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Intersectionality and the 'journeys' of LGB women youth workers

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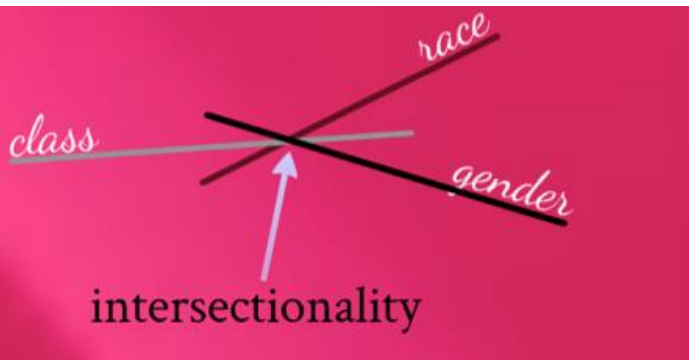
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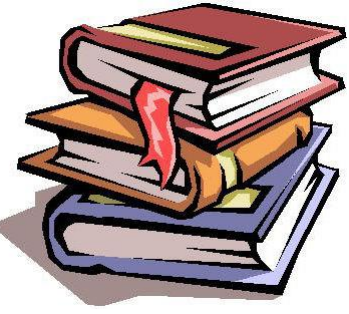
Intersectionality and the 'journeys' of LGB women youth workers



SEPD school conference
May 2017

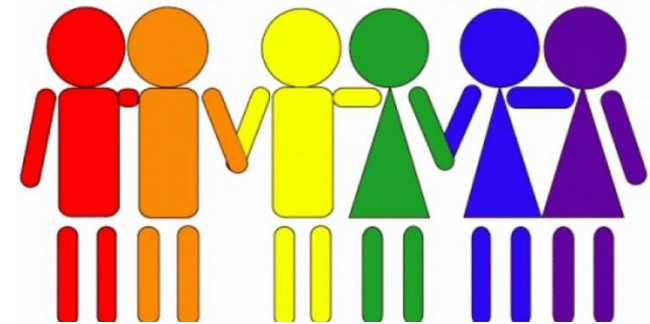
This presentation

- The conceptual framework
- The research context
- 4 case studies
- Findings and links to theory
- Conclusions



Conceptual framework

- The usefulness of an ‘intersectional’ approach
- Meta narratives
- Essentialism and social constructionism
- Queer? What does it mean?



The case studies

- Carla
- Issie
- Helena
- Sabidah



Meta narratives



- Helena: no images of butch women with short hair; George *'inspiring'*.
- Sabidah: *'clocking ...two women and they looked like right butch lesbians'* on black and white tele when 10

But many early images in media were negative:

- Issie: lots of people in her extended family including one gay man who lived with from 7-11 and still close to him and his partner

Essentialism or social constructionism

Complementary or mutually exclusive?

Helena dob: 1948

- *'believe[s] that we construct our identity ... [but] our sexual orientation is predetermined because I wouldn't have chosen at 11 to start fancying girls and I wouldn't have chosen ... all the shit that I've been through, I tried 2 years to make myself straight. I couldn't'*

Is it of interest/importance?



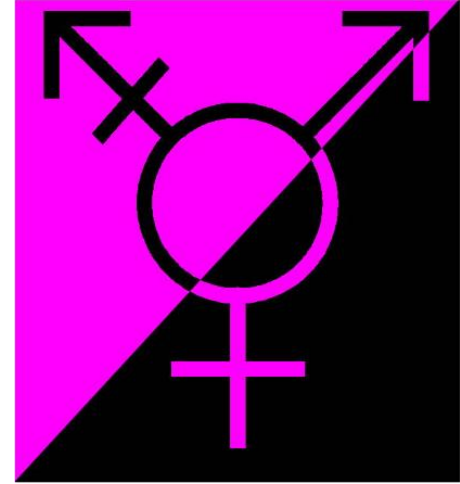
Essentialist or social constructed?

- Carla: sexuality being 'something you realise. ... [we are] born pansexual ... born with the possibility of being attracted to anyone... socialised quite young' regarding the limitations of sexual choice
- Issie *'leans towards the socially constructed side of things' but 'believes' that some 'people can be born with a really strong predisposition one way or the other ... they are that way; it is in them'.*
- Helena: *'believe[s] that we construct our identity ... [but] our sexual orientation is predetermined because I wouldn't have chosen at 11 to start fancying girls and I wouldn't have chosen ... all the shit that I've been through, I tried 2 years to make myself straight. I couldn't'*
- Sabidah: both gender and sexuality are 'socially constructed'. some people are adamant that they have been *'born into the wrong body'*.

What does 'queer' mean?

Helena: *Abusive in my day*

Issie: *Chameleon word ... queer changes and gets owned by different groups of different people I'm not queer enough [by some people's definition] . Nothing to do with sexuality, it's to do with lifestyle and politics. ... queer and queer culture maybe two different things*



Queer for Carla

- *Queer spaces 'non-race, anti-racist, anti-sexist practice'. 'Queer nights' in smaller venues.*
- *'I didn't feel that I had to look a certain way ... or dress a certain way. ... more accepting ... more fluid ... a bit more celebrating everyone'.*
- *Doesn't assist other people to understand what you're talking about'.*

Labels accepted and rejected: Carla:

- *'There was a certain hairstyle and a certain cut of jeans ... or brand of jeans ... that was very defined as ... the lesbian look. quite spikey hair'. '*
- *Gay as an umbrella term ... as there is more movement in who I am under gay ... People get it. They know what it means'*
- *challenge of finding a label that fits as 'identity is never really static ... I like going back and forth. ... Queer means that there is potential for change. Whereas lesbian, if you change you're no longer a lesbian*

Intersectionality: ethnicity & social class

- Carla *'you see the odd black person dotted around but ... not in groups of black people. ... The majority of black people that I see out there are toilet attendants ... not ... black people ... accessing venues. ...*
- BME young people *'they're usually ... interested in how [her] black parent has reacted'*
- *Sabidah: BME yp; Helena: working class yp*
- *Issie: needs to be aware of how her middle class upbringing*

Conclusions



- LGB people/women are all different individuals
- The 'cause' of homosexuality not important
Rather
- how our sexual identity or orientation impacts on our current experiences and shapes how the world responds to us and how we respond to the world

