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# Introducing *Out in Psychology*

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'If we are liberated we are open with our sexuality. Closet queenery must end.  
*Come out.*<sup>1</sup>

'We're out. Where the fuck are you?'

'Nobody knows I'm a lesbian.'

'We're here. We're queer. Get used to it'.

'Trans, out and proud.'

'Blatantly bisexual.'

These pride slogans and rallying cries for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans<sup>2</sup> and queer (LGBTQ) movements – at once celebratory and confrontational – highlight the importance of 'outness' and visibility across a range of political eras and agendas. The title of this volume *Out in Psychology: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer perspectives*, draws attention to the centrality of visibility for LGBTQ psychologies<sup>3</sup>, movements and politics. We chose this title to signal the presence, and increasing validation and acknowledgement, of research, theory and practice on LGBTQ concerns across the discipline of psychology. We are 'outing' psychology as a discipline that already, if sometimes ambivalently or unwillingly, incorporates LGBTQ perspectives. Although it is important to have a separate space to pursue research and practice, it is vital that we engage with, and contribute to, the broader discipline (Dworkin, 2002). LGBTQ psychologies of all varieties aim to support social change. This goal is realised both through making or assisting interventions

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<sup>1</sup> These slogans are all general LGBTQ pride slogans with no specific source, other than the first (Wittman, 1997/1969–70, p. 383, emphasis in original) and second (Queer Nation, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> We use the term 'trans' as an umbrella term for those people whose gender presentation or behaviour conflicts with or exists outside of dominant sex/gender norms (see the Press for Change web site: <http://www.pfc.org.uk>).

<sup>3</sup> We use the label 'LGBTQ psychologies' with some caution. We think that it is not possible to confidently identify the existence of a coherent LGBTQ psychology (as opposed to lesbian and gay psychology) in the UK or internationally. We view this book, and the use of the term 'LGBTQ' in this book, as a step towards LGBTQ psychologies rather than a declaration or celebration of their establishment. As such, we shift between using LGBTQ, LGBT, LGB and lesbian and gay in order to avoid using the less established labels in a meaningless way. We considered adding 'I' onto 'LGBTQ' in this chapter (and including the word 'intersex' in the title of the book), but, ultimately, it seemed problematic to include 'I' when only one chapter in *Out in Psychology* addresses intersex concerns.

into the world outside of academic psychology and through turning our attention back onto psychology and interrogating and challenging the homophobia and heteronormativity<sup>4</sup> embedded in the discipline (see Hodges & McManus, 2006). We have come a long way in this endeavour (Greene, 2000), but there is still a long way to go.

To give some examples of progress and of the challenges that remain, we draw on our own experiences of teaching on undergraduate (British Psychological Society [BPS] accredited<sup>5</sup>) psychology programmes. In these programmes, LGBTQ issues are virtually only mentioned when *we* mention them. Our students receive lectures on social psychology, developmental psychology, health psychology, and sport psychology, to name but a few areas of the curriculum. These are all areas of the discipline where LGBTQ concerns are highly relevant, and LGBTQ psychology is largely not taught in these areas, unless we are there to teach it. This is not intended as a criticism of our colleagues but rather to point out how easy it is, even for people who ascribe to broadly pro-gay principles, to ignore, exclude and marginalize LGBTQ concerns (Peel, 2001). When we do teach a 'token' lecture about, for instance, same-sex relationships on a core psychology course, we are sometimes faced with a half-empty classroom. We have experienced resistance, hostility and abuse from heterosexual students, and some of our LGB students have told us that they have felt extremely anxious and exposed before, during and after attending core lectures on LGBTQ issues. These students have also spoken to us about the hidden curriculum of heteronormativity (Epstein, O'Flynn & Telford, 2003) they are compelled to negotiate in the psychology classroom. For example, they frequently encounter situations where teaching staff or students assume that everyone in the classroom is heterosexual. This means that they constantly face dilemmas about whether to come out or to leave such assumptions unchallenged. We have also at times felt that some of our colleagues are bewildered by our sexuality and/or our research interests and we have on occasion been told that sexuality is not a workplace issue.

At the same time, we both teach elective courses on sexuality and many of our colleagues and the students who take these courses are supportive of these additions to the psychology programme. Every year we are delighted by students sharing their enthusiasm for these courses and the insights they have developed about heteronormativity or the limits of a binary gender system. We are also approached annually by students – both heterosexual and LGB – who are keen to undertake a research project on LGBT issues for their final year dissertation, and colleagues have been extremely supportive when we have been subject to homophobic abuse.

These positive and negative experiences suggest that it is vitally important to continue to seek transformation of the discipline of psychology. LGBTQ psychologists must push for inclusive curricula, teaching materials and practices; we must challenge others to revise heteronormative theories and research processes; and we must promote the field as a vital and necessary element of the discipline, rather than a, at best, marginal 'specialist' concern. Although, as we noted above, our presence is increasingly acknowledged, and occasionally welcomed, there is a danger of the field becoming a mere 'add on' to the discipline. LGBTQ psychologies offer crucial challenges to the discipline, ones that must be reckoned with and eventually actualized. Therefore, central to the realization of LGBTQ psychologies in this

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<sup>4</sup> We use heteronormative to signal assumptions, norms and values based on traditional conceptions of heterosexuality.

<sup>5</sup> For the benefit of readers outside of the UK, most psychology programmes in the UK are accredited by the BPS, which means that students follow a core psychology curriculum for at least the first two years of their degree (and many students study only psychology). Some of the experiences we discuss are shared and some are not.

book is a dual focus on providing a variety of psychological perspectives on LGBTQ concerns and a variety of LGBTQ perspectives on the discipline of psychology.

## ADDRESSING ABSENCES AND FORGING NEW DIRECTIONS

This is the second British-edited collection on lesbian and gay psychology. The first (Coyle & Kitzinger, 2002) was a groundbreaking celebration of the establishment of lesbian and gay psychology as a legitimate area of psychological research and practice in the UK. Five years on, this collection documents and showcases the development and diversification of the field, and in particular a move from lesbian and gay psychology to LGBTQ psychologies. This collection also has an international focus – with contributions from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA, in addition to primarily the UK. We use the term ‘psychologies’ throughout this introductory chapter to capture the multiplicity of perspectives and approaches to LGBTQ research, theory and practice that constitute the text. As we discuss in more detail below, it is no longer possible to claim that lesbian and gay psychology is predominantly practised within positivist-empiricist and liberal-humanistic frameworks. As well as drawing on a diverse array of perspectives, the chapters address a diverse array of concerns, offering insights into topics ranging from how gay men with intellectual disabilities develop and maintain a gay identity (Christopher Bennett and Adrian Coyle) to how lesbian athletes and coaches cope with heteronormative sports climates (Vikki Krane and Kerrie Kauer) – both neglected topics in lesbian and gay psychology. Other chapters interrogate areas of psychological practice including the ways in which psychology textbooks (re)produce heteronormativity and, in particular, the invisibility of bisexuality (Meg Barker), and the ways in which LGB psychological discourses on ‘ethnic minorities’ serve to disappear the race and privilege of white lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (Damien Riggs). *Out in Psychology* seeks to acknowledge and begin to challenge absences in lesbian and gay psychology, and the discipline of psychology more broadly. These absences include the marginality of bisexuality in psychology, and the neglect of the lives and experiences of bisexual and lesbian women, gay men with disabilities, trans people, and heteronormativity/heterosexual privilege and whiteness/race privilege in lesbian and gay psychology.

The one theme that all the chapters speak to directly or indirectly is inclusivity. The contributors offer different answers to questions of inclusivity: some advocate giving specific and sole attention to the experiences of lesbians (Sara MacBride-Stewart, Faith Rostad and Bonita Long), gay men (Jeffery Adams, Timothy McCreanor and Virginia Braun), trans people (Clair Clifford and Jim Orford), and bisexual women (Maira Gurevich, Jo Bower, Cynthia Mathieson and Bramilee Dhayanandhan). Others champion an inclusive coalition of lesbian and gay (Victoria Clarke, Carol Burgoyne and Maree Burns), LGB (Sonja Ellis, Gareth Hagger-Johnson, Rosie Harding and Elizabeth Peel), or LGBTQ (Peter Hegarty, Riggs) psychologies. In the following chapter we argue that a move from lesbian and gay psychology to LGBTQ psychologies requires some reflection on the meaning and politics of inclusivity. We explore tensions within lesbian and gay, and between lesbian and gay, bisexual, trans and queer psychologies, movements and politics and suggest that in the immediate future LGBTQ psychologists should pursue both separatist and coalitional strategies.

We are delighted that *Out in Psychology* includes chapters specifically focused on bisexuality (Barker, Gurevich et al.), on trans (Clifford and Orford, Katherine Johnson,

Susan Speer), and on the possibilities of queer theory (Gurevich et al., Hegarty, MacBride-Stewart). These chapters stand alongside a number of others that engage more broadly with LGB, LGBT or LGBTQ concerns (Hagger-Johnson, Hegarty, Ellis, Jeremy Monsen and Sydney Bailey, Harding and Peel, Riggs). The chapters focused on trans exemplify different traditions in this area of research. Some social scientists have long been interested in transgender and transsexuality (and intersexuality) because they facilitate an examination of the social construction of sex, gender and sexuality (e.g. Garfinkel, 1967; Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Both Speer's and Johnson's chapters fit into this broad tradition of work and are examples of a critical psychology of trans as a social, political and historical phenomenon. Johnson adopts a social constructionist perspective to explore the historical development of 'transsexualism' as a diagnostic and identity category distinct from homosexuality and other iterations of trans, such as transvestism. Using an ethno-methodological/conversation analytic approach, Speer analyses an actual interaction between a psychiatrist and a male-to-female transsexual in a gender identity clinic. The focus of her analysis is on how the trans-woman's gender identity gets constructed and displayed in a segment of interaction. The third chapter (Clifford and Orford) represents a very different and neglected approach to the psychology of trans in that it focuses on the lived experiences of women and men who identify as trans. Clifford and Orford explore the processes through which people come to an identity as trans, and how social power (people's access to social, material and other types of resources that influence individual life chances) informs this process.

As we discuss in the next chapter, until recently, lesbian and gay psychology has resisted the seductive advances of queer theory. Three chapters in *Out in Psychology* specifically showcase the potential of queer theory for LGBTQ psychologies and demonstrate the ways in which the influence of queer theory is now increasingly felt in some areas of psychological research on sexuality and gender. Gurevich et al. provide an analysis of women's accounts of what it means to disclose bisexual identities informed by post-structuralist and queer theorizing. Hegarty's chapter centres on a queer informed critique of the ways in which social constructionism and discourse analysis are positioned as the self-evidently radical frontier of (British) LGBTQ psychology. He interrogates the heteronormative assumptions underpinning a prominent debate about conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis and ways of reading gender from conversations, and explores other formations of the social beyond the textual. MacBride-Stewart examines feminist social constructionist and queer theorizing about lesbian identity. She notes that whereas feminist social constructionist work retains 'lesbian' as an identity category (while acknowledging its constructed status), queer posits that identity categories are regulatory fictions that reproduce heteronormative concepts of sex and gender. She considers what each approach can learn from the other and what both can offer lesbian health research.

Many of the chapters in *Out in Psychology* emphasize the importance of new intersections with other disciplines (and between areas of psychology such as LGB psychology and personality and individual differences research [Hagger-Johnson]). As well as highlighting the possibility of productive links between queer theory and LGBTQ psychologies, contributors demonstrate the value of connecting critical psychology and critical legal studies (Harding and Peel), and psychology and sociology (Clarke et al.). Contributors also call for, and highlight, new approaches to clinical/professional practice in domains such as educational psychology and LGB youth (Monsen and Bailey), and clinical psychology and heterosexuality-identified intersex women (Lih-Mei Liao). There are many visions

and versions of LGBTQ psychologies in circulation: *Out in Psychology* offers readers an unapologetically socially and politically engaged LGBTQ psychology, one that identifies productive links with LGBTQ scholarship outside the often narrow confines of psychology.

## OUT ACROSS THE SPECTRUM

The chapters address a range of areas of the mainstream discipline, including: health psychology (MacBride-Stewart, Adams et al.); counselling and clinical psychology (Johnson, Liao, Speer); educational psychology (Monsen and Bailey); social psychology (Hagger-Johnson); sport psychology (Krane and Kauer); family psychology (Clarke et al., Ellis); qualitative and critical psychology (Barker, Bennett and Coyle, Clarke et al., Clifford and Orford, Ellis, Gurevich et al., Harding and Peel, Hegarty, Victoria Land and Celia Kitzinger, MacBride-Stewart, Riggs, Speer); and occupational psychology (Ellis, Harding and Peel, Rostad and Long). Until recently, there has been an emphasis on research, theory and practice in the areas of social, health, developmental, counselling and clinical psychology within lesbian and gay psychology texts. *Out in Psychology* incorporates fields and areas of research not typically considered under the banner of lesbian and gay psychology, and these include sport, qualitative and critical psychology.

There is an increasing acknowledgement of the important differences in approach between US, and UK and Australasian LGBTQ psychologies. Whereas in the USA there continues to be a strong engagement with positivist-empiricist frameworks (Clarke & Peel, 2007; Russell & Gergen, 2004), in the UK and Australasia qualitative and critical LGBTQ psychologies are gaining momentum (Coyle, 2000), as *Out in Psychology* demonstrates. Critical psychology is a developing area of research, theory and practice, and the label ‘critical psychology’ is regarded as an ‘umbrella term’ (Walkerdine, 2001) for a wide variety of radical perspectives on the discipline. As the editors of a key collection – Prilleltensky and Fox (1997) – outlined, critical psychologists ‘believe that psychology’s traditional practices and norms hinder social justice, to the detriment of individuals and communities in general and of oppressed groups in particular’ (p. 3). Critical psychologists argue that – echoing the authors of early UK lesbian and gay psychology texts, such as Hart and Richardson (1981) and Kitzinger (1987) – psychology is not a neutral endeavour conducted by researchers and practitioners detached from the larger social and political context. Moreover, the theories and practices of mainstream psychology are value-laden and reinforce an unjust status quo. By contrast, the central themes of critical psychology are the explicit pursuit of social justice, the promotion of the well-being of communities and in particular of oppressed and marginalized groups, and changing the status quo of society and of psychology. It is crucial to note, however, that critical psychology is not all that LGBTQ psychologies are or should be. As Hegarty (Chapter 3) cautions, we should be suspicious of any approach to LGBTQ psychology that announces itself as radical. *Out in Psychology* aims to bring critical and qualitative psychology to the table, not to replace other approaches to this area of psychology, but to contribute to the diverse buffet that is LGBTQ psychologies.

The following 20 chapters span a broad range of theoretical/epistemological approaches: from positivist or essentialist perspectives (e.g. Hagger-Johnson) to experiential or con-

textual perspectives (e.g. Ellis, Rostad and Long), to critical, constructionist and discursive perspectives (e.g. Land and Kitzinger). However, there is an emphasis on qualitative and critical approaches. The chapters that fall under this banner demonstrate a range of different approaches to qualitative and critical research, including: conversation analysis (Land and Kitzinger, Speer); thematic and thematic decomposition analysis (Clarke et al., Ellis, Gurevich et al.); phenomenological analysis (Bennett and Coyle, MacBride-Stewart); textual analysis (Barker, Riggs); and grounded theory (Clifford and Orford, Rostad and Long). Some authors also develop novel combinations of different qualitative and critical approaches (e.g. Gurevich et al., Ellis). The empirical chapters draw on a variety of data sources including more traditional sources such as interviews (Bennett and Coyle, Ellis, Gurevich et al., Clarke et al., Rostad and Long, Harding and Peel) and case notes (Liao, Monsen and Bailey), and more innovative sources (ones that are new to LGBTQ psychologists), such as email interviews (Clifford and Orford), psychological literature (Barker, Riggs) and ‘naturalistic’ data collected from lesbian and gay awareness training sessions (Harding and Peel), psychiatric assessment sessions (Speer) and telephone calls going in and out of lesbian households (Land and Kitzinger). The chapters also use a range of theoretical models including social power (Clifford and Orford), identity process theory (Bennett and Coyle), and social identity theory (Krane and Kauer). Together the chapters provide a range of empirical, theoretical and reflective insights into contemporary LGBTQ psychologies.

## **THEMES IN *OUT IN PSYCHOLOGY***

In this final section, we outline the themes, structure and organization of *Out in Psychology*. In addition to two introductory chapters, there are four thematic sections: (1) histories and commentaries, (2) lives and experiences, (3) work and leisure and (4) health and practice. Each section includes a commentary written by a leading scholar in the associated field of research. The chapters that constitute the first section ‘histories and commentaries’ provide a range of critical reflections on the historical and contemporary practices of psychology in general and LGBTQ psychologies in particular. Riggs interrogates discourses of race in LGB psychology, Barker probes the invisibility of bisexuality in psychology textbooks, Hagger-Johnson examines the intertwining histories of LGB psychology and personality and individual differences research, and Hegarty offers a queer informed critique of the increasingly common presentation of social constructionism and discourse analysis as representing the radical frontier of (British) LGBTQ psychology.

The chapters in ‘lives and experiences’ highlight the continuing importance of examining the everyday experiences, realities and perspectives of LGBTQ people. The chapters explore the lived experiences of specific groups of LGBTQ people – gay men with intellectual disabilities (Bennett and Coyle) and trans people (Clifford and Orford) – as well as specific aspects of our everyday existence. Land and Kitzinger provide a fine-grained analysis of telephone conversations between lesbians, gay men and their partners and family members, and show how these testify to the continuing importance of ‘the closet’ and visibility in the everyday interactions of lesbians and gay men. Clarke et al. enter the hotly contested terrain of same-sex relationship recognition and offer an empirical exploration of lesbian and gay couples’ views on civil partnership and marriage. Until



recently work in this area has been dominated by academic debates about legal recognition, Clarke et al.'s analysis provides an examination of the discourses informing accounts of legal recognition grounded in the personal and political experiences of lesbian and gay couples.

The chapters in 'work and leisure' continue the focus on the everyday experiences of LGBTQ people, but in relation to the specific domains of work and leisure. Ellis offers a holistic appraisal of contemporary issues in the lives of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals living in Britain – her analysis centres on the workplace, relationship recognition and the LGB community. She argues that greater inclusion of LGB people in mainstream society and culture has led to the loss of distinct and vibrant LGB community spaces. Ellis queries whether it is time to revive such spaces and debates about the goals of LGBT movements and communities. Harding and Peel examine heterosexism in the workplace and the strengths and weaknesses of a two-pronged strategy for tackling the marginalization that LGB people experience in their working lives. This strategy involves structural challenges (through anti-discrimination law) and individual challenges (through education and training). As noted above, their chapter provides an example of a productive intersection between critical psychology and critical legal studies aimed at the interrogation of LGB marginality. Rostad and Long continue the focus on the workplace with an analysis of the experiences of a group of high achieving lesbians. These women have attained significant levels of workplace success and their stories provide an insight into successful career development in heteronormative working environments. In addition, Krane and Kauer, as previously noted, examine the experiences of lesbians in sport.

The chapters in the final section, 'health and practice', shift the focus to the applied domain of LGBTQ psychologies. MacBride-Stewart explores lesbians' accounts of what it means to be a 'healthy lesbian', Adams et al. examine the public health implications of marketing alcohol directly to gay men, and Liao outlines a clinical psychological approach to the sexual concerns of heterosexually-identified intersex women. Monsen and Bailey, drawing on their experiences as practising educational psychologists, explore the practical implications of the dilemmas associated with developing an LGB identity in school. They develop recommendations for interventions at the level of the individual (with LGB pupils) and the institutional (working within and attempting to change the homophobic school environment), and highlight the importance of the latter. As noted above, both the chapter by Speer and the chapter by Johnson fall into the critical social science tradition of interrogating the historical, social and political meanings of trans and what trans reveals about the social construction of sex/gender.

The gaps and absences in *Out in Psychology* suggest some priorities for future research in LGBTQ psychologies. We are very pleased that *Out in Psychology* has an international focus; however, this is limited to a small number of countries located in the cultural west. There is much potential for international dialogue beyond these rather narrow confines. There needs to be a greater acknowledgement and examination of the diversity within LGBTQ communities, although *Out in Psychology* makes some considerable leaps forward in this respect, there is still much work to be done. We also hope that our examination of the dilemmas and tensions underlying the reconstitution of the field as LGBTQ psychologies in the following chapter prompts further consideration of who we include in and exclude from our research and why. This is an exciting time for the field and we are delighted that *Out in Psychology* forms part of the cutting edge of LGBTQ psychologies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been a long time in the making. We first mooted the possibility of editing a ‘follow-up’ collection to Coyle and Kitzinger (2002) when it was still in preparation in 2001. Six years later *Out in Psychology* has finally come to fruition. This book would never have happened without the assistance and support of the following (in no particular order): our editors at Wiley; Bramble, Diesel and Amber; noodle-based dishes; Celia Kitzinger; Julia Lawton; Sue Wilkinson; John Fenaughty; Peter Hegarty; Meg Barker; Adrian Coyle; Damien Riggs; Sonja Ellis; members of the BPS Lesbian & Gay Psychology Section; our colleagues at Aston University and the University of the West of England; and those lovely, lovely people who straddle the friend/colleague divide and provide us with much needed support, encouragement and the occasional smile (you know who you are!).

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