Amanda Gordon how our Interest Group might contribute to National Psychology Week. We agreed that the Interest Group might prepare a number of media releases that could be either released during National Psychology Week or in response to an issue arising in the media at any time. Given that the major goal of the week is to educate the community about services psychologists offer and the value of those services, we need to think about what services our members can offer in response to GLB issues. Some of the people we might offer services to are:

- those struggling to come to terms with same sex attraction.
- families of young people who declare their same sex attraction
- parents concerned about opposite sex behaviour of their children (I've added this one because I was recently contacted by a journalist from New Idea, who was trying to write something on this)
- those who have heard about so called 'conversion therapies', and are wondering if they might try them.
- GLB students in schools who are being bullied, harassed, etc.

If you are aware of others, do let us know.

What we need to do to advance this is to prepare statements based on best practice and up to date knowledge. I think that if we had 2-3 people develop each release we could achieve this. First, we would like to identify a person who would take responsibility for co-ordinating the content of each release. If you have an interest in focusing on how psychologists could address any of the above issues or any other GLB issues of concern in the community, do get in touch. Don't let lack of expertise hold you back! The expertise can always be tracked down

GLIP Award

Entries for the GLIP award for the best fourth year or Masters course work research report or thesis are now with the judges, who this year are Dr Vivienne Cass and Dr Daryl Higgins. The announcement of the winner will be made at the annual APS Conference in Perth.

Terms of Reference of the Interest Group

You will have received the draft copy of the revised terms of reference and I am pleased to say that they are now in their final form ready to be sent to the APS Board of Directors for approval. Thanks to Graeme Kane who has kept this moving.

Information Sheet: Answers to your questions about sexual orientation and homosexuality.

I reported to you in the last newsletter that we had revised this Information Sheet. However, when we submitted it to the APS, we are asked to revise it further. The APS has had all the Information Sheets evaluated from the point of view of their usefulness to the general community, and one piece of important feedback is that they are often written in a form of language that is more appropriate to professionals. Ours is guilty of this too, and so we now need to produce a plain English version. Hopefully we will get this done shortly.

We have decided not to include useful resources in the sheet because of the risk that they will go out of date rather quickly. We've decided to refer readers to our website. This means that we need update resources on the web site, and to maximize the usefulness of the sheet we need to have resources in all states.

Australasian Perspectives on Gay and Lesbian Psychology

The book now has a name: "**Out in the Antipodes**" I'm pleased to report that all is looking good. We've had quite a number chapters submitted, and Damien Riggs and I have been busy doing editorial work. The book will cover a range of very interesting issues, but I'm not giving anything further away at this stage!! Stay tuned!!

30th anniversary of the depathologising of homosexuality

We are greatly indebted to Graeme Kane for arranging a one-day conference to celebrate this event. If at all possible do come along and make this a great event in GLB psychology – see elsewhere for details and how to register.

Best wishes
Gordon Walker
National Convener

Review of Jones, B. E., & Hill, M. J. (Eds.). (2002). *Mental health issues in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities*. Washington: American Psychiatric Publishing.

This book makes up one third of Volume 21 in the 'Review of Psychiatry' series. There are three other titles in this series: *Cutting-edge medicine: What psychiatrists need to know*; *Emergency psychiatry*; and *The many faces of depression in children and adolescents*. The series editors John M. Oldham, M.D., M.S., and Michelle B. Riba, M.D., M.S., reflect that *Mental health issues in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities* is an attempt to consider and challenge traditional concepts, biases and prejudices about LGBT issues. To some extent, it achieves this objective. However, one concern I had about the text, was that it was relatively short compared to other similar reviews. The editors Jones and Hill assure the reader that the authors of the five chapters provide "a thorough review of the subject matter" (p. xviii), yet at 118 pages it would be more accurate to say that the authors provide a broad and concise review of current ideas from psychiatry. Hence the review lacks the depth that some readers may be looking for.

Chapter 1 (Barry Fisher & Jeffrey Akman) outlines the process of heterosexual adolescent development, and then goes on to discuss the extra challenges that are faced by youth in the development of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity. The chapter provides a reasonable summary of the models of identity formation and some consideration of "coming out" issues.

Chapter 2 (Douglas Kimmel) reviews the interactions between multiple minority statuses (sexuality, race, age) and blends in research, historical anecdotes and social reflections from a North American perspective. The reader is asked to consider when a minority status may be experienced as a form of resilience and when it may be positioned as pathological, and to consider the social and historical contexts of older lesbians, gays and bisexuals lives. Kimmel is insightful in the questions he asks about the ways in which psychiatrists may provide an equitable and respectful service to the older LGBT community. In celebrating the diverse lives of older LGBT people, Kimmel suggests that they are privileged by virtue "of the uniqueness of their development as a sexual minority" (p. 20). While potentially devaluing individual sexual development regardless of specific sexuality, such a view runs the risk of romanticising the older LGBT experience.

Chapter 3 (Richard Dudley Jnr) provides a thought provoking review of the challenges psychiatrists

and other mental health workers face in educating judges and juries about current research affecting laws in relation to child custody/visitation, workplace harassment/other discrimination, domestic violence, and immigration/asylum issues (as they pertain to the United States). An obvious omission in this very thorough and interesting chapter is a historical perspective of the role psychiatry played (and sometimes continues to play), in the prejudicial findings against LGBT individuals.

Chapter 4 (Jack Drescher) blends a historical overview of clinical attitudes to homosexuality with a scientific approach outlining the three etiological theories on homosexuality. These theories are the *normal variant theory*, *theories of immaturity* and *theories of pathology*. Drescher provides a concise account of the APA's 1973 decision to acknowledge homosexuality as a normal variant of sexuality and remove it from the DSM. However, 'sexual orientation disturbance' was retained, which Drescher suggests ensured the continuation of the so-called conversion/reparative therapies. For a more thorough historical account, I would recommend Drescher, J. (1998). I'm your handyman: A history of reparative therapies. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 36, 19-42.

Chapter 5 (Donald Tarver II) places the need to re-evaluate the psychiatric diagnosis and treatment of gender identity disorder alongside the DSM and America's evolving historical, social and political attitudes in regards to the construction of race and sexual orientation. Like the other chapters, this one is concise and addresses psychiatric assumptions about what does, and what does not, constitute 'pathology'. The objective is changing the DSM, not in exploring in any depth the treatment issues facing transgender individuals.

I would recommend the book to psychology students or psychologists interested in a concise and engaging review of some of the mental health issues in the LGBT community (from a North American perspective). For those wanting greater analysis or exploration of research it may provide a useful starting point, but lacks an awareness of the more subtle dilemmas facing LGBT individuals. Paying greater attention to these complex issues may have helped to establish this text as a seminal review of the topic area.

Graeme Kane (MAPS)
graeme.kane@iechs.org.au

Book review: Bessen. W. R. (2003). *Anything But Straight: Unmasking the scandals and lies behind the ex-gay myth*. New York: Harrington Park Press.

Due to the recent resurgence of conversion therapies in the United States, and following the visit of one of the proponents of conversion therapy to Australia, the publication of a book that outlines the 'scandals and lies' of the movement would seem timely. Add to this the recent attacks from the new right in many Western countries upon the rights of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals, and it would appear even more pertinent that as members of these communities we speak

about the ways in which we are marginalised within society. The current book under review is one such example of someone 'speaking out' about the pathologisation of same sex attracted individuals. Yet as will be evidenced in this review, such speaking out may indeed be seen as contributing to the marginalisation of LGBT individuals through the construction of us as 'essentially different' to heterosexual individuals.

The author talks about gay men and lesbians as

having a 'true' self that is founded upon their sexual orientation. Similarly, he draws upon stereotypical constructions of gay men as effeminate and lesbians as butch in order to demonstrate his point about the inevitable failure of conversion therapies. The author also seems to construct a binary of 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' gay identities (the latter being exemplified by drug abuse and sex addiction). What this works to achieve is the further marginalisation of an already stigmatized group. These constructions are compounded by the ways in which the author positions gay men and lesbian who are 'out' as being inherently more adjusted than those individuals who are 'closeted'. In these ways the characters that the author presents throughout the book are used to justify the 'essential differences' between heterosexuals and homosexuals. Whilst this is indeed a position that some same sex attracted individuals affirm, and it may well assist people in developing a justification to both themselves and others for their sexuality, it is often also used by homophobic institutions to justify discriminatory practices. Thus those who believe that homosexuality is either pathological or immoral may use notions of 'essential differences' to warrant their attacks.

A similar logic is used by proponents of conversion therapy, who focus on changing homosexual *behaviours*. In this way homosexualities are reduced to sexual behaviour, which is but one of the many ways though which gay men (in particular) have historically been positioned as deviant and immoral. This reduction of gay men's identities to sex also works to reduce the potential politicality of such identities. In other words, speaking out as a gay man may often have the potential for unsettling heterosexism, through challenging the normative status of heterosexuality. It is also suggested that some women adopt a lesbian identity in order to challenge the system of heteropatriarchy (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993). Yet by constructing homosexuality as being only a matter of differences in sexual attraction, the politics of LGBT identities are sidelined.

In amongst these assumptions about the 'inherent differences' between homosexuality and heterosexuality, and the prioritising of stereotypical constructions of gay men and lesbians, the author does make some important points about the rhetoric of conversion therapies. He outlines the ways in which research that is taken to support conversion therapy often draws upon very limited, selective samples, and then makes universal statements from the findings. He also draws attention to the ways in which the connections between the 'ex-gay ministries' (the religious wing of conversion therapies) and the new right work to position attacks upon LGBT individuals as an attempt at 'helping them lead better lives'. Such rhetorical strategies have also been deployed by the new right in England through the use of discourses of 'equality' and 'fairness', in order to justify racist practices (see Ware & Back, 2001). In this way the book does indeed make an important contribution to the interrogation of the ways in which the rhetoric of the right works to further marginalise and justify oppressive practices.

Whilst the book makes some important points in regards to the negative impact that conversion therapies have upon the lives of (predominantly) gay men and lesbians, it does this within a framework that limits the political

potentiality of the work. In accepting the notion that sexuality is an inherent trait of individuals, the author backs himself into a corner when it comes to challenging the heterosexism of society. For whilst there may be some utility in rallying around identities that have been traditionally positioned as deviant, and indeed it is often difficult *not* to celebrate the 'equalities' that we have won, it is important to understand the ways in which continuing to take heteropatriarchal constructs (such as gender and sexuality) as *a priori* to cultural inscription works to legitimate our oppression. In other words, by working from the assumption that we need to change societies' opinions of homosexuality, we continue to accept the hetero/homo binaries as normative. The radical challenges that lesbians and gay men have made to dominant institutions (and the challenges that queer theory currently presents within the academy), have most often been to unsettle the very category of sexuality itself (cf. Roseneil, 2002).

In conclusion, the book is written in a rather journalistic style, which makes for easy reading. Furthermore, the author writes quite well, in a humorous style that brings to the subject matter a camp attitude that is clearly contrasted with the (apparently misguided) seriousness of conversion therapists in general, and ex-gay ministries in particular. In this way the book may be accessible to the lay public, and thus may go some way to challenging the rhetoric of the right in regards to homosexuality and deviancy. Unfortunately, however, the book fails to address some of the key concerns of contemporary writers in the fields of gay and lesbian psychology and queer theory; namely the ways in which sexual identities are neither biologically located nor historically and culturally universal. In this way the book would seem to buy into some of the ideologies of heteropatriarchy, in ways that limit the potential usefulness of the critiques mounted in the book. In order for the book to engage with such issues, the author would need to focus less on the 'juicy details' that often mar his argument, and instead focus on the impact that discourses of difference have upon the effectiveness of critiques of conversion therapy.

References

- Roseneil, S. (2002). The homosexual/heterosexual binary: Past, present and future. In D. Richardson & S. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of lesbian and gay studies*. London: Sage.
- Ware, V. & Back, L. (2001). *Out of whiteness: Colour, Politics and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilkinson, S. & Kitzinger, C. (1993). *Heterosexuality: A Feminism & Psychology Reader*. London: Sage.

Damien Riggs
 Department of Psychology
 The University of Adelaide
 damienriggs@yahoo.com.au

Book review: Bailey, J.M. (2003). *The man who would be Queen: The science of gender-bending and transsexualism*. Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press.

This is a book, written by a leading researcher in the field, is about understanding sexual orientation and identity. Although the author makes much use of research, this is not a textbook; any educated person with an interest in this topic would find the material very accessible. The stories of various boys and men are woven together with the discussion of research to create a highly interesting and very worthwhile book. In fact once I started I had difficulty putting down! Broadly speaking it is an examination of the relationship between male homosexuality and femininity. As the author says, to say that femininity and homosexuality are closely bound together has been politically incorrect for some time now, but nevertheless factually correct. The book then goes on to demonstrate this across the sexual orientation spectrum.

The book is therefore a challenge to the postmodern position on gender, although the author clearly occupies the middle ground between social constructionism and essentialism. This is demonstrated in his discussion of feminine boys and of those labeled gender identity disorder (GID) in particular. In looking at the debate between those on the left who want them left alone to be as feminine as they want to be and those on the extreme right who view homosexuality as arrested psychosexual development, he draws the reader's attention to research that shows that therapy directed at reducing femininity in highly feminine boys reduces the number who ultimately seek a sex-change, and therefore increases the number who as adults identify as gay. He suggests that an alternative to this would be to allow such boys to become women very early (pre-puberty) so that they can have better outcomes as women.

The author uses a range of research to clearly challenge the view that pronounced femininity in boys is the result of socialisation. The question of where does extreme femininity come from is also examined

Similarities and differences between gay and

straight men are also examined. Broadly speaking, although gay men have interests more in line with those of women, in attitudes to sex and the body homosexual and heterosexual men were shown to be essentially the same; the differences in behaviour come about because heterosexually men are basically constrained in their behaviour by women. The author provides a very accessible and readable account of the sometimes confusing array of studies that have attempted to account for sexual orientation and draws the conclusion that there is some fundamental biological influence that transcends culture. The last section of the book focuses on transsexualism, and produces a compelling argument for recognising two main types – homosexual and non-homosexual types, with the latter being erotically obsessed with the image of themselves as women. A very much more complex picture emerges than the popular image of a woman being trapped inside a man's body.

The great value of this book lies in the way it has brought together a wide range of research on important questions relating to sexual orientation. This gives the reader a wonderful opportunity to reflect further on what being other than heterosexual might mean.

Gordon Walker
Department of Psychology
School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological
Medicine
Monash University

Editorial Policy

Aims and Objectives

The Newsletter of the APS Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Interest Group is produced by the National Executive, in collaboration with State Branch Committees. Its target audience is GLIP Interest Group members. It serves as a means of communication among Interest Group members. The Newsletter also promotes the work of Interest Group members, acts as a forum for discussion and keeps members aware of forthcoming events and professional development activities.

Contents

The contents will vary from issue to issue, but will attempt to include an editorial comment, a National Convenor's report, State Branch reports, national news, promotion of training and professional development activities, brief notices and, assorted reviews and news from members.

Solicited articles

The Editor may approach suitable authors to write on relevant issues.

Unsolicited articles

The editor encourages GLIP members to contribute unsolicited articles to the Newsletter. Publication of unsolicited articles cannot be guaranteed. The Editor in consultation with regional representatives has the final decision for inclusion of material and the form that it takes. Unsolicited articles should not exceed 500 words, except with prior arrangement.

Advertising

Placement of an advertisement in the Newsletter is not necessarily an endorsement of the advertiser by GLIP. Approval of advertisements rests with the Editor who may consult with the National Executive. Advertising is at present free of charge, which may be reviewed at a later date.

Submission of material

Material should be submitted to the Editor by the relevant deadline. Submissions are to be in electronic format only via email to graeme.kane@iechs.org.au. Documents are to be in Microsoft Word 97, or earlier, or text only format.

Graeme Kane