

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87666-7 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer Psychology: An Introduction

Victoria Clarke, Sonja J. Ellis, Elizabeth Peel and Damien W. Riggs

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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer Psychology

This exciting and engaging textbook introduces students to the psychology of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer lives and experiences. It covers a broad range of topics including diversity, prejudice, health, relationships, parenting and lifespan experiences from youth to old age. The book includes ‘key researcher’ boxes, which outline the contributions of significant individuals and their motivations for conducting their research in their own words. Key issues and debates are discussed throughout the book, and questions for discussion and classroom exercises help students reflect critically and apply their learning. There are extensive links to further resources and information, as well as ‘gaps and absences’ sections, indicating major limitations of research in a particular area. This is the essential textbook for anyone studying LGBTQ Psychology, Psychology of Sexuality or related courses. It is also a useful supplement to courses on Gender and Developmental Psychology.

VICTORIA CLARKE is a Reader in Sexuality Studies at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

SONJA J. ELLIS is a Principal Lecturer in Psychology at Sheffield Hallam University.

ELIZABETH PEEL is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Aston University, Birmingham.

DAMIEN W. RIGGS is a Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Psychology at the University of Adelaide and Lecturer in the School of Social Work at Flinders University.

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Introduction: how to read and use this book

The book is intended as a specialist textbook that will support a course or lecture block on LGBTQ psychology (or the psychology of sexualities and genders). At the same time, each chapter is intended to stand alone, and provide an introduction to a particular aspect of LGBTQ psychology, so LGBTQ perspectives and experiences can be incorporated into a wide range of psychology topics such as, for example, lifespan development, prejudice, health, research methods, family and relationships. Readers ‘dipping in’ to some of the later chapters can consult the glossary for definitions of key concepts.

What’s in this book?

The book is divided into three sections plus a concluding chapter.

Section I (History, contexts and debates in LGBTQ psychology) provides an overview of the theoretical, methodological, political and practical issues and debates that inform LGBTQ psychological research. Chapter 1 explores the history and development of the field of LGBTQ psychology. It discusses the work of early sexologists, the ‘founding fathers’ of sexuality and gender research, the emergence of ‘gay affirmative’ psychology in the 1970s and the subsequent development of LGBTQ psychology as a recognised sub-field of psychology. Chapter 2 summarises some of the key theoretical and political perspectives that inform research in the area, and examines the relationship between LGBTQ psychology and related areas of research such as queer theory and feminist psychology. It also examines the relationship between LGBTQ psychology and positive social change for LGBTQ communities and individuals. Chapter 3 provides insight into doing LGBTQ psychological research. It explores some of the issues that psychologists encounter when researching LGBTQ populations and the main methods used in LGBTQ psychological research. It also provides practical guidance for readers undertaking research projects in LGBTQ psychology and outlines the core principles of non-heterosexist and non-genderist research. Chapters 2 and 3 will also equip you with tools for critically evaluating research in LGBTQ psychology and mainstream psychology.

Section II (Understanding social marginalisation in LGBTQ lives) overviews one of the core concerns of LGBTQ psychology: understanding and challenging the social marginalisation of LGBTQ individuals and communities. Chapter 4

examines aspects of diversity within LGBTQ communities, and the different and intersecting forms of social marginalisation that members of these communities encounter. Some LGBTQ psychologists might disagree with our decision to have a separate chapter on diversity on the grounds that this serves to make diversity a ‘special issue’. However, we think it is important both to integrate discussion of diversity throughout the book and to allocate some separate space within the book to focus specifically on issues around diversity. Chapter 5 overviews the most well investigated topic in LGBTQ psychology: prejudice and discrimination against members of LGBTQ communities. Research has focused both on the implications of prejudice and discrimination for members of LGBTQ communities and on understanding and challenging the negative attitudes and behaviours of heterosexual and non-trans people, as well as on broader institutional heterosexism. Chapter 6 explores social marginalisation in relation to the sexual, mental and physical health of LGBTQ people. This chapter highlights the distinctive experiences and needs of LGBTQ communities in relation to health and health care.

Section III (LGBTQ experiences across the lifespan) outlines research on significant events in the LGBTQ lifespan: from youth to old age and death. Chapter 7 centres on the experiences of LGBTQ young people and the significant ways in which these differ from those of heterosexual and non-trans youth. This chapter also summarises the literature on coming out and the development of non-heterosexual and trans identities. Chapters 8 and 9 consider significant events in the lives of LGBTQ adults, namely, forming and maintaining relationships and creating families and parenting children. Chapter 10 examines ageing in LGBTQ communities and the lives of older LGBTQ people, as well as issues around dying and bereavement. Finally, Chapter 11 concludes the book by considering future directions for LGBTQ psychology, highlighting some of the issues that have been neglected to date and outlining key concerns for future research. For readers contemplating undertaking a research project in this area, this chapter might give you some ideas for your research!

There are some topics that we simply did not have the space to discuss, including growing bodies of work on LGBTQ concerns in relation to sport and leisure, and the workplace (see Clarke and Peel, 2007a). We hope that work in these areas continues to develop and that a future edition of this book or other books on LGBTQ psychology will include a discussion of LGBTQ issues in sport and leisure, and the workplace.

Pedagogical features of the book

A number of pedagogical features support the main text:

- **Chapter overviews and summaries.** Each chapter starts with an overview, which signposts the major topics dealt with in the chapter, and each chapter ends with a summary of the main points covered.

Overview

- What is LGBTQ psychology and why study it?
- The scientific study of sexuality and 'gender ambiguity'
- The historical emergence of 'gay affirmative' psychology
- Struggling for professional recognition and challenging heteronormativity in psychology

Main chapter points

This chapter:

- Defined LGBTQ psychology as a branch of psychology that seeks to challenge the privileging of heterosexuality within society and provides a range of psychological perspectives on the lives and experiences of LGBTQ people.

- **'Key researcher' boxes.** Each chapter (except for Chapter 8) contains a box (or boxes) written by a key researcher in the field, which outlines their contribution to, or vision of, LGBTQ psychology.

Box 1.1 Key researcher: Charlotte J. Patterson on why we need LGBTQ psychology

Why study the psychology of LGBTQ lives? When I ask myself this question, I think of the great US writer James Baldwin (1924–87). Baldwin, an African American gay man, was a prolific writer, producing plays, novels, poetry and essays. In an essay that Baldwin published in 1955, he wrote: 'I have not written about being a Negro at such length because I expect that to be my only subject, but only because it was the gate I had to unlock before I could hope to write about anything else' (Baldwin, 1955: 8). It was essential, Baldwin believed, for writers to begin from their own experience.

- **'Key study' boxes.** Chapters 1, 2 and 4–10 contain boxes that summarise the findings of an important study in the area.

Box 1.4 Key study: Evelyn Hooker (1957) on the adjustment of the overt male homosexual

Evelyn Hooker was a researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles in the 1950s, and much has been written about the role of her research in challenging the pathologising model of homosexuality. Hooker befriended one of her gay male students, Sam From, who introduced her to the middle-class, male homosexual community in Los Angeles. He persuaded Hooker to study homosexuality and Hooker was successful in securing funding from the National Institute of Mental Health (she had to go through a background check to ensure she was neither a communist nor a lesbian; Minton, 2002).

- **‘Highlights’ boxes.** Each chapter contains boxes that foreground key issues and debates, provide examples of research instruments or summarise the pros and cons of particular approaches.

Box 1.2 Highlights: the Kinsey scale

- 0 Exclusively heterosexual behaviour
- 1 Primarily heterosexual, but incidents of homosexual behaviour
- 2 Primarily heterosexual, but more than incidental homosexual behaviour
- 3 Equal amounts of heterosexual and homosexual behaviour
- 4 Primarily homosexual, but more than incidental heterosexual behaviour
- 5 Primarily homosexual, but incidents of heterosexual behaviour
- 6 Exclusively homosexual behaviour

- **‘Gaps and absences’ sections.** At the end of each chapter (except Chapter 4) we identify a number of gaps and absences in the relevant research area. These suggestions for future research signal some of the major limitations of work in a particular area and will help readers critically to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the existing literature. They might also provide inspiration for research projects on LGBTQ issues.

Gaps and absences

Every chapter will highlight gaps and absences in a particular area of research. In this chapter, we note some of the major gaps and absences across the field of LGBTQ psychology as a whole:

- *The lives of LGBTQ people outside of the USA:* As will quickly become apparent, a lot of the research we draw on in this book was conducted in the USA. This is partly because the field was first established in the USA and because there are lots of LGBTQ psychologists there. We hope that as the field continues to develop, we will learn more about LGBTQ people living in other countries.
- *Diversity within LGBTQ communities:* Research has tended to focus on the experiences of gay men and lesbians who live in urban areas (often major gay

- **Questions for discussion and classroom exercises.** Each chapter includes questions and exercises that are designed to help readers to reflect critically on the issues covered in the chapter and to guide you in further exploring some of the issues. Many of the questions and exercises can be used as a focus for seminar discussions, assignments or research projects.

Questions for discussion and classroom exercises

1. List all the terms and associations you can think of for the categories ‘lesbian’, ‘gay man’, ‘bisexual’ and ‘heterosexual’. These can be slang terms, stereotypes, famous people, behaviours or practices. It doesn’t matter if some people would consider the words offensive or whether you would use them; the point of this exercise is to identify all the positive and negative cultural associations for these categories. Once you’ve listed all the associations you can think of, can you spot any themes or patterns?

- **Further reading.** Each chapter includes suggestions for further reading to guide readers’ independent study. LGBTQ psychological research tends to be scattered over a wide range of books and journals and some of these may not be very accessible. We have been careful to include only sources in the suggestions for further reading and throughout the book that are (hopefully)

relatively easy to access. In addition, although we encourage greater dialogue between psychologists and academics in other disciplines, this book is intended as a celebration of the work of LGBTQ psychologists and we only draw on work outside of psychology when psychological research is minimal or absent.

Further reading

Barker, M. (2007) Heteronormativity and the exclusion of bisexuality in psychology. In V. Clarke and E. Peel (eds.), *Out in psychology: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer perspectives* (pp. 95–117). Chichester: Wiley.
British psychologist Meg Barker analyses the representation of homosexuality and bisexuality in introductory psychology textbooks. She highlights the heteronormative assumptions that are widespread in psychology and the invisibility of bisexuality in discussions of non-heterosexuality.

- **Glossary.** A comprehensive glossary at the end of the book includes definitions of all the key terms and concepts used in the book and should be the reader’s first port of call if you are not clear about the meaning of any words. If you start by reading some of the later chapters first, you will come across some words or concepts that have been explained in earlier chapters, and we encourage you to check the glossary for definitions. When a term that is defined in the glossary first appears in the main text it is printed in **bold** type.

additive models of identity Models based on the assumption that it is possible and appropriate to examine a single aspect of someone’s identity in isolation from the other aspects of their identity (e.g., it is possible to examine and understand a person’s experience as a gay man in isolation from his status as a white, middle-class, middle-aged, able-bodied man). An alternative approach to identity is the intersectional approach, which understands all the different aspects of our identity as interconnected and impossible to separate and examine in isolation (see Chapters 4 and 11).

androgyny The phenomenon of not clearly fitting into either of the binary categories of ‘male’ or ‘female’, typically on the basis of physical appearance, dress or mannerisms.

- **Additional resources.** We also include lists of websites, documentaries and feature films that are important, alternative sources of information on LGBTQ lives and experiences. These suggestions are intended to help readers further their understanding of particular issues, and can be used as a basis for group discussions in lectures and seminars.

Documentaries and feature films

History of LGBTQ psychology

Kinsey (Bill Condon Dir., 2004). The story of the life and work of Alfred Kinsey, the ‘founding father’ of modern sexology. The film provides an insight into Kinsey’s research and methods, especially the less widely publicised aspects of his work.

Our approach

Although this book is recognisable as a textbook, and we map the terrain of LGBTQ psychology as we perceive it, we are critical of the notion that textbooks are simply dispassionate, ‘objective’ overviews of a body of research and theory. We therefore aim both to outline the themes and perspectives of the existing field of LGBTQ psychology, and to present a vision of how LGBTQ psychology should develop in the future. (We suspect that our vision of the field may be too radical for some and not radical enough for others!) This means that our mapping of the field is far from dispassionate and the book invites the reader to engage critically with LGBTQ research. We particularly emphasise ‘criticality’ in areas where we feel the field has been dominated by mainstream perspectives and assumptions, and there is a lack of *accessible* critique of mainstream perspectives. For example our discussion of the essentialism versus social constructionism debate in Chapter 2 focuses on critiques of mainstream approaches to understanding the aetiology of homosexuality.

In Chapter 1, we discuss our decision to name the field ‘LGBTQ psychology’ rather than the more conventional title of lesbian and gay psychology, or, more recently, LGB or LGBT psychology. The name LGBTQ psychology signals, among other things, our commitment to an inclusive approach to this area of psychology, one that acknowledges and explores the diversity of LGBTQ communities and engages with a wide range of theories and methodologies, as well as with research and theory on LGBTQ issues in other academic disciplines. Some authors choose to change the ordering of ‘LGBTQ’ (to ‘TBQLG’ for example, and some authors vary the order each time they use the acronym) to signal an inclusive approach and to recognise that the experiences and agendas of gay men and (to a lesser extent) lesbians have (problematically) dominated the field. We applaud this strategy, but feel it is impractical for a textbook, so we have chosen to use consistently one of the most orthodox and recognisable orderings of the acronym (the other being ‘GLBTQ’).

We have thought carefully about the language and concepts we use in the book and how we present research. Readers may be unfamiliar with the use of inverted commas around certain words and concepts (e.g., ‘gender ambiguity’ and ‘gay affirmative’ psychology in Chapter 1). Although not common in mainstream psychology, in fields such as LGBTQ psychology and feminist psychology inverted commas are used (often rather liberally!) to signal that a particular word or concept is problematic in some way or that the author does not fully subscribe to the use of particular terminology (and alternative terminology may be equally problematic or simply unavailable). We have also been careful to indicate briefly the geographic origins of particular studies and/or researchers (and which academic field researchers work in). This is because LGBTQ psychology has been dominated by the work of North American researchers and it is important to locate research within its cultural context and acknowledge the contributions of researchers outside of North America.

When writing this book we have been aware of the limitations of our experience both as researchers and as members of LGBTQ communities. As we discuss in Chapter 3, writing about groups to which one does not belong is a precarious task. We are particularly aware of speaking from positions of relative privilege (we are all, like most academics, white and middle-class) and of our lack of personal experience of living as trans. We have attempted to incorporate a range of perspectives on living out particular identity categories and have consulted guidance produced by members of the trans community on non-trans people writing about and representing trans lives and perspectives.

Who we are

To give readers an idea of who we are, we now provide brief outlines of our research interests and approaches. Victoria Clarke is a Reader in Sexuality Studies at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK. She has published on the history of LGBTQ psychology, lesbian and gay parenting, same-sex relationships and civil partnership, LGB sexualities and appearance, LGBT issues and education, and qualitative methodology. In collaboration with Elizabeth Peel, she has edited a number of books and Special Issues of journals on LGBTQ psychology. She uses mainly qualitative approaches to research, particularly critical qualitative approaches such as discourse analysis, and she has commitments to feminism, social constructionism, post-structuralism and queer theory. She used to identify and write as a radical lesbian feminist, but now identifies and writes as a non-heterosexual.

Sonja J. Ellis is a Principal Lecturer in Psychology at Sheffield Hallam University, UK. She has published on attitudes and moral reasoning around lesbian and gay rights issues, and on homophobia at university, and is currently completing a small project on the sexual health education needs of LBQ young women. Sonja’s research to date has mainly employed a mixed-method approach (i.e., studies using both quantitative and qualitative methods) and has focused on facilitating positive social change for lesbians and gay men. Sonja identifies as both a lesbian and a feminist and some of her work is informed by these perspectives.

Elizabeth Peel is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Aston University, Birmingham, UK. She has published on heterosexism, diversity training about sexualities and same-sex relationships. She predominantly uses qualitative methods and aims for criticality in her research. She is the editor (with Victoria Clarke) of the books *Out in psychology* and (with Victoria Clarke and Jack Drescher) *British lesbian, gay, and bisexual psychologies*. Elizabeth also conducts critical health psychology research about chronic illness (e.g., diabetes) and is interested in the intersections between health, illness, gender and sexuality.

Damien Riggs is a Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Psychology, University of Adelaide, and Lecturer in the School of Social Work at Flinders

University, Australia. He has published on psychoanalysis and queer theory, race privilege and lesbians and gay men (and LGBTQ psychology more broadly), gay men’s health and sexual practices, lesbian and gay parents, embodiment and non-gender normativity, lesbian and gay rights, and heteronormativity in psychological practice. He is the editor (with Gordon Walker) of the first Australasian book on lesbian and gay psychology (*Out in the Antipodes*) and the editor of the Australian Psychological Society’s *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*. He is the author of a book about queer rights and race privilege (*Priscilla (white) queen of the desert*) and a book about lesbian and gay parenting (*Becoming parent*). Damien mainly uses qualitative approaches to research (and in particular thematic analysis and discourse analysis), though he has recently used content analysis to quantify research findings.

Although we speak and write in one authorial voice throughout the book, it is inevitable that we don’t agree on everything! The choices we have made in writing this book have involved compromises of our individual perspectives and politics. However, we feel that bringing together a group of people with different interests and areas of expertise, and varied perspectives and approaches to research, has substantially enriched the book. We have certainly learnt a great deal from each other in the process of writing it. As you might imagine, four authors writing together is a challenging process but we hope you’ll agree that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts! We decided to nominate a lead author for each chapter who wrote the first draft of the chapter (some sections of the chapter may have been written by one of the other authors), incorporated the others’ feedback and produced the final draft, taking responsibility for any final decisions about language and content. Victoria wrote the Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 9 and 10, Sonja Chapters 5 and 7, Elizabeth Chapters 6 and 8, and Damien Chapters 4 and 11.

We hope you enjoy reading this book and that it provides an informative and engaging introduction to LGBTQ psychology. We have certainly enjoyed writing it and welcome readers’ feedback.

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participated in her lectures and seminars on LGBTQ psychology for allowing her to ‘test out’ a lot of the material that she presents in this book, and her colleagues at UWE. Sonja would like to thank the Psychology Subject Group at Sheffield Hallam and Michelle Boughton for supporting her endeavours in the field of LGBTQ psychology; and also the students on her Psychology of Sexuality module, whose interest in our work has made it worthwhile. Elizabeth would like to thank Rosie Harding, Adam Jowett, Celia Kitzinger (for the same reason as Victoria), colleagues at Aston, and the students who take her Human Sexualities module for their enthusiastic engagement with the field. Damien would like to thank the students in his qualitative lecture series who have provided him with feedback on this teaching and his extensive inclusion of LGBTQ topics in the lectures.