

GLIP News

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

Editor's Note



Welcome to old and new members alike to the first edition of GLIP News for 2003. As outlined in Gordon's Convener's Report, the executive and various members have been busy on many projects. The one we are keen for your comments and thoughts, relates to the review of GLIP's Terms of Reference (see page 3). As well, this edition contains a book review by Damien Riggs, an outline of the Symposium to be held in Perth at the APS Conference in October, call for nominations for the Executive Positions, the AGM and the GLIP Award nominations.

I have included the information on the GLIP Breakfasts held in Melbourne and Brisbane, although out of date, for those members who do not receive email updates, in order for them to contact the respective organisers for future dates.

If you would like a free book (we get a review), I have the following Haworth Press publications available to GLIP members:

- * Journal of Homosexuality Vol 42 (4)
- * Journal of Bisexuality Vol2 (2/3)
- * From here to diversity: The social impact of lesbian and gay issues in education in Australia and New Zealand
- * AIDS and Mental Health Practice: Clinical and Policy Issues
- * Femme/Butch: New considerations of the way we want to go
- * The bear book II: Further readings of the history and evolution of a gay male subculture

Graeme Kane
National Secretary and Editor

Call for Nominations & GLIP's AGM to be held in Melbourne - 31st July 2003

It's election time again. All three National positions, Convener, Secretary and Treasurer are up for grabs. These positions are for two years. Interested members can contact me for further enquiries or if they wish to nominate.

Again this year, we will be holding GLIP's Annual General Meeting in Melbourne in order to facilitate greater member participation. Outcome of the election will tabled as well as report from the current Convener, Secre-

GLIP Award Nominations

The APS Interest Group on Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology is calling for nominations from graduates of fourth year, Masters by coursework, and/or their supervisors, for the GLIP Award. The value of the GLIP Award is \$250 and the winner will be announced at the annual conference of the APS and in *InPsych*.

The Award is intended to promote and encourage excellence in research into psychological issues of same-sex attraction and to acknowledge and reward psychology graduates for their contribution to research into such issues.

Award criteria

Applications will be received from students who have completed a fourth year or Masters by coursework research report or thesis, as part of an

tary and Treasurer.

Following the AGM, interested members are invited to join us for dinner t a local restaurant. At this stage, we are thinking the Curry Club in Richmond. Open to other suggestions

The AGM will be held from 7.00 - 7.30 pm at the Boroondara Community Health Centre. NOTE: Entry via back gate. Please advise if you are planning on attending, either on 03-9810 3087 or email me at graeme.kane@iechs.org.au

Australian Psychological Society Ltd accredited Psychology program. Applications will be judged by a committee on their scientific merit, contribution to the field of psychology and relevance to same-sex attracted people.

Submission

Nominations are to be made by submitting two (2) copies of the research report or thesis to the Coordinator of the Selection Committee by no later than the 31st May 2003.

Mr Gordon Walker, Coordinator of the Selection Committee
Department of Psychology, Monash University
PO Box 197, Caulfield East, VIC, 3145
Ph: 03 9903 2728
Fax: 03 9903 2501
Email: gordon.walker@med.monash.edu.au

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GLIP's National Breakfasts!

1. Attention Queensland Members

Put this in your diary
Sunday 27th of April 2003
9.30 am BREAKFAST
VENUE: Moray Cafe
Corner of Moray and Merthyr Streets
New Farm

Come and celebrate the inaugural
Brisbane GLIP Breakfast
RSVP to Lynette 07-3254 0304 or 0403 369 242
joostetherapy@bigpond.com

2. Attention Melbourne Members

Put this in your diary
Sunday 4th May 2003
10am BREAKFAST
VENUE: Fitzroy Gardens Pavilion
FITZROY
Please RSVP to elaexplore@today.com.au
0419 155 707 or message bank 9539 1557
Please bring pamphlets/flyers and business cards
for show and tell :)

Book Review: *Queer Counselling and Narrative Practice* (ed) by David Denborough

The turn to narrative therapies in this country has been largely the result of work done at the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide. This turn towards a focus on language and the ways in which subjectivities are 'storied' into existence mirrors work done in the field of discursive and constructionist psychologies, the difference being (in many cases) that narrative therapies have paid particular attention to what such understandings of subjectivity mean to people in their everyday lives. Thus rather than resulting in heavy, theory-driven practice, the outcomes have instead worked to validate hidden stories and to celebrate the multiple ways in which subjectivities are experienced. This works to demystify psychological knowledges, share access to power and use positions of privilege to achieve political ends. *Queer Counselling and Narrative Practice* provides an insight into the ways in which an understanding of subjectivity as narrative may be used to challenge heterosexist constructions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities.

The book draws together a wide range of articles on queer identities; articles which tend towards a celebration of the multiple, and often contradictory, ways in which we experience subjectivity, rather than simply reproducing reductionist conceptualisations of heterosexual 'either/or' gender binaries. Amy Ralfs, Jane Speedy, Christopher Behan and James Light all point towards the importance of 'speaking the unspoken'; of talking about the positive and negative aspects of queer subjectivities, rather than simply attempting to present the 'good story' (a tendency that must be located in the desire to contradict homophobic constructions of queer identities as deviant and pathological). They suggest that as queer academics we must be work with paradoxes – that instead of trying to reconcile the multiple aspects of our experiences of being queer, we need to be happy to rest uncomfortably with the contradictions (Riggs, 2002).

The workings of power within heterosexist society also receive attention within this book. Chris McLean writes openly and honestly about what it means to have heterosexual privilege, and the importance of acknowledging our own subject positions when we are working with varying groups of people (see also the chapter by Moneira on the benefits of white race privilege and Mark Trudinger's chapter on bisexual privilege). For to assume that just because we may believe that our goals are for 'the greater good', the recipients of our attention may see the situation in very different ways. Liberal humanist discourses of empowerment and self-change often work to ignore the ways in which the ability to enact agency (and thus direct social change) is often the privilege of the powerful. By simply adopting a 'change is in your hands' philosophy, we may indeed be colluding with the oppressive practices that we are attempting to challenge (Burman, 1996). If instead we are willing to challenge our own place within structures of power and dominance, we may be more able to work towards social change (Watson, 1992; Ettinger, 1994). For as Suzy Stiles suggests in her chapter on the power of language, we must work to turn the gaze around onto heterosexist practices, rather than continuing to look just at the impact heterosexism has on queer subjectivities.

It is this focus on language that provides some of the most stimulating reading within the book. Again Suzy Stiles writes about the usefulness of thinking about the word 'family' as a verb – that the construction of families is not the result of biological reproduction, but is rather a set of culturally located beliefs that are dominated by the traditional heterosexual model. Thus if we are to conceptualise family as something that we do, we may be more able to enact other forms of family that challenge that of the typical 'nuclear family'. Indeed Claire Ralfs suggests that queer families provide the possibility for the enactment of what she calls 'anti-nuclear' families, where the focus is on "collectivity rather than individualism". Whilst this may not fit for everyone seeking to challenge heterosexist models of the 'good family', it certainly provides a space for us to re-think how we 'do' family.

Language is also given attention in regards to the ways in which differing words achieve certain political outcomes. In varying ways the 'reflections' offered by Zoy Kazan, Claire Ralfs and Patrick O'Leary challenge the ways in which understanding queer subjectivities through the lens of heterosexual gender binaries works to reinforce positions of power and oppression. They suggest that instead of working with set categories of gay and lesbian (for example), we need to be recognising the fluidity of subjectivities, thus allowing each person to define their experiences for themselves, rather than slotting them into predetermined boxes. The point is also made that the use of certain terms (such as heterosexism and homophobia) have different uses at different times, and that we must be mindful of the ways in which we can be made complicit with hegemonic regimes of truth.

The only sticking point in the book occurs when contributors run aground of

homogenous constructions of lesbian and gay identities (see chapters by Bill Logan and Daphne Hewson). As previously suggested, this works to subsume multiple experiences within a limited framework. So whilst it may be useful at some times to deploy what Diana Fuss (1990) refers to as 'strategic essentialism' in order to provide a rallying point for social and political change, we must be wary of buying into heterosexual gender binaries and essentialist notions of gender and sexuality. For as Christopher Behan suggests in his solo chapter, there are issues around rights to define subjectivities (for example, in regards to ideas of a monolithic gay culture), and we must be mindful that we do not further exclude individuals by delineating the ways in which we expect certain queer subjectivities to be performed.

Queer Counselling and Narrative Practice is a timely collection that contributes a great deal to furthering the study of queer subjectivities as they are currently configured. If we are to accept an understanding of western culture as always already under the gaze of psychology, then it is important that we develop ways of challenging and reconstructing the discipline in order to provide space for voices that have been marginalised historically. Rather than simply working to reinforce heterosexual dichotomies of gender and sexuality, we as queer writers and activists may instead explore alternate ways of conceptualising subjectivities (see chapter by Manja Visschedijk). And it is this type of book, and narrative therapies more generally, that provide rich spaces for this work to be achieved.

Burman, E. (1996). The spec(tac)ular economy of difference. In Kitzinger, C. & Wilkinson, S. (Eds.) *Representing the Other: A Feminism and Psychology Reader* (pp. 138-140). London: Sage.

Ettinger, M. (1994). The Pocahontas Paradigm, or will the subaltern please shut up? In Garber, L. (Ed.) *Tilting the Tower* (pp. 51-55). New York, Routledge.

Fuss, D. (1990). *Essentially Speaking*. London: Routledge.

Riggs, D. (2002). As if it were real: Writing experiential multiplicity as epistemology. *Conference Proceedings of the 1st Australian Postgraduate Students' Critical Psychology Conference* (pp. 162-177). Sydney: University of Western Sydney.

Watson, L. (1992). "Untitled." *Health for Women*, 3.

Damien Riggs
Adelaide University
Associate Member APS

GLIP's Terms of Reference

Proposed

1. To encourage research, teaching and professional development opportunities in relation to sexual orientation and related gender issues within the discipline of psychology
2. To provide a forum for discussion and support for practitioners dealing with clients' sexual orientation issues
3. To liaise with other professional groups whose aims are congruent with those of the Interest Group and in accordance with those of The Australian Psychological Society Limited
4. To promote client care which is supportive and well-informed practice for lesbian, gay and bisexual clients
5. To provide expert advice to and on behalf of The Australian Psychological Society Limited on issues relating to the area of sexual orientation and related gender issues

Current

1. To encourage the study and foster research of homosexual (gay and lesbian) issues
2. To promote the development of gay and lesbian issues within the discipline of psychology
3. To provide a forum for research, discussion and support of practitioners dealing with gay and lesbian issues
4. To liaise with other professional groups whose aims are congruent with those of the Interest Group and in accordance with those of The Australian Psychological Society Limited
5. To serve the broader discipline with a network of practitioners to whom referral could be made with regard to gay and lesbian issues
6. To provide expert advice to The Australian Psychological Society Limited on issues relating to their area of interest when the need arises

APS Conference - Perth 2003. GLIP Symposium :

Challenging heteronormative practices: Developing alternative understandings of gay and lesbian identities.

Convener: RIGGS, DW.

Presenters: CASS, V.; HIGGINS, D., & MILLER, D.; JANSEN, H.; POWER, GJ., & FALLON, BJ.; RIGGS, DW.

In this symposium we seek to explore the ways in which the use of a heterosexual framework to understand gay and lesbian identities works to both limit the development of alternative psychological theories and practices, and proscribe the ways in which such identities are experienced. In a series of papers that span the qualitative and quantitative spectrum, we attempt to demonstrate the ways in which a reconceptualisation of the methods of doing research within gay and lesbian communities may allow for the voicing of local understandings that have been historically marginalised and silenced. Both Higgins & Miller and Jansen provide insightful analyses of the ways in which heteronormative practices can work to 'closet' those individuals who would wish to be otherwise. Similarly, Cass, Power and Fallon, and Riggs explore the ways in which certain voices may be suppressed through practices that position some identities as 'normal', whilst others are labeled 'deviant'. Together these papers explore several alternate ways of understanding gay and lesbian identities. We would also encourage the exploration of other marginalised identities within this broad framework of challenging heteronormative practices. Such challenges may be enacted both in the research setting, and by practitioners who seek to challenge the status quo.

Who is influencing whom? The relationship between Identity, Sexual Orientation and Indigenous Psychology

CASS, V. (Clinical Psychologist). vcass@perth.dialix.com.au

Despite calls in some quarters for a greater flexibility in our notion of sexual orientation, the belief that individuals *are* lesbian/gay or 'straight' is still strongly held in the general community. Research on lesbian/gay identity has sometimes been criticised for being one of the major forces constructing and influencing the idea that lesbian/gay sexual orientation is about who one *is*, and that this *is-ness* is a fixed entity residing within the individual. In this presentation I will examine whether this criticism is justified. To do this I will look at my own work and processes as a so-called 'identity researcher' (who seems to have become a bit of 'living history') and the way this linked into early historical developments and the Western indigenous psychology of the 1970s. By examining the interconnections between these variables, it is possible to address the question of whether identity research did indeed have the power to formulate our current views on lesbian/gay sexual orientation (and whether identity researchers should be drawn and quartered or praised).

The role of sexual disclosure and harassment in predicting job satisfaction and organisational commitment

HIGGINS, D., & MILLER, D. (Deakin University). dhiggins@deakin.edu.au

The relationship between disclosure of sexual orientation, reported harassment, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment of Same Sex Attracted Employees (SSAEs; n = 65) and Opposite Sex Attracted Employees (OSAEs; n = 34) is examined in a self-selected sample of 99 employees. SSAEs and OSAEs reported similar levels of job satisfaction; however, SSAEs had significantly less organisational commitment than OSAEs. SSAEs reported a higher degree of active disclosure about their personal sexual orientation than OSAEs, for whom—in accordance with existing theory on heteronormative bias—it would be assumed that they were 'normal' (i.e., straight). For SSAEs, greater disclosure about sexual orientation was associated with greater job satisfaction; however, the association between disclosure and organisational commitment was positive, but statistically non-significant. In contrast, for OSAEs, higher levels of disclosure were associated with lower satisfaction with, and commitment to their organisation. Surprisingly, SSAEs who scored high on the measure of self-disclosure of their sexual orientation ('open' SSAEs) did not report greater levels of harassment than (a) 'closed' SSAEs, (b) 'open' OSAEs, or (c) 'closed' OSAEs. Sexual orientation is a construct that is strongly associated with employees' work outcomes, and greater attention is needed on the differences between SSAEs' and OSAEs' experiences of disclosing their sexual identity at work.

Editorial Policy

Aims and Objectives

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

Contents

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

Solicited articles

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

So, do you have a boyfriend? Bringing same-sex attraction out of the closet

JANSEN, H. (James Cook University). heidsta2002@yahoo.com.au

This paper offers a new perspective on research into same-sex attracted identity. Although pathology-based approaches to same-sex attraction have been vigorously challenged and are no longer widely accepted, mainstream psychological epistemologies still fail to encompass the issues involved in same-sex attracted identity development. It is proposed that a narrative psychological approach is a useful way to gain insight into the issues that permeate the lives of same-sex attracted women, and explore some of the ways in which social contexts construct heterosexuality as more acceptable than same-sex attraction. Society is inherently heteronormative and this can be evidenced in the discrimination and stigma that many same-sex attracted individuals face when they 'come out' or are forced out of the 'closet'. Using a survey methodology based on Cass's (1984) homosexual identity development model, 44 self-identified same-sex attracted women explored their 'coming out' experiences. The research offers support for Cass's model and also indicates that the narrative methodology is useful in examining same-sex attracted individual's stories.

Cass, C. V. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research*, 20(2), 143-167.

Sacred and profane: Catholic gay priests

POWER, GJ., & FALLON, BJ. (Australian Catholic University). geor-jap@alphalink.com.au

Catholic doctrine and canon law sanction celibate heterosexuality as fundamental to the identity of a priest. But qualitative data from the CCLS 2001 survey of priests in parish ministry (N=383) and semi-structured interviews with 14 priests and ex-priests indicates that many priests are neither heterosexual nor celibate. Evidence that alternative sexual orientation and practice abound within the clerical sector of the organisation has been consistently reported in recent research and literature. Questions about the overall sexual maturity of priests have been raised, exposing serious deficiencies in seminary structures for psychosexual development, particularly in relation to gay seminarians. The organisation holds a dogmatic position which demands that priests who acknowledge their gayness also accept without reservation the fact that they are intrinsically disordered towards acts that are evil. This emphasis on the orthodox position creates a climate which tacitly supports the notion that homosexuality is linked with acts of pedophilia and ephebophilia, and intensifies the structural denigration of gay priests. This paper explores the organisational framework that informs the experience of gay priests, and looks at that experience from professional, personal and psychological perspectives.

On the limits of discourses of 'sameness' and 'difference'

RIGGS, DW. (The University of Adelaide). damienriggs@yahoo.com.au

The present study offers a critique of writings within the field of study of gay and lesbian identities, with particular focus on the ways in which such identities are either constructed as being 'just like' or 'essentially different' to heterosexual identities. Work within this field draws upon discourses such as 'we are all humans regardless of our sexuality' or 'gay and lesbian individuals have an essence (either biological or spiritual) that influences their sexuality'. Through an analysis of the discursive repertoires deployed within these writings, it will be shown that focusing on either end of the spectrum works to a) reify heterosexist gender binaries and b) limit the ways in which sexualities may be expressed in multiple and often contradictory ways. Particular focus will be given to the ways in which such repertoires work to limit the political potentiality of research in this area. The intention here then, is to not to criticise the work that is being done in the area of gay and lesbian identities, but rather to explore ways of understanding such identities that exceed the narrow confines of heteronormative understandings of identity.

Unsolicited articles

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

Advertising

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

Submission of material

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