

## **Chapter 6**

# **Heteronormativity And The Exclusion Of Bisexuality In Psychology**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education is a site of ‘thundering heteronormativity’, where lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) sexualities continue to be silenced (Epstein et al., 2003, p.102). Whilst curricula at liberal institutions occasionally add on LGB-relevant material, a heterosexual norm is still perpetuated in the hidden curriculum (Epstein, 1995) through overt harassment of staff and students, structural impediments to those who identify as LGB, and only tokenistic course coverage which gives a clear message that LGB sexualities are different and strange (Eyre, 1993). This chapter updates Simoni’s (2000) research to display the ways in which such heteronormativity is reproduced within psychology textbooks.

As with research and theory in the discipline, the history of psychology teaching has been marked by prejudice and discrimination, failing to represent minorities or to include relevant new scholarship on minority groups (Bronstein & Quina, 1988). Higher education is a time during which many people negotiate issues of personal and sexual identity, and psychology students in particular tend to apply course material to their own lives (Whitbourne & Hulicka, 1990). If certain groups are omitted or presented as deviant in course material, this could close off opportunities for some and exacerbate feelings of

exclusion for others. Kitzinger (1990) and Snyder and Broadway (2004) link the lack of coverage of lesbian and gay sexualities in psychology curricula to isolation, marginalization and even depression and suicide amongst lesbian and gay students, as well as the continued acceptance of homophobic abuse within educational settings. Epstein et al.'s (2003) longitudinal study of gay male undergraduates revealed several examples of homophobic abuse from both staff and students, including innuendos about anal sex, the word 'gay' being used as an insult, and comments in seminars that gay sexuality might 'die out' because of AIDS. There were very few examples of staff trying to prevent or challenge this, and some students had been forced to leave university accommodation because of constant taunts and abuse, or to hide their sexuality from peers who responded to lesbians and gay men with physical violence. Students particularly reported being very surprised by the lack of coverage of lesbian and gay issues on psychology programmes.

Psychology degrees are second only to law in popularity in the UK, and the students who complete these courses are one of the routes via which mainstream psychological research and theories filter through into popular understanding. Therefore it is of serious concern if what is taught on psychology degrees is heterosexist or if homophobic assumptions are not challenged. An absence of LGB content in curricula also affects students' future professional abilities (Epstein et al. 2003). It is particularly vital that those psychology students who go on to work in applied arenas (e.g., counselling, clinical, occupational, educational psychology) have been well educated in issues of sexuality since their work is likely to inform therapeutic treatments,

organizational equality and diversity strategies, sex education, legal policy-making, and so on (British Psychological Society, 2005b).

Kitzinger's influential (1990) paper reported that heterosexist and pathological depictions of lesbians and gay men were still prevalent in psychology and that this was reflected in textbook coverage. Textbooks are vital in shaping both curricula and the views and conceptual frameworks of students. Yanowitz and Weathers (2004) report that they often drive the content and presentation of undergraduate programmes, and that the majority of students see them as the most important sources of information on their courses. Whitbourne and Hulicka (1990) argued that textbooks both reflect and help shape the 'zeitgeist' of the academic discipline (p.1127), and McDonald (1981) stated that it is widely understood that 'textbooks function as agents of socialization by reflecting cultural values, articulating prevailing social norms, and conveying appropriate or socially acceptable standards of behaviour' (p.46).

Higher education textbooks in other social sciences and humanities subjects have been analysed for their constructions of sexuality (e.g., Phillips, 1991; Zimmerman, 1982), but examinations of psychology textbooks have tended to focus more on gender (e.g., Gray, 1977; Yanowitz & Weathers, 2004), with some research addressing the portrayal of lesbians in psychology of women textbooks (Fontaine, 1982; Peel, 2001). The key study on the representation of sexuality in psychology textbooks is McDonald's (1981) content analysis of 48 US and Canadian introductory books. McDonald found that lesbian and gay relevant material was generally included in chapters on sexual 'deviation', 'dysfunction' or 'abnormality'. Gay male sexuality was often only mentioned in passing, whilst lesbians were omitted altogether or assumed to be similar to gay men.

For every source of relevant or accurate information there were five sources of inaccurate, misrepresentative and/or heterosexist data, and 75% of textbooks contained five or more sources of misrepresentative information than relevant information. McDonald also found little improvement in content between 1975 and 1979.

There appears to be no systematic analysis of the coverage of lesbian and gay male sexualities in psychology textbooks between McDonald's (1981) study and Simoni's (2000) research on books published in the 1990s. However, King (1988) gave a feel for the way lesbian and gay male sexualities were covered in US texts published in the 1980s, reporting that lesbian and gay psychology was still either not mentioned at all, or considered in chapters on abnormal psychology or psychopathology. Such chapters discussed the removal of homosexuality *per se* from the American Psychiatric Association (APA)'s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) in 1973, but continued to discuss what 'causes homosexuality' and/or therapies that may 'cure' people of it. Like McDonald, King called for lesbian and gay issues to be considered under a number of 'normal' psychology topic areas such as life span development, the health psychology of HIV and AIDS, and the social psychology of prejudice, minority groups, social movements, and interpersonal attraction and relationships. McDonald also argued that textbooks should acknowledge continued discrimination against lesbians and gay men in relation to parenthood, legal recognition and homophobic attacks amongst others.

Simoni's (2000) survey of 24 introductory, developmental, social and abnormal psychology textbooks suggested some positive movement forward along the lines suggested by McDonald and King. Slightly fewer of the texts she analysed failed to

mention lesbian and gay sexuality at all (13% compared to McDonald's 16%), and, whilst introductory textbooks tended to restrict relevant material to sections on sexual orientation, some social and developmental textbooks included material in several places, particularly in sections on prejudice, AIDS, and the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness. However, Simoni also found an excessive focus on the origins of homosexuality with no consideration of the origins of heterosexuality, and a lack of presentation of anyone other than heterosexuals in sections on attraction, love relationships and parenting. She argued that the continued absence of lesbians and gay men in some texts, coupled with the tendency of many to consider lesbians and gay men only in contexts relevant to their sexual orientation, implies that they are 'deviant, less important, and less natural' (p.83) than heterosexual people.

### **Bisexuality**

The current research, reported in this chapter, revisits Simoni's analysis and focuses on textbooks published in both the US and the UK in the 2000s. In addition to Simoni, it also considers an area which has been neglected in the literature so far: the coverage of 'non-heterosexual' sexualities other than lesbian and gay sexualities, particularly bisexuality (see also Gurevich et al., this volume). Thus it will provide a somewhat fuller picture of heteronormativity within psychology textbooks. Heteronormativity is 'the hegemonic discursive and nondiscursive normative idealization of heterosexuality' (Hird, 2004, p.27). In other words it relates to the ways in which heterosexuality is explicitly or implicitly presented as the normal and/or ideal way of being and relating in textual accounts and elsewhere - for example, in images and cultural practices.

Petford (2003) states that bisexuality is almost completely disregarded in the psychological literature as a whole and Angelides (2001) reports that, if bisexuality is mentioned, it tends to be named once and omitted subsequently. This is in spite of research demonstrating bisexual identities and behaviour in significant numbers of individuals (Fox, 2000), in some estimates exceeding the extent of lesbian and gay sexualities (Klein, 1993). There is growing acknowledgement of bisexuality in social science disciplines. Collections of current research and theory on bisexuality have been published by cultural theorists (Hall & Pramaggiore, 1996), sociologists (Storr, 1999) and psychologists (Fox, 2004), and there is an international *Journal of Bisexuality* published by Haworth Press. The American Psychological Association's Division 44 have incorporated bisexuality into their name: 'The Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual issues', and there are moves in the British Psychological Society Lesbian and Gay Psychology Section to follow suit. The current analysis will examine whether the research and theory on bisexuality has filtered through into psychology textbooks, and the ways in which such texts do, or do not, represent bisexuality and bisexual people.<sup>1</sup>

## **METHODOLOGY**

Previous research on the representation of homosexuality in textbooks has ranged from an in depth analysis of one particular aspect of a small number of textbooks (such as images, Whatley, 1992) to content analysis of the entire coverage of representations of certain groups in a large number of textbooks (e.g., over 100 textbooks in Whitbourne &

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'bisexual' throughout this chapter because it is probably the most widely used and clearly understood term. However, as with 'homosexual', it is a word that necessitates ongoing scrutiny in terms of its implications and the history of its usage, as will become apparent in the analysis.

Hulicka's [1990] study on ageism). This analysis follows Simoni (2000) by sampling just over 20 textbooks from a number of relevant areas of psychology and conducting both a quantitative analysis of the overall coverage and an in depth analysis of the presentation of specific material. It is important to combine quantitative and qualitative techniques in this way because questions of quantity and structure are telling. For example, the number of pages devoted to LGB sexualities gives an idea of how much importance is placed on students having an understanding of them. If information is included in 'add on' boxes or sections rather than being integrated into the main text, this suggests that LGB people are perceived as different or abnormal (Eyre, 1993). The inclusion or exclusion of bisexuality as an index term may be seen as indicative of whether bisexuality is viewed as a legitimate sexual identity. A more in depth qualitative analysis is necessary to examine, for example, whether homosexuality and bisexuality are presented as requiring explanation, which explanations are privileged, or what images are used to illustrate same sex relationships.

### **Textbook Sample**

I reviewed 22 undergraduate textbooks, including seven in the area of introductory psychology, and five in each of the following areas: biological psychology, developmental psychology and social psychology (see Table 6.1 below). The aim was to cover key areas of the psychology curriculum that all students study internationally (e.g., British Psychological Society, 2005a; American Psychological Association, 2002) and where issues of sexual identity and relationships are relevant.<sup>2</sup> All were published

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<sup>2</sup> There is no analysis of specifically gender, sexuality or 'critical psychology' textbooks here because courses in these areas are offered on few psychology degrees and tend to be optional rather than part of the

between 2000 and 2005 with the exception of Malim and Birch (1998), a popular UK text which has not yet been updated in the 2000s.

**Table 6.1:** Textbooks Analysed

<b>Area</b>	<b>Textbooks</b>
<i>Introductory Psychology</i>	Gross, R. (2005). <i>Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour</i> . London: Hodder Arnold.
	Hayes, N. (2000). <i>Foundations of Psychology: An Introductory Text</i> . London: Thomson Learning.
	Kosslyn, S. M. & Rosenberg, R. S. (2004) <i>Fundamentals of Psychology: The Brain, The Person, The World</i> . Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
	Malim, T. & Birch, A. (1998). <i>Introductory Psychology</i> . Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
	Myers, D. G. (2003). <i>Psychology</i> . New York: Worth Publishers.
	Passer, M. W. & Smith, R. E. (2003). <i>Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behavior</i> . Burr Ridge, Il: McGraw Hill.
	Smith, E., Nolen-Hoeksema, S. & Fredrickson, B. (2002). <i>Atkinson and Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology</i> . Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.
<i>Biological Psychology</i>	Kalat, J. W. (2003). <i>Biological Psychology</i> . Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.
	Martin, G. N. (2003). <i>Essential Biological Psychology</i> . London: Hodder Arnold.
	Pinel, J. P. J. (2005). <i>Biopsychology</i> . Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
	Rosenzweig, M. R., Breedlove, S. M. & Watson, N. V. (2004). <i>Biological Psychology: An Introduction to Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience</i> . Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, Inc.
	Toates, F. (2001). <i>Biological Psychology: An Integrative Approach</i> . Hove: Pearson Education.
<i>Developmental Psychology</i>	Berger, K. S. (2004). <i>The Developing Person Through the Life Span</i> . New York: Worth Publishers.
	Berk, L. E. (2003). <i>Development Through the Lifespan</i> . Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

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core curriculum. I also chose not to include abnormal or clinical psychology textbooks (as Simoni did) because, at least in the UK, these are often optional areas of the psychology curriculum. Instead I analyzed biological psychology textbooks as this is a core component.



	Boyd, D. & Bee, H. (2005). <i>Lifespan Development</i> . Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
	Harris, M. & Butterworth, G. (2002). <i>Developmental Psychology: A Student's Handbook</i> . Hove: Psychology Press.
	Santrock, J. W. (2005). <i>Life-Span Development</i> . Burr Ridge, IL: McGraw Hill.
<i>Social Psychology</i>	Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D. & Akert, R. M. (2004). <i>Social Psychology</i> . Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
	Baron, R. A., Byrne, D. & Branscombe, N. R. (2005). <i>Social Psychology</i> . Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
	Brehm, S. S., Kassin, S. M. & Fein, S. (2002). <i>Social Psychology</i> . Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.
	Hewstone, M. & Stroebe, W. (Eds.), (2001). <i>Introduction to Social Psychology: A European Perspective</i> . Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
	Hogg, M. A. & Vaughan, G. (2004). <i>Social Psychology</i> . Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Textbooks were selected from the lists of bestsellers on the US and UK Amazon websites (amazon.com and amazon.co.uk), as these stood in the early Autumn of 2005, in an attempt to focus on the most popular and widely used books<sup>3</sup>. I chose texts from the top ten in each category including the number one bestseller plus a range of others from a variety of publishers and authors. The market is dominated by US published texts, but I attempted to include at least one European book in each category as a point of comparison<sup>4</sup>.

Like Simoni, I must raise a note of caution about generalizing from what is clearly a small and not statistically representative sample of textbooks. However, I would concur with her suggestion that ‘the striking similarity among recently published textbooks in

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to find measures of the sales of individual textbooks, therefore the Amazon websites were used because Amazon is the most popular bookseller worldwide (<http://www.woopidoo.com/biography/jeff-bezos/>).

<sup>4</sup> The US texts I examined were generally the ‘international’ versions (marked ‘not for publication in the US’) because I was accessing them from UK bookshops and libraries. However, these do not differ by and large in content from the original US versions.

each area argues for the generalizability of the findings' (p.78). Certainly, there is marked similarity in the areas of these books that cover sexual orientation and relationships (see Table 6.2), the theories and research which are, and are not, included, and the ways in which these are presented.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

For the quantitative component of the analysis I updated Simoni's (2000) study by tallying, as she did, the number of index headings/subheadings and pages devoted to relevant terms. Like Simoni, I focused on the terms *lesbian*, *gay*, *homosexual*, *heterosexual* and *sexual orientation* (and derivatives of these such as *lesbian relationships* and *gay male*). However, I also included the term *bisexual* (and derivatives) in this analysis. Following Simoni I also scanned all the sections likely to include relevant passages in order to avoid missing anything. Two books, one biological (Martin, 2003) and one introductory (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2004) failed to include index references to their sections on *sexual orientation*. As in Simoni's (2000) analysis, the general thematic content of the coverage was noted, as was the context of the chapters/sections it was presented in. I constructed a slightly amended version of her table summarizing this quantitative analysis and also including a separate section on the coverage of bisexuality. Simoni's tally of the number of relevant glossary terms was left out because very few of the textbooks I analysed included any of these. Instead, glossary definitions were incorporated into the qualitative analysis where relevant.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

McDonald (1981) and Simoni (2000) rated the quality of the coverage in their textbooks using scoring systems. Rather than emulating this, I describe the ways in which sexual orientation and relationships were presented so that readers can make up their own minds about the quality of this coverage in relation to LGB people. A simple scoring system was not viable because some textbooks thoroughly engaged with one aspect of representation (e.g., including images of gay parenting, considering the biases involved in searching for the ‘cause of homosexuality’), but relatively poor at another aspects (e.g., incorporating bisexuality, lesbian sexuality, or alternative relationship structures). Also, readers of this chapter may disagree with my conclusions about whether an emphasis on biological explanations classifies the texts as ‘good’, ‘fair’ or ‘poor’.

For the qualitative component of my analysis I drew on both critical psychological and queer theory perspectives, particularly the techniques employed by Anderson and Accomando (2002) in their discourse analysis of popular psychology texts and Snyder and Broadway (2004) in their queer analysis of high school biology textbooks. Snyder and Broadway recommend asking questions throughout the analysis, such as: in which content areas is sexuality outside the heterosexual norm represented and how is it represented? Which groups and explanations are privileged in the text? Which are silent/absent? I also tried to consider the potential implications of the representations. In addition to approaching my analysis with these questions in mind, like Anderson and Accomando, I considered how authors presented material in ways which appear to *describe* reality rather than *constructing* only one possible version of it. I share their sense that ‘beneath a veneer of objectivity certain issues are foregrounded and others are ignored’ (p.493).

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

**Table 6.2:** Coverage of LGB Sexualities and Relationships in 22 Undergraduate Psychology Textbooks

Evaluation Criteria	Textbook Subject Area				<i>All</i>
	<i>Introductory</i>	<i>Biological</i>	<i>Developmental</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Quantity of Coverage</i>					
Index citations (range/mean)	0-9 / 3.4	1-5 / 3.6	0-17 / 8.8	0-5 / 2.4	<b>0-17 / 4.6</b>
Pages (range/mean)	0-5.5 / 2.1	1.5-4.5 / 2.5	0-4 / 2.2	0.25-4.5 / 1.25	<b>0-5.5 / 2.0</b>
<i>Context of Coverage (chapter)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Not mentioned at all	1	0	1	0	<b>2</b>
Sexual orientation section (motivations/gender)	4	5	2	0	<b>11</b>
Same sex relationships (early adult development)	1	0	3	0	<b>4</b>
Same sex relationships (interpersonal relationships)	2	0	0	4	<b>6</b>
Same sex parenting (early adult development)	1	0	4	0	<b>5</b>
Identity formation/coming out (adolescent development)	1	0	4	0	<b>5</b>
Homophobia/prejudice (social psychology)	1	0	0	2	<b>3</b>
DSM declassification (abnormal psychology)	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
HIV/AIDS (in any section)	1	0	2	0	<b>3</b>
Sexual violence in same sex relationships (in any section)	0	0	3	0	<b>3</b>
Heterosexism in psychology (theories/methods)	2	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
Older adulthood/bereavement (older adult development)	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Suicide/anorexia nervosa (adolescent mental health)	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Gay men being promiscuous (evolutionary psychology)	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>

<i>Bisexuality</i>					
Not mentioned at all	3	3	3	5	<b>14</b>
Mentioned just at one or two points in relevant sections	4	2	2	0	<b>8</b>
Mentioned throughout relevant sections	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

A comparison of the quantity of coverage displayed in Table 6.2 with Simoni's (2000) equivalent table reveals very little change since her analysis. Simoni found three textbooks which did not mention LGB sexualities at all, I found two (one introductory, one developmental), and the range and mean number of index citations and pages were extremely similar. Overall I found an average of 4.6 citations compared to Simoni's 3.5<sup>5</sup> and 2.0 pages of material compared to her 2.8. The longest and most extensive sections covering LGB sexualities were those on sexual orientation within the US introductory textbooks, the biological textbooks, and three of the developmental textbooks (Santrock, 2005; Boyd & Bee, 2005). Therefore it is these sections that the qualitative analysis will focus on in depth, following a brief overview of the coverage of LGB sexualities in other chapters.

Although clearly there are not enough texts in the analysis for any generalizable comparison between the US and UK publications, it was the case that the eight UK books reviewed contained, overall, much less coverage of LGB sexualities and relationships than the other books. The three introductory texts (Gross, 2005; Hayes, 2000; Malim & Birch, 1998) did not cover theories or research on sexual orientation at all, and none mentioned bisexuality. Despite the very small amount of LGB relevant material in these UK texts (there is none at all in Hayes), it could be argued that what was included was

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<sup>5</sup> My inclusion of *bisexuality* as an index term as well as Simoni's terms made very little difference since only three books indexed this.

good. The lack of coverage of explanations of sexual orientation may not be entirely a negative thing, as I will go on to discuss. And Malim and Birch and Gross both made explicit references to heterosexism as a potential bias in psychology research. The one UK developmental text (Harris & Butterworth, 2002) made no mention of lesbian and gay sexualities at all. This was partly because, like many UK developmental texts, it did not go beyond adolescence to include adult development. However, the US texts all mentioned lesbians and gay men in sections on adolescent development and parenting of children in early childhood. The two social psychology texts (Hewstone & Stroebe, 2001; Hogg & Vaughan, 2004) were more similar to the US texts, although with somewhat less mention of lesbian and gay sexualities. Hogg and Vaughan was the only text to mention critical psychological work on homophobia. The UK biological psychology texts (Martin, 2003; Toates, 2001) were very similar in coverage to the equivalent US books.

## **QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **Overall Coverage Of LGB Sexualities**

Simoni (2000) critiqued the textbooks she analysed for failing to systematically incorporate references to lesbians and gay men in contexts which were not related specifically to their sexual orientation. My analysis suggests that things have improved in the last few years: the majority of the developmental psychology textbooks considered lesbians and gay men in their sections on adolescent identity and early adult relationships and parenting, and the majority of social psychology textbooks mentioned same sex relationships in their chapters on attraction and love. Introductory textbooks were generally not as good at integrating LGB psychology into sections other than those on

sexual orientation: they tended to avoid mention at all in sections on relationships, or made very brief comments that the findings discussed also applied to lesbians and gay men (e.g., in relation to benefits of relationships for well-being, Myers, 2004). Malim and Birch (1998) acknowledge the heterosexual bias in their coverage, stating: ‘we have tended to ignore the gender of lovers in this discussion. While heterosexual love has been the major focus (the research is very much greater here), love experiences do not appear to be very different for people with different sexual orientations’ (p.605). Gross (2005) makes similar points about lesbian and gay parenting.

Whilst social and developmental textbooks do now mention lesbian and gay sexualities, it is mostly in a separate tokenistic section (Kitzinger, 1996) rather than throughout their coverage of interpersonal relationships. Relationships are presented in the textbooks in heteronormative ways, with the vast majority of images, examples and reported studies being about heterosexual couples. However, none of the textbooks in the current analysis went quite as far as one of the textbooks analysed by Simoni (2000), which clearly positions the reader as heterosexual, and presents them with a heteronormative pathway to follow: ‘chances are that one day the “right” person will come along, you will fall in love with that person, get married, and perhaps have children’ (Carlson & Buskist, 1996, p.518).

Coverage of early adult social development is very similar across all the introductory and developmental textbooks examined. Those that include this tend to locate early adulthood on Erikson’s 1960s life stage model and Levinson’s 1970s theory of the ‘seasons of a man’s life’ before focusing on marriage and parenting in depth. Both Erikson and Levinson’s theories are clearly heteronormative. Erikson’s states that, in

early adulthood ‘the adult seeks deep and lasting personal relationships, particularly with a partner of the opposite sex’ (Malim & Birch, 1998, p.545), and Levinson’s focuses on the need to achieve a new life structure following the transition of marriage (Boyd & Bee, 2005). Same sex relationships, where covered, tend to be mentioned after the sections on marriage as one of the ‘diversity of adult lifestyles’ (Berk, 2003; Santrock, 2005) along with being single, co-habiting, and remarrying following divorce. Most books emphasize that ‘homosexual couples have the same relationship issues as heterosexual couples’ (Berger, 2004, p.472). Some challenge ‘misconceptions’, such as same sex relationships being shorter-lived, or involving more sex or the adoption of masculine and feminine roles, and several mention the fight for legalization of same sex marriage in various countries (e.g., Santrock, 2005). Sections on same sex parenting emphasize the similarity between lesbians and gay men and heterosexual parents and challenge myths that lesbian and gay parents are less adequate or more likely to have lesbian and gay children (e.g., Berk, 2003). Developmental textbooks also sometimes mentioned ‘homosexual families’ in sections on child development and LGB identities in sections on adolescence (e.g., Berger, 2005; Boyd & Bee, 2005). Berk (2003) was the only text to cover same sex relationships in late adulthood and aging as recommended by Kimmel (2000).

As with developmental texts, social psychological chapters and sections on attraction and close relationships mostly covered theories and research concerning who heterosexual men and women are attracted to and form relationships with (on the basis of physical attraction, similarity, proximity, etc.). All those I analysed - except Hogg and Vaughan (2005) - included evolutionary theories of what men look for in women and vice versa. Some began with vignettes about heterosexual couples (e.g., Greg and Linda –



Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2005, p.294; or Mark and Karen – Hogg & Vaughan, 2005, p.515). Lesbian and gay relationships are sometimes covered within sections on marriage: Baron, Byrne and Branscombe (2005) include a two page segment on the campaign for same sex marriage, whilst the rest of their 10 page long section on marriage considers the formation, maintenance and break-up of heterosexual relationships. Other textbooks make sporadic references to research that includes lesbian and gay couples: for example Kurdek's, (1992, cited in Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2004, p.363) research supporting exchange theory in lesbian and gay relationships and Schreurs and Buunk's (1996, cited in Hewstone & Stroebe, 2001, p.395) research on the importance of equity in lesbian relationships. Occasionally they specify that the majority of the research reviewed in the textbook is based on heterosexual couples, but generally this is left implicit. Brehm, Kassin and Fein (2002), for instance, state in a brief paragraph that research on married couples focuses on men and women, but that same sex couples are now able to have civil unions in some countries. However, they title their whole section on intimate relationships 'Relationship issues: the male-female "connection"' (p. 334) and only mention 'homosexual couples' once to say that they are just as likely as heterosexual couples to break up due to problems in communication.

The focus of developmental and social textbooks on couple relationships and marriage also clearly presents monogamy as the norm. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found that 29% of US lesbian couples and 65% of gay male couples had some kind of non-monogamous arrangement, compared to 15-28% of heterosexual couples. However, this appears to be almost completely excluded from psychology textbooks which have no images of anything other than couple relationships and present monogamy as 'natural'

and 'normal' despite evidence of non-monogamy in the majority of non-Western societies (Goodwin, 1999) and the emergence of polyamorous communities in the US and UK (Barker, 2004). Only two of the textbooks I analysed briefly mentioned the existence of open relationships in gay men (Boyd & Bee, 2005; Santrock, 2005) and none in other groups.

Whatley (1992) argued that the photographic images of lesbians and gay men in textbooks are very important because they are assumed by the reader to be 'objective and unable to "lie"' (p.197). Moreover, because images depicting lesbians and gay men are so rare in textbooks they are likely to be interpreted by the reader as representative. None of the biological and few of the introductory textbooks included images at all, probably due to their emphasis on lesbians and gay men only in the context of sexual orientation (which did not tend to be illustrated with images of people). Photographs and cartoons of couples in developmental and social textbooks were overwhelmingly heterosexual. General questions such as 'why do we fall in love?' and discussions of different kinds of love were invariably illustrated with a heterosexual couple in close physical contact, kissing or holding one another (e.g., Hewstone & Stroebe, p.373; Hogg & Vaughan, p.519). I only found eight images of same sex couples in total, generally illustrating sections on lesbian and gay relationships or parenting, and very rarely in any closer proximity than holding hands. My analysis certainly concurs with Whatley's observation that visual representations of lesbians and gay men are 'isolated and ghettoized' in textbooks (p.208). However, whereas Whatley found that images of lesbians and gay men in the health and sexuality textbooks she examined were predominantly white, young and were rarely depicted with children, half the images I found portrayed culturally mixed

relationships, half were at least in their forties, and a third showed couples with children. One of the most interesting images was Aronson, Wilson and Akert's (2004) photograph of a middle-aged black woman and a white woman walking in the woods (p.372). It seems from the context (love relationships) and the caption (including the word 'partners') that they were representing a lesbian couple. This is a rare example of a same sex relationship being used to illustrate a general point about relationships, as recommended by Whatley (1992).

There was very little mention of bisexual people in any of the sections described above. This omission will be discussed in detail below, however it is worth pointing out here that developmental and social textbooks generally only mention 'homosexual' or 'lesbian and gay' relationships and there are no images which could easily be read as bisexual<sup>6</sup>. Only Berk (2003) and Santrock (2005) occasionally tag the word 'bisexual' onto 'lesbian and gay' or 'homosexual', but there is slippage in this, and the sections in which they do so are titled 'homosexual' and 'lesbian and gay' respectively. Similarly, bisexuality is excluded from other areas of the textbooks which cover lesbian and gay issues. Sections on homophobia fail to mention the existence of biphobia. Petford (2003) reports that bisexuals often experience the same prejudice as lesbians and gay men, but that this can be coupled with a lack of acceptance or support within lesbian and gay communities and general stereotypes that bisexuality is unreal or a phase on the way to heterosexuality or homosexuality. Biphobia has been linked to relatively high levels of

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<sup>6</sup> Examples of visibly bisexual images would be bisexual activists on pride marches or at bi conferences, holding banners or wearing bi T-shirts. Images taken from bisexual newsletters and websites could also be used. Alternatively, images could be presented of the same person at different points in time with partners of more than one gender, and/or of non-monogamous bisexual people with multiple differently gendered partners (although this latter should be used cautiously so as not to imply that all bisexual people are non-monogamous).

mental health problems within bisexual communities (e.g., Jorm et al., 2002). Whilst many textbooks mention the removal of homosexuality from the DSM, no textbook considered the impact of this on perceptions of bisexuality. Fox (2000) argues that, although this event helped build a more affirmative approach to homosexuality within psychology and psychiatry, the APA retained a dichotomous model of sexual orientation (that people can only be heterosexual or homosexual), which ‘supported the belief that bisexuals were psychologically maladjusted’ (p.180).

## **Sexual Orientation**

### ***Context And Content Of Coverage***

The introductory textbooks which cover sexual orientation include this in their chapters on motivation - generally towards the end of a longer section which examines the drives behind animal and human sexual behaviour. By ‘sexual behaviour’ it is apparent that the books mean ‘heterosexual behaviour’ since the topics covered all relate to arousal and preference for ‘the opposite sex’. A fairly representative exemplar, Kosslyn and Rosenberg’s (2004) section on sexual behaviour, begins with a vignette of a heterosexual date and reports research findings about ‘mating preferences’ (the kinds of men women prefer and vice versa) and women’s responses to pictures of nude men at the time of ovulation. Their section ‘sexual orientation: more than a choice’ then presents research on various biological differences between ‘heterosexual and homosexual people’ (p.428), prior to the final section of the chapter covering ‘sexual dysfunction’ and ‘atypical sexual behaviour’ (fetishism, androgen insensitivity syndrome and transvestism).

Like introductory textbooks, biological psychology textbooks tend to include sections on sexual orientation within chapters on sexual, or even 'reproductive' behaviour (Kalat, 2004). The sexual orientation section in Pinel (2005) starts by saying 'so far, this chapter has avoided the issue of sexual orientation' (p.347), suggesting an awareness of the underlying assumption in the previous section that 'sexual' equals 'heterosexual'. In the two developmental textbooks that cover sexual orientation, Boyd and Bee (2005) consider it in a separate section on 'homosexuality' at the end of their section on relationships in adolescence. Santrock (2005) gives equal space to 'heterosexual attitudes and behavior' and 'attitudes and behavior of lesbians and gay males' (pp. 445-446) in an early adulthood chapter. However, it is the latter section, not the former, which includes a three-paragraph consideration of biological bases of sexual orientation. This implies that the cause of sexual orientation is an issue for lesbians and gay men and not for heterosexuals. The general coverage of homosexuality and bisexuality within separate sections on sexual orientation seems tokenistic (Kitzinger, 1996; Peel, 2001) and suggests that these sexualities constitute problems for overall theories of sexual behaviour and therefore require explanation.

Within the sections on sexual orientation it is clear that heterosexual norms frame the questions posed by both textbook authors and the researchers whose work they cite. Some textbooks minimally acknowledge the heterosexism implicit in searching for explanations and causes of homosexuality rather than heterosexuality, something Simoni (2000) reported was lacking in the books she analysed. For example, Smith, Nolen-Hoeksema, and Fredrickson (2002) begin their section on 'causes of sexual orientation' with this statement 'the common question "what causes homosexuality" is scientifically

misconceived because it implicitly assumes either that heterosexuality needs no explanation or that its causes are self-evident' (p.380). However, all textbooks then go on to present biological research which searches for ways in which lesbian and gay, and occasionally bisexual, people differ from heterosexuals. It seems likely that this common rhetorical strategy serves to construct subsequently reported studies as 'good science' as well as protecting the authors from any accusation of heterosexism.

Hegarty and Pratto's (2004) research found that people were generally more likely to focus on lesbian/gay than heterosexual people in their explanations of differences on the basis of sexual orientation, thus constructing heterosexuality as the neutral standard and anything else as a deviation from it. Such 'norming' is prevalent in textbook sections on sexual orientation which generally report findings in this format, for example:

- 'response to a click [in the ear] is less frequent and weaker for homosexual and bisexual women than for heterosexual women' (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2004, p. 428);
- 'gay men and lesbians were ... more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to report that they had not been masculine (for men) or feminine (for women) as children' (Smith et al., 2002, p. 380);
- 'long bones in the legs and arms of school-aged children who grow up to be homosexual do not grow as rapidly as those of children who eventually become heterosexual' (Boyd & Bee, 2005, p. 334); and
- 'gay more than straight men express interest in occupations such as decorator, florist and flight attendant that attract many women' (Myers, 2003, p. 479).

Percentages are given for the proportion of 'homosexual' people, not heterosexual people, in the population (generally reporting that the common statistic of 10% is an overestimate). In relation to such research on sexual orientation, Tavris (1993) argues that 'the study of "difference" is not the problem; of course people differ. The problem occurs when one group is considered the norm with others differing from it, thereby failing to 'measure up' to the ideal, superior, dominant standard' (p.151). As King (1988) writes 'questions of causality ... are no more or less pertinent to the study of gays and lesbians than to the study of their heterosexual counterparts' (p.168). Although some textbooks pay lip service to this perspective, it is clearly not embedded in their subsequent presentation of research.

### ***Focus On Biological Explanations***

The explanations of sexual orientation given in textbooks are overwhelmingly essentialist and biological. The possibility of a choosing one's sexuality is consistently denied. For example, Kalat (2003) states that 'sexual orientation, like left-or right-handedness, is not something that people choose or that they can change easily' (p. 346). Whilst this is generally presented as an argument against homophobia and for equal rights (e.g., Myers, 2003), it denies the possibility of, for example, lesbianism as a politically chosen identity (Rich, 1978) and any role for personal agency in sexual identity or behaviour. Further, Hegarty (2002) found that the belief that sexual orientation is immutable is not necessarily correlated with more tolerant attitudes amongst heterosexual people<sup>7</sup>. Textbooks frequently equate and reduced social theories of the

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<sup>7</sup> Hegarty found that such a correlation was only apparent with people who thought that immutability beliefs would be expressed by more tolerant people.

origins of sexuality with sexual orientation being 'chosen'. Myers states that sexual orientation is 'biological influenced – an enduring identity, not a choice' (p. 480), as if these are the only two possibilities. But neither social essentialist nor social constructionist understandings of sexuality imply that sexuality is something that is 'freely chosen' by individuals, rather that it is learnt or shaped by social forces.

Very few textbooks cover social theories of sexual orientation at all, except to dismiss previous problematic myths such as the link between homosexuality and relationships with parents, or seduction by an 'adult homosexual' as children (e.g., Myers, 2004; Santrock, 2005). Some textbooks argue that environmental factors are involved in sexual orientation but that what these are is unknown, explaining that this is why they give little space to their consideration (e.g., Boyd & Bee, 2005). Myers (2004, p. 477) makes an unusual (for these textbooks) shift from the third to the first person in his statement:

'the bottom line from a half-century's theory and research: if there are environmental factors that influence sexual orientation, we do not yet know what they are. If someone were to ask me, "what can I do to influence my child's sexual orientation?" my answer would have to be "I haven't a clue"'.

This invites the reader to conclude that 'environmental factors' are not involved, if fifty years of research has failed to reveal them and even an expert like the author is forced to admit his ignorance. Arguably, it also suggests that the question of influencing one's child's sexual orientation might be a reasonable one, or at least leaves this unchallenged.



Smith et al. (2002) include two pages claiming to present 'both sides' of the argument over whether sexual orientation is 'innate or socially determined' (pp. 382-283). This involves J. Michael Bailey summarizing his theory that child gender nonconformity (CGN) and adult homosexuality are intrinsically linked and have genetic origins. Following this, Daryl J. Bem presents the 'social' side of the argument with his 'exotic becomes erotic' theory which agrees that genes and hormones cause CGN but argues that this places children in the company of the 'other sex' who are thus seen as more similar to themselves and therefore, later on, as less sexually attractive. This positioning of Bailey and Bem as the two sides of the debate over the origins of sexual orientation excludes the possibility of more social understandings of sexuality. The social constructionist theories which dominate most of the other social sciences when it comes to understanding sexuality (Weeks, 2003) are not represented at all, and there is very little consideration of the vast historical and cultural variation in sexual behaviour and understandings of sexuality. Indeed authors' avoid the issue and use universalizing statements like 'as far as we know, all cultures in all times have been predominantly heterosexual' (Myers 2004, p. 475).

Along with Bailey and Bem's theories of genetic involvement, many books present studies on the influence of maternal hormones and/or stress levels on sexual orientation during gestation. As Hegarty (2003) points out, the construction of the maternal body as altering the infant's body in this way implicitly shifts responsibility for gay men's sexuality onto their mothers, perhaps echoing old stereotypes of mothers causing gayness in their sons. Textbooks also present Simon LeVay's (1991) finding that the brains of heterosexual men have a larger third interstitial nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus than

those of women or homosexual men. This is generally followed by a summary of the problems with LeVay's research: the lack of replication; the small sample size; the fact that the men had died of AIDS related illnesses and that their sexual orientation was assumed on the basis of whether they contracted HIV through intravenous drug use or not; and the fact that experience could affect the brain rather than the other way round (e.g., Rosenzweig et al., 2004). Despite these recognized flaws, LeVay's study is still reported in all the sections on sexual orientation. Indeed, Pinel (2005) concludes that although LeVay's research is controversial: 'it has been widely publicized and has stimulated a major effort to identify neural correlates of sexual orientation' (p. 348) – implying that this is good reason to give it so much page space.

Many of the biological studies reported in the texts are presented as finding that lesbian women are more masculine than heterosexual women and gay men more feminine than heterosexual men (in terms of hormones, brain size, childhood behaviour, etc.), whilst some present gay men as 'even more "male-like" than the average male' (who, presumably, is heterosexual) (e.g., Kalat, 2003, p. 347). The ways in which conclusions are drawn from the former studies seem to support persistent myths which confuse gender identity and sexual orientation, seeing lesbians as 'masculine' women and gay men as 'feminine' men (Gainor, 2000). These conclusions are often based on the spurious and overly simplistic notion that certain hormones and behaviours are 'female' and others are 'male' (Hird, 2004). There is generally no reflection on the conflicting nature of the findings that gay men are 'more male', and these still manage to present gay men as deviating from 'the usual male pattern' (Kalat, 2003, p. 347).

### *Bisexuality And Dichotomous Theories*

Roughly half of the textbooks covering sexual orientation failed to mention bisexuality at all as a possible sexual orientation. Kalat (2003, p. 345) asks ‘why do some people prefer partners of the other sex and some prefer partners of their own sex?’, failing to mention those who do not prefer one or the other. Boyd and Bee (2005, p. 334) chart the pathway of the ‘great majority of teens’ from unisexual groups to heterosexual groups and then heterosexual pairs, stating that the process is different for ‘the subgroup of homosexual teens’. Toates (2001) and Myers (2003) both define sexual orientation as whether a person is heterosexual or homosexual, indicating that these are the only possibilities. Of all the textbooks analysed, only one introductory (Smith, Nolen-Hoeksema & Fredrickson, 2002) and two developmental texts (Berk, 2003; Santrock, 2005) included index terms for bisexuality. In 1979, Newton argued that the complete omission of homosexual content in textbooks was an implied antihomosexual statement to students, and the equivalent could be said now of this omission of bisexuality.

Pinel (2005) and Toates (2001) were the only biological psychology textbooks analysed to mention bisexuality. Pinel follows the pattern of all the introductory psychology books which cover bisexuality by mentioning and/or defining it briefly at the start but then focusing on differences between ‘homosexuals and heterosexuals’ (p. 347). Some books only mention bisexuality briefly in order to downplay its existence, for example, Myers (2003, p. 476) reports low frequencies of bisexuality, and continues the analogy between sexual orientation and handedness to state that ‘most people are one way, some the other. A very few are truly ambidextrous’. This conceptualisation of bisexuality corresponds with current arguments in the psychological (e.g., Dickins et al.,

2005) and popular press (Borno, 2006) about bisexuality. Wilson and Rahman (2005) shed some light on why there might be an agenda amongst some biological psychologists to prove the non-existence of bisexuality. They argue that a dichotomous understanding 'implies that sexual orientation is set from an early age, whereas a prevalence of intermediate sexualities fits better with the argument that later learning experiences, 'chance' factors or lifestyle choices are influential' (p. 16). Putting to one side the problematic construction of sexuality as *either* biologically *or* socially determined, this argument is not consistent with much current biological and evolutionary thinking which emphasizes variation and diversity, finds widespread bisexuality amongst animal species and humans, and critiques dichotomous understandings of sexuality (Hird, 2004).

Some textbooks do present the possibility of non-dichotomous sexual orientation, however my feeling is this is generally done in a way that would be quite confusing to students, because the authors then go on to focus almost entirely on differences between homosexual and heterosexual people. Smith et al. (2003) define an individual's sexual orientation as 'the degree to which he or she is sexually attracted to persons of the other sex and/or to persons of the same sex' (p. 379) and begin their section with a summary of Kinsey et al.'s (1948, 1953) famous research, arguing – like Kinsey et al. – that: 'most behavioural scientists conceptualize sexual orientation as a continuum, ranging from exclusive heterosexuality to exclusive homosexuality' (p.379). This statement is not reflected in the overall tone and content of the textbooks, as I will explain shortly. Smith et al. go on to define bisexuals as those who score two to four on the six point Kinsey scale. Like Passer and Smith (2003) - the other introductory textbook which considers non-dichotomous theories - they then point out that sexual orientation comprises different

components (e.g., attraction, behaviour, self-identity) and that people may be at different points on the scale for different elements. They also state that ‘individuals may shift over time on one or more of the components’ (p.379), suggesting that sexual orientation is mutable - a possibility which would seem to be denied by most of the biological research they go on to present. The words ‘bisexual’ and ‘bisexuality’ are mentioned three times in the first two paragraphs but then never mentioned again in the three pages on sexual orientation that follow.

There is some similar confusion in the literature on sexuality in general over whether continuum or dichotomous theories are accepted within psychology. King (1988) reports that sexuality ‘is viewed as a continuum along which an individual’s identity and sexual activities may move at different stages of life’ (p. 168) and Fox (2000) states that there is ‘a greater acknowledgement of bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation and sexual identity’ within psychology, following ‘a critical reexamination of the dichotomous model of sexual orientation’ (p. 161). However, Rust (2000a) reports that both popular understandings and scientific research on sexuality collapse bisexuality by dichotomous either/or inquiry. The research investigating genetic, hormonal and brain differences presented in the textbooks is clearly based on a dichotomous framework that ‘erases bisexuality as an epistemological category’ (Petford, 2003, p. 7). The coverage in the textbooks suggests that bisexuals are sometimes excluded from research completely and at other times lumped in with lesbians or gay men (Tavris, 1993). Garber (1995) notes that much genetic and physiological research fails to make clear the criteria on which sexual orientation is judged (e.g., behaviour, identity, attraction) and that the changeability of these across a lifetime makes such research problematic. Also, as Rust

(2000b) points out, both dichotomous and continuum-based theories define sexual orientation in terms of dichotomous sex/gender because they present sexuality as attraction to men and/or to women. This understanding of 'opposite sexes' underpins heteronormativity as evidenced by Kessler's (1998) finding that, in Western cultures, those people (up to 5%) who are born ambiguously sexed are assigned a gender according to a table which categorizes 'male' as having an appendage of a certain length which is capable of becoming erect and penetrating a vagina, and 'female' as having a vagina capable of being penetrated (see Hird, 2004 for a full discussion of non-dichotomous sex and gender diversity in both nonhuman and human animals). Petford (2003) found - in contrast to textbook definitions of bisexuality as attraction 'to both sexes' (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2004) - that the preferred definition of bisexuality from the bisexual communities she studied was 'mutable sexual and emotional attraction to people of any sex, where gender may not be a defining factor' (p. 6).

Only one textbook showed some recognition of the problems that acknowledgment of the existence of bisexuality posed for the dichotomous explanations presented. Toates (2001) queried dichotomous explanations (genes *or* environment) and went on to say 'also we should not dichotomise into neat categories of gay or heterosexual and we need to recognize overlap' (p. 465). However, as with all textbooks that mentioned bisexuality, there was a great deal of slippage in wording, and bisexuality was not consistently included when 'non-heterosexual' sexual orientations were being written about. McDonald (1979) found that gay men were more frequently mentioned than lesbians in writing on sexual orientation. In my analysis it seemed that most of the time people of 'non-heterosexual' sexual orientations were referred to as either 'gay and lesbian' (in that

order) or 'homosexual'. Sometimes 'lesbian' would be missed off, and sometimes 'bisexual' would be added to the end ('gay, lesbian and bisexual'), but this inclusion of bisexual was inconsistent.

Dichotomous understandings of sexuality erase bisexuality as a category and this may well contribute to discrimination experienced by many bisexuals and the myth that bisexuality is only ever 'a phase' en route to a mature heterosexual or homosexual identity. Textbooks would do well to draw on Tavris' (1993) consideration of research on sexual orientation. As she highlights, studies on brain differences are small and inconclusive, the meanings of terms keep changing, there is far more evidence of similarity than difference, brain differences do not prove innateness, and 'there are many sexualities which do not divide up neatly into heterosexuality and homosexuality' (pp. 157-158). Some of the textbooks analysed include awareness of the impact of homophobia on the lives and experiences of lesbians and gay men within their sections on sexual orientation, which seems a positive move forward. Myers (2003, p. 475) poses the question 'what does it feel like to be homosexual in a heterosexual culture?' and considers various examples of heterosexism and homophobia. However, when I read this question my immediate response was 'probably rather similar to the way it feels to be bisexual reading these textbooks'.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It is clear from my analysis that the coverage of lesbian and gay sexualities in textbooks has improved since the studies of McDonald (1981) and King (1988). Texts may still make brief reference to the removal of homosexuality per se from the DSM in

sections on 'abnormal psychology', but most of the coverage takes place in chapters on aspects of 'normal' psychology, and few social or developmental psychology textbooks completely exclude lesbian and gay relationships from their coverage of intimate relationships. As Simoni (2000) found, there is still excessive focus on the origins of homosexuality, although some textbooks now acknowledge the flaws in searching for causes of homosexuality and not heterosexuality. Coverage of lifespan development, intimate relationships and sexual behaviour is still largely heteronormative, as are the images and examples used to illustrate them. Most mention of LGB sexualities is in tokenistic boxes or subsections. However, a minority of textbooks have made progress by illustrating general points about relationships with images of same sex couples, by considering lesbian and gay relationships throughout the lifespan, or by referencing heterosexist biases in mainstream psychology and the existence of lesbian and gay psychology.

Sexual orientation is generally constructed as rooted in biology, unchangeable and dichotomous. Bisexuality is rarely mentioned and, when it is, it is only included sporadically and not theorized in any depth. None of the recent psychological research on bisexual identities, experiences or behaviour (e.g., Fox, 2004) seems to have filtered through into psychological textbooks. I share Petford's (2003) concerns that this marginalization and exclusion of bisexuality and reliance on dichotomous models of sexual orientation risks perpetuating biphobia and models of mental health and psychotherapy which regard bisexuality as deviant or disordered.

Further research in this area should continue to chart changes in the representation of LGB sexualities in psychology textbooks and to check the generalizability of the



conclusions drawn here by conducting larger scale content analyses of both textbooks and curricula. There are also important areas for in depth qualitative analysis that were beyond the scope of this study, for example in relation to the depictions of transgender and/or intersex people. As previously mentioned, dichotomous understandings of sex and gender, as well as sexual orientation, are inherent within heteronormativity. However, most coverage of sex and gender in mainstream textbooks constructs male and female, man and woman, as 'opposites'. Many introductory and biological textbooks consider intersex people in sections on gender identity but they are often portrayed as deviations or abnormalities and only understood within the two-gender model. For example Kosslyn and Rosenberg (2004, p. 432) write about people with androgen insensitivity syndrome who 'should have been boys' and who can, in most cases, have 'normal female sex lives'. There is very little coverage of transgender in textbooks outside the pathologizing language of 'gender identity disorder' (Gainor, 2000), and no consideration of sex and gender diversity or the challenges intersex and transgender might pose to mainstream understandings of sex/gender (Hird, 2004). Despite the fact that abnormal psychology texts no longer include homosexuality as a disorder, it would be useful to examine them for the ways in which they present homosexuality's removal from the DSM, for their depiction of transgendered people, and for their continued construction of deviance around same sex and non-monogamous relationships. Also, the continued pathologization of certain sexual practices, like sadomasochism, as paraphilias is of relevance to many in LGB communities (see Barker, 2005). There is scope for a more detailed analysis of the coverage of LGB parenting in psychology textbooks (see Clarke, 2000) and of issues of

ethnicity and (dis)ability which are rarely considered in relation to sexuality (Simoni, 2000).

Snyder and Broadway (2004) in their textbook analysis argue that ‘the pervasive acceptance of heteronormative behaviour privileges students that fit the heterosexual norm, and oppresses through omission and silence those who do not’ (p. 617). I would suggest that this is largely the case in psychology texts and that bisexuals especially are excluded from these books. As mentioned earlier, this is damaging for LGB students who could understandably feel that they are not part of human behaviour or normal development on the basis of these texts. It is also problematic on a much wider societal level because these (mostly) heteronormative textbooks are one of the main sources of knowledge and understanding for many future therapists, clinical psychologists, educators, occupational psychologists, law-makers and so on, and because the theories and research presented in them tend to filter through into popular understanding.

I would support Greene and Croom’s (2000) call for a more lesbian and gay affirmative psychology to pervade textbooks where ‘lesbians and gay men are acknowledged to be equal to heterosexuals in their psychological adjustment and in their capacity to love, relate, and contribute to society’ (Simoni, 2000, p.76). However, I would argue strongly for the addition of bisexuals and transgender people to ‘lesbians and gay men’ and for a continued critical consideration within LGBTQ psychology of the dichotomous understandings of sexuality, sex and gender that underlie heteronormativity and much psychological theory and research. Until textbooks reflect these aims, I would call on psychology teachers to actively choose the most inclusive textbooks to recommend on their courses and to embed LGBTQ relevant material throughout their

courses, particularly that which encourages students to reflect on their existing assumptions (see Barker, 2005).

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