

International BiReCon 2010: Provisional Programme

Programme: 26th August 2010

10.00-10.30	Registration
10.30-10.45	Welcome: Christina Richards and Meg Barker
10.45-11.15	Keynote talk: Steven Angelides – <i>How to bring your kids up bi</i>
11.20-12.35	Presentations
12.40-1.10	Keynote talk: Robyn Ochs – <i>Why we need to “Get Bi”</i>
1.10-1.50	Lunch
1.50-2.20	Keynote talk: Serena Anderlini D'Onofrio - <i>Gaia & the New Politics of Love: Notes for a 'Bi' Planet</i>
2.25-3.25	Workshop 1
3.35-4.35	Workshop 2
4.40-5.10	Keynote talk: Eric Anderson – <i>Heterosexual men, bisexual behaviour</i>
5.10-5.45	Panel discussion: John Sylla (American Institute of Bisexuality) and keynote speakers – <i>The future of bisexual research and theory</i>
5.45-evening	Conference end, socialising

Plenary at International BiCon on 27th August

International research for a non-academic audience: Robyn Ochs, Serena Anderlini D'Onofrio, Ron Fox, Meg Barker, Christina Richards, Eric Anderson, John Sylla.

Presentations – please choose one room and remain in it

Time	Room 1:	Room 2:	Room 3:
11.25-11.40	Nichola Wood – “...apparently you can't be bisexual”: <i>Bisexual experiences of inequality, prejudice and discrimination in the workplace</i>	Helen Bowes-Catton – <i>Visualising bisexual spaces</i>	<i>Anna Einarsdottir and Brian Heaphy - 'A date or a drink?' How Civil Partners meet</i>
11.40-11.55	Ruth Hunt – <i>Bisexuals in the workplace: Applying the research</i>	Lyndsey Moon – <i>What's your position? Bisexuality, Therapists and the Emotional Habitus</i>	<i>Jenny Kangasvuo - "It's Like a Wave, This Thing Called Bisexuality." Comparing the Experiences of Finnish Bisexuals in 1999 and 2009</i>
11.55-12.10	Surya Monro - <i>Where are all the bisexuals? Bisexuality and local government equalities work in the UK</i>	Beth Roberts – <i>Imag(in)ing Bisexuality in the Cinema</i>	<i>Miguel Obradors – Deconstructing Biphobia</i>
12.10-12.25	Camel Gupta & George Voss – <i>Activism in queer and bi spaces</i>	Kaye McLelland – <i>Towards a Bisexual Shakespeare</i>	<i>Christian Klesse - 'I did my way ...' – Creating Bisexual Intimacies in the Face of Heteronormativity and Biphobia</i>

Workshops – feel free to move rooms between workshops

	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Workshop 1: 2.25-3.25	Lindsay River – Issues for older bisexual people	Ele Hicks – Supporting and finding the bisexuals	Ruth Hunt and Louise Kelly – bis in the workplace	Hartmut Friedrichs - Political strategy: bisexual or queer? - a two-eyed approach
Workshop 2: 3.35-4.35	Rebecca Jones - 'When I get older': Imagining your bisexual future	Surya Monro - Bridging the Gap: The bisexual community influencing policy making	Richard Lohman & Carola Towle - Working for bi equality – how can we use the 2010 Equality Act?	Sue George – Bi blogging

Abstracts and Biographies

Keynotes

Steven Angelides - How to Bring Your Kids Up Bi

Almost 20 years ago Eve Sedgwick published her critique of the American Psychiatric Association's shift from delisting homosexuality and adding Gender Identity Disorder as a pathological mental condition. It was famously entitled "How to Bring Your Kids up Gay." In the piece Sedgwick railed against the effeminophobia and homophobia of America's most powerful psychotherapeutic institutions of psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and ego-psychology. She also expressed burning frustration at the fraught entanglement that is the nature/nurture complex and inveighed against the cultural foreclosure of any whiff of advice on "how to help your kids turn out gay."

This paper revisits Sedgwick's powerful intervention by raising the spectre of bisexuality. It begins with an autobiographical vignette in order to reflect upon the place of bisexuality within more recent debates about transgender, Gender Identity Disorder, child development, and the nature/nurture problematic. By retracing key themes in the epistemological history of (bi)sexuality, the paper concludes with an argument about the importance of challenging the ongoing marginalisation and erasure of bisexuality.

Steven Angelides has degrees in philosophy and gender studies, including a PhD from the University of Melbourne. He has held research positions at the Australian National University, Adelaide University, and the University of Melbourne and is currently Monash fellow in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University. Steven is the author of *A History of Bisexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and the recipient of the 2004 MLA Crompton-Noll Award for his work on child sexuality published in *GLQ*. He has just completed a monograph entitled *The Fear of Child Sexuality*.

Robyn Ochs – Why We need to “Get Bi”

What are challenges to acknowledging and understanding bisexuality and other non-binary identities? Why is this field of study important? Robyn will address these questions and outline a few challenges and opportunities we face going forward.

Robyn Ochs is the editor of the 42-country anthology *Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World* and of the *Bi Women* newsletter. She has been an educator in this field for 25 years, and has taught several university courses on bisexual identity and presented at more than 400 colleges, universities and conferences in various countries. (www.robynochs.com).

Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio - Gaia & the New Politics of Love: Notes for a Bi Planet

This talk is about why we need a new politics of love if we, as a species, want to get along with our hostess planet Gaia, and in particular, with the symbiotic ecosystems that sustain us. In her new book, *Gaia & the New Politics of Love* (2009), the author studies love and life from a sex-positive, ecofeminist perspective to claim that we need to practice the arts of loving in their infinite forms of expression to generate the global joy, peace, and health our species needs to confront the current ecological crises. In this first comprehensive theoretical analysis of human sexuality, ethos, and global ecology, the author proposes a new politics of love that envisions love as an art that can be productively taught and studied by every one. Bisexual practice, awareness, and theory are key to the paradigm shift that will enable humanity to make peace with Gaia because bisexuality is a portal to practicing the arts of loving in an inclusive manner. When we understand love as an art rather than a science, we feel the affinity between the arts of loving and the arts of healing. The world revolutionized by the arts of loving will be a "world where it is safe to live because it is a world where it is safe to love."

Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio will keynote at the June 2010 conference of the World

Polyamory Association at Harbin Hot Springs, California, with a talk about “What’s in a Word? Dissidence and Health on a Poly Planet.” She also gave the keynote address at the 2007 Loving More and World Polyamory Association conferences. She has been interviewed on Italian public TV about her books on practices of love that include bisexuality and polyamory. She is an academic, an activist, a writer and a healer. Her numerous books include Lambda finalist *Eros* (2007), *Plural Loves* (2005), *Women and Bisexuality* (2005), and a forthcoming collection on bisexuality and queer theory. She leads workshops and lectures on Gaia, Eros, & the Sacred. Her blog, Poly Planet GAIA is an open discursive space about the paradigm shift toward a polyamorous future where humanity is at peace with Gaia, <http://polyplanet.blogspot.com>. She has been published in and peer-reviews for several journals. She is a professor of humanities at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez, and lives in Cabo Rojo, Western Puerto Rico

Heterosexual men, bisexual behaviour? - Eric Anderson

Discrimination against Bisexuals has been documented as characteristic of the bisexual individuals’ life experience. Those identifying as bisexual have often been stigmatized as neurotic, unable to love, or incapable of making up their minds. Bisexuals have also been subject to double discrimination, facing hostility from both heterosexuals and homosexuals. And, for bisexual men particularly, they have been described as simply being in transition into pure homosexuality, in a ‘bi today, gay tomorrow’ dismissal. Thus, the overwhelming social attitude toward bisexuality has been one of denial, erasure, and/or stigma. However, my research suggests that these myths and misattributions are relegated to a particularly conservative period of history. Youths’ attitudes toward sex and sexuality today are changing—and they are changing rapidly. Supported by the American Institute of Bisexuality, my research into the attitudes of 90 heterosexual male youths, alongside 60 interviews of bisexual men from various age-groups, shows that as cultural homophobia decreases, bisexuality is looked upon with more favor. Results suggest that the viability of alternative categories of sexuality are on the increase, as is an expanded social and political landscape for bisexuals. Thus, a cultural space is opened for the recognition of sexualities and/or sexual behaviors that have been previously silenced and stigmatized among men.

Dr. Eric Anderson is an American sociologist at the University of Bath, England. He is known for his research on sport, masculinities, sexualities and homophobia. Dr. Anderson is the foremost researcher on the relationship between gay male athletes and sport. His work on heterosexual men principally examines the changing nature of how heterosexual men bond in an era of decreased cultural homophobia. Here, he finds improved homosocial emotionality, physical tactility, and markedly improved attitudes toward sexual minorities. Dr. Anderson has authored many peer-reviewed articles and several books, including the award-winning *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity* (2005), as well as *Inclusive Masculinity: The Changing Nature of Masculinities* (2009) as well as *Sport, Theory & Social Problems* (May 2010).

Panel discussion

John Sylla with talk for 10 minutes about the work of the American Institute of Bisexuality. Then all speakers will discuss the future of bi research and its relationship with activism and community.

Presentations

Room 1

“...apparently you can't be bisexual”: Bisexual experiences of inequality, prejudice and discrimination in the workplace - Gill Valentine & Nichola Wood, School of Geography, University of Leeds.

In recent years the UK has witnessed a series of legal changes that extend the rights of and provide new protections for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in the workplace. However, recent research suggests that attitudes to LGB people have not necessarily evolved at the same pace as legislative changes and that discrimination and prejudice against these groups remains widespread across a range of employment spaces (Stonewall 2008). It also highlights the existence of a particular lack of understanding of bisexuality as a distinctive (and valid) identity by both heterosexual, and lesbian and gay colleagues (Valentine et al 2009, cf. Hemmings 1995, Tucker 1995). Drawing on research conducted on behalf of Stonewall, this paper explores the ways in which bisexuality is often experienced as an invisible identity and how this, in turn, affects the capacity of bisexual employees to feel included, respected and equally-valued within their work environments.

Gill Valentine is a Professor of Geography at the University of Leeds. She has over 15 years experience of carrying out social research on social identities, lifestyles, and exclusion, including working with lesbians and gay men, bisexual men and women, D/deaf people, refugee and asylum seekers, and children and young people. **Nichola Wood** is a lecturer in Critical Human Geography at the University of Leeds. She is an early career academic with experience of researching the emotional experience of identity (including work on Scottish national identities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans identities) and emotional experiences of place/space. Gill and Nichola have recently worked together to produce a research report for the Equality Challenge Unit entitled *The Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Staff and Students in Higher Education* and to complete research for Stonewall that formed the basis of their (2009) report on *Bisexual People in the Workplace*.

Bis in the workplace – Ruth Hunt

Stonewall knows that people perform better when they can be themselves and it is with this aim that we have been working with over 500 employers that are part of our Diversity Champions programme. It is clear however, that despite many great strides that have been made to achieve sexual orientation equality in workplaces across Britain, many bisexual men and women still feel unable to be themselves at work.

This presentation and workshop will explore the research findings and recommendations from Stonewall's most recent Workplace Guide, 'Bisexual People in the Workplace', the first of its kind to capture the experiences of bisexual employees of large organisations in the UK. It will show how the discrimination bisexual men and women often face can prevent them achieving their full potential at work and how these experiences are often quite distinct from those of their lesbian and gay colleagues. Participant will hear examples of how top employers are raising awareness of the issues bisexual people face in the workplace and developing strategies to involve bisexual staff in their workplace initiatives.

Ruth Hunt is Deputy Director of Public Affairs at Stonewall and is responsible for the strategic development and implementation of Stonewall's policy, campaigns and research programme. Ruth has led Stonewall's ongoing development of research and guidance into the needs and experiences of different communities within the lesbian, gay and bisexual community. This includes Stonewall's *Bisexual People in the Workplace* guide, *The Double Glazed Glass Ceiling* guide into lesbian and bisexual women's experiences in the workplace and *Prescription for Change*, the first ever national lesbian and bisexual women's health study.

Where are all the bisexuals? Bisexuality and local government equalities work in the UK - Surya Monro

Recent legislative and cultural changes have supported greater equalities for bisexuals in some ways, and bisexuality is now routinely included within the 'LGBT' equalities strands used by statutory sector policy makers and practitioners. However, findings from a large ESRC funded project about LGBT equalities in local government show that this inclusion is largely rhetorical, with bisexuality tagged onto the end of lesbian and gay, and LGBT equalities work as a whole being placed low down the hierarchy of equalities work. In localities where there appear to be high levels of homophobia generally (rural England, Wales and Northern Ireland) bisexuality is virtually invisible. In areas where LGBT work is more established, there are still high levels of ignorance about bisexuality, and in some cases active biphobia, evident amongst statutory sector players. This presentation examines the reasons why bisexuality is still the poor relation within the LGBT equalities strand. It is set within the context of the recession and broader challenges facing statutory sector service providers.

Surya Monro is a Research Fellow based at the University of Huddersfield. She has researched and published substantially in the fields of LGBT politics and identity, particularly around [i] Trans; [ii] LGBT equality and local governance; [iii] LGBT citizenship and [iv] Intersectionality and sexuality. She is the author of 'Gender Politics: Citizenship, Activism and Sexual Diversity' (Pluto Press, 2005). Surya is bisexual and has been involved in LGB activism for many years.

Activism in queer and bi spaces - Camel Gupta and George Voss

The paper examines the Brighton Bifest events of 2006-2009, as set in the greater context of the UK bi community and activism movement of the past three decades, to argue that this bi space performs many of the overlaps, elisions and disputes that refuse to be contained within bi and queer theories. Within this site, queer performances can take place alongside the invocation of a specific identity of 'bisexual'. This has particular productive tensions that constitute spaces. In particular, Brighton Bifest specifically located bisexuality in a local LGBT policy-making setting, whilst maintaining a fluidity and lack of conformity characteristic of bisexual activist spaces. These events have also paved the way for the development of further UK policy/activist sites, including the Bisexual Index and BiReCon. Thus, these spaces problematise and inform both 'bisexuality' and 'queer theory'. Locating theory within the practices of Bifest and the specific moments of engagements with state apparatus that demand identifications, this paper interrogates the silences (even dismissal) of the category of 'bisexual' within key moments of queer theorizing. Yet it does not reject the pivotal points that interrogate the falsity of binaries such as hetero/homo and male/female and performative understandings of identity. We build on the contemporary 'theorising from the fence', that constructs bisexual epistemologies, as well as illuminating key moments in queer theory, in this way bi spaces are read as productive sites that can balance both queer and bisexual work.

George Voss has been involved in various LGBT activism over the past decade. Her PhD from Sussex University examined how stigma around sexuality affects the capabilities of organisations. She is currently a visiting fellow at the University of Brighton.

Room 2

Visualising bisexual spaces - Helen Bowes-Catton

Recent research into bisexuality has tended to use discourse analysis to explore bisexual

people's articulations of identity. This research shows that, although many bi people argue that they experience their identities as coherent and unified, and vehemently reject binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality as bogus and constructed (Bowes-Catton 2007), 'their own discourse on sexual subjectivity is inescapably marked by these discourses', resulting in articulations of identity that appear 'structurally fractured' (Ault 1996) and inchoate. Following the turn to the body in sociological research, I argue that an approach to identity research which privileges discourse in this way makes it difficult for participants to articulate identities outside of prevailing binary categories, and seems to result in the reiteration of these dominant discourses, obscuring experiential and material aspects of sexual identity such as embodied experience and performativity.

My research aims to move towards an understanding of how bisexual identity is grounded in the bodily practices and performances of lived experience. In this paper, I present some preliminary results from my application of visual and creative methods such as modelling and photography to the study of bisexual people's embodied experience of space, with the aim of moving towards an understanding of the experience and production of bisexual identity, both in everyday life, and in bisexual spaces such as BiCon, the annual gathering of the UK bisexual community.

Helen Bowes-Catton is a PhD student in the Psychology Department at The Open University. Helen's research examines bi people's embodied experiences and productions of identity in bi community spaces and in the spaces of everyday life. Her doctoral research project uses visual and creative methods such as photography and modelling to explore the ways in which bisexual identities are experienced and produced, through the body, in 'spectacular' and mundane spaces. Her research on bisexuality has been published in the *Journal of Bisexuality* and *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, as well as in the edited collection *Visual Psychologies: Using and interpreting images in qualitative research* (Reavey, P (ed): Routledge 2010).

What's your position? Bisexuality, Therapists and the Emotional Habitus – Lyndsey Moon

The habitus refers to a phenomenological space where objective and subjective are drawn together. In this social perspective, originating from the works of Pierre Bourdieu, the question of 'choice', social rules and personal freedom come into full view - and thereby provide an interesting challenge for therapy. For Bourdieu the personal, the idea of choice, is always influenced by the social - ie. that we internalize social structures and he even states: "In fact we can think of habitus as internalized, embodied, social structures" (Bourdieu 1984) which lead us to have a 'common sense'. For example, Bourdieu argued that it manifests itself in the way we eat, drink, talk, walk "and even blow our noses". Of course, this is far away from the idea of 'individual choice' and one of the main problems critics have pointed towards is the way the 'habitus' is social - that it remains unconscious and therefore the social is almost too powerful by reminding us we have no choices!

In my own work, I centre on the emotional habitus. This, I suggest, is a space where the meanings for feelings have been internalized as the range of 'emotions' - that the name given to the way we 'feel' and why we feel, is influenced very deeply by social structures - far more than we imagine! This is particularly evident when we think of sex and gender and the way emotion is used to separate out 'men' from 'women' in a rather simplistic and trite manner. However, these meanings have been taken up by therapists and psychologists and the extreme versions are embedded within tools such as the DSM and the various texts highlighting the deficits of those who fail to do heterosexuality on a regular basis. My own research with 70 therapists over the past decade has shown that emotion is often highly

regulated but this regulation is beginning to shift. In my most recent research, while a number of therapists named themselves as openly 'bisexual', a number of therapists who had previously stated they were 'heterosexual', 'lesbian' or 'gay male', began to describe their sexual and emotional feelings and began to say they did have feelings for both sexes and genders and that it was really because of 'the time' or the relationship they were in had gone on for too long to change, that prevented them acknowledging these 'real' feelings openly and acting on them.

This raises a number of interesting points:

1. That gender, sex and feelings are more 'free floating' than we care to acknowledge.
2. That although critics have suggested Bourdieu lacks integrity when it comes to gender and sex in relation to meanings, in fact it may well be the case that he is much nearer the mark than he is given credit.
3. Finally, that we have to work very hard to stay within the conventional structures and this is because of the 'symbolic profit' (deemed to be unconscious) that we simply don't want to give up! ie. why give up being 'heterosexual' or 'lesbian' or 'gay' when there is a symbolic profit to this position?

Thus we take up a strategic positioning within social space and we learn strategies that mean we 'feel' how we feel towards others because of implicit rules. It is therefore argued that positioning oneself in social space as attracted to same/other sexes and/or genders is a more authentic emotional habitus reflecting the reality of the social world.

Imag(in)ing Bisexuality in the cinema - Beth Roberts

Historically, the debate among those who write about bisexuality and film has been framed as a problem of seeing. For some, images of bisexuality are erased or ignored – as a consequence of fixed ideas about sexuality – and therefore remain invisible. For others, images of bisexuality may be produced or read – perhaps as a challenge to the validity of such ideas – and therefore may be visible. A review of the literature, however, suggests that these competing beliefs intersect in ways that are both productive and problematic, and that their differences are a matter of method and ultimately of meaning. Crisscrossing the discourse is a series of schisms (activist/academic; experiential/ theoretical; moral/analytical) that delimit a range of critical practices and limit the kinds of knowledge they produce, all of which become conditions for future research. It is my contention that, rather than search films for evidence of set hypotheses, we need to incorporate a greater awareness of our modes of production and, more importantly, the technologies of cinema, if our work is to be persuasive.

Beth Roberts is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Cinema Studies at New York University, where she is, at long-last, completing a dissertation on the imaging of bisexuality in film, after many years of teaching composition to freshmen. Her essay, "The Many Faces of Bisexuality: The 4th International Bisexual Symposium," was published in the *Journal of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity* (January 1997).

Towards a Bisexual Shakespeare - Kaye McLelland

Many claims have been made about Shakespeare's sexuality, with counter claims as to the validity of applying modern identity labels to a Renaissance figure. Queer theorists seek to distance the historical facts from the pursuit of modern queer readings. So how valid are specifically bisexual readings of Shakespeare's work? How do people access Shakespeare in a way that makes such readings possible? This paper looks at passages which can be specifically read as bisexual rather than hetero or homosexual and asks how important it is for bisexuals, especially young bisexuals, to see their identities reflected in the work of one of the greatest cultural icons in their society.

Kaye McLelland has a first class honours degree in English Literature from the Open University and is now studying for a Shakespeare MA at UCL. In addition to bisexuality, Kaye is also interested in portrayals of witchcraft in Shakespeare's female characters as well as Kink readings of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Kaye attended her first BiCon in 2004 and was recently involved in organising Oxford's first BiFest. She is also co-ordinating Bisexual Oxford's presence at Oxford Pride.

Room 3

'A date or a drink?' How Civil Partners meet - Anna Einarsdottir and Brian Heaphy

Meeting someone is generally viewed as an exciting process whereby implicit and explicit dating "rules" help to form a relationship. While dating scripts may apply to 'opposite' sex couples, this paper explores dating practices amongst same sex couples and how the transition from being single to a couple is made. Our ESRC funded study, *Just like marriage? Young couple's Civil Partnerships* involves qualitative interviews with same sex couples who have entered Civil Partnership in the UK. Their stories suggest that forming a relationship without gendered dating scripts creates ambiguity and uncertainties about what a date is and what distinguishes it from meeting up with a friend. The paper will explore and illuminate this through an analysis of how same sex couples met, what their dating practices consisted of and what gestures /landmarks needed to be expressed/reached to become 'a couple'. The absence of gendered differences complicates dating practices, can trouble the boundaries of friendships and sexual relationships and make the transition from being single to a couple a more ambiguous process.

Dr. Anna Einarsdottir is a Research Associate at the Morgan Centre, University of Manchester. She has been working on an ESRC funded study, *Just like marriage? Young couple's Civil Partnerships* with Dr. Brian Heaphy and Professor Carol Smart since she completed her doctorate study from London South Bank University in 2008. Anna has specialised in same sex relationships, focusing on formalised unions both within the UK and in Iceland.

Dr. Brian Heaphy is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology and founding member of the Morgan Centre for the Study of Relationships and Personal Life and the University of Manchester. He has researched same sex relationships, ageing sexualities, and living with HIV. His publications include *Same Sex Intimacies* (2001, with J. Weeks and C. Donovan).

"It's Like a Wave, This Thing Called Bisexuality." Comparing the Experiences of Finnish Bisexuals in 1999 and 2009 - Jenny Kangasvuo

In 1999 I interviewed 40 Finnish, bisexually identified persons for my master's thesis. I asked them about their experiences about living as bisexuals in late 20th century Finland. Most of my interviewees were active in sexual minority subcultures and politics. They found it imperative to increase the visibility of bisexuality. Now, after ten years, I have interviewed some of my informants again for my PhD project. What do their experiences and thoughts reveal about the change of Finnish sexual culture during the ten passed years? The visibility and equality of sexual minorities has improved considerably since 1999. The law for registered partnership for same sex couples passed in 2001, the adoption of a same-sex partner's child became possible in 2009 and there have been various national projects about sexual equality at work and education. Also the media handles sexual minority issues often. But what does this increased visibility of bisexuality mean for people who identify as bisexual? How has their life changed during ten years? What kind of contradictions do bisexuals meet when tackling with everyday life? Has the concept of bisexuality a meaning at all any more?

Jenny Kangasvuo has graduated from the Department of Art Studies and Cultural

Anthropology, University of Oulu, as a Master of Arts in 2001 and as a Licenciante of Philosophy in 2006. Her licenciante thesis concentrated on the experiences of Finnish bisexuals and the discourses used in Finnish media while discussing bisexuality. She is currently writing her doctoral dissertation on Finnish bisexuality. Her other interests include Japanese popular culture, which is also one of her research subjects. She has also been active in local LGBT-organisation Seta and organised a discussion group for bisexuals – currently the most popular discussion group Seta provides. Institutional affiliation and address Cultural Anthropology, University of Oulu, Finland Home address: Tuulimylynkatu 28 A 2 FI-90140 Oulu Finland Work address: Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities Post box 1000 FI-90014 University of Oulu Finland

Deconstructing Biphobia - Miguel Obradors

Homophobia, lesbophobia, transphobia, heterophobia, xenophobia, biphobia etc, all these terms have a similar meaning, which implies that a certain group is categorised, alienated, objectivised, and targeted with hatred by another group. Sometimes this 'phobia' has a structural nature which implies that oppression becomes invisible emanating from different sources and not only from a well determined and framed single group or discourse.

However it is important to understand the inherent differences amongst these terms and why they can have a simultaneous impact on a group of people, in this case bisexuals.

Biphobia is generally understood by analogy to homophobia. Homosexuals are by definition the object of homophobia ergo bisexuals are by definition the object of biphobia. These simplistic definitions create more confusion to the already cumbersome (and sometimes bizarre) discussion on human sexuality.

In this presentation I will deconstruct biphobia, homophobia and heterophobia and I will analyse its impact on bisexual persons. In order to do so I will make three main assumptions:

- My first assumption is that Bisexuals face biphobia, homophobia and heterophobia, which are interlinked
- My second assumption is also that homophobia and heterophobia need to be understood taking into account two main indicators: gender and sexual orientation, not only sexual orientation. 'Sex' is furthermore a major indicator when talking about misogyny (hereunder lesbophobia) and androphobia (hereunder 'gay-phobia'). In this point I will also mention the differences between 'sexual orientation' and 'sexuality', which are two different terms that tend to be confused.
- My third assumption is that in order to understand biphobia it is important to identify how bisexuality is perceived by monosexuals. Lessons learnt based on empirical experience will be used in order to illustrate this point.
- In order to elaborate this presentation I have taken into account different views and opinions exchanged in a number on bisexual seminars and group meetings I have attended. I will also keep in mind the text titled 'the 5 faces of oppression' written by Iris Marion Young together with Foucault's theories on power relations. As most bisexuals do, I will also use introspection in order to find answers they are still not codified but probably already found and shared by others.
- Last but not least I will reserve a couple of words to understanding legitimacy in LGBT organisations and how bisexuals can increase impact and legitimacy in such organisations. I will also question the hegemonic queer discourse which is taking place right now and stigmatises bisexuals and I will argue in favour of bisexuality which I consider it is the only postmodern gate to deconstruct the hierarchical systems of gender-sexual orientation.

'I did my way ...' – Creating Bisexual Intimacies in the Face of Heteronormativity and Biphobia – Christian Klesse

Non-heterosexual relationships are frequently met with disapproval and face a widespread lack of recognition. According to a common insight in critical sexuality studies, low levels of acceptance and validation create a range of problems for people who engage in same-sex relationships. The bulk of research in the field has explored the damaging effects of oppression, discrimination and denial on gay male and lesbian intimacies. Bisexuality is usually ignored or subsumed to these categories. The paper draws on Anglo-lingual research literature published in Europe and North America and my own UK-based research to address the question what kind of relationship problems bisexual people may experience as an effect of bi-negative attitudes. It explores the precarious position of bisexuality in popular ideas on sexuality. It discusses stereotypical representations through a focus on bisexual identity, intimacy and sexuality. Bisexuality faces erasure as an integral dimension of lasting same-sex intimacies. Bisexuals are often seen as problematic or risky lovers/partners (by heterosexuals and gay men or lesbians). Bisexual intimacies face erasure (through invisibility), misrecognition (through distortion) or condemnation (through moral devaluation). The paper locates the origin of these common discourses on psychic and interpersonal bisexual deficiency in cultural forms of power, which run to the heart of western conceptualisations of sexuality.

Christian Klesse is Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University (GB). Previously, he taught as an Associate Lecturer for the Gender Studies and Queer Theory Programme at the University of Hamburg (2004-2006) (Germany) and held the Sociological Review Research Fellowship 2004/2005 at Keele University (GB). His research interests lie in the areas of sexualities, social movements, race/ethnicity, embodiment, body modification and research methodology. He is author of *The Spectre of Promiscuity* (Ashgate) and of a range of journal articles and book chapters on various topics within the above mentioned fields of study.

Workshops

Room 1

Issues for older bisexual people - Lindsay River

In this workshop Lindsay River will explore with participants what, if any, specific implications there may be for bisexual people in older age, in terms of their possible need and use of services and resources aimed at older people. She will look at their situation as unpaid carers, and the potential perceptions of them and their situations by service providers, families and friends. While many older lesbians and gay men have reported their experiences, very little has been heard so far from older bisexuals, in spite of interest and attention by bisexual and other queer researchers. We will look at what an ideal 'bisexual older age' might look like, taking into account aspects of diversity and the very varied life course in older age. We will also look at what positive ageing means in a bisexual context. Much older bisexual experience is lost and stories are not told because of the needs of confidentiality and respect for privacy. In the workshop we will use imaginary case studies to look at some of the implications and to create our own recommendations for good practice.

Lindsay River has been active in LGBT movements since 1972. She identifies as queer and has a strong political commitment to the bisexual community. She was for seven years a development worker with Age Concern supporting local and multi-ethnic older people's organisations. From 2003-2009 she worked for Polari, which campaigned for better understanding of the needs and aspirations of older LGBT people, and as Director she has carried out and supervised research, managed participatory projects and undertaken strategic work with local and national government, its agencies and providers to older people. Lindsay is setting up a new campaigning older LGBT organisation, Age of Diversity, to continue this work in a new way, and seeks to engage bisexuals in this: ageofdiversity@googlemail.com

'When I get older': Imagining your bisexual future - Rebecca Jones

People often find it difficult to imagine themselves becoming old. When we do think about our own ageing, we draw on both positive and negative images from the cultural resources around us (people we know, films and books, the media). However, there aren't many representations of bisexual older people. What might bisexual later lives look like? In this workshop, we'll use creative techniques to think about this and to imagine our own later lives. This is a data-gathering session for a research project looking at how bisexual people imagine their futures. The session will be recorded and anonymised information collected. This workshop is open to people who want to think about their own ageing and later life – it doesn't matter whether you're expecting to live for another 5 years or another 55. It is designed for people who identify as bisexual, but people identifying in other ways are also welcome.

Dr Rebecca Jones is a Lecturer in Health and Social Care at The Open University. She researches later life, sexuality, and especially sexuality in later life. She currently identifies as bisexual and kind-of-middle-aged.

Room 2

Supporting and finding the bisexuals - Ele Hicks

This participative workshop will explore the bisexual community, groups and structures that currently exist and how to utilise them to find bisexual people. It will also explore the theme of supporting and engaging bisexual people and addressing their issues in a variety of settings, including at work and in public services.

Participants will be invited to share their experiences and bring their own questions to the table in addition to exploring questions such as how effective are LGBT staff networks at

supporting bisexual people? What needs to be done differently to support bisexual people compared to lesbian and gay people? And where is the bi community outside of BiCon?

Ele Hicks has been involved in the Bi scene and bisexual activism in the UK and Wales since 2004, when she attended her first BiCon. In 2007 she set up Bi Cymru/Wales, the all Wales bisexual network, with a group of dedicated volunteers. Since then she has helped to foster and grow bi groups in Swansea and Cardiff as well as delivering training on bisexual issues and inclusion in a variety of contexts; producing materials on bisexuality; stalls and outreach work and coordinating bisexual workplace issues in Wales and general bisexual issues in Wales surveys. She is behind the first ever Wales Bifest in April 2010 and works for an LGB organisation as her day job.

‘Bridging the gap’: the bi community influencing policy making - Surya Monro

This workshop will provide a space for us to look at key issues that we as bisexuals face at the present time – and then look at what might effect positive change in the world out there. The workshop will take a ‘chaos’ format (but hopefully won’t be too chaotic!) where we identify things we want to talk about, set up a ‘storyboard’ (that is, a piece of flipchart paper) and wander around talking to other workshop participants about the issues, before all feeding back to the group. Things we might want to talk about include:

- Health issues and changes to health care provision
- Relationship issues and changes we might want in terms of legislation and the way that sexuality and relationships are framed by statutory services – education, social services, housing etc
- Safety and harassment issues and changes we might want the police and others to make

The workshop may help feed into proposals to do research in this area – the facilitator will check issues re confidentiality and consent at the beginning and end of the workshop.

Surya Monro is a Research Fellow based at the University of Huddersfield. She has researched and published substantially in the fields of LGBT politics and identity, particularly around [i] Trans; [ii] LGBT equality and local governance; [iii] LGBT citizenship and [iv] Intersectionality and sexuality. She is the author of 'Gender Politics: Citizenship, Activism and Sexual Diversity (Pluto Press, 2005). Surya is bisexual and has been involved in LGB activism for many years.

Room 3

Bis in the workplace – Ruth Hunt and Louise Kelly

Stonewall knows that people perform better when they can be themselves and it is with this aim that we have been working with over 500 employers that are part of our Diversity Champions programme. It is clear however, that despite many great strides that have been made to achieve sexual orientation equality in workplaces across Britain, many bisexual men and women still feel unable to be themselves at work.

This presentation and workshop will explore the research findings and recommendations from Stonewall’s most recent Workplace Guide, ‘Bisexual People in the Workplace’, the first of its kind to capture the experiences of bisexual employees of large organisations in the UK. It will show how the discrimination bisexual men and women often face can prevent them achieving their full potential at work and how these experiences are often quite distinct from those of their lesbian and gay colleagues. Participant will hear examples of how top employers are raising awareness of the issues bisexual people face in the workplace and developing strategies to involve bisexual staff in their workplace initiatives.

Ruth Hunt is Deputy Director of Public Affairs at Stonewall and is responsible for the strategic

development and implementation of Stonewall's policy, campaigns and research programme. Ruth has led Stonewall's ongoing development of research and guidance into the needs and experiences of different communities within the lesbian, gay and bisexual community. This includes Stonewall's Bisexual People in the Workplace guide, The Double Glazed Glass Ceiling guide into lesbian and bisexual women's experiences in the workplace and Prescription for Change, the first ever national lesbian and bisexual women's health study.

Louise Kelly is Stonewall's Information Officer. She manages the Stonewall Info Line, a signposting service which receives calls from across the UK on a range of LGB related questions.

Working for bi equality – how can we use the 2010 Equality Act? - Richard Lohman & Carola Towle

Bi workers face the double whammy of invisibility and biphobia. We are finally gathering clear evidence of the issues. It is now time to identify what practical steps we can take to build bi equality. One of the last acts of the outgoing Labour government was secure the passage of the 2010 Equality Act onto the statute book, relatively unscathed. This interactive workshop, led by UNISON, will discuss how we can use this legislation, including the new equality duty, for bi equality at work and in public services.

Presenters: Richard Lohman, convenor, UNISON bi caucus, Carola Towle, UNISON national officer, LGBT equality

Richard Lohman is a qualified social worker and has been employed as a Substance Misuse Support Worker in a specialist GP practice for people experiencing homelessness for the past 10 years. Richard has been a proud member of UNISON for more than 15 years, supporting Oxfordshire Health branch LGBT members as their elected representative for the last seven. He has been out at work as Bi for the last 3 years and feels especially proud of his role in getting Oxfordshire PCT to overturn their discriminatory policy on trans surgery last year. Richard sits on the UNISON national LGBT committee as bi caucus male representative and is a publically elected member of the Oxfordshire LINK Steering Group (the public's voice on health and social care) supporting minority groups.

Carola Towle is UNISON's national officer for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. UNISON's 1.3 million members work in the public services, in the community and voluntary sector, for private contractors providing public services and in the essential utilities. UNISON has a long-standing commitment to LGBT equality at work and in how public services are delivered. It has a well developed network of LGBT members who meet locally and nationally. UNISON's bi caucus meets nationally twice a year. UNISON advice and publications on LGBT equality are at www.unison.org.uk/out, where members can sign up for monthly LGBT e-bulletins, for our newsletter 'Out in UNISON', and find information about regional and national events.

Room 4

Political strategy: bisexual or queer? - a two-eyed approach - Hartmut Friedrichs

It is difficult to make out political demands for bisexual people from which other sexual emancipation movements would not profit in the same way. Therefore working together with other LGBTIQPB... organisations in common working processes and if useful in organisational structures seems to be plausible. On the other hand, you can hear from people in sexual minority movements that they fear to lose their identity as a movement if and when they appear to the outside as a part of a greater amalgam like the queer movement.

The aim of this workshop is to further clarify about:

- In which direction could the movement for sexual emancipation and liberty evolve, of which

we, the bisexual movement, are a part?

- Which political demands could we bring in into this movement to work on them?
- Basic steps to form appropriate political strategies for the organisations and initiatives participating in the bisexual movement

Hartmut Friedrichs was born in Frankfurt in Germany in 1950 and lived in this country all of his life. Sex male, gender open for discussion. He took part in the German bisexual movement since 1997 and is active in the German nationwide organisation BiNe - Bisexuelles Netzwerk e. He is very Interested in philosophy and communication designs, mostly web based.

Bi blogging - Sue George

What role does blogging play for some bi people who are coming out? What do they write about, and how does and doesn't it help them? While some of those blogging are able to be, and want to be, interested in joining some kind of real-world bi community others are neither able nor interested. Yet more want to consider issues of sexuality before they take themselves out to that community. Whichever group they fall into, blogging can help individuals think through the issues involved with, hopefully, the support of some interested readers. This paper will look at a few blogs that are active (at the time of BiRecon) and some have definitely or probably ended to look at how the writers negotiate the coming out process. It will argue that, while blogging can certainly help, it is the role of the reader and commenter on the blog that is key to the beneficial effect that blogs can have.

Sue George is a writer and editor on a range of subjects, particularly international development, travel and social issues (for money and love), and bisexuality (for love but no money). She completed her MA in Life History Research at Sussex University (UK) this summer and is currently waiting for the results. Sue has been in and around the bi community since 1984, and has identified as bi since 1973 when she was 17. Her book Women and Bisexuality was published last century, and she blogs (on bisexuality) at suegeorgewrites.blogspot.com.