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Lesbian and Gay Psychology Symposia at The British Psychological Society's Annual Conference, Blackpool, 14-16 March

The BPS Lesbian & Gay Psychology Section has organised a symposium on 'Exploring heterosexism and homophobia' at the 2002 BPS Annual Conference; Section members have also convened a symposium on 'Lesbian and gay issues: Social psychological perspectives', organised by the Social Psychology Section. The individual papers in each symposium are listed below. For more information on the conference, contact the BPS Conference Office (Tel. 0116 254 9555; e-mail conferences@bps.org.uk) or check the BPS website at http://www.bps.org.uk

Exploring heterosexism and homophobia

(convened by Adrian Coyle & Celia Kitzinger):

Projections of gay men: A psycho-discursive analysis of heterosexual men's talk
Brendan Gough, University of Leeds

Heterosexism in reports of psychotherapists' countertransference with lesbian and gay clients
Adrian Coyle & Martin Milton, University of Surrey; Charles Legg, City University

Talk about homophobic bullying: A discursive psychological approach
Victoria Clarke, Loughborough University

Reproducing normative heterosexuality in calls to the doctor
Celia Kitzinger, University of York

Lesbian and gay issues: Social psychological perspectives

(convened by Victoria Clarke, Elizabeth Peel & Sue Wilkinson)

Why (some) people did not support the lowering of the age of consent for sex between men: An analysis of Hansard and newspaper reports
Sonja J. Ellis, Sheffield Hallam University

Challenging homophobic attitudes: Is lesbian and gay affirmative education effective?
Elizabeth Peel, Loughborough University

Lesbians, gay men and therapy: An exploration of systemic psychotherapy
Maeve Malley, Alcohol East, London/Birkbeck College, University of London

'It's not a choice, it's the way we're built': Symbolic beliefs about sexual orientation in the United States and Britain
Peter Hegarty, Yale University, USA

Decision-making in planned lesbian parenting: An interpretative phenomenological analysis
Elena Touroni & Adrian Coyle, University of Surrey

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* of 2002. This marks the third year of *Review's* existence (or the fourth if we include its inaugural year under the title of the *BPS Lesbian and Gay Psychology Section Newsletter*) and ushers in a new co-editor, Elizabeth Peel, who replaces Martin Milton. Martin has been at the helm of this publication since its inception and has played a major role in shaping its development. Last autumn, he decided to step down from his editorial role in order to allow more time for his extensive work commitments. We hope that he will be able to continue to contribute to *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* in the future and continue to provide us with wise advice when required. For now, on behalf of the Section committee, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for his vision, creativity and hard work on this publication over the last few years.

This Spring sees a landmark in lesbian and gay psychology as the first book devoted to British work on the subject – *Lesbian and Gay Psychology: New Perspectives* (edited by Adrian Coyle and Celia Kitzinger) – is published by BPS Blackwell. Although we have obvious investments in this book (with both of us being contributors), we hope readers will forgive us for recommending this text which reflects the theoretical, conceptual and methodological diversity that has characterised British work in lesbian and gay psychology: it is truly a book in which there is something for everyone. Another publication to which Section members have contributed is the special issue of the *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* on 'Social psychological perspectives on lesbian and gay issues in Europe', which should appear in May/June. The same diversity is reflected in the articles in this special issue which address lesbian and gay identity, lesbian parenting, sexual decision-making among gay men in relation to HIV/AIDS, students' beliefs about sexual orientation, arguments about the age of consent for gay men and systemic therapy with lesbians and gay men. We will, of course, be seeking reviews of both publications for a future issue of *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*.

Some of the topics addressed in these publications will be examined in two symposia convened by Section members at the Society's Annual Conference in Blackpool on 14–16 March. This year's conference is focused on three themes, one of which is 'Sexuality'. The symposia will provide a showcase for some current lesbian and gay psychological research. One symposium (organised by the Social Psychology Section and convened by Victoria Clarke, Elizabeth Peel and Sue Wilkinson) is entitled 'Lesbian and gay issues: Social psychological perspectives'. We hope that this fruitful collaboration between our Section and other BPS subsystems on topics of mutual interest will continue and develop in the future. The other symposium (convened by Adrian Coyle and Celia Kitzinger) is entitled 'Exploring heterosexism and homophobia' and examines projections of gay men in heterosexual men's talk, the reproduction of normative heterosexuality in phone calls to the doctor, talk about homophobic bullying and psychotherapists' countertransference with lesbian and gay clients.

This issue of *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* contains two original 'academic' articles. In the first paper, Helen Barrett and Fiona Tasker review the growing body of research on gay fathers and their children; they explore 'what we know and what we need to know'. The authors discuss general research on fathers, research on gay and bisexual men (and what this reveals about gay fathers) and research explicitly on gay fathers before going on to suggest directions for future quantitative research on this topic. Their critiques of previous research and their suggestions regarding methodology and research design extend and develop some important points and arguments that were put forward by Julie Fish and Ian Rivers in their articles on sampling and

quantitative research in lesbian and gay psychology in the November 2000 issue of *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*. Readers who are engaged in quantitative research on lesbian and gay-related topics may wish to read all three articles for some valuable research guidance and direction. In the second paper, Laura A. Markowe focuses on the 'coming out' process for young lesbians. Drawing upon her own and others' research, she considers what changes there have been for young lesbians coming out during the latter part of the 20th century and looks forward to how this process might change in the future.

This issue also contains our second 'Focus on Activism' article, which follows the same format that was used in an earlier article in which Peter Hegarty talked with Cheryl Chase about possibly fruitful lines of dialogue between intersex activism and lesbian and gay psychology (Vol. 1, Part 1, 2000). In this issue, Elizabeth Peel talks with Stuart McQuade – who is the director of Northamptonshire Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance – about activism and politics within lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) communities and also about the role that (psychological) research on LGB issues can play in this. We hope that this article will provide encouragement to researchers on LGB issues to become more directly involved in LGB community work and to communicate their research findings to LGB organisations. Now that we have provided some possible models of how articles for our 'Focus on Activism' slot might be presented, we hope that readers will contact us with ideas for articles about their own experiences of activism and service provision and/or suggestions about activists and service providers whom we might interview about their experiences. You will also find in this issue an interdisciplinary lesbian and gay conference report, rules for the Section's 2002 postgraduate prize, book reviews and a list of new books for review. All that remains to be said is read on and enjoy!

Elizabeth Peel & Adrian Coyle
Co-editors, Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review

Gay fathers and their children: What we know and what we need to know

Helen Barrett & Fiona Tasker

There is now a growing body of research relevant to the topic of gay fatherhood. Yet, despite a number of studies reporting findings that challenge prejudiced misconceptions, existing research on this topic has been less influential than it could be and is limited by methodological deficiencies. Space does not permit detailed presentation and discussion of the wide range of findings pertaining to the current status of research on gay male parenting, so here we have chosen to summarise the arguments contained in longer papers which draw upon published and unpublished research on gay male parenting over approximately the last fifty years (for example, Barrett & Tasker, 2001).

In this paper, to set the context for discussion, we first consider the broader question of the need for research in this area. We then go on to consider the sources and nature of information about gay and bisexual male parents. From here, we identify issues about which we need to know more and, finally, we suggest possible directions for future research.

Why research gay fathers?

In the middle of the twentieth century, the interest of researchers on parenting was heavily focused on the relationship between mothers and children. Whilst research in this area flourished, relatively little attention was paid to the role of the father who was often seen to be of secondary importance. Popular views of fatherhood tended to prevail, emphasising the role of the father as economic provider, disciplinarian and link to the outside world. Little was known about the real extent to which fathers were engaged in childcare or child-rearing.

By the end of the century, this situation had begun to change. This was due both to interest in redressing apparent gender imbalance and to an increasing awareness that the 'traditional' family – of mother, father and 2.4 children – was no longer the norm. Tendencies for parents to separate or divorce, to have children out of wedlock, to form new partnerships and to engage in new family forms were on the increase and economic pressures were also encouraging larger numbers of women to become breadwinners. In addition, it was rumoured, a 'new man' was at large. Research workers shared a popular curiosity to discover more about this supposed phenomenon: might the 'new man' be more or less involved with his children, more or less skilled in their care, more or less prone than 'old man' to molest or abuse them? With women's increasing liberation in relation to children, might 'new man' be stepping into 'old woman's' role?

Side by side with the advent of 'new man' came developments in respect of homosexuality – for instance, the de-criminalisation of same-sex sexual behaviour between men (in private) in the UK in 1967, the removal of homosexuality *per se* from the American Psychiatric Association's list of psychiatric disorders in 1974, the growth and establishment of lesbian and gay rights organisations and slowly increasing recognition of equal rights issues in law courts, in the press and in society more widely in relation to lesbians and gay men. Despite these generally more liberal attitudes, evidence of concerns about the safety of children around gay men has remained. These concerns appear to stem from stereotypical views of gay men, linking them perhaps with disinterest in child-rearing, with misplaced interest in children as erotic objects and/or with an inability to model appropriate behaviour. Views such as these fuel beliefs that gay men will also, in the longer term, influence the moral behaviour of younger people to the detriment of society. A huge variety of fears and prejudices prevails for

example, that gay men will encourage peculiar dress habits, effeminate behaviour and all kinds of perverse sexual practices in their offspring or that they will challenge all the standard tenets of society and leave children uncontrolled, unsure about what is right and wrong, confused about their own sexual orientation and vulnerable to 'predation' from peers as well as from adults. In the same vein, gay men have been thought to have limited ability to sustain the sort of long-term monogamous relationships that are assumed to provide an appropriately stable environment for the rearing of children.

An alternative view has identified such prejudicial outlooks as the chief source of disadvantage for gay fathers, their partners, ex-partners and children. Homophobic bullying and harassment of children and adults has been documented (for example, Rivers, 1999, 2001). However, little is known about the impact of homophobic attitudes on the lives or development of children with gay fathers. Unanswered questions include the extent to which children may experience or fear bullying because of having a gay father, how they might cope with real or imagined homophobic reactions from others both within their own family and outside, how these reactions might impact on the quality of their relationship with their fathers and ultimately with themselves and their ability to relate intimately to others.

This gives some indication of the need for research and the seriousness of the issues under consideration. Clearly, without more information, not only is it difficult to make informed child care policy decisions but there is also a danger that prejudices will proliferate, become more deeply entrenched and ultimately cause more damage. To determine how much we already know and how much we still need to find out about gay and bisexual male parenting, three main sources of information will now be considered – general research on fathers, research on gay and bisexual men and research on gay fathers.

Research on fathers

Much early research on fathering in the third quartile of the last century was focused on the question of whether fathers and mothers share similar, complementary or unrelated roles in relation to their children (see Lamb's, 1997, edited volume for a comprehensive review of the mainstream literature on the role of the father in child development). While observational methods have been used to document differences in mothers' and fathers' interactions with young children, to date no study has investigated this issue with respect to parents' sexual orientation. Some recent research has suggested that same-sex partners might be more egalitarian than typical heterosexual couples (for example, McPherson, 1993; Patterson, 1995; Dunne, 2000) but the database is, as yet, small and somewhat inconclusive.

More firmly established is the observation that fathering is considerably more sensitive to social context than mothering. In other words, the relationship between fathers and their children appears to be more vulnerable to social influences such as work, class and cultural variation. Frequently, even where parenting occurs in 'intact' families, mothers appear to perform a gate-keeping role in respect of children, monitoring and shaping input from other carers. This tendency becomes even more pronounced in families following separation or divorce (Thompson & Amato, 1999). Therefore, while many studies of mothers and children may have been carried out without taking account of the wider family context, taking a similar approach when studying fathers almost inevitably results in fragmented data. Fathers need to be studied in their social context if the role of fathers is to be well understood. Research designs which are not capable of partialling out effects of parenting circumstances are unlikely to produce an informative or accurate picture. To date, small research budgets in studies of gay male parenting have tended to preclude the use of sufficiently complex designs.

Research on gay and bisexual men

Information about numbers of gay fathers has often been drawn from studies of sexual behaviour in the larger general population. Perhaps most notably, work carried out by Kinsey and colleagues in the States – particularly the 1948 and 1953 reports but also subsequent reports by workers at the Kinsey Institute – have

formed the basis for estimates of numbers of gay fathers. Some have concluded that if, as Kinsey suggested, approximately 4 per cent of men self-identify as gay or bisexual throughout their lifetime, then there must be hundreds of thousands of married homosexuals: 'in other words...in Britain...the homosexual husband or wife must be neither an absurdity nor an anachronism but an invisible common variation among the patterns of marriage' (Maddox, 1982, p.21).

Others, starting from slightly different premises, have followed similar lines of argument and have concluded that approximately 25–50 per cent of gay men must be fathers (Bozett, 1989, whose estimate is widely quoted by others). The accuracy of such 'guestimates' is difficult to assess. What is clear is that defining sexual orientation is complicated by the fact that same-sex sexual experience – penetrative or otherwise, regular or otherwise – is not always associated with self-labelling as gay or bisexual, that sexual orientation might possibly be better conceptualised as a somewhat labile continuum rather than as a discrete categorical scale and that definitions based on same-sex sexual attraction rather than on same-sex sexual experience may yield different outcomes (see Davies *et al*., 1993, for an example of a study which examined both attraction and behaviour dimensions).

In addition, researchers such as Wellings and colleagues (currently updating the UK database on sexual behaviour at the National Centre for Social Research) have suggested that self-labelling may operate differently depending upon the research approach taken (Wellings *et al*., 1994). Non-random samples, they suggest, might be biased towards 'out' gay men whilst random samples might be biased in the opposite direction. Similarly, anonymous questionnaires sent to large randomly-selected samples might produce more conservative estimates of incidence than face-to-face interviews with self-selected respondents.

Wellings *et al*.'s 1994 data indicated that 2.5 per cent of currently married men had ever had a same-sex partner, although only 0.2 per cent of these had had a same-sex partner within the last year and 1.3 per cent within the last five years. Corresponding figures for separated or divorced men were 4.5 per cent ever, 0.8 per cent in the last year and 1 per cent in the last five years. The fact that reports of same-sex sexual experience were considerably lower among older men could be explained in a number of ways; for example, this could reflect historical shifts towards greater sexual openness or older men may, for various reasons, be less able or ready to recall same-sex experiences.

For a variety of reasons, findings from larger-scale studies of gay men often do not yield hard facts that can usefully elucidate or inform findings from smaller, more specialised populations. This creates a fundamental problem with regard to evaluating findings from many studies of gay male parents since, in the absence of representative baseline data, the representativeness of smaller samples cannot be assessed. Theoretically, it is therefore possible that conclusions from all studies will have an equal likelihood of being valid or invalid.

Information about gay male parents

As well as the larger-scale surveys already mentioned, sources of information about gay male parents include folklore, clinical and case studies and smaller-scale studies using questionnaires or interviews. Folklore has deliberately been given a prominent position in this list in order to draw attention to the fact that, as documented by Belcastro *et al*. (1993), studies have generally used small samples and methods, the reliability and validity of which are not well established. Clinical case studies are often treated with more caution in this respect but, in the absence of more substantial studies, findings from small-scale studies which purport to have employed more controlled designs can escape criticism and slip unnoticed into the realm of received 'wisdom'. This seems particularly likely in the case of unpublished doctoral theses, findings from which appear sometimes to be cited with little indication that commentators have read the original work. One or two over-generalisations or misrepresentations in areas where many researchers are working might fade into background noise. On more virgin soil, where research projects have generally been under-funded and where access to representative samples is so problematic, they can threaten to invade the pitch.

Identifying and accessing the population of gay fathers is undeniably difficult, involving some of the challenges faced by other researchers in lesbian and gay research (Fish, 1999, 2000) and also presenting additional ones. All studies are confronted with the problem of what Fadiman (1983) has called the 'double closet'. Gay fathers are closeted not only from the heterosexual world but also within the gay community which is often described as overtly celebrating a culture of youthfulness and freedom from commitments (Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989). In response to this obstacle, many workers have relied heavily upon gay social networks (through campaign groups and snowballing, for example) for recruitment. These practices inevitably limit or seriously complicate any assessment of representativeness. Typically, such samples contain respondents who are highly educated, white and from unrepresentatively high income brackets. While this need not be a problem if findings are presented with extreme caution, it does pose huge problems in respect of the generalisability of findings. On theoretical grounds alone, it has to be recognised that these studies are as likely to portray an inaccurate as an accurate picture. Indeed, in the absence of any basic referencing point, whichever methods more empirical studies may have employed, they cannot be seen to differ in scientific status from single case studies, nor even from personal, anecdotal or journalistic accounts.

This situation might be altered if careful and extensive replications were to be carried out. But, so far, although some researchers have made their research tools available for purposes of replication, to date, very little has been done to replicate, confirm or disconfirm tentative observations. Generally, despite the relative scarcity of research in this area, methods of research have been highly varied and idiosyncratic. In both sociological and psychological work, ethnographic approaches have tended to be favoured, sometimes accompanied by questionnaire measures of varying validity. Furthermore, the focus of research has ranged widely over a huge number of highly complicated issues. Gay fathers have been compared with heterosexual fathers, with gay men who are not fathers and with lesbian mothers. Fathers still in relationships with the mothers of their children have been contrasted with those no longer in relationships and those who have never been in relationships. Though few systematic reports are yet available, accounts of gay fathers who are not biologically related to the children they are parenting (as step-parents or as foster or adoptive parents) and of gay fathers in parenting or co-parenting arrangements with surrogate heterosexual or lesbian mothers have also begun to emerge.

Cutting across these dimensions of comparison, some studies have attempted to explore the nature of the relationships in which children have been conceived, whether the father has been 'out' to his partner or his children and, if so, at which point in the relationship this occurred and what effect it had on the father's role as a parent. No study has attempted to include information from both parents, although one sociological study points clearly to the potential impact of mothers on father-child relationships (Gochros, 1989). Some studies have considered questions such as whether gay and bisexual fathers differ from other parents in parenting style, values or practice, self-esteem, sex role identity, gender identity or their own history of being parented. Some studies have also attempted to examine the question of whether children of gay fathers are more likely to be (lesbian or) gay themselves than children without gay fathers.

With regard to the question of outcomes for children, research methods and samples have been no less idiosyncratic. To date, of the few studies in which an attempt has been made to elicit information from children, children have almost always been recruited via their fathers – a practice which seriously constrains interpretation of results. Few studies have elicited data directly from children; instead, information about children has generally been elicited from fathers. Sample sizes have been small, ranging from 14 (including six adopted children) in Bozett's (1980) semi-structured interview study to 48 in a questionnaire study of first-born children in gay stepfamilies (Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993). Although both Bozett (1980) and Miller (1979) appear to have interviewed children, neither reports suffi-

cient details to permit replication or extension. As a result, suggestions that fathers who are 'out' to their children invest more effectively in their parenting role than those who are not 'out' or that children engage in boundary control strategies designed to limit peer group knowledge of their gay father and so protect their own social identity (Bozett, 1988) remain purely speculative.

Before moving on from this discussion to recommendations for future research, it seems important to raise another point concerning the common finding across many studies that gay fathers are not a homogeneous group. At times, it seems that this fact is recruited in defence of idiosyncratic methodologies, the underlying assumption being that no approach devised for the study of other populations will be appropriate for the study of this more diverse population. On at least two grounds, this position seems untenable for two reasons. Firstly, where populations are small and diverse, research designs need to evince far greater sophistication than in studies with more accessible and homogeneous populations and need to take greater pains to overcome obstacles to data access. Secondly, whilst gay and bisexual fathers may be involved in as many and as varied parenting situations as heterosexual fathers, there is no evidence to suggest that this diversity is any greater than that of heterosexual fathers. For example, surveys have demonstrated the existence of multiple routes to parenting for gay and bisexual men, including marriage, cohabiting or non-cohabiting relationships, sperm donation, step-parenting, adoption or fostering, co-parenting and partnering a gay father. Only the last mentioned of these routes is unique to gay or bisexual men and may indeed have its theoretical equivalent in heterosexual men whose partners also have children from another relationship. So, whilst routes to parenting may undoubtedly be as many and as varied for gay as for straight men, they are not necessarily more diverse. This is not to suggest that the same social meanings and evaluations are associated with these routes for gay as opposed to heterosexual men and, for example, what may be unique to both gay and lesbian parenting is the concept of 'family of choice' with its wider variety of kinship networks (Weston, 1991; Weeks, 2000). Nevertheless, research designs will need to reflect the fact that gay male parents are likely to be a highly complex, non-homogeneous group and – to be sensitive to qualitative differences amidst considerable background 'noise' – they will need to be considerably more refined than they have tended to be over the last fifty years.

Future directions for research

So what steps could be taken to refine the available research tools and to ensure that they are appropriate to the task in hand? Our contention is that, if knowledge is to advance beyond speculative theories based on specialist populations, then we must accept the need for research designs to involve far larger samples and much more comprehensive designs. Without these, we are likely to continue to resemble biologists looking at minute parts of buttercups, celandines and daffodils through telescopes – or even kaleidoscopes! Our observations will be so fragmented that we will continue to struggle to make sense of them. This is not to under-estimate the value of insights from small-scale qualitative studies, especially in revealing the meaning of different aspects of gay parenting. For many researchers, such studies may be the most viable option. The strength of such studies, obviously, will continue to depend upon the care with which reports specify the progeny of data. However, if the quantitative route which has begun to be opened up is to yield richer results, we may now need to move on in a number of ways.

First, there is a need for larger samples and improved recruitment strategies. Ethical considerations – particularly those related to concerns about participants' need to be in control of information about their sexual identity – have clearly played a huge part in encouraging the use of volunteer samples drawn from very specific populations. Whilst accepting the need for volunteer samples and all the limitations these involve, the practice of recruiting gay men through gay networks seriously reduces the likelihood of obtaining representative samples. So too the practice of recruiting children through the gay parent alone constitutes an obvious obstacle to

generalisability. Responding to the exclusive attention given to mothers and children by giving exclusive attention to fathers and children will simply duplicate earlier mistakes.

Very little is known about gay or bisexual men who remain in heterosexual relationships. The assertion that gay male relationships founder earlier than heterosexual relationships does not come from studies of gay or bisexual married men about whom little is yet known. By conducting population surveys of family relationships and parenting but including questions about sexual behaviour and attitudes, it may be possible to obtain a more accurate picture of the family life both of gay and bisexual men and of men who self-define as heterosexual but who have also had more than incidental same-sex sexual experience. Conceivably, this kind of study could be extended and replicated across a range of family forms. In this way, a fuller picture might emerge in place of the rather fragmented picture afforded so far. Perhaps too it might be possible to examine whether social changes in relation to homosexuality have in any way influenced how gay and bisexual men in different generations may feel about being and becoming parents.

Furthermore, if samples are not to be more heterogeneous than necessary and in order to facilitate replication, careful thought needs to be given to selection factors known to be important – for example, family characteristics such as income, size, structure and history, parental characteristics such as education, pathology and parenting attitudes and child characteristics such as age, gender, birth position and pathology. Leaving such factors free to vary in qualitative designs may add to the richness of the data. Leaving them free to vary in designs where one group is to be compared with another is highly likely to threaten the validity of the comparison and even more likely to obscure any differences which may be present. In such designs, matching will need to be carefully considered and matching criteria will need to be fully reported if replication is to be possible. By tightening up standards of reporting as well as standards of conducting quantitative studies, more pieces of this highly complex picture may begin to emerge.

Next, attention needs to be given to the tools used in research. As in any other area of scientific enquiry, the validity and reliability of research tools – whether they be questionnaires, structured interviews or semi-structured interviews – need to be well established. It is not uncommon in this area of research to find evidence that tools have neither been extensively tested in the course of their development nor employed in ways that guard against bias from researchers or respondents. Until this evidence is provided, findings must remain highly questionable – particularly findings of no differences on critical comparisons. Since, to date, only one study has reported a partial attempt to replicate and validate a questionnaire measure (Ross, 1983), there is clearly considerable scope for improvement in this area. It is also unfortunately true that, in this area as much as in others, statistical analyses are not always appropriate or appropriately interpreted. Greater care needs to be taken in this respect also.

Within the growing body of literature in this area, many important research questions have been raised and continue to be raised. It is our contention that, in order to answer these questions, it is now necessary to move on to a new phase of research. In this phase, we must widen the net to include larger samples, drawing upon a much broader range of families from many more sections of society. To reflect the complexity of the population under study, more sophisticated and inclusive research designs must be employed, taking account of the social context within which relationships between fathers and children develop. Research tools and methods will need to be further developed and more rigorously tested to ensure that they are both valid and reliable. Finally, reports will need to provide substantial details of sampling and methodology so that necessary and extensive replication can take place.

Gay men may be in a minority in the general population and gay fathers may be an even smaller group within this minority but it is now well established that they are neither negligible in quantity nor a unidimensional entity. If qualitative differences between fathers of differing sexual orientations are to be accurately teased out and understood, research designs and programmes

will need to be even more sophisticated and thorough than studies which do not seek to account for such differences – not less so, as has been the case so far.

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Young lesbians: Coming out into the future[1]

Laura A. Markowe

In my vision of the ideal world of the future, coming out as lesbian would no longer be an issue. Children would grow up knowing that relationships with same-sex partners were as valid and desirable as relationships with opposite sex partners – as acceptable, as 'normal' and as valuable. Books and television programmes would reflect this, as would the children's everyday encounters with friends and their families. Underlying such a society would be transformed conceptualisations of gender and human nature that both recognised and encouraged diversity. We are as yet some distance from this ideal world. My aim in this article is to assess what changes there have been for young women coming out as lesbian during the last part of the twentieth century and to look forward to future change. 'Coming out' refers here both to identifying oneself as lesbian and to the disclosure of this information to other people such as friends or family. It needs to be understood within the context of our predominantly heterosexual and often heterosexist society. I shall begin by sketching the context through a brief review of relevant literature and a consideration of the developmental challenges that have faced young lesbians. I shall then focus on what changes there have been in the process of coming out for young women during the last part of the twentieth century and the issues that still have to be dealt with. Finally, I shall consider how young people might negotiate their sexual identities in the future.

Context and issues

Previous research has focused largely on the conceptualisation of lesbian identity, lesbian identity development and issues of disclosure to others. The first psychological studies of lesbians and coming out appeared in the 1970s. By the end of the year 2000, 253 such studies were recorded on PsycINFO[2]; of these, 51 focused upon the young. Pertinent studies focusing on lesbian identity increase these figures[3], as do relevant studies that are not recorded on PsycINFO. Key early studies of lesbian identity included those of Wolff (1971), Cass (1979) and Kitzinger (1987). Early studies of coming out included those of De Monteflores and Schultz (1978), Lewis (1984) and Trenchard and Warren (1984).

Recent British and American studies have included both theoretical and empirically-based work. Examples include the work of Brown (1995), Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1995), Bohan (1996), Eliason (1996), Morris (1997), Rivers (1997), D'Augelli (1998), Hunter *et al*. (1998), Savin-Williams (1998), Diamond and Savin-Williams (2000), Farquhar (2000), Oswald (2000), Peplau and Garnets (2000), Rothblum (2000) and Savin-Williams (2001). These studies – which include some that are not focused on youth – indicate that we need to consider certain issues. On identity, we need to look at the movement away from dichotomous definitions (i.e., lesbian *or* heterosexual) and consider questions of fluidity and non-exclusivity: many women identifying as lesbian have had heterosexual relationships and some will continue to do so. Furthermore, consideration needs to be given to the basic question 'Is 'lesbian identity' necessary?'. On the topic of disclosure to others, coming out to parents

[1] This article is an elaborated version of a paper of the same title which was presented as part of a symposium entitled 'Looking forward: The future for lesbian and gay youth' at The British Psychological Society's Lesbian & Gay Psychology Section Annual Conference, which took place during The British Psychological Society's Centenary Annual Conference in Glasgow in March 2001.
[2] PsycINFO 1967–87: 29; 1988–2000/12: 224. Search: lesbian* and coming out.
[3] PsycINFO 1988–2000/12. Search: (lesbian* and coming out) or lesbian identity, 344; and (young or youth), 55.

remains a major issue. Indeed, increasing numbers of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people have been coming out to parents since the 1990s and at earlier ages than before (D'Augelli, 1998; Savin-Williams, 1998, 2001). Young people's general relationships with their families, the availability of support and the additional problems that ethnic minority young people may face require attention. Other areas particularly relevant to young people include school, media and the internet – all forming part of the context for coming out. At school, peer groups' and teachers' attitudes are important. The media may reflect realistic and positive images of lesbians, present stereotypical or negative images or simply neglect the area. The internet may provide new opportunities for young lesbians to experience coming out in a relatively anonymous and therefore less threatening context before embarking upon face-to-face disclosure.

The basic challenge facing young lesbians as they grow up is the construction of an identity that they will feel positive about, an identity that acknowledges the same-sex attractions they experience and allows these to develop, an identity that enables them to resist societal pressures towards exclusive heterosexuality. The process is much easier with the support of others – others who identify as lesbian as well as supportive heterosexual friends and family. Underlying many young lesbians' experiences are basic needs – the need for affiliation and the need for authenticity or integrity (Markowe, 1996, 2002). Some of the issues faced by lesbians are also important for young gay men but there will be differences as women's and men's positions within society are dissimilar and gay male development appears to differ from lesbian development (De Monteflores & Schultz, 1978).

I shall focus now on some of the major aspects of coming out, comparing and contrasting the experiences of women who first identified themselves as lesbian from the 1950s onwards with those who have come out around the end of the century. The quotations used for illustration are from a small number of participants interviewed in the year 2000 and also from participants interviewed for my earlier study (Markowe, 1996), the data for which were collected in the late 1980s. As with any retrospective interview material, there may have been reconstruction of the experiences recalled. Furthermore, while my focus here is on women who identify as lesbian at an early age, it should be recognised that some women do not identify as lesbian until much later in life after lengthy periods of identifying as heterosexual (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1995).

Bisexuality and fluidity

There has been a tendency to view sexuality from a dichotomous perspective, neglecting and obscuring bisexual identities. This is an area in which change is taking place. Whereas a few years ago, there were lesbian and gay groups, increasingly there are now lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) groups, or indeed, LGBT groups, which also welcome transgendered people. This provides the opportunity for women who in the past may have felt the need to identify as lesbian, in spite of heterosexual experiences, to identify as bisexual if they perceive this as more appropriate. A related development in perceptions of identity is the notion of sexuality as 'fluid' – as something that does not remain static but is always open to change. The quotations shown in Box 1 reflect a new openness to notions of bisexuality and fluidity (all participant names have been changed to protect confidentiality).

Whilst perceiving sexuality as fluid is obviously helpful for many women in enabling them to make sense of their experiences, for some it is perhaps less helpful. For example, constructing sexuality as fluid seems to link easily with the dismissal of lesbian experiences during teenage years as 'going through a phase' (en route to heterosexuality). Also, in the same way that the concept of androgyny was criticised for implying that people require both masculine and feminine attributes, an emphasis on fluidity may seem to imply that changes in sexuality are a requirement. This excludes those of us who have been and seem likely to continue to be consistent. Although some have perceived both male and female sexuality as fluid and have questioned dichotomous definitions (for example, Simpson, 1996; Tatchell,

Box 1: Bisexuality and fluidity – quotations from interviews conducted in 2000

> 'When I first came out I suppose I described myself as bi'. (Jessica)
>
> 'I don't consider myself bisexual, though I did at one point several years ago'. (Rose)
>
> '[I'm] bi at the moment'. (Mandy)
>
> 'Sometimes I'll say bisexual because I think – I mean sexuality can be quite a fluid thing'. (Catherine)
>
> 'I think [sexuality] is very, very fluid and I think that's just the way we are'. (Jessica)

1996), flexibility has been linked by others to women's sexuality rather than men's (for example, Baumeister, 2000). Caution is needed here. Overall, whilst recognising that many women's experiences fit most easily into a framework that incorporates fluidity and non-exclusivity, we also need to acknowledge the needs of women who experience their sexuality in terms of fundamental consistency over time.

An unnecessary construct?

Is the notion of 'lesbian identity' necessary? Postmodernists and others have suggested a focus on *performance* rather than identity in considering same-sex relationships (for example, Butler, 1991; Phelan, 1993). From their perspective, lesbian/gay identity is an unnecessary construct. However, within our current society, the construct of lesbian identity serves person-centred, social and political functions. On a personal level, lesbian identity may contribute positively towards our sense of self, help us to give meaning to our lives and provide us with a way of understanding how we fit into society. It may aid self-esteem and help towards a sense of personal security. In our relations with others in today's world, the potential social and political contributions of lesbian identity are obvious. In a future, very different society, all this might no longer be the case.

In my previous work (Markowe, 1996), I emphasised the emotional basis of lesbian identity and showed how this was reflected in women's definitions and perceptions of their experiences of becoming aware of themselves as lesbian. It is interesting and illuminative to consider this from the perspective of Robert Sternberg's (1998) 'three-component view of love', involving intimacy, passion and commitment, which is based on heterosexual relations. Sternberg's model describes how different properties such as stability, experiential salience, conscious awareness and conscious controllability, as well as psychophysiological involvement, may vary in level across the three components. Seven different kinds of love are generated from the three components, ranging, for example, from liking (which would involve intimacy but not passion or commitment) through romantic love (which would involve intimacy and passion but not commitment) to consummate love (which involves all three components). Balances among the components change over time. Whilst the empirical study of lesbian relationships within this model awaits investigation and whilst the impact of social context, the diversity of relationships and differences from heterosexual relationships need to be recognised and explored (for example, see Kitzinger & Coyle, 1995; James & Murphy, 1998), psychological research – as well as historical and autobiographical material – indicates that lesbian love could be described in terms of intimacy, passion and commitment (for example, see Peplau, 1991; National Lesbian and Gay Survey, 1992; Bohan, 1996; Hamer, 1996; Faderman, 1999; Oram & Turnbull, 2001). What is notably absent in Sternberg's perspective of love, though, is the connection to an 'identity' – obviously an unnecessary link for heterosexual people within a predominantly heterosexual society. This seems a good illustration of how love has no need to be based on identity. Whilst emotions may become linked to identity construction, they could be understood as aspects of love in a different way. Perhaps it is in the context of a heterosexist society that lesbian love links with society's notions of gender, sexuality and human nature to become an identity.

We can of course look back to previous centuries when romantic relationships between women were not associated with a notion of lesbian identity (Faderman, 1981, 1999) and perhaps perceived as more acceptable. For the future, however, while we may consider a society in which lesbian identity does not need to exist, this can only be within a context in which love between women is seen as, in every way, as valid a relationship as that between men and women.

Coming out: Past, present and future

In today's world, identifying oneself as lesbian continues to be a fundamental aspect of lesbian experience. My earlier work indicated that a need for authenticity was evident within many lesbian accounts. This continues to be the case: for example, in one of the interviews conducted in 2000, Catherine said, '[Coming out] initiates a journey whereby you kind of peel back the layers to who you are – like you become…more what you are…living who you are'.

Issues of isolation have affected and continue to affect lesbian, gay and bisexual development (for example, see Hunter & Mallon, 2000). Whilst these issues will not disappear until the stigma associated with non-heterosexuality within our society dissolves, there are some positive signs. We can compare data from women recalling their experiences from the 1970s with accounts of more recent experiences (see Boxes 2 and 3).

Box 2: Recalling the 1970s – a sense of isolation

> ' I never felt there was anybody who I could confide in'. (Joan)
>
> 'I just felt that I couldn't tell anyone else about it and it was a secret that I had to keep to myself. It made me feel depressed'. (Carol)
>
> '…a sense of absolute desperation…I had nobody to talk to and I didn't have the guts to tell anybody'. (Sophie)

Box 3: 2000 – continuing isolation or progress?

> 'I'm a 13-year old girl…For almost a year now I have known that I am a lesbian. I have told no one about it…This secrecy is a constant source of anxiety to me.' (*The Guardian* [G2 section], 'Private Lives', 15th Sept. 2000)
>
> 'I'm very lucky in the fact that my parents are very liberal, ridiculously laid back, and they literally knew when I knew…it wasn't that I ever had to hide...I never considered actively hiding it'. (Rose, interviewed in 2000)

Feelings of isolation (Box 2) were typical within accounts from my earlier study (although not necessarily representative of lesbians more generally: Markowe, 1996). The recent quotations (Box 3) illustrate two extremes but the sample considered here is too small to indicate what may be typical.

Media and technological developments have the potential to relieve some of the isolation. Whilst women coming out as lesbian from the 1950s to the 1970s could often recall little on television about lesbians – and perhaps Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* as the only book on the subject that they knew of at the time – today's women have far greater opportunities. British mainstream television presents lesbian characters in popular series (for example, Channel 4's *Brookside*); gay and lesbian shows are broadcast (for example, *Gaytime TV* on BBC2); and there has even been a lesbian character starring in a comedy series (*Rhona* on BBC2 in 2000). Both mainstream and alternative publishers now produce a variety of material relating to lesbians. For lesbians in the mid 1960s, there was *Arena Three* – a 'private circulation' magazine (Hamer, 1996) and in the 1970s, *Sappho* magazine (published from 1972 to 1981) with a print run of about one thousand copies per month (Forster *et al*., 1981). Today there is *Diva*, a magazine widely available from mainstream newsagents, with a

circulation of 35,000 copies monthly[4].

Diva provides us with an interesting reflection of the coming out experiences of today's young lesbian and bisexual women. Focusing on the letters pages – both the general letters from readers and the 'problem' page (entitled 'Around the kitchen table') – it is evident that coming out remains an issue. Topics addressed in 2000 included meeting others, isolation, identity, stereotyping, coming out at work or remaining in the closet and heterosexuals' attitudes/behaviours. Letters are often from young women and many are by e-mail.

Studies have already begun to indicate the potential for the internet to ease coming out (McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Yang, 2000; Thomas, 2001). Not only can the internet provide information and interaction with others whilst maintaining relative anonymity but this medium may also encourage self-disclosure (Joinson, 1998). There has been male domination in some aspects of computer use but gender differences in this area are less apparent among the young. Females are already significant users of e-mail and it may be expected that, over time, they will increase their use of the internet 'as a communication medium for support, information sharing, and community building' (Morahan-Martin, 1998, p.188). In these kinds of ways, the internet might play an increasingly positive role in coming out (although it must be recognised that it also has certain limitations and drawbacks).

Women's need for affiliation guides them in making coming out decisions: they seek to maintain and improve relationships with others. Sometimes, this is perceived as best achieved through non-disclosure but sometimes they choose to come out. Within the family, the decision about whether or not to come out to parents has always been an important issue and is perhaps the hardest for many to deal with. This is particularly so for young people who may be not only emotionally dependent on parents but may still live at home and depend on parents financially. Today's young women's experiences demonstrate both positive signs but also some of the negative experiences that women have reported in the past (see Box 4).

Box 4: Coming out to parents – quotations from interviews conducted in 2000

> 'I came out to my parents fairly quickly and relatively painlessly – because, I mean they're pretty liberal'. (Jessica)
>
> '[Mum] just looked at me stunned for a while and she just said 'No, no' – this real denial. And just the look on her face was horrible and then she was in tears… 'I want you to be normal'…When I was leaving and [Dad] was putting me on the train, he said 'Well, you know you've broken your mother's heart''. (Catherine)
>
> 'The whole coming out process is very different for me because I didn't have to come out to my parents'. (Rose)

Perhaps a clue to the ideal world of the future is provided by Rose. This young woman described how she never had to 'come out' to her parents – she had always talked to her parents about her feelings without any problem. Even today, this is probably still quite unusual. Whilst in this case the mother herself was bisexual, it perhaps points to the possibility of a family situation providing an accepting, encouraging, supportive background for diversity – coming out to parents, as we have conceptualised it until now, then becomes unnecessary.

Schools can potentially play a crucial role in providing a supportive context for lesbian and bisexual young people. Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act which banned the 'promotion' of homosexuality is still in force in England at the time of writing and has had the effect of discouraging teachers from dealing with issues of homosexuality (see Epstein, 2000). Rose reported that she was out at school, which illustrates progress – none of my earlier sample had attempted complete openness at school – but her experience also

[4] Gillian Rodgerson, editor, *Diva*, e-mail communication 27.02.01.

reminds us that schools have yet to provide the kind of supportive environment needed, as Rose described being the only person out as lesbian at her school and having to deal with offensive graffiti. Whilst such ideas remain controversial, it seems to me that for the ideal world of the future, full acceptance of same-sex relationships as part of the diversity of life needs to be present from the very beginning of school education.

The way forward

From a wide range of perspectives, our cultural understandings of gender and perceptions of what is 'normal' or 'natural' for women and men in our society can be seen as underlying coming out issues for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. Ideas from perspectives as diverse as evolutionary psychology to psychoanalysis reinforce our notions of gender division and 'normality'. On the psychological level, major advances for young lesbians coming out will require basic change in our social representations of gender and human nature.

Looking towards the future for young women coming out as lesbian or bisexual, further societal changes need to be considered. Among these are changes in the family, changes relating to women's position in society and advances in political and human rights. Giddens' (1999) idea of the 'pure relationship', with its basis in communication and its implicit democracy, provides an indicator of the way forward, away from the inequalities of the traditional family. Emotional communication, intimacy and trust underlie such relationships. The 'democracy of the emotions' that Giddens perceives can apply to all kinds of love and sexual relationships, friendship and family relationships. Indeed, in contrast to my previous participants, my recent interviewees talked of having children one day and establishing their own forms of family (see also the article on gay fathers by Helen Barrett and Fiona Tasker in this issue). Meanwhile, progress is evident on some aspects of women's position in society (for example, Walby, 1997) and on human rights issues (with the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law) and this will need to continue.

Some very positive developments are taking us forward. Coming out experiences overall show some major improvements if we contrast the experiences of, say, those in their teens or early twenties during the 1960s with those of this age now. However, some fundamental issues remain. Whilst the extent and intensity of isolation, lesbian 'invisibility' and negative societal attitudes have diminished, these still form a background to many women's experiences. Until fundamental changes occur in our conceptualisations of gender, and indeed of human nature itself, negative societal attitudes towards same-sex relationships seem likely to persist. However, women are beginning to conceptualise their own identities in more flexible ways and to perceive that they can make an increasing range of positive choices in their lives. In a society where non-heterosexual relationships were perceived to be as desirable as heterosexual relationships, identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual would no longer be a problem. Indeed, when our society has developed to that level, there would perhaps be no need for classifying identity relating to sexuality – and coming out issues would disappear altogether.

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Focus on Activism

Reflections on community practice and lesbian and gay psychological research

Elizabeth Peel in conversation with Stuart McQuade

'Bring psychology to society' was a phrase frequently seen in *The Psychologist* throughout last year (MacKay, 2001). *The Psychologist* ran a series of 'action plans' – on crime prevention, war and peace and terrorism – aimed at generating practical recommendations to achieve that goal. Clearly, the British Psychological Society (BPS) wants psychology to be relevant to social policy. The desire for psychology to benefit society is not a new idea. In 1969, George Miller (cited in Uzzell, 2000) advocated that psychologists should 'giv[e] psychology away' (p.333). Politically-grounded research was *institutionally* endorsed in Geoff Lindsay's (1995) BPS Presidential address when he emphasised that psychology 'must be seen to exist within a wider system of values and against the notion of 'value free' scientific enquiry' (p.498). The relationship between lesbian and gay psychology and lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) community activity is a significant aspect of this, particularly given the lack of human rights afforded to lesbians and gay men in the UK and current moves to address this – for example, the repeal of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act in Scotland, the same-sex partnership register in London and more general progression towards civil unions for lesbian and gay couples and the EU directive coming into force in 2003 outlawing discrimination based on sexuality in the workplace. As a field, lesbian and gay psychology is strongly committed to 'to contribut[ing] psychological perspectives to social policy initiatives which provide for better quality of life for lesbian and gay people' (Kitzinger *et al*., 1997, quoted in Kitzinger, 1999, p.4).

As I have argued elsewhere (Peel, 2001), lesbian and gay psychological research *has* the capacity to be both politically grounded and of practical use. The relationship between research and policy formation is not a neutral one (Tizard, 1990) and the more involved lesbian and gay psychologists are in 'the world of policy and application', the better able we are to control how our research is used (see Willig, 1999, pp.156–158, for a discussion of this in relation to discursive psychology). Rather than 'bestowing' psychology on LGB community members, it is important for lesbian and gay psychologists to engage in a 'dialogue' with members of community organisations in order to develop a (hopefully) more informed and reciprocal relationship between the often polarised domains of 'research' and 'practice'.[1] To this end, on 6 February 2001, I interviewed Stuart McQuade who is the director of the Northamptonshire Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance (NLGBA).[2]

Northamptonshire is a rural county and the NLGBA, as well as providing direct services, acts as an umbrella organisation for LGB groups in the county and has strong relationships with outside

[1] One example of this is the Ellen Gee Foundation (www.ellengee.org), which aims to promote and support LGB research and link it to a social policy agenda. The organisation aims 'to make policy makers, mainstream service providers and funders sit up and take notice of the health, welfare and care needs of lesbians and gay men' by deploying research findings appropriately (Ellen Gee Foundation, 2000).

[2] The NLGBA provides a number of services including advocacy, training for statutory and community groups, a counselling service, outreach, health advice, a resource centre and an in-house publication. NLGBA houses various groups – an LGB young people's group, Lesbian Line, Gay Line, a lesbian mothers' group, and 'Coming Out Together' – a group for any heterosexual struggling with someone's (homo)sexuality.

agencies. NLGBA, which was established in 1992, is a 'member-led' voluntary organisation, has four full-time paid staff members (and 15 volunteers) and houses the SNAP project (a 'men who have sex with men' sexual health project). The organisation was originally funded for three years (from 1995) by the National Lottery and is currently funded by a consortium of local statutory organisations, including the health authority and the county council. What follows is an edited version of the conversation Stuart and I had about his involvement in the LGB community and the relationship between community practice and research. Stuart, now in his 40s, has been involved in LGB community work since 1980, latterly as an 'out' HIV positive gay man. I opened the interview by asking him how he first became involved in LGB community organisations.

EP: How did you become involved in community organisations and activism?
SMcQ: The very first time was accessing a service through a help line, which was around *my* sexuality and where I would be able to go to meet other people. From that point on, I realised that actually there was some sort of network of LGB organisations. The first time I became aware of something that needed to change was when I realised that the people who were running one of the gay lines were abusing it. They were using it as a way of making sexual contacts – and it was pretty horrendous[3]. Independently I made a first challenge to that.
EP: By joining the organisation?
SMcQ: Yes. Basically there *was* no organisation. They ran this line from home and they acted as queen bees and it was very controlled – you did not have access directly to talk to these people unless you were in the inner circle. By status or class I was in the inner circle. I was allowed to talk to them because I was a white, middle class, business man – so I got in on that ticket not realising it. So as an unconstituted, self-run group with no accountability, there was something very, very clearly wrong. I realised that something should be done.
EP: Do you think your motivation for being involved in LGB groups and services has changed over the last 20 years?
SMcQ: Yeah. I was a peer leader, an organiser 20 years ago. I won a lot of friends and I made a lot of enemies because inevitably you just do in that kind of context. The groups I was involved in were fairly depoliticised. There was very little policy formation and no lobbying or campaigning that I was aware of. It was all around sex and social contexts.
EP: And was that – is that a gay *male* experience?
SMcQ: Yeah. It was very gendered. I think the reason that I was sometimes hated by some of the other organisers was that they were there to get sex and I wasn't. That wasn't my agenda. I think retrospectively that they must have looked at me and thought 'What was he doing?'
EP: Do you think community work has been professionalised?
SMcQ: It's been professionalised to death in some ways.
EP: How is that problematic?
SMcQ: There's not a representative member organisation and professional boundaries apply to those who are paid or who hold an office. So you have a division between paid LGB community workers and 'the community' at large. What has happened is the paid people have to work within the structures of the local authorities, county council and so on, which have rules and protocols. So I have to question – are we really campaigning? Is it not the person on the ground that's actually doing the campaigning? It seems 'never the twain shall meet' somehow.
EP: It's a dilemma. Do you work within the structures to change them or do you lobby from outside?
SMcQ: I think the only way is if you do work from within – you must be able to have strong and close links with those at a ground level. You need to liaise with the community and that often just doesn't happen. Another thing that's made a huge difference is HIV and it's radically changed things for the good. HIV has brought forward – particularly for gay men – sexuality issues. I've seen a shift in the last few years much more towards LGB issues. It has moved on but, in 1984 or 1985, health, sickness and employment policy was

[3] Birkett (2001) also draws attention to the early stages of community organisations being plagued by 'a less rigorous adherence to the codes of conduct' (p.85) than is acceptable.

heavily influenced by HIV because the main question was 'How are we going to get the pay, support and rights for people who are going to die?'.

EP: How does HIV relate to the wider LGB community?

SMcQ: It's a massive waste of services when direct access services are being directed away from men who have sex with men. It's political correctness gone mad. One of the funniest things I ever saw was [that] the London Borough Grants Committee HIV Commissioners collectively awarded a substantial grant to a lesbian HIV/AIDS project. I'm not saying there are no lesbians with HIV but they're an absolutely tiny amount of lesbian women. The horrendous thing was the Commissioners knew that but they bowed to political correctness. When we complained (and there were lesbians complaining as well) and argued that lesbians needed culturally appropriate health provision, they just took all the money away.

EP: So people get constrained by the ring-fenced monies available [i.e., funds that can be used for one purpose only and are non-transferable]?

SMcQ: Completely – and health provision doesn't address that, although health provision for gay men has become more holistic and services have rippled out from what used to be specific HIV/AIDS provision towards gay men's health more generally. Gay men are not an homogeneous group and there will always be people who complain. But where is the provision for lesbian women? The thing we should criticise is the LGB political factories. The consortium of LGB voluntary organisations held a two-day conference in 2000. They didn't mention health, social policy, inclusion, housing or employment. They didn't even mention Section 28. So you have to ask the question – what the hell were these people doing there? They failed to address what are still massive inequalities for LGB people. So community organisations become too far removed from the community. Also we were all white, middle class and middle aged, which is problematic. I worry very much (a) are we making enough room for new blood across our LGB communities and (b) are the young people as motivated as the older LGB people were? And they're not.

EP: Because there's no sense of LGB history and the past?

SMcQ: Yes – it's off the political agenda nationally and locally because it's not of interest. The young LGB group that we run at the NLGBA is completely apolitical. The culture has changed. I had an experience this week where, at 'First Out'[4], we asked the group to redesign the poster advertising the group. Currently the poster displays the rainbow flag[5] – which is a very important symbol of LGB politics, solidarity and I very much welcome that because I'm happy with the rainbow flag because we worked hard for that. The young people don't want that flag any more: they say it doesn't mean anything to them. They want to create something that is more local and personal to them and I accept that. But what I think it's saying is that rather than this world campaign, things are much more internalised and people are saying 'What's the immediate benefit for *me* as an individual?'. It has shifted.

EP: What else has changed?

SMcQ: LGB people play the 'victim card' much less and wheeling ourselves out as LGB people or as HIV positive people has become far less effective to create change. Visibility has increased. I asked 35 elected members of a borough council recently, 'Hands up how many of you have ever known a gay, lesbian or bisexual person'. Five years ago, maybe half the group would have held their hands up. Ten years ago, maybe only one or two. Two weeks ago, every single hand went up. There's less shock impact when trying to get LGB issues on the agenda because we are integrated – we're told. With HIV, that was also very important. In the mid 80s, you could squeak yourself in in a wheelchair and you'd come out with ten thousand pounds. AIDS was actually sexy. That's changed as well. What I would like to see groups campaign for is

[4] 'First Out' was the name of NLGBA's youth group. It was renamed 'Sorted' in August 2001.

[5] The rainbow flag was developed in 1978 and designed by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker as a symbol of the lesbian and gay movement (Stewart, 1995, p.211). The colours of the rainbow flag symbolise the diversity of our community. Although today the flag contains six stripes, Baker originally designed a flag with eight stripes: pink, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. The colours represented respectively: sexuality, life, healing, sun, nature, art, harmony and spirit.

that every lesbian, gay and bisexual person should have the same standards of service wherever you live, whether you live in Brighton or Cornwall or Aberdeen – and it's exactly the same for people with HIV as well. So the idea of national standards or common good practice and consultative procedures is politically very important.

EP: How do you see national standards being achieved?

SMcQ: We need to work collectively to develop national targets in order to develop national standards across the UK. We need to learn from other parts of Europe and the world.

EP: How do you think research fits into a national agenda for 'equality'?

SMcQ: I think without research, we've actually got very, very little hope. Without research, all we've got is victim mentality and anecdotal evidence – that [anecdotal evidence] is important but you have to have an audience for that. Those audiences aren't always available without an effective research machine being in place. If we look at the health issue alone, it's only now that I'm seeing research on suicide amongst LGB people coming through. It tends to be American[6].

EP: Local funding bodies can say that international research is not applicable to the immediate context.

SMcQ: Exactly. So in terms of getting funding for LGB organisations, it is crucially important. We need a national strategy about how we collect information and to encourage [high] standards of data collection. I'd like to know how many young people are thrown out of their house by their parents because they've come out as being gay because I don't believe that it's just the four a month that we see in Northamptonshire. We need to have the numbers involved in that *and* we need to understand the other implications and the knock-on effects. Another example of this is exclusion from school. We have a major education crisis when you have such a large amount of LGB people excluding themselves from school and psychological research would be really useful in gaining a fuller picture of what's happening.

EP: Would research be persuasive to policy makers?

SMQ: Yes. They've done a huge amount with race but you don't see anything having occurred with LGB communities. In Northamptonshire, over the whole county we have three per cent of the population who identify as being from an ethnic minority group. At least ten per cent, I would argue, are LGB[7] – and again we don't have the research that's evidence-based enough I think to really endorse that. That's 85,000 LGB people in the county. In terms of funding expenditure, there's three million [pounds] on equalities programmes for ethnic minority groups, twenty thousand [pounds] for LGB people. It doesn't add up. I'm not saying they should move a single penny of that money from ethnic minority groups but where is the LGB provision coming through government? Where is Stonewall? Where is the consortium of LGB voluntary groups? So yeah, I think research would be very influential in creating a national response.

EP: How do you think research informs the work you do? Does it inform practice beyond getting funding bodies to stump up money?

SMcQ: As I said, I think the research that's available is fundamentally anecdotal and you have great orators of that. There are people who work in the profession who have become skilled merchants of anecdotal evidence. Does it inform anything else other than funding? No because I don't think that service providers are open to all people and they tend to think that sexuality doesn't matter. So appropriate service delivery is *ad hoc* and sporadic. I don't think research gets through to service providers or service deliverers.

EP: Is part of the problem that research isn't applied enough or community based?

SMcQ: Well I think generally the LGB community is not good at communicating. I think research should be embraced and not ignored. There's no

[6] It has been suggested by Jan Bridget that Britain lags about 20 years behind the US in terms of lesbian and gay research: see http://www.lesbianinformationservice.org/suicide.htm (accessed 17.10.01). For examples of North American research on suicide among lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, see D'Augelli & Hershberger (1993), Rotheram-Borus *et al*. (1994), Hershberger & D'Augelli (1995), Bagley & Tremblay (1997), DuRant *et al*. (1998) and Remafedi *et al*. (1998).

[7] 'Facts' are rhetorically effective and numbers are convincing to funders. LGB 'facts' have been well used by activists to secure service provision and further civil rights for LGB people (Kitzinger, 1995).

central collection point there either, which has to be community-led. Some research *must* be saying things that are relevant to LGB service provision – for instance, LGB people being more likely to attempt suicide – but it doesn't seem to be getting through.

EP: How do you see the relationship between psychological research and LGB practice developing in the next few years?

SMcQ: I suppose it's about commissioning appropriate research. It's about finding the underlying problems that exist for LGB people in many different situations across the country. I would like to see what the mental health risks are for LGB people. Let's look at what the risks may be, let's look at how they're prevented and then, importantly, how they can be dealt with. LGB sexualities need to be more fully integrated into practice. For example, within assessment procedures in the NHS, questions about sexuality need to be asked. There are many people with depression, for instance, who go and see a psychologist and questions about sexuality are avoided completely and never ever asked at all, so history-taking is a major problem. At a minimum, I think research could inform how history-taking and assessment are undertaken.

EP: Do you see any problems linking together community work and research in lesbian and gay psychology?

SMcQ: No. I think the community would welcome research and it would participate directly in trying to collect data. It's always difficult to collect information but I think where there was consensus of agreed common data collection to inform research, it would work. I've had direct experience that people *will* participate – people will give you information if you ask them appropriately.

EP: Does the personal and the professional overlap in the LGB community work that you do?

SMcQ: I think it's essential to be a gay man to do the roles that I do. What has always been beneficial – and I've played this card, along with the victim one – is that, when I *have* to be, I'm incredibly straight-acting. I'm perceived as being a 'safe' gay man. In 1993, I got a job for the Health Authority and they wanted a 'straight' gay man. I had to be able to play along and it was 'trial by sherry'. I would imagine that, over the years, people would look at me over the table and think 'Nice guy…he could have married my daughter. There must have been something in his programming that went just a little bit wonky'. [*Laughter*] I think that's called working from within. I have been happy to whore myself in that way because I have wanted to work from within. I really wish that I could say some of the things that I'm saying to you in some of the professional forums that I go into but I can't. That's my lack of confidence in the ability of other organisations and institutions to be accepting – it's almost drip, drip, drip. I did chain myself to lamp-posts in the past but I've chosen a different route.

EP: You play the system?

SMcQ: Yes.

EP: What have been your biggest successes in the LGB community?

SMcQ: I can cite far more than we can pursue! Personally, it's been the time I've spent with LGB folk. Organisationally, it's been shifting agendas to be more inclusive and more accepting of people who 'didn't fit' – [for example] running a health group in Leeds for gay and bisexual men and altering the dynamics that excluded people who were too fat or used drugs or got pissed. I think I've demonstrated a strong sense of that inclusion.

As with the inaugural 'Focus on Activism' article in the November 2001 issue of *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* (Birkett, 2001), these reflections and observations on activism and service provision from someone who has long been involved at the 'coal-face' may provide some useful pointers for others who are working in the same areas – and may provide reassurance that some of the difficulties they encounter are not specific to particular individuals, organisations or geographical areas but are a common feature of this challenging work. For those who are conducting psychological research on lesbian and gay issues, Stuart's reflections on the potentially vital importance of good-quality research relevant to service provision are encouraging. They act as a reminder of the need to consider carefully how we might share our findings with agencies and organisations which are well placed to use them

to inform and shape practice for the benefit of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

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Research in brief

On 'mundane heterosexism'

Mark Craven

In a recent research article, Elizabeth Peel (2001) combined discourse analysis with lesbian feminist politics in order to explore subtle forms of heterosexism in language – a feature which she refers to as 'mundane heterosexism' because of its everyday nature. As one might expect from discourse analytic research, Peel lays down a persuasively comprehensive rationale for her study by looking in considerable detail at a range of issues which include understandings of subtle sexism, gender and sexuality, and discursive psychology and prejudice. A cogent argument is created, highlighting the need to focus upon and identify everyday, mundane forms of heterosexism in order to challenge prejudice stemming from heterocentric assumptions. The performative nature of language is established as the primary analytic focus in the research. Consequently, discourse analysis is deployed in uncovering the linguistic resources and techniques involved in the production of mundane heterosexism.

Taking data from lesbian and gay awareness training sessions, Peel uses principles taken from Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analytic approach alongside a lesbian feminist political sensibility to highlight how the 'micro inequalities' of heterosexism are constructed in talk. Three themes or 'interpretative repertoires' are presented, namely (i) prejudice against the heterosexual, (ii) non-heterosexuality as deficit and (iii) refusing diversity. These categories, it is emphasised, are seen as interlinked and as operating within the confines of liberal ideology. The analysis that subsequently unfolds is firmly grounded in the data, i.e., quotations are used to illustrate what is occurring in particular instances of talk. The analysis is successful in that it presents a persuasive account of how the micro-inequalities of heterosexism are constructed in talk.

A clear sense of reflexivity is in evidence as the author positions herself in relation to the topic being explored. I found the most noteworthy aspect of this work to be its clear real world implications – something that is rather unusual in discourse analysis, which has been accused of lacking real-world relevance (Abraham & Hampson, 1996), despite the contrary claims of some leading discourse analysts (Willig, 1999). The aim of fostering beneficial social change – by considering how mundane heterosexism is constructed with a view to developing strategies for its eradication – is obviously central to Peel's intentions. She draws our attention towards two potential ways of challenging the oppressive discourse of heterosexism, i.e., through interactional, *'in situ'* challenges and through broader societal campaigns and activism. However, whilst the analysis makes reference to the macro-level in this respect, the main emphasis is directed towards the micro-level of language in terms of theorising, analysis and suggested challenges. What is not sufficiently explored perhaps is the process by which a micro-level discursive analysis might provide us with the tools to effect the sort of changes that Peel advocates – and how these changes might be effected. Of course, this criticism could also be levelled at many other discourse analytic papers which claim that a micro-level linguistic analysis can be used as a resource for meaningful social change – and here I appreciate that my own preference for a more thoroughly social, Foucauldian version of discourse analysis is showing. Whilst Peel's research is commendable in that it uncovers the linguistic resources and techniques involved in the production of an oppressive social process, the emancipatory potential of this work might arguably be extended by also considering how the material context of social relations – including

inequalities arising in the structural features of society – creates possibilities for and also constrains the discursive production of mundane heterosexism and in turn its potential eradication. It is increasingly being recognised that fruitful combinations of micro-level and more macro-level analyses may provide us with research that is maximally useful in political terms (Wetherell, 1998) – and, although both levels of analysis are readily discernible in Peel's research, perhaps a little more of the latter might have been beneficial. But then, to paraphrase Mandy Rice-Davies' famous observation, I would say that, wouldn't I?

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Conference report – 'Researching under the rainbow: The social relations of research with lesbians and gay men'

Elizabeth Peel & Victoria Clarke

'Researching under the rainbow', a one-day conference held at Lancaster University on 27 September 2001, brought together academics from across the social sciences to explore the politics and practicalities of researching lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people. The ten speakers discussed their experiences of researching LGBT people, often as an LGBT researcher. They explored topics such as ethics and power within the research process; the visibility of and audiences for lesbian and gay research; the policy context of lesbian and gay research; and participation and empowerment (whether lesbian and gay research should be *on* or *for* lesbians and gay men).

A major theme of the day – addressed by five of the papers – was researching lesbian and gay families. Jaqui Gabb, from the University of York, highlighted the differences between her research and most other research on lesbian parenting which celebrates lesbian families' *differences* from the traditional heterosexual family. Her participants described a rather more traditional family structure, where the birth mother was 'literally left 'holding the baby''. She attributed these differences in part to her insider status as a birth mother, a status she shared with most of her participants. She suggested that future research on lesbian parents (and research on LGBT issues generally) needs to take account of the subjectivity of the researcher, the specificities of the sample and how these factors impact on the findings. There is, she argued, a need for greater reciprocity between researchers working on lesbian and gay families.

Another prevalent theme during the day was the representation of LGBT experiences. In a paper focusing on inclusivity, Brian Heaphy, from Nottingham Trent University, raised questions about 'non-heterosexuals' – such as the need to broaden the spectrum of individuals included 'under the rainbow'. He suggested that the sampling of 'hidden populations' often serves as a justification for not making an effort to recruit particular groups – often the most marginal groups in the LGBT community. He urged researchers to be more creative and find ways of accessing marginal groups. A number of the papers dwelt on our obligations as researchers to our participants and the complexities of faithfully representing their experiences in ways that they find meaningful and acceptable. Heaphy pointed out that LGBT participants' motivations for taking part in research are often ignored by researchers. Their involvement in LGBT research can be based upon the mistaken assumption of a shared politics with the researcher. The dilemma of balancing our participants' concerns with our, often conflicting, agenda as researchers (and the agendas of funders) emerged as a central issue for LGBT researchers engaged in reflexive practice. Kathy Almack, from the University of Nottingham, suggested that one way of resolving these dilemmas would be to take data back to participants. This would both improve our understanding of their experiences and empower them by more fully including them in the research process.

A number of the speakers discussed their isolation as lesbian and gay researchers within the academy. Andrew Kam-Tuck Yip, from Nottingham Trent University, explored the often negative consequences for our careers when LGBT researchers choose to study LGBT issues. He described the position of the LGBT researcher as an often 'lonely research journey' and talked of

an occasion at a conference on the sociology of religion when he was the only delegate to present a paper on lesbian and gay issues. This contrasts with the relief and excitement he felt when, at a recent conference he attended, there was a whole symposium on lesbian and gay issues. He cited the difficulties of gaining recognition within often extremely conservative research fields, such as the sociology of religion, which are frequently hostile to lesbian and gay concerns. One solution he suggested was that LGBT researchers should contextualise our funding applications within the existing themes of organisations (for example, the ESRC), to market them in the 'best light'.

Catherine Donovan, from the University of Sunderland, discussed collaborative research between lesbians and gay men. She charted some of the potential advantages and disadvantages for lesbians who work closely with gay men. She raised questions about the power dynamics within research teams and also attended to difficulties such as analysing data where respondents have diverse identities. These issues also concerned wider issues of 'inclusivity'. This topic provoked interesting discussion about who we claim to represent when we research the lives and experiences of lesbians and gay men. A number of papers stressed the heterogeneity and diversity of lesbians' and gay men's variously classed, racialised, gendered and (dis)abled experiences. For instance Liz McDermott's (Lancaster University) paper addressed the invisibility of class and Steve Hick's (University of Central Lancashire) explored racist norms in the assessment process for lesbian foster carers. The main thrust of the discussion was broadening the boundaries of lesbian and gay research to embrace all those individuals who fall outside the category 'heterosexual'. It was claimed that the implicit assumption that drives a desire for inclusivity disappointingly results in 'Others' being incorporated into a framework based upon a white, middle class, able-bodied, gay male perspective. The discussion, sadly, did not interrogate the *politics* of inclusivity.

The topics in the plenary discussion addressed interesting themes, such as the limitation of social categories. Questions about 'how researchers can take into account a range of participant identities' and 'whether the increasing interest in queer theory has resulted in an over-textualisation of lesbian and gay lives at the expense of materiality' provoked interesting discussion. Similarly the politics of doing research were raised – both micro-politics within the research process and the political *ends* of research; for instance, whether the urge to use lesbian and gay research for emancipatory ends is 'clouded by the complexity' of lesbians' and gay men's lives. The concluding message that we took away from the day was 'not to look over the rainbow but struggle within it'!

We particularly valued the opportunities that were provided to share experiences across a diverse range of disciplines from geography to sociology. It brought home to us the variety of lesbian and gay research currently in progress and acted as a useful reminder that research focusing on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities is burgeoning. Being together with a diversity of researchers highlighted that, even though we may feel quite marginal within psychology and not like 'proper' psychologists, as lesbian and gay psychologists we have a unique perspective to offer on lesbian and gay issues. An encouraging sign was that a lot of the papers and conference attendees were postgraduate students, which is a clear indication of the proliferation of research in the field. It was well worth the unnaturally early start!

Elizabeth Peel is a PhD candidate in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University and is co-editor of *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*.
Victoria Clarke is a PhD candidate in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University, whose research examines the social construction of lesbian and gay parenting.

BPS Lesbian & Gay Psychology Section 2002 Postgraduate Prize Rules

As part of its commitment to the development of lesbian and gay psychology in the UK, the BPS Lesbian & Gay Psychology Section instituted an annual postgraduate prize in 2000. The prize is awarded for the best submission based on a postgraduate thesis or on the research element of a postgraduate portfolio that is relevant to lesbian and gay psychology. The deadline for submissions for the 2002 prize is **30th August 2002**.

The winning entry will be published in *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*. The winner will receive a framed certificate, a year's free membership of the Section and will have their registration fee paid to allow them to attend a Section conference (or a BPS conference at which there is a Section symposium) where they can receive their prize and present a paper based on their submission.

The rules are as follows:

1. Entries are welcomed from graduates of or students/trainees on PhD, PsychD/DPsych/DClinPsy (and other postgraduate practitioner courses) and MSc/MA/MPhil courses
   - who are Section members and
   - who are currently working on their thesis/portfolio or have submitted their thesis/portfolio within the 12 months prior to 30th August 2002, and
   - whose thesis or portfolio (or the research element of the portfolio) is relevant to lesbian and gay psychology.

Any individual can make only one entry in any year. Prize winners are not eligible to submit further entries in future years. If in doubt about your eligibility, please contact Adrian Coyle <A.Coyle@surrey.ac.uk>

2. Submissions should be based on a postgraduate thesis or – for graduates of PsychD, DPsych, DClinPsy and other postgraduate practitioner courses – on the research element of a postgraduate portfolio or course. Submissions should be clearly relevant to lesbian and gay psychology. Do not send a copy of the complete thesis or portfolio.

3. Submissions should be prepared in the form of an article for *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* (see Notes for Contributors) and should contain no more than 3500 words (excluding references). Please ensure that your entries conform *exactly* to the format of articles in *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* (including the referencing format). However, the cover sheet for entries differs from the cover sheet required for regular *Review* submissions. All entries should be accompanied by a cover sheet containing the following information:

   (a) Your full name and address for correspondence and a telephone number where you can easily be contacted.

   (b) Title of the postgraduate course for which you are/were registered.

   (c) Year in which the postgraduate course was commenced and year of (expected) completion.

   (d) Full address of the department and institution at which you are/were registered.

   (e) Name(s) and title(s) of supervisor(s).

   (f) Finally, please type out and sign the following statement: 'This submission is based on my postgraduate thesis/the research aspect of my postgraduate portfolio or course, supervised by _____.

The submission has not previously been published in whole or in part and it is not currently under submission for publication elsewhere. I am willing for my supervisor to be contacted for further information.'

Also, we require four hard copies of each submission but we do not require a version on disk. Entries which do not conform to these requirements cannot be considered and will be returned unread. Note that late submissions cannot be accepted.

4. Submissions should be sent to Adrian Coyle, Department of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XH. All submissions will be acknowledged.

5. All submissions will be anonymously reviewed by members of the Lesbian & Gay Psychology Section Committee (except for committee members who are eligible to submit entries for the prize), which will choose the winning entry. If committee members conclude that none of the entries are of an appropriate standard, the prize will not be awarded.

6. The winner will be notified by the beginning of November 2002 and the winning submission will be published in *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* in 2003 (as a single-authored article, with the supervisor(s) credited in an acknowledgement). The decision of the Section committee will be final. Feedback will not be provided on unsuccessful entries.

Book Reviews

Our sexuality (7th ed.)

Robert Crooks & Karla Baur (1999)
Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
ISBN 0-534-35467-X (hbk)

Reviewed by Stanley Richardson

The authors' preface says that their book 'offers a comprehensive…introduction to the biological, psychological, behavioral and cultural aspect of sexuality'. This statement is a challenge to any reader. If their claim had been confined to 'sexuality in the USA', I would probably have agreed. 'Cultural diversity' has 12 references in the subject index. Apart from passing historical references to Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, ancient Egypt and ancient Greece, 'cultural diversity' to the authors means differences between *Americans* of African, Asian, Caucasian and Hispanic (undefined) descent, with minimal discussion of Native Americans (who are acknowledged as a diverse group exposed to the hypocrisy of the Christian invaders). So, if one wants to learn about the sexuality of the major American ethnic groups, this book would be invaluable, especially as it gives useful information about internet resources and recent research (up to 1998). The authors say they have a non-judgemental perspective and a psychological orientation: these claims are well founded.

The book does not totally ignore the UK but never calls it by its proper name. In the index (which is excellent), there is one reference to 'Great Britain' (in a table of prevalence rates of child sexual abuse) and three references to 'England', yet it is clear that the UK is being described in each of the four cases (about numbers of multiple sex partners, adolescent pregnancy, etc.). Leaving these caveats aside, the book's 20 chapters are grouped under headings such as 'Sexuality problems', 'Biological basis', 'Sexuality and the life cycle' and 'Social issues'. The authors stress that they have a psychosocial orientation, i.e., they believe that sexuality is governed more by psychological factors and by social conditioning than by the effects of biological factors such as hormones and instincts. They question two long-standing themes: 'that reproduction is the only legitimate reason' for sex and 'the rigid distinction between male and female roles' (including any lack of equality between women and men). Their questioning of these themes results in their opposition to them. This opposition and their 'biases' (their word) appear throughout the text, they say – and this is true. But to take any other stance today would be bizarre, especially in books by psychologists (Lefton, 1997, and Pinker, 1998, are two examples among many).

The chapter on 'Sex research: Methods and problems' should be of special interest to readers of *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*. The authors rightly stress that 'human sexual behavior is…difficult to study, for it occupies an intensely private area in our lives…the subject matter of sexology abounds with myth, exaggeration, secrecy, and value judgments' (p.20). They give a useful comparison of the non-experimental and experimental methods and remind us that feminist scholars believe that sex researchers place too little emphasis on females and offer an inadequate exploration of the subjective and qualitative experiences of both sexes. As expected, the Kinsey reports are given adequate coverage but are criticised for their limited 'sampling techniques that over represented young, educated, city-dwelling people'. Since Kinsey, the authors believe that 'the most comprehensive information about adult sexual behavior in the USA is provided by the National Health and Social Life Survey…this study stands alone as the single best sex survey ever conducted within the United States and …*reflects the sexual practices of the general US adult population in the 1990s'* (p.31, my emphasis). In later chapters, the findings of this study are examined 'in some detail'. Thus the authors make it clear that their book is about people in the USA and readers should, perhaps, remind themselves of this.

Chapter 10 ('Sexual orientations') gives adequate coverage of Kinsey's continuum of sexual orientations, societal attitudes to them, homosexual lifestyles, the gay rights movement, etc. The chapter concludes that sexual orientation 'seems to be formed from a composite of factors that are unique to each individual'. This will strike many as vague, especially those who support the proposition that structural differences in the brains of homosexual and heterosexual men are linked to sexual orientation in a causal way (LeVay, 1991). However, LeVay cautioned that the differences he observed provide no direct evidence of a causal link. The authors do say that 'research suggests there is a biological predisposition to exclusive homosexuality'. The factors affecting sexual orientation are discussed both from a psychosocial and a biological standpoint. Four contemporary Christian views on homosexuality are examined. The Vatican's opposition to homosexuality is mentioned, as is the 1997 National (USA?) Conference of Catholic Bishops direction to parents to love their homosexual children. The authors present a balanced picture of 'Sexual orientations' without downplaying the controversial nature of topics such as homosexual marriage, adoption of children in lesbian and gay couples and reactions against lesbian and gay rights.

Every chapter ends with a summary, 'Thought provokers', suggested readings and web resources. The 'Thought provokers' are really questions for discussion – for example, 'When did you first encounter pornographic material? How did it affect you?'. These, together with the suggested readings and web resources, enhance the value of the book as a text for sexuality courses. It also has a useful glossary. 'Critical thinking questions' are integrated into the text and are meant to encourage students to stop and think critically about what they are reading in order to facilitate learning.

In sum, provided the USA bias is acceptable, this book should be a valuable text. Many psychologists not specialising in sexuality will learn from it and enjoy it and it will appeal to a wide audience.

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LeVay, S. (1991). A difference in hypothalamic structure between heterosexual and homosexual men. *Science, 253*, 1034–1037.

Pinker, S. (1998). *How the mind works*. London: Penguin Books.

Stanley Richardson *is a Chartered Psychologist and heads Stanley Richardson Management Consultants in Singapore.*

Counselling today's families

Herbert Goldenberg & Irene Goldenberg (1998)
Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole
ISBN 0-534-34655-3

Reviewed by Leonard Bloom

This solid, competent and hefty American text will suit students of counselling and counselling psychology in the UK, provided that they are aware of how fluid and Americanised are 'family problems' here – and how they differ because of our different values and class-structure. Counsellors of lesbian and gay clients will find much that is relevant and adaptable to our society but they will, I hope, be more alert to stigma that the authors, who do not even mention it in the index. Surely, they must be aware of stigmatisation in the USA?

The book is divided into three sections. 'Understanding family relationships' (pp.1–105) describes the modern American family in a rapidly changing society. It outlines techniques of analysing (not psychoanalysing) how families function and tabulates six approaches to family counselling. The approaches are all essentially simple 'experiential', almost behaviourist, and they range from 'experiential' (equalling self-growth and fulfilment) to various forms of conflict in relationships across the generations and to 'post-modern' analyses of how families use language to create 'stories' about themselves. The nearest approach to the psychodynamic seems to be the post-modern, which is not too far

from the family myth and the family romance to which a psychoanalytic practitioner would be sensitive. Doubtless these approaches could be applied to lesbian and gay family members as to any other people but they all lodge families in a world of their own, operating *sui generis* regardless of the constraints and stigmatising by the wider society. The impact of the wider world is frequently mentioned but rarely integrated with the discussions of what counsellors should be doing in their day-to-day practice. All very sound, no doubt, but I missed in its 104 pages any view about the ethics of intervention. For the authors, the counsellor's task is to assess a family's problems and to intervene when called upon to do so. But who has the right to do the calling? Who, if anyone, has the right to refuse to let them in? Who has and who should have the right to invade a family's privacy and to set about changing its members' feelings about one another or their behaviour? In a society that stigmatises and demeans many members, I would expect a book about intervention to state openly what its authors believe are and should be the rights and limits to intervention.

Part two – 'Counselling families with varied lifestyles' (pp.109–254) – includes 'Counselling gay male and lesbian couples' as one of four kinds of family, namely the 'single-parent-led', the remarried, heterosexual adults and gay and lesbian couples. Gay and lesbian couples are implicitly pathologised, as are the other families in this section. There is no attempt to show how the families more often than not function adequately. Their members may be neither eccentric nor so deviant as to 'require' intervention by a counsellor. And again one must ask: required by whom? In what specific and tightly circumscribed circumstances? In good social science style, the authors give guidelines to forms of counselling, inventories and checklists of dysfunctions. These would be more helpful to teachers and students had the authors been bold enough to give a few suggestions for debatable uncertainties and controversies. Few issues in counselling are as cut-and-dried as the book rather blandly implies. When I first read the book, this section made me feel uneasy about the liberal yet conventional thrust. My uneasiness was not lessened on my second reading. I am, for example, unhappy about the impoverished definitions of 'gay' and 'lesbian', which shrink them to sexual relationships. Moreover, in 1998 the glossary could still say of AIDS that 'gay men and drug abusers are at the greatest risk', without the mildest caveat about the changing patterns of risk that are associated with, *inter alia*, the influences of cultural mores, education and socio-economic class.

Student counsellors and their teachers would be better enlightened if the book directly and unambiguously confronted them with the possibility that they, like their clients, have latent prejudices, anxieties and fears. The book nowhere even hints at the sometimes dramatic problems of transference and counter-transference. More serious is the lack of anti-pathologising. Lesbians and gay men are as human as anyone else and are not solely engaged in a sexual relationship but live together as companions, parents and lovers, there being many ways to love, to be in love and to cherish, support and care for one another. Overall, there is an odd absence of a section that addresses the basic question that must be faced before any substantive issues are looked at. Who is a counsellor? How should he or she be educated emotionally? What should be the legal and social limits to her or his professional propensity to 'intervene'?

The final section (pp.255–331) is somewhat oddly entitled 'Counselling families with special circumstances' but it is never made clear why these families differ from those in section two. Only two types of families are included: 'the dual-career' and the 'ethnically diverse minority'. Again the treatment is conventionally liberal and again the heated debates are played down. What, for example, are the merits and demerits of 'assimilation', ghettoising and cultural separation? What are the emotional strengths and weaknesses of relations in the dual-career families? Not enough is made of the diversity and idiosyncrasy of families and their members. There is no more sense in over-generalising about, for example, African-Americans than there is in over-generalising about lesbians and gay men. The authors seem little interested in the true and ignored platitude that it takes all sorts to make a world.

The book overall is a workable text but its 330 pages barely touch the politically and socially sensitive questions which are latent to all counselling theory and practice. How you, the counsellor, treat my family and me, gay or lesbian, ethnic minority or not, depends upon how the socio-political values that influence you will influence how you will perceive my family and then how you will make decisions about us. Furthermore, there is nothing in the book that sensitises the reader to her or his unawareness of these influences. The authors could have been more open about the problems experienced by many gay men and lesbians, forced as they are to live sometimes with fearful and suspicious neighbours in a hostile wider society. The authors deal with the problems of achieving a sense of positive identity, or a Winnicottian true self but I am far from persuaded that having a lesbian or gay counsellor is, *ipso facto*, necessarily helpful. The counsellor may have her or his defensiveness, denial, guilt or anxiety. These are psychodynamic issues that are ignored in the book. The authors do deal with such emotional problems as coming out, coming to terms with one's positive and negative feelings, forming relationships and HIV/AIDS counselling but they do not acknowledge that there are similar or identical emotional problems for all individuals. Dare I say that they fail to offer readers one hint that sometimes it is fun to be different and that counselling may be the last thing that people in difficulties might need or want?

I have no doubt that the book will be prescribed for recommended reading. It ought to come with a cover that announces 'we' are the same as 'them' and that warns readers against tacitly colluding with a society that is at best indifferent and at worst hostile to lesbians and gay men and others with off-centre ways of life.

Leonard Bloom *is a psychotherapist and social psychologist who has recently returned to the UK after practising for about 10 years in South Africa. He is currently writing a book and professional papers about his experiences and is concerned with how individuals cope as individuals in changing authoritarian societies.*

Through the wardrobe: Women's relationship with their clothes

Edited by Ali Guy, Eileen Green & Maura Banim (2001)
Oxford: Berg
ISBN 1-85973-388-3

Reviewed by Matt Fowler

This edited text is one of a handful of titles in a series entitled 'Dress, body, culture' and consists of 15 chapters arranged in four parts. The first section draws attention to the experiential process of women consuming fashion, whilst the second examines the clothing choices made by women in the public domain, specifically within the employment arena. This is followed by a section focusing upon the 'hidden aspects of women's clothes' (p.9). The final part offers reflections upon the research process and material. The aim of this book is to plug an existing gap in the literature on the ambivalence of women's fashion and dress. Two recurrent themes involve the extent to which women's choice and experience of clothing is controlled by the fashion system and women's ability to reveal their 'true selves' (p.7) through their clothing choices and to challenge the ascribed meanings about femininity.

It might not be immediately clear from the title how this book is relevant to the concerns of lesbian and gay psychology. However the discerning reader will recognise that in today's globalised post-modern society, lesbians and gay men are choosing to explore new identities or identifications through clothing, fashion, style and dress. This book provides a forum for discussing to what extent these transitions are connected to revealing, concealing or creating identities based upon sexuality. From the outset the editors maintain that they want to provide a voice for ordinary women through the contributors. They have certainly achieved this and should be congratulated for assembling a collection of warm, humorous, tragic, poignant and exultant accounts which tap into the very heart of 'everyday' women's 'wardrobe moments' (p.5) by teasing out the leisure, pleasure and pain of clothes shopping. There is a welcome breadth to this book. The

editors have brought together an impressive wealth of empirical data and theoretical knowledge utilising a broad range of data collection techniques which involve transcribed interview extracts, case vignettes, observation and personal narratives and biographies.

There are some particularly good chapters, notably chapter 3, entitled 'Big girls' blouses: Learning to live with polyester' (by Alison Adam). This explores the relationship between big women and their clothes and the author explains that big women are often unwilling to conform to society's ideal of slenderness and as a result are placed in the margins of femininity. Bodies which deviate from the ideal of slenderness are pathologised and located 'outside' of what is normal, frequently being linked with greed, laziness and indiscipline. The chapter helps to highlight the ambiguity about where 'normal' ends and where 'big' begins. In a chapter entitled 'From closet to wardrobe', Winn and Nutt provide the only direct material regarding lesbian women and explore some of the main features of 'lesbian existence' in the twentieth century. Specific attention is paid to the notion of 'butch-femme' and how the visible 'butch' has offered a culturally homogeneous image of lesbian identity. Finally, there is a questioning of the fashion styles which are flourishing within the context of 'global queer' (p.222).

What I found especially original and refreshing throughout this book was the 'true voice' accorded to each of the contributors. The editors have included a short piece at the close of each chapter entitled 'Endnotes: Unpicking the seams'. Here the contributors have been invited to reflect upon their research and this helps to capture researcher reflexivity. Each author shares their motivations behind their choice of methodology, the rationale behind their current theoretical position and the messy aspects of their research – the 'bumpy bits' (p.260) – which are seldom reported or made visible once a piece of research is completed. I would have liked the contributors to have suggested further reading at the end of each of their respective chapters. However, this minor gripe is overshadowed by the excellence of many of the chapters.

My overall impression of the book was very positive. The editors have produced a gem, an immensely readable, lively book that is imaginative and innovative – a must for anyone interested in clothing, costume, fashion, women's studies or feminism. In my opinion, a number of factors contribute significantly to the quality of the text. The structure of the book is very user friendly. It is well edited and contains a number of fabulous photographic images, including a cover design which invites the reader inside.

Matt Fowler *is a trainee Forensic Psychologist at HMP Frankland, Durham. He is currently a part-time MSc student at the University of Teesside and the University of Northumbria at Newcastle.*

Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality (Volume 11, Number 3, 1999)

Edited by Eli Coleman

Journal of Bisexuality (Volume 1, Number 1, 2000)

Edited by Fritz Klein
Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press

Reviewed by Peter Martin

These two journals share the same intent: their purpose is to inform and to encourage thoughtful debate. While the older *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality* presents a scholarly and refereed selection of papers on a given theme, the new *Journal of Bisexuality* intends to appeal to a wider audience. It includes some peer-reviewed papers but also some lighter articles and a few informational pieces. These are intended to encourage and sustain what the journal claims is a growing population of people who have bisexual behaviour, inclinations and interests.

The Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality appeared first in 1996 and publishes original articles on sexuality-relevant topics from a wide range of psychological perspectives. Part 3 of volume 11 – the subject of this review – represents only part of this range. It takes as its theme 'Sexual offender treatment: Bio-psychosocial

perspectives'. One article on the standards of care for the treatment of adult sex offenders (by Eli Coleman and colleagues) is indicative of the high standard of scholarship achieved by this publication. It reviews the range of paraphilia (erotosexual conditions) and the measures for treatment in the USA. Having carefully defined its terms ('standards of care', 'sexual offence', 'sexual offender', 'psychological treatment', 'bio-medical treatment'), it then examines the professional competence required to meet the need for and the antecedents to successful treatment. It ends with a set of principles of the standards of care. These include the need to integrate psychological interventions with bio-medical ones and to work within the criminal justice system. Interestingly principle 15, which is about non-discrimination, does not include sexual orientation. Principle 16 does, however, state that 'professionals who treat sexual offenders must view these individuals with dignity and respect' (p.17).

Other articles examine psycho-neuro-endocrinology and separate papers trace the relationship between brain abnormalities and self-perceived aggression, self-concept and violent behaviour. There is an interesting investigation into the treatment of adult male molesters and one on female sex offenders. This journal is accessible but serious and would be well worth the specialist's attention. It might also be worth bearing in mind as a possible publication outlet for sexuality-related research being conducted by Section members, as the journal has carried work by British-based researchers in the past (for example, Coyle & Rafalin, 2000). Each issue is themed but the journal does offer 'separates' (monographs) from previous issues that would be of interest to the researcher of lesbian and gay issues: for example, a double issue was devoted to 'New directions in HIV prevention for gay and bisexual men' (Wright *et al*., 1998).

The *Journal of Bisexuality* has a 'jokey' cover and there are some rather lame attempts at humour in some sections within it. However, these belie a serious emancipatory purpose. This first edition claims to cover sexual science, history, phenomenology, therapy and politics. It is not an idle boast. The journal is seeking to provide for what it believes to be a very wide population that is larger in number than the lesbian and gay community and has 'bisexual experience, curiosity or interest'. The contents would certainly be a feast of information and debate to those who have come new to the world of bisexuality, especially if the reader happened to be intelligent and reflective. The academic content is, however, respectable in terms of analysis, tone and careful referencing.

It begins with comments on the 'Bisexual resource guide'. This is written in a folksy idiom and charts the recent history of bisexuality. Randen (p.21) quotes Ochs (2000), the author of the 'Guide', responding to criticism of her popularism, saying 'we need to proactively engage the media'. This article exemplifies that belief. In a more meaty paper, Rust examines the meanings of bisexual identities. She draws data from 917 individuals who took part in an 'International bisexual identities, communities, ideologies and politics' study. The main focus is a qualitative analysis of the meanings that individuals impute to their bisexual identities. Her analysis concludes that there is an important distinction to be made between bisexual identity and the definition of bisexuality. She regards this as an important discussion because it is the 'most effective deterrent to the development of new, oppressive sexual categories' (p.67). Her research is an assertion of the individual differences that defy categories.

'Stories of bi-sexuality', a paper in the tradition of auto-ethnography, is followed by Dworkin's 'Bisexual histories in San Francisco in the 1970s and early 1980s'. This is heart-warming stuff but is followed only by a brief analysis that does not seem to do justice to the narratives. Poelzl's account of her own experiences as a bisexual surrogate has life and energy and is clear and well referenced. Lawrence and Queen assert that 'bisexuals help create the standards for safer sex' (p. 147): although there is a slightly self-congratulatory tone to this work, it is nevertheless a valuable record of endeavours which might well be otherwise swallowed up in the massive literature on the gay response to HIV/AIDS. This first issue concludes with short articles on a bisexual biography from Europe and articles on film/video and

books relevant to bisexuality. The *Journal of Bisexuality* does fill a gap and does so worthily. The mixture of academic and more popularised accounts should not deter the serious scholar. Even where rigorous analysis is lacking, the articles have a ring of sincerity and, from a phenomenological stance, are valid. The intent behind these articles reminds me of Ellis and Bochner's (2000) research goal to 'encourage compassion and to promote dialogue' (p.748). They do just that.

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Wright M.T., Rosser S. & de Zwart O. (Eds.) (1998). New international directions for HIV prevention for gay and bisexual men. A special issue of the *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality, 10*(3–4).

Peter Martin *is a freelance Counselling Psychologist with expertise in working with lesbian and gay clients. He can be contacted at 52 Ethelburt Avenue, Southampton SO16 3DD. E-mail: pamartin@dircon.co.uk*

Books for Review

A number of books have arrived on the desks of the editors and we are hoping that they will be of interest to members of the Section. If you are interested in reviewing books for *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, please get in touch with Elizabeth Peel (see inside the front and back covers for contact details), who can also provide assistance to those who have never written a review before. Remember that reviewers are allowed to keep the copy of the book that they review, so reviewing can be a good way of adding to your book collection at no cost! The following texts are now available for review:

Baumeister, R.F. (Ed.) (2001). *Social psychology and human sexuality*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

Baumeister, R.F. & Tice, D.M. (2001). *The social dimension of sex*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bi Academic Intervention (1997). *The bisexual imaginary: Representation, identity and desire*. London: Cassell.

Bleys, R. (2000). *Images of ambiente: Homotextuality and Latin American art, 1810-today*. London: Continuum.

Creekmur, C.K. & Doty, A. (Eds.) (1995). *Out in culture: Gay, lesbian and queer essays on popular culture*. London: Cassell.

Gilbert, L.A. & Scher, M. (1999). *Gender and sex in counselling and psychotherapy*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Greene, B. (Ed.) (1997). *Ethnic and cultural diversity among lesbians and gay men*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Helgeson, V.S. (2002). *The psychology of gender*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Steffens, M.C. & Biechele, U. (Eds.) (2001). *Annual review of lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in European psychology, volume 1*. Trier: Association of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Psychologies Europe.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS TO *LESBIAN & GAY PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW*

Submissions

The editors of *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* invite empirical, theoretical and review articles (maximum 3500 words) on any aspect of lesbian and gay psychology. The editors would also like to encourage the submission of book reviews, bibliographic articles, short articles on relevant research papers for 'Research in Brief' (see Vol. 1, pp.21-22 for an example), conference reports, letters and notices of events and activities likely to be of interest to members of the BPS Lesbian & Gay Psychology Section.

Academic submissions

Manuscripts (maximum 3500 words excluding references) should be typewritten, double spaced with 1' margins on one side of A4 paper. Each manuscript should include a word count. Sheets should be numbered. On a separate sheet include the author's name, address, telephone number, current professional activity and a statement that the article is not under consideration anywhere else and has only been submitted to *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*. As academic articles are refereed, the rest of the manuscript should be free of information identifying the author/s.

Full bibliographic references should be contained in the list of references at the end of each article. They should be listed alphabetically by author, be complete, accurate and in the format used in *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*.

If in doubt about any formatting issue, authors should either consult the editors or should adhere to the format used in articles published in *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*.

Low quality art work will not be used. Graphs, diagrams, etc. should be supplied in camera-ready form. Each should have a title. Written permission should be obtained by the author for the reproduction of tables, diagrams, etc., taken from other sources.

Other submissions

Book reviews, bibliographic articles, conference reports, contributions to 'Research in Brief' and 'Focus on Activism', letters and notices about courses, conferences, research and other forthcoming events are not refereed but are evaluated by the editors. However, book reviews and all other reports should conform to the general guidelines for academic articles.

Deadlines for notices of forthcoming events and letters are listed below.

For publication in:	*Copy must be received by:*
March	5 November
July	5 March
November	5 August

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