

Getting to know you? Reflections on Researching LGBT Ageing

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LGBT Ageing Research

- ▶ Gaining momentum
- ▶ Reflecting on three projects
- ▶ Methodological futures



LGBT Ageing Research – gaining momentum

- ▶ ‘Queer Absence’ (Cronin, 2004)
- ▶ Multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary knowledge production
 - ▶ Gerontology, Sociology, Social Work, Health and Social Care, Psychology
- ▶ Activists, Advocates, Charities



OPENING DOORS
LONDON



Knowledge production and results

- ▶ Mostly qualitative or small scale surveys
- ▶ Some secondary analysis/reviews
- ▶ Generally pulls out key themes, including:
 - ▶ Older LGBT people more isolated and fearful about getting older
 - ▶ To some extent, strong friendship networks
 - ▶ Actual or perceived prejudice from service providers
 - ▶ Intersection of multiples forms of inequality/oppression
 - ▶ Intra-group differences!
 - ▶ Significant knowledge gaps



Three projects: methodological issues and reflections

- ▶ Older LGBT Matters
- ▶ Putting Policy into Practice
- ▶ Minding the knowledge gaps



Older LGBT Matters

- ▶ **Small qualitative scoping study for LGA**
 - ▶ 2008-2009
 - ▶ Interviews and focus groups

- ▶ **Drivers for research**
 - ▶ LGA pro-active in LGBT issues
 - ▶ Equality and Diversity monitoring/equality strands
 - ▶ Sexuality and Gender Equality Schemes

- ▶ **Outputs: Report for LGA with recommendations**



Concerns about older LGBT Matters

- ▶ A ‘sociological queasiness’
- ▶ Production of ‘older LGBT’ as a collection of categories with certain attributes
- ▶ Lessons from Queer Theory and micro-sociology (ethnomethodology and conversation analysis)
 - ▶ The contextually specific production of intersecting identifications, drawing upon but transforming discourses (knowledge) related to sexuality, age and gender, amongst others
 - ▶ ‘culture in interaction’
 - ▶ Focus on what people are doing in the inter-action



Queer(y)ing categories in research, policy and practice

- ▶ Categories (of identification) are not neutral (carry knowledge)
- ▶ They have attributes/activities 'attached' to them, which reproduce and transform taken-for-granted understandings (knowledge)
- ▶ People use categories in 'skilful' ways, making their own meanings, but within limits
- ▶ Need to be mindful of this categorisation work
 - King A and Cronin A. (2010) Queer Methods and Queer Practices: Re-examining the identities of older lesbian, gay, bisexual (OLGB) adults. In: Browne K and Nash C (eds) *Queer Methods and Methodologies*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 85-96.
 - King A. (forthcoming) Queer Categories: Queer(y)ing the identification of 'older lesbian, gay and/or bisexual (LGB) adults' and its implications for organisational research, policy and practice. *Gender, Work and Organization*.



Categorisation work

Int: “We all use different terms to describe our sexuality so it would be helpful for me if you could tell me how you describe yourself”

Ernest: “Well right I feel it’s a very important issue, well for me it is. I’m a gay man but my *gayness* is not what I’d call my primary characteristic. That would be that I’m male and er I would do everything that I would expect an ordinary man to do expect when it comes to sex then I’m going to prefer to *have sex with other men* but that’s the only way I consider myself to be gay”



Categorisation work

Ernest: “*I’ve never lived erm I’ve always been around other gay people, but I’ve never lived in an *exclusively gay community*. I’ve never been in an *exclusively gay relationship* although I’ve had quite a few fairly *long-term* gay relationships but er I wouldn’t consider anything like a *civil partnership* or anything in a formalised way. I have been *married* but that was purely for erm *immigration purposes* while I lived briefly in America and that didn’t succeed at all (laughs) it wasn’t a very rewarding experience*



Categorisation work

Int: “What about service provision for older people do you think?”

Ernest: “There again I have very rarely got myself involved and not classifying myself as gay I don't classify myself as err old. I just *don't think in terms of age*... So that's [his voluntary work] brought me much more in to focus on the needs of older people and what older people talk about err which is mainly *sitting around and chatting about the old days* (laughs). It's not really my scene but you know you listen and you try and be as helpful as you can



Implications / reflections

- ▶ Knowledge production (in research, policy and practice) uses categories but doesn't always show/enable complexity or active production
 - ▶ Fitting into place
- ▶ 'Older LGBT' is regulatory collection
 - ▶ Comes with assumptions and inclusions/exclusions
 - ▶ Are we, inadvertently, excluding some older lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans lives and ignoring difference, diversity, intersectionality?
 - ▶ How can we ensure diversity and complexity of experiences/voices are heard?
 - ▶ Who 'counts' and 'how'?

The image shows a portion of a registration form. It includes fields for: 2 Title, 3 First Name, 4 Middle Name, 5 Surname, 6 Known as, 7 Sex (Male, Female, Other), 8 Date of Birth (dd-mm-yy), and 9 *Sexual Orientation. The sexual orientation options are: 01 Heterosexual, 02 Gay Man, 03 Gay Woman/Lesbian, 04 Bisexual, 05 Other, and 06 Prefer not to say.

2 Title	3 First Name	4 Middle Name	5 Surname
6 Known as	7 Sex Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>		8 Date of Birth (dd-mm-yy)
9 *Sexual Orientation			
01 Heterosexual <input type="checkbox"/>	02 Gay Man <input type="checkbox"/>	03 Gay Woman/Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/>	
04 Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/>	05 Other <input type="checkbox"/>	06 Prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>	

Knowledge exchange, impact and austerity

▶ Putting Policy into Practice

- ▶ ESRC Knowledge Exchange Project
- ▶ 2010-2011
- ▶ Developed methodology 'Knowledge exchange action research' (KEAR)
- ▶ Using research findings (from older LGBT Matters and existing studies) to create impacts on policy and service practice with older LGBT service users in mind
 - King A. (2013) *Prepare for Impact? Reflecting on Knowledge Exchange Work to Improve Services for Older LGBT People in Times of Austerity*, in *Social Policy and Society* (onlinefirst)
 - King A. (2013) *Knowledge Exchange Action Research: Creating Impact with Social Science Research*. SAGE Research Methods Cases. SAGE Publications, Ltd, London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publications, Ltd.



KEAR: 'Putting Policy into Practice'

Stage One

- Awareness raising conference and workshop (75)
- Impact measured by questionnaires

Stage Two (a)

- Development and use of SAFE 'toolkit' (24)
- Workshop and action points

Stage Two (b)

- Regrouping to discuss experiences
- Impact measured by questionnaires

Stage Three

- Final end of project conference/workshop (101)
- Impact questionnaires
- 6 month follow up survey

Knowledge production and impact

- ▶ Service providers knowledge about LGBT issues
- ▶ Development and use of 'equality toolkit' (SAFE framework) and action points
- ▶ Social networks
- ▶ Service Provider Reflections:
 - ▶ "I'm being honest, I'd never thought about the possibility that someone in my care might be LGB or T"
- ▶ Action points included:
 - ▶ Holding staff meetings about older LGBT issues, using Age UK older LGBT health and social care checklist, awareness raising session by ODL, training session for staff, being a 'champion'



Prepare for Impact?

- ▶ Effects of austerity on project objectives
 - ▶ Willing but unable to attend
 - ▶ Magnification of structural issues
 - ▶ Restructuring of services
 - ▶ Where does change happen?
 - ▶ Experiential/identity labour
 - ▶ Being 'the champion'
- ▶ Evidence emerging from service providers and studies e.g. NatCen (2013) report
- ▶ Older LGBT people at a range of intersections that austerity will exacerbate e.g. 'cuts' to health, housing, care, supports etc



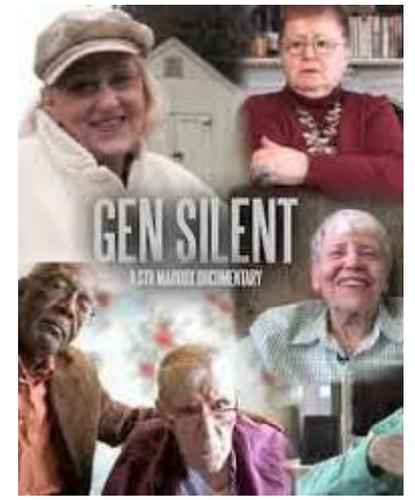
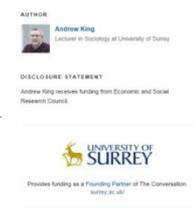
Minding the knowledge gaps

- ▶ Six seminars/workshops and a final conference
 - ▶ Older bisexual lives; Trans Ageing; Ethnicity, Culture and Religion; Resources/Austerity; Health, housing and social care; Intergenerational issues
- ▶ Keynotes and workshop activities around key theme
- ▶ Events as sites of the production of knowledge, about LGBT ageing and sites of social interaction



Methodological futures

- ▶ **LGBT ageing research still developing/emerging**
 - ▶ Range of different methods not yet fully utilised
 - ▶ Social simulation, media analysis, institutional ethnographies, creative/active, visual, others?
- ▶ **Methodology isn't just about sampling, research design, analysis etc**
 - ▶ How knowledge is produced/used
- ▶ **Importance of challenging existing knowledge about LGBT ageing**



Thank you! Further info

- ▶ andrew.king@surrey.ac.uk
- ▶ http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/people/king_andrew/
- ▶ @andrewdhking

Seminar Six: Wednesday 26th November 2014.

**New Directions in Health, Housing and Social Care: What do older
LGBT people want?**

Rik Medlik Building, University of Surrey, Guildford.

Programme:

9.45 - 10.30 Registration and refreshments

10.30 - 10.45 Welcome and introductions

10.45 - 11.30 **Dr Kathryn Almack**

University of Nottingham

"I didn't come out to go back in the closet": Ageing and
Care towards the End of Life for older LGBT People.

11.30 - 12.15 **Dr Paul Willis**

Swansea University

*"There could be someone in here that's gay..."
Accounting for older LGB people in the provision of
residential care services in Wales*