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Towards a queer research methodology

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This paper proposes that psychological researchers generally, and psychologists concerned with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues specifically, could benefit by including ‘queer theory’ insights into their research. It begins with an elaboration of this theory, with special attention given to Judith Butler’s arguments in her book, *Gender Trouble*. These insights are used in a close reading of Evelyn Hooker’s famous research from the 1950s on gay male adjustment, and more contemporary writing on homosexual adjustment done by James M. Cantor. It will be shown that while traditional psychological research methods aspire for the objectivity of science, this aspiration is often complicit in a regulatory regime which does less to liberate homosexual desire, than to account for it, limit it, and often convert it to something ‘normal’. The implications for research are discussed in the final section. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 2004; 1: 321–337

Key words: bisexual; gay; lesbian; queer; research methods; transgender

Introduction

This paper has its origin in an uneasiness I began to feel in reading many mainstream psychological research articles on sexuality and sexual orientation. In particular, I came to realize that many of the methodological assumptions and tools utilized in mainstream sexuality research construct a constrained version of what a homosexual and heterosexual is, and that these rigid constructions marginalize those whose way of

‘doing’ homosexuality or heterosexuality does not fit the mould. I also realized that, paradoxically, the researchers whose work made me uncomfortable had a prosexual minority rights stance, even while their work, unintentionally, seemed to work against their explicit aims of liberation. Reflecting on this irony led me to reconsider what sexuality researchers in psychology are doing, and what they could be doing.

The paper proceeds in three parts. I begin with an exposition of ‘queer theory’ – a

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critical heuristic for questions of sexuality that has gained popularity in the humanities and social sciences, and which I think has important implications for research in psychology. In the second section, I begin explicating a critique of psychological research into sexuality and offer concrete examples of queer concerns. First I look at one of the most important research projects in the history of sexuality studies: Evelyn Hooker's now famous 1950s research on gay male adjustment. I offer what I hope is a sympathetic reading of Hooker's work to demonstrate both the power and importance of her research, as well as the paradoxical liberatory concessions that her work instantiated. Then I turn to contemporary sexuality research to demonstrate the many ways that Hooker's work provides the foundations of contemporary research. I will argue that these legacies need to be evaluated in light of current political and research concerns, and that a new direction ought to be sought.

In the third section I argue that psychology researchers should integrate the insights of queer theory into their research projects. In particular, I invite researchers to innovate in the ways they acknowledge and account for the fact that they construct their object of inquiry in their very investigations.

What is queer theory?

Like any other intellectual movement, there is not one queer theory, but many queer theories advocated by many different thinkers. However, certainly one of the most famous and important theorists of a queer perspective is Judith Butler, whose 1990 book *Gender Trouble* is still seen by many as the founding text of the movement

(Butler, 1990). Quite simply, for Butler, categories such as boy, girl, gay and straight are not givens, but social constructions we constantly perform and reperform in order to naturalize them. This is a more radical claim than traditional second-wave feminist critiques that conceptualize gender as a construction on top of women's real sex. Butler argues that biology, too, must be understood as a construction.

The matrix of intelligibility and performativity

Butler begins by critiquing the idea that one's biological 'sex' is real/actual, while one's 'gender' is culturally constructed. She points out that there is no reason to assume that this is so. How do we know that there are two biological sexes, upon which the 'cultural construction' of gender is built, if all we have access to are the constructs? Why do we seek out *two* sexes, unless we already have in mind what we are looking for? In short, ideas of gender *precede* ideas of sex. A culture first has an idea of gender, and then searches for the 'stuff' to back up its position. This stuff could be biology, as it is in our culture, or it could be a spiritual essence, as in other cultures. It could be anything. There is no necessary reason that 'penis stuff' or its 'lack' should mean that we are different ontological units – an ideological disposition directs our search. And once the sex is 'discovered', it is posited retroactively as having always been there – predetermining the reasons for the inquiry, and naturalizing the 'social' gender. As Butler explains, 'Gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real' (Butler, 1990: viii). All the while sex naturalizes as something beyond rhetoric, beyond reproach.

In our particular society, we believe there are two genders, masculine and feminine, and two sexes, male and female, and that

each desires the other (Butler, 1990: 6). However, the word 'believe' is too innocent; it evades recognizing the power interests supporting, buttressing and enforcing this picture, and with it 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1993) and sex/gender oppression. Quite simply, to exist in our culture, to be intelligible (not put in jail, or an insane asylum, or reviled in public, etc.), one must conform to the culture's 'matrix of intelligibility' (Butler, 1990: 17). This matrix constitutes a person by enunciating the individual differences between bodies in terms of distinct 'natural' categories: man, woman, Black, White, etc. Once a person is identified as belonging to a natural category, 'natural' assumptions are made: men have penises and desire women, women are soft and make good secretaries, etc.¹ As such 'social objects' people are knowable, categorizable and ultimately manipulatable. Deviance from these 'natural identities' makes one 'unintelligible', and can often result in punishment. For instance, a young boy crying risks growing into an unintelligible figure – a man who cries. He is told, 'buck up, boys don't cry.' Even though his crying should demonstrate the inaccuracy of the statement, the 'boy' can only become a boy through performing it correctly: he stops crying. Crying becomes a border of intelligibility for the identity 'man'.

The matrix of intelligibility does not exist like a stage, waiting for us to enter and take on our rightful intelligibility. Such a logic would align well with Irving Goffman's 'dramaturgical' theory, in which a person's public persona is considered a role, but one they can discard 'backstage' when being themselves (Goffman, 1959). Butler argues more radically that there is no subjectivity at all outside of the matrix.² Thus, Butler's is not an account of how people interact, but

rather one of how an individual's sense that 'he' or 'she' exists is constructed. Research projects, juridical systems, marketing campaigns construct the matrix, as do calling the kids to breakfast and checking the mirror before heading out of the house: all of these regular, everyday activities are directed toward, and so define, certain 'types' of people. When we respond to the various ways we are hailed by both other people and structures in our society, we are constituted in the various terms that these 'hailings' require (Althusser, 1971). Our identity is naturalized and cauterizes to the flesh – a subject is born.

In our society, a person's sex and gender must align appropriately in order for a person to be deemed healthy, and such a coherence is demonstrated through social actions. Practices can vary on the day-to-day level (how does one look walking down the street?), to the institutional (is one able to check the boxes in the welfare application sheet?), to the academic (how do we name the members of the population that we are investigating?). All of these practices and behaviours are thus *performances*. That is to say that the meaning of any behaviour is found in the way the behaviour fits into the matrix of intelligibility, those around whose practices and gaze maintain the matrix, and the power served by these practices.

Thus, 'being a man' is a performance of what the matrix expects of 'men'. The performance includes certain costume accessories (e.g., a penis, facial hair, a baseball cap), certain social responsibilities, etc. As long as these are effected, you are being a man. There is no truth 'under' the performance (Butler, 1990: 16–25), and while some of the aspects of the performance may seem more fundamental than others, this is all up to the critics (i.e., those

observing at the moment). So, although we often believe that someone's gender is based on actual biological equipment, in everyday practice this is not so. Consider this: of all the men you interact with on a daily basis, how many of their penises have you ever really inspected for biological authenticity? Do we not usually just presume their existence and move on from there? In practice, judgements of gender identity are based on public performances, not private parts.

'Homosexual' and 'heterosexual' are identities as thoroughly performative as 'male' and 'female'.³ This is demonstrated by the very difficulty of properly defining exactly what a homo- or heterosexual is. For example, which behaviours constitute 'experimentation' and which constitute full-blown 'invert' status? If a man has explicitly heterosexual relationships until age 30, then she enters a polyamorous homosexual relationship for her next 30 years, only to settle down into a heterosexual couple for the remaining years of his life – how would we define her?⁴ Which behaviours point to 'real' desires? Can we assume that it was the desire to spend time with people bearing certain gender markings that inspired these actions?

We must be careful not to misunderstand Butler here: she is *not* asserting that homosexuality is 'just' a social construction, as if we have all just been waiting for this realization so we could stop the charade. Neither is she claiming that the desires that lead people to risk public ostracism and ridicule are solely some universal hoax. Queer theorists are not *sceptical* that homosexuals exist; just as there is no doubt that women 'really' exist, or that men do. If anything, these identity categories are only *too* real. But how did these categories come to dominate the way people understand themselves and others? What are the criteria

that society uses to demarcate the boundary between one category and another? What kind of life is lived in these categories, and can we ever change to something more liberatory and equitable? These are queer questions, because they look at sexual and gender identity as phenomena of an emerging subjectivity in a temporal, sociohistorical power structure.

Butler entitled her fourth book '*The Psychic Life of Power*' (Butler, 1997). This is an apt description of her view of the psyche. We cannot make claims about a psyche that are not embroiled in power relations. Even such 'basic facts' as one's desire, one's understanding of his own body and one's belief in her reproductive role, are based more on those forces that *structure* life, than on some essential attribute *in* life. If we want to know about an identity, we have much to learn from studying the structures in which it emerges instead of the biological stuff we have wrapped around its existence.⁵

Queering

Butler's world view carries a powerful political punch that has mobilized a growing throng of scholars and researchers gathered under the 'queer' moniker. To oversimplify: queer researchers seek to speak about gender, sexuality, and desire (amongst other topics) in ways that problematize the referent. This is a move against projects that try to discover whether historical figures (Abraham Lincoln, Joan of Arc, etc.) were or were not gay, or whether homosexuals are or are not pathological. Instead it inspects the queerness of all people in all times. Queer identity 'demarcates not a *positivity* but a *positionality* vis-à-vis the normative – a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men, but is in fact available to anyone who is or who feels marginalized because of her or his

sexual practices.’ (Halperin, 1995: 62, my emphasis).

With this move the alliances available for political mobilization increase dramatically. Instead of divisive identity politics, wherein various special interest groups wrangle for position, a queer movement mobilizes anyone who ‘doesn’t fit in’. They are not mobilized to say, ‘Let us in! We can fit-in!’ but instead to argue against the notion of fitting-in entirely.

Everyone can be/is queer. To be straight takes effort: it takes learning your role, performing on cue and denying whatever part of yourself lies outside of the law. It takes constantly reperforming that you have nothing to perform, repeating that your identity is essential and not in constant crises of fracturing. Being not-queer is a phenomenon of regulatory practices which seek to make the infinite diversity of human life knowable, reducible and – ultimately – controllable.

Queerness is not about living outside of the regulatory apparatus of the matrix of intelligibility, for there is no proper existence on the outside. As previously stated, there is no place where one can see what is really going on because power is wrapped into everything. Instead, queerness mocks these barriers. Queerness means misperforming in such a way that ‘natural’ assumptions are called into question; mixing and matching in ways that are not allowed and not called for; living (or researching) as a series of nonsequiturs which highlight that the supposed ‘natural’ relations in the matrix are merely constructions.

For Butler, a Butch/Femme lesbian relationship need not be complicit with heterosexual norms, but can also function as a parody of the matrix’s demands that only people with vaginas can be ‘femme’ while only those with penises can be ‘butch’

(Butler, 1990: 122–24). In doing so, the relationship challenges the supposed coherence of sex/gender/desire that the system requires, and says ‘We can do heterosexuality better than the supposed ‘natural’ couple.’ Most importantly, Butler points out that Butch/Femme relationships are not copying the ‘original’ heterosexual model, but instead showing that there is no original – that the supposedly normal heterosexual couple is caught in a performance they think is natural, but which the Butch/Femme can also enjoy.

In a way, much of the logic that supports a queer approach is demonstrated in its very name. While many well intentioned gay-rights activists argue that the term’s ugly history as a term of derogation proscribes its use in a prosexual minority movement, this argument misses the true power of adopting the word ‘queer’ – i.e., ‘peculiar,’ ‘weird’.⁶ For only once we realize that being queer – being different without explanation – is not an insult but merits *pride*, can we stop privileging the explicable (Halperin, 1995).

This logic helps explain why queer theorists use such unconventional – and at times seemingly inconsistent – terms. Throughout this piece I will refer to ‘sexual minorities’, ‘homosexuals’, ‘queers’ and ‘gays’...which do I mean? In other queer pieces authors will use terms ranging from MSMs (men who have sex with men), to the famously deprecatory ‘Fairy Queens’, ‘Homos’ and ‘Fag Hags’. The reason for this seemingly irrational (if not offensive!) lack of definitional rigor, is that it is *exactly* the terms’ definitional rigor that is under investigation. From a queer position I recognize that none of these terms has a clear, unambiguous referent. The supposedly neutral ‘homosexual’ can be used in as harsh and controlling manner as the supposedly offensive ‘queer’. Further, ‘queer’ can be

used in a caring and forward looking manner, while the antiseptic 'homosexual' label often hides a pathologizing and reductive agenda behind the terminology of scientific objectivity. Words alone hold no information; their meaning emerges in context (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; de Saussure, 1972). Thus it is important to read a queer work holistically – observing how terms develop within the entire argument, recognizing which are used flippantly, which are ridiculed, and which are being advanced. Often a queer researcher may eschew offering a clear definition of their terms, for they do not want to risk essentializing or reducing any of the categories. Instead they refer the reader to the way the term unfolds in their research, and in the flow of a given text.

Being 'normal' – conforming to the power structure – does nothing to rupture those borders which separate proper from improper desires, and proper from improper bodies. Likewise, and as I will demonstrate with more detail in the Psychological Research section, research that seeks to demarcate the psychology of 'normal' women, gays, Blacks, Whites, etc. can never produce ultimately liberatory knowledge. There is no such thing as a normal woman, gay, etc.; instead, in searching for the category, the researcher reperforms it. Any findings made in such research simply create the searched for. Any 'stuff' that is found becomes retroactively posited as that which inspired the search, and further ensconces the legitimacy of the political category. This may benefit those few who are able to look 'normal', but those whose deviance persists remain marginalized. Regardless of whether the researcher intends to produce prejudiced or nonprejudiced data, research that gives undue substance to identity categories

always does so at the expense of a more fluid sexuality, and a more free life.

Psychological research

It is now important to turn to examples of psychological research in the field of gay and lesbian studies (e.g., LGBT research⁷). I will begin with Evelyn Hooker's famous research from the 1950s, which demonstrated that there is no necessary correlation between homosexuality and neurosis. It is commonly agreed upon today that Hooker's research cleared the way for anti-homophobic research in psychology. However, I would like to point out another legacy of Hooker's research: it established the way by which queers were made intelligible to the psychological gaze. By exploring some of the travails and hurdles Hooker navigated in her study, I will demonstrate how 'normal homosexuals' were made, how 'non-normal homosexuals' remain excluded, and the legacy this logic of normal and its antithesis play in contemporary LGBT psychology.

My goal in this section is not to criticize Hooker, who for many LGBT psychologists (including this author) stands as a symbol of the power that psychological science can have when put to the task of truth and justice. Instead I want to ask what assumptions undergirded her research? What power was made complicit in her investigations? Who was marginalized in the process? And finally, which kind of 'homosexual' was left out in the analysis, and which kind was privileged?

In the second half of this section, I will discuss contemporary LGBT psychology researcher James M. Cantor's writings on paedophilia. I picked Cantor's work,

because (as I will argue) it represents the mainstream in North American psychological LGBT research today. I will show that the continued focus on 'normal' homosexuals, has resulted in psychologists once again working to categorize and speak for sexual minorities, instead of to liberate sexual minorities and help them speak their own words. I will draw particular attention to Cantor's call for brain scans of sexual minorities. This approach, regardless of the researcher's aim, seeks to explain a person's desire for them, and thus can never be liberatory.

In the last section of the paper I will direct these theoretical insights and critiques towards a queer research methodology. The intention is not to call for an end to sexuality research, but to utilize these insights so our research becomes better.

Evelyn Hooker

Since its inception in the mid to late nineteenth century (Halperin, 1990: 15), the term 'homosexual' has been used to define a pathology – a person so different in her practices that she constitutes an inferior type which we need to categorize, understand and control. As George W. Henry, one of the earliest psychologists of sexual deviance, stated, 'Society must protect itself by classifying sex variants as soon as it is possible to do so' (Minton, 2002: 51). Henry would never have thought of himself as homophobic – he held a rather progressive attitude for his time, proposing that homosexuals should be dealt with as humanely as possible. His monograph, *Sex Variants*, (clocking in at 1130 pages) is filled with first-person testimonials from queer people, whom he analyses utilizing his self-devised theoretical account of sex lives (Henry, 1948). In short, it is a translation of the multitude of ways that sexuality can be

lived into an objectivizing, pathologizing language that Henry used in an effort to 'protect' himself (and society) from difference.

Evelyn Hooker was one of the first psychologists to challenge the implicit homophobia of such research. In the McCarthy-era academy of the 1950s, she embarked upon a daring project to demonstrate that 'homosexual men, due to their homosexuality alone, need not be considered neurotic' (Ruitenbeek, 1963: xiii). While many of the most important psychologists and psychiatrists of the time doubted that such a thing could be proven, her courage and determination prevailed and opened the door to extensive research on the basic 'normality' of homosexuals.

While much has been said of the role of Hooker's research in realigning anti-homophobic gay and lesbian research (APA, 1991; Schmiechen, 1992; Minton, 2002), not enough attention has been paid to exploring the implications of her research and method. Hooker made some very specific choices in how she went about collecting and presenting her data. I will argue that these choices constructed the 'normal male homosexual', an identity she helped construct within the matrix of intelligibility, and which today dominates the interests of LGBT researchers (and not surprisingly, the agendas of many policy makers). Let us look at how this was done.

When Evelyn Hooker, then a research associate at the University of California, Los Angeles, sought to conduct experiments on the 'adjustment of overt male homosexuals', she faced two distinct impediments to her research: a wall of social prejudice, and the seemingly insurmountable task of actually accessing her population. Ironically, the societal prejudice against homosexuals was the lesser of her concerns, but it is

important to note that Hooker's receiving funding from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) for her research was truly a coup for the time. Hooker underwent a background check by NIMH to ensure that she was neither a communist nor a lesbian before she received her funding (Minton, 2002: 223). Throughout her research she was further monitored by Joe McCarthy's lieutenants (Minton, 2002: 224).

As difficult as overcoming the societal and bureaucratic prejudices which hindered Hooker's efforts, was the daunting task of isolating a population to study. Hooker faced two distinct challenges in gathering subjects. First, she had the difficult task of finding people who identified with the term 'homosexual', and finding 'heterosexuals' willing to participate in the study (Minton, 2002: 227). Secondly, once a supposed 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' was found, Hooker needed to ensure that they really were what they purported to be. Hooker directly addresses this second concern in her research, which is why I will address it first. To understand how she overcame the first problem of locating self-described homosexuals, however, requires background research into the history of gay activism in America, and Evelyn Hooker's personal connections to the gay community and gay liberation of the time. I will discuss this second.

Finding a population: 'pure' homosexuals

Hooker's research is rather simple by the standards of today's multifactorial designs. She recruited 30 homosexual men and 30 heterosexual men and ran them through a battery of projective tests (TAT, Rorschach and MAPS). She asked experts to interpret each of the tests for pathology. Her conclusion was that 'there was no association between maladjustment and homo-

sexuality' (Minton, 2002: 228). This finding shocked the psychological community, and ignited heated debate at many subsequent APA conventions (Minton, 2002: 256–262).

Despite the simple design, the project included difficult components. To start, identifying homosexual and heterosexual men for the study was a daunting task.⁸ (How could one ever be sure that the person standing before them really *was* either a homosexual or heterosexual?) The guile and distrust Hooker demonstrates in identifying her two groups is almost comical to read. One fifth of the article discusses exactly how homosexuals and heterosexuals were picked and properly ascertained to be 'what' they purported to be: 'I attempted to secure homosexuals who would be pure for homosexuality; that is, without heterosexual experience' (Hooker, 1963: 144). Notice how homosexuality is defined negatively, as *not* having done anything heterosexual. A problem immediately presented itself: how could she take a person at their word? In the following example, Hooker discusses her methods for finding pure heterosexuals – a task just as complex as finding pure homosexuals:

having very briefly described the project to him, I then asked whether he had had any homosexual inclinations or experiences. This question was put in a matter-of-fact way and only after a good relationship of co-operation had been established. *If the individual seemed to be severely disturbed by the question, or responded in a bland way, or denied it vehemently, I did not include him in the sample of 30.* It is possible, though I doubt it, that there are some heterosexuals in my group who have strong latent or concealed overt homosexuality. (Hooker, 1963: 145, emphasis mine)

A sort of humorous paranoia is alive in this research, and in all subsequent research into homosexuality. The attempt to get

'pure' homosexuals and heterosexuals leads to suspicion, unsure categories and finger crossing. This is because a true homosexual or heterosexual cannot be known outside of someone's identifying with the identity, and not behaving in a way which would make the category invalid. Behaviour is bound with identity through a leap of faith that 'deep down' the pure 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' core is organizing this subject's sexual life. Without the leap of faith these behaviours could be grouped along all sorts of other axes.

It took Hooker over two years to isolate a sample of 30 homosexual and 30 heterosexual men matched for age, intelligence and education (Minton, 2002: 227). Her results were 'tentative', but as Hendrik Ruitenbeek said in the introduction to his 1963 book, *The Problem of Homosexuality in Modern Society*, '[Hooker] gives us reason to think that on the grounds of his homosexuality alone the homosexual need not be considered neurotic' (Ruitenbeek, 1963: xiii).

The regulatory implications of Hooker's methods show up in the immediately following sentence: 'Albert Ellis goes even further in his essay, and emphasizes the possibility of curing the homosexual – of converting him, as it were, to heterosexuality' (Ruitenbeek, 1963: xiii).

As we can see here, in discovering that 'homosexuals' are no more neurotic than anyone else, the possibility that they are 'convertible' is presented. This, I should mention, is being stated by an author who is not ostensibly homophobic and who edited the volume in order to present anti-homophobic research. But implicit in a project of identifying truths about homosexuals, and in identifying homosexuals as true objectified knowable things, is the will to modify them.

Making a population: 'normal' homosexuals

Ruitenbeek's comments are not just one researcher's bias, but speak to an implicit message buried deeply in Hooker's research. We should explore this message to see how it can alter our future efforts in sexuality research. It is here that we must depart from merely reading Hooker's study, and to look at the extratextual context in which Hooker went about her work.

First, identifying a research population was difficult. As discussed earlier, the very act of ensuring that one really is a homo- or heterosexual was daunting enough. But there were other problems. Before Hooker, most psychological research on homosexuals was conducted with already criminal or 'unhealthy' populations: prisoners, men or women who 'came out' to their therapists, etc. 'It therefore seemed important, when I set out to investigate the adjustment of the homosexual, to obtain a sample of overt homosexuals who did not come from these sources; that is, who had a chance of being individuals who, on the surface at least, seemed to have an average adjustment' (Hooker, 1963: 142).

Hooker's decision to avoid these people of less than 'average adjustment' is important. If Hooker had intended to show that there is no psychic difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals – that the prejudice that identifies them as separate, and deviant from the mainstream heterosexual ideal, is specious – she could have easily used a prison population. She could have administered the test battery to 30 homosexual and 30 heterosexual convicts, and found that despite both groups' 'deviancy' there is nothing that identifies some of the men as homosexual and some as heterosexual. Such research would have brought critical attention to the very identity categories,

without making any statement about norms. It also would have avoided dehumanizing criminal populations as if their sexuality were perverted. In such an experiment, homo- and hetero- would be equally deviant, and indistinguishable.

Instead, Hooker's method, and her quest to only study 'normal' male homosexuals (Minton, 2002: 226) delegitimized such 'deviant' populations from the outset. Hooker set herself the task not of showing that homosexuals are just like heterosexuals, but of showing that homosexuals can also be 'normal'.

When Hooker told her department chair that she was studying 'normal male homosexuals', he replied, 'What do you think you're doing? There is no such person' (Minton, 2002: 224). While this interchange ostensibly points to the prejudice and ignorance which Hooker was up against in her efforts, the chair may not have been all wrong. Is there such a thing as a 'normal' homosexual? Who is/what is normal? Are homosexuals in prison not normal?

Hooker replied that she knew many normal homosexuals, and would have little difficulty in 'recruiting' them for her study (Minton, 2002: 227). This is the same guarantee she made to NIMH in order to garner funding for her research (Schmiechen, 1992). In short, the very promise that she could inform on the location of what was at the time a deeply hidden minority group was a necessary condition of receiving funding for her research.

At this point in American history, same-sex liaisons were illegal in most states, and gay culture was just forming. At best it was on the fringes, in back alleys and often anonymous. Further, the identity 'homosexual' was only 50 years old, and not everyone participating in the culture was ready to wear the label. While today most major

cities, and even many small towns, have a gay area or bar where many (but hardly everyone) will self-identify as gay, in the 1950s such a 'gay' community was just forming (D'Emilio, 1993). Thus, finding 'gay' people did not mean finding people with a certain desire, but rather finding people who were already willing to name their desire in a certain knowable way that could be counted and tabulated. Unless Hooker found such a population, she could not do her research.

Hooker gained access to exactly such a homosexual community through her friend and student Sam From (Schmiechen, 1992). Through From, Hooker was introduced to the Los Angeles middle class, male, homosexual community. She went to their bars, hung out at their parties and had them over to her house. Every account indicates that she was comfortable in the community, and that she got along well with the people she met. In short, for Hooker these men were normal, and thus it was *this* population that she drew from in her research.

The homosexuals that Hooker knew were nearly all members of the Mattachine Society, the USA's first gay rights organizations. Its members were certainly not normal if we take normal to mean representing the way most homosexuals of the time lived and understood themselves. They were mostly White, middle-class, valued monogamous relationships, understood themselves as a part of a gay community and were all interested in advancing the juridical project of gay liberation (Hay and Roscoe, 1997). As Hal Call, an early Mattachine leader, recalls

We wanted to see changes come about by holding conferences and discussions and *becoming subjects for research* and telling our story. We wanted to assist people in the academic and behavioural-science world in getting the truth out to people who had influence on law and law

enforcement, the courts, justice, and so on. (Minton, 2002: 174, emphasis mine)

These were far from passive, uninformed research participants, but were instead a highly organized group with a political agenda. Built into the Mattachine ethos was a willingness to expose one's psyche to the scientific power structure, to come out from the shadows of marginal sexuality and (despite Call's construction) to have their story *told for them* in psychological scientific jargon (Rorschach, TAT and MAPS scores, for instance). This was far from normal.

These men deviated from the norm in other respects as well: most queers did not have it so good economically, and even fewer were in a well organized, politically motivated community. Further, even fewer queers would have called themselves gay and understood their desire as specifically 'homosexual' (Halperin, 1990). The benefit of this attitude, however, is evident: Mattachine homosexuality got its name and face out there first, and thus established a new grid in the matrix of intelligibility, perfectly suited for *their* kind of sexual deviance.

Mattachine Society members trusted that telling their story would be to their benefit, because in most other ways they were complicit with the fantasy of the 1950's 'normal American': a White, self-contained, capitalist male. It is this model of homosexuality which in fact *does* pass for the norm in contemporary discourse (consider the popularity of *Will and Grace* and *Queer as Folk*), while homosexual prisoners are still a mostly ignored group with little research speaking to their experiences. Those sexual deviants who were not able to make their life fit easily into capitalist America were ignored, not included. Hooker's research did not emancipate them.

Homosexual normality was not discovered by Hooker, but created. Hooker was a kind of ambassador between the scientific juridical structure, and the newly organized minority group: homosexuals. This new, 'normal' homosexual was what other queers were going to be held up against, and what new queers, discovering their desires, could *aspire* to. The Mattachine homosexual could live down the street from the Cleavers. It was the perfect solution to the growing 'problem' of homosexuality (Ruitenbeek, 1963).

James Cantor

While Hooker's research is rightly hailed for providing some of the first anti-homophobic research in American psychology, I've also argued that her research constructed the 'normal homosexual'. Hooker's research was *productive*: she did not 'find' something new, but presented a group of people as the new standard by which we should think of those people who participate in certain behaviours. Thus she maintained the assumption that men who have sex with men share some essential attribute, meanwhile stating that there is a 'normal' way to express this attribute, thereby excluding all those who are 'not normal'. This normal homosexual has become the gold standard against which other sexual perverts are measured, and for whom policy is designed. Many psychologists today maintain this model of sexual research in an effort to show the 'normality' of homosexuals, and to shunt the 'abnormal' to the side. While most of these researchers are working with the best of intentions, their 'scientific' attitude prohibits them accepting their role in constructing their object of inquiry. The effect is a continued marginalization of those of us who *are not* 'normal' homosexuals, and a continued denial of the potentially positive effects of dismissing

normative conceptions of sexuality in favour of freedom and polyperversity.

To demonstrate just one of the ways that this normalizing legacy inhabits mainstream psychology, I turn to an examination of research and advocacy put forward by James M. Cantor. Cantor's work represents the contemporary mainstream in North American LGBT psychological research. Cantor has not only been a regular contributor to many esteemed sexuality journals, but he has also been a very active Science Committee Chair for APA Division 44 (The Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues): his vision of science and psychology is one deeply entrenched in the institutions currently leading LGBT psychology. He has also published a 'Top Ten List' of LGBT psychology's 'Hottest Research Topics' (Cantor, 2003), suggesting that he is interested in steering the direction of mainstream research, and is aware of his own place in it (his own work is cited in the list).

When I first began questioning Cantor's work I was not yet aware that his research was already under intense scrutiny from the transgender activist and research community (Conway *et al.*, 2003; Mistress Krista and Pandora, 2003). While I will not describe this controversy here, it is sufficient to note that the transgender activists, public health workers, academics and psychologists who are mounting this attack seem to be expressing a 'queer' critique similar to the one I present in this paper. Thus, while my paper does not endorse any position regarding Cantor's research on transexuality, as distinct from his work on homosexuality, it may shed some light on the methodological assumptions that Cantor makes in all his research, and which result in the negative appraisals of those he ostensibly is trying to serve.

The work of Cantor's which I will discuss here is a short article written for the Division 44 newsletter entitled, 'Male Homosexuality, Science, and Pedophilia' (Cantor, 2002). Cantor's ideals are noble. He wishes to disabuse us of the notion that homosexuals are predisposed to committing paedophilia. However, he goes about this task by adding 'precision' to the definition of homosexual (a dangerous move when we understand how imprecise – and political – the term is by its very nature).

[S]tatements such as '6–8 million boys were abused by age 18 by 1–2 million adult homosexuals' (Walker, 2001) are half truths. Although it might be reasonably said that these perpetrators were homosexual pedophiles, there is no basis on which to believe they were homosexual teleiophiles (i.e., gay men). To refer to the sex in which the offenders' were erotically interested and not the age is mere sophistry. (Cantor, 2002)

It is important to note Cantor's strategy here, for its primary intention is to distance the proper homosexual from the deviant one. He calls sophists those people who do not distinguish between adult and child objects of desire. That is to say, they are playing with words, for the 'true homosexual' only desires within his own age group, according to Cantor.

Paedophilic men experience penile erections when they view erotica of children in the same way that teleiophilic men experience erections when they view erotica of adults (e.g., Blanchard *et al.*, 2001). Both gay and straight men show little reaction when viewing erotica of the less interesting age group in the same way that both gay and straight men show little reaction when viewing erotica of the less interesting sex (e.g., Freund *et al.*, 1973, 1989). Thus, describing a man's sexual interest requires naming both the sex and the age that interest him. (Cantor, 2002)

Before I go on to further discuss the implications of Cantor's attempts to make the term 'homosexual' more precise, I

would like to point out the way Cantor localizes the truth of his subject's desires. For it is here that Cantor is actually taking a large step away from Hooker, who hoped to help homosexuals tell their story in their own voice. In contrast, Cantor uses biology to figure out what his subjects 'are'. First, the method he endorses above involves utilizing an erection sensor on his subjects. What the subject may have to say about this erection is irrelevant to how Cantor would categorize him. At the end of the article, however, Cantor pushes beyond erection sensors:

It is very likely that the data that will most strongly impact the future of the pedophilia/homosexuality debate are likely to be those from neuroscience. Studies of brain function have revealed certain patterns of functioning in normal gay men that differentiate them from straight men (e.g., Wegesin, 1998). Likewise, the brain functioning of pedophiles appears to differ from that of teleiophiles in yet another pattern (e.g., Cantor *et al.*, 2001). Although homosexual teleiophiles and homosexual pedophiles have not yet been directly compared with regard to brain function and structure, it is hoped that such research will provide the most decisive data regarding the basic differentiations between them. (Cantor, 2002)

We see here Cantor's primary interest in differentiating the properly gay from the queer and deviant. Cantor never entertains the notion that the growing complexity of these categories is a sign of their failure to account for the actual nature of desire.⁹ Nor does he account for the complexity of paedophilia in general and the possibility of diversity within this deviant desire. For, most of all, Cantor is looking for some 'real' thing that creates a wall between normal homosexuality and its deviant other. Erections help serve this purpose, and brain scans would do so even more. However, disconcertingly, he never explains how any of these factors can actually help us control

sexually predatory behaviour. For regardless of erections and brain structure, the option of molesting an innocent is available to all of us. (Of course, as I have been arguing, so is homosexual conduct.) Adding precision to the terms may help Cantor feel better about the terms he is using to understand himself, but he has given no reason for us to think that these more precise terms actually represent the way the lives under these terms are lived.

This leads to two conclusions. First, we must realize that Cantor's politics are not necessarily forward looking. In strapping a sensor onto a penis, the matrix of intelligibility is taking the complicated fantasies and memories which comprise a person's personal sex life, and reducing them to a question of priapic potential. This is a high school boy's version of desire – if I can get it up, it must be worth fucking. The fact that researchers do not recognize this phenomenon as a construct is a terrifying statement to the short distance we have come since we held such ideas as 'hermaphroditism of the soul' (Foucault, 1978: 43).

Secondly, 'paedophile' PET scans are an Orwellian conception, and will do nothing to eliminate sexual predatory behaviour. Such an approach goes looking for the truth of paedophilia in the wrong place; in a location outside of the subjectivity of the paedophile. Apparently the paedophile's own understanding of his conduct is illegitimate, it takes an 'expert' to explain his desire. As such, the researcher asserts to a) know a person's desire better than they know it themselves, and b) give this desire a name in the researcher's own, official, terminology. A more clear example of oppressive power at work would be hard to provide.

Using Hooker's and Cantor's research as an example, I hope I have demonstrated that methodology is not a neutral tool when

used to evaluate the truth of some population 'out there'. In creating her sample and in executing her research, Hooker created the scientific, knowable homosexual to the detriment of all those who did not make the grade, and to help further regulate those that could and could not make the grade. Her research did not make the notion that there are radical differences between homo- and heterosexuals vanish. Instead, homosexuality became further solidified as an identity with normal and deviant strains. Cantor represents the next generation of sexuality researchers. Not only has he continued the process of differentiating normal from deviant homosexual desire, but he further promotes identifying a biological substrate for all desires. As such, he brings us full circle: queers are spoken for by experts who seek to influence policy in their own conception of 'The Good' and 'Health'.

Towards queer research methodologies

When Butler's logic is followed to its ultimate end, we recognize that a constituent element of 'being a homosexual' is having a psychologist there to label a person as such. The term homosexuality, though having slightly mysterious origins, gained its currency within psychology (Foucault, 1978; Halperin, 1990). How people came to adopt this term for self-understanding is not exactly clear to me, and probably worthy of research. *This* would be a queer research – because it would seek to understand how subjectivity is formed and unfurled, and does not presume to know what a 'homosexual' is from the outset.

Homosexuality is not only a product of science. It is also the product of cities, capitalism, post-WWII social reorganization, juridical systems and more (D'Emilio, 1993; Foucault, 1978; Greenberg, 1988,

Sedgwick, 1990). The list is endless, and thus provides us with endless queering possibilities to mix and match. However, for as long as I can see out into the future, the scientist will continue to be a part of this list. As long as we live in a society that distributes essential goods and services on the basis of desire and sex, it will be the responsibility of the scientific establishment to do our job in making sure that good, helpful, liberatory knowledge is produced. What is our best route?

There is no one answer to this question. Innovative social scientists should continue to experiment and explore what methods and knowledge are necessary to help us understand ourselves and our oppressions. This is why, in truth, there can be no *one* queer research methodology, but many *methodologies*. There is no one truth for sexual identity and sexuality, so it follows that there is no one method by which to generate answers on such topics. However, there are some basic heuristics that a queer methodology should account for.

First, queer research methodology should be reflexively aware of the way it constitutes the object it investigates. The subject–object dichotomy presumed in many positivistic research methods eludes the constitutive nature of knowledge production. When researchers are forced to acknowledge their role in knowledge production, we are already towards more equitable research.

This leads us to a second queer heuristic, that it must qualitatively account for its object of inquiry. This is not because of an implicit phobia of numbers, but because any attempt to quantify homosexuals, heterosexuals, etc., assumes a commonality between the individual's desires and lives that is suspect. Qualitative approaches have a better chance of accounting for queer

experiences in the same terms as the actual people living these experiences. This is the most liberatory knowledge of all, because it speaks directly to the experience of the oppressed. As Kidder and Fine explain, 'The nature of Qualitative data ... is not simply that they are 'not numbers,' but that they are analyzed with an ear for what informants are saying rather than an eye on predetermined categories and hypotheses' (Kidder and Fine, 1997).

We must remember that emancipatory LGBT psychological research is dependent on the good faith submission of queer individuals (Kameny, 1965). They come to our studies, fill out our mailings, wrap sensors around their penises, let us scan their brains, etc. This good faith is built on an implicit belief that by surrendering privacy and exposing themselves to our gaze and categorization system, their life, and the lives of people in similar situations, will improve. Scientists must uphold our end of the bargain. The continued demonstration of queer normality is counterproductive – it does little more than demonstrate the middle-class White male hiding in all of us, and does not allow us to discover anything new: a queerness that just might shake up society, and in doing so bring about, true, emancipatory change. It is time for such a research.

Last, I would also like to encourage psychologists to abandon the Quixotic search for an aetiology of homosexuality. As Mary McIntosh says, 'One might as well try to trace the aetiology of 'committee chairmanship' or 'Seventh Day Adventism' as of 'homosexuality'' (McIntosh, 1996: 34). This is not only because of the arbitrary manner in which a desire gets grouped into an identity category, but also because intrinsic to the project is a will-to-knowledge that objectifies and seeks to 'normalize'

what is most a person's own: their pleasures and desires.

I hope it is clear that my intentions are *not* to be negative, but instead to give rise to reflection among psychological researchers into the types of knowledge we are generating. When we name a population to investigate, when we operationalize practices and behaviours, and even when we inspect MRIs, we are manufacturing a reality that follows from the questions we are asking. It is not that all LGBT research over the last 50 years has been a waste, nor am I arguing that all research into sexuality is inherently complicit with queer oppression. Instead, I am advocating that we begin to ask certain questions of ourselves as researchers, and that we integrate these questions into our research.

Queer research should stop adding letters to LGBT research, and should instead form a body of knowledge about how these categories come to be, and are lived, on a daily basis. On the fringes of the social sciences such projects are already forming, as scholars try to understand what questions researchers should be asking about sex, gender, sexuality and identity (see in particular Coyle and Kitzinger, 2002; Holmes and Warner, 2004; McIlvenny, 2002; Seidman, 1996; Stein, 1999). This would be a methodology of the margins that does not seek to make things intelligible in terms of the heteropatriarchy, but tries to find the words of the margins itself. Ultimately, it would be a methodology that understands the performative nature of identity and does not seek to found the social in the biological.

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Notes

1. 'Intelligible' genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire' (Butler, 1990: 17).

2. This is not to say there is no *stuff* outside of the matrix, but no *subjectivity*. This distinction will be discussed below.

3. In fact, Butler goes on to demonstrate the way that the prohibitions on sexuality and desire are intimately connected to sexism. Thus she is not just saying that homosexuality is a construction like gender, but that the two constructions are linked through society's heterosexism and bias towards 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Butler, 1990: 6).

4. *stet*.

5. It is important to note that Butler is not saying that the psyche is *only* power relations, but that any notion of a psyche is already political (Butler, 1993: 1–23).

6. It is interesting to note, however, that as far back as the 1930s, there have been marginalized sexual communities who have adopted the term queer as a form of positive self-identification (see Minton, 2002: 62).

7. LGBT typically stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. Sometimes a Q is added, to stand for either Questioning, or Queer. I am, of course, trying to simply refer to the field of homosexual psychology generally, without leaving out any of the ever proliferating identities.

8. In her paper, Hooker refers to the 'fascinating, frustrating, and gratifying aspects of the attempts to secure both of these groups' (Hooker in Ruitenbeek, 1963: 142).

9. See, Mistress Krista and Pandora (2003) for a similar indict towards the categories Cantor utilizes in demarcating various transexual 'types'.

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