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Intersectionality and the 'journeys' of LGB women youth workers

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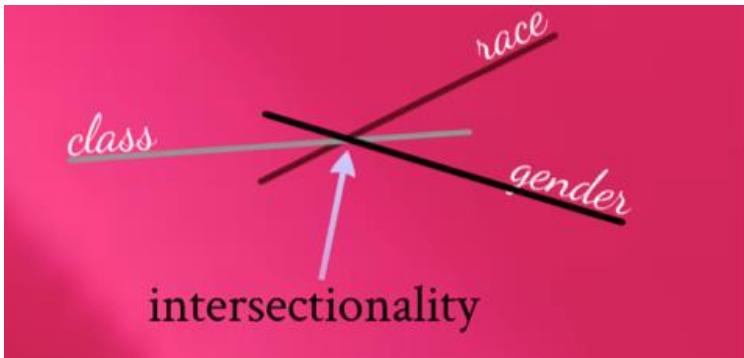
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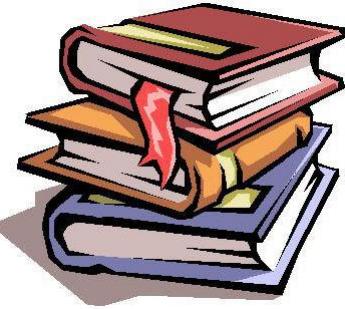
Intersectionality and the 'journeys' of LGB women youth workers



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 research

- Aims
- Scope, fieldwork and sampling
- Limitations of study
- Data collection and analysis



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'*

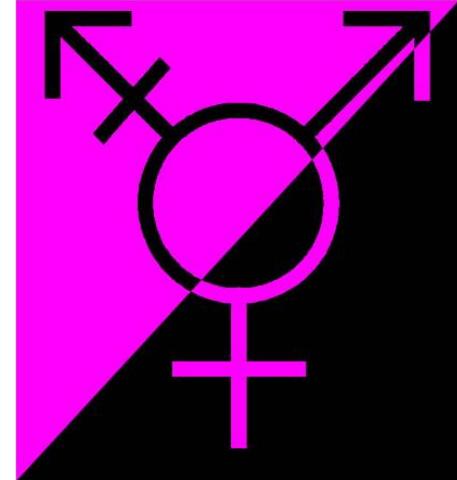
Is it of interest/importance?



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 spiky 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

