Contents

Doing sex research: History, methods and ethical criticalities

Alessandro Porrovecchio

Abstract: This article surveys empirical studies in sexuality from the point of view of a researcher schooled in Europe and the Mediterranean. It provides a survey of a sample of studies from Kinsey onward to provide a framing of the methodological and ethical problems that empirical studies in sexuality face, concluding with a discussion of online and virtual research opportunities

Victor Shakapopulis: *Doctor, I read a statement you made that, uh, you felt that the average length of a man's penis should be nineteen inches. Doesn't that seem a little long?*

Dr. Bernardo: *Long? My friend, I'm making discoveries you wouldn't dream of.*

Dr. Bernardo: *Yes I know, but nineteen inches. I mean that's-…*

[Victor makes hand gestures]

Dr. Bernardo: *Does it sound mad? That's what they called me at Masters and Johnsons Clinic, mad. Because I had visions of explorations in sexual areas undreamed of by lesser human beings. It was I who first discovered how to make a man impotent by hiding his hat. I was the first one to explain the connection between excessive masturbation and entering politics. It was I who first said that the clitoral orgasm should not be only for women! They ridiculed me, said I was mad, haha! But I showed them. They threw me out of Masters and Johnson, no severance but, and I had it coming. But I showed them!*

Victor Shakapopulis: *Are we having dessert?*

Woody Allen,

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* (*But Were Afraid to Ask)

1972

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Introduction: Sexuality as an "absent presence" in social sciences

The first phase of the history of studies of sexual behaviour was characterized by two somewhat ironic features: first of all, the scientific study of sexuality arose during the Victorian era, when even talking about sex was regarded as strictly taboo; secondly, during the first phase of its development, anthropologists and sociologists did not make a significant contribution to this branch of studies. Paul Gebhard, who followed Alfred Kinsey as the second director of the Kinsey Institute (in the years between 1956 and 1982), considered this first phase of study as a phase of silence and ignorance.

This first phase coincides with the development of sociology as a modern science. Sexual behaviour was not central to the focus of social research, although it had always been recognised as an issue. Studying sexuality meant studying social interactions between individuals in their groups or institutions or within social contexts, which was at the core of sociability and society. It was also a means of analyzing the cultural and interpretive categories that mark these interactions and from which these interactions derive (for example body, marriage, and family), as with the work of Georg Simmel (1984).

The reference to Simmel is not accidental. We can draw a parallel between body and sexuality in classic sociology: for all the corollaries of the body, the pioneers of sociology and their precursors were aware of the importance of the emotional and erotic factors, but these factors were not at the core of their studies. Thomas Hobbes, for example, considered sexual desire as one of the major forces in nature, that displayed in the "extreme" desire to possess the *Other* (Hillyer, 2009). Max Weber considered the sexual experience as a semi-autonomous sphere of life with its own values. He explained that, in the protestant ethic, sexuality control paves the way to an "intra-mundane existence" (2011). In Vilfredo Pareto's theory of "residues" and "derivations" sexual residues represented one of the six classes of constant factors influencing individual's actions (1916). Georg Simmel, in some of his "Exkursus" (1984), described the interactive and the exchange dimension inherent in sexual relations. We can find the issue of sexuality also in some excerpts of Emile Durkheim's works, for example when he faces the theme of sexual anomie (1897), or when in 1911, in addressing the *French Philosophical Society,* he talks over Dr Doléris's sexual education programme (2011). Finally, the emotional and affective dimensions of sociability can be found also in some parts of Leopold von Wiese's works (1933).

As Shilling (2003, p.17) suggests, "the body has historically been something of an 'absent presence' in sociology". It has been an object and subject of analysis that is both "at the very heart of the sociological imagination" and "absent in the sense that sociology has rarely focused in a sustained manner on the embodied human as an object of importance in its own right". Sexuality had the same fate as the body. As an "absent presence", sexuality never managed to establish itself in a coherent and legitimate perspective. Whilst clearly critical to human experience, it was marginal or eccentric in terms of social research priorities and theoretical debate. In addition to this general eccentricity, sociological research on sexuality suffered from an

Social transaction: A relevant paradigm for the sociology of sexuality and gender?

Christophe Gibout

Abstract: This article explores the possible utility of the Social Transaction Paradigm approach to sexual research, sketching its theoretical outline, exploring key studies and showing its applicability as an alternative and possibly innovative approach to the study of sexuality.

The Social Transaction Paradigm (STP) was developed during the 1970's by researchers working at Louvain University (Belgium). The paradigm was initially developed as a means to investigate the crisis between the Flemings and the Walloons who disagreed fundamentally on the future of the Catholic University of Leuven and on the language(s) that had to be used for lectures. The scientific value of the STP was immediately widely recognised. Since its initial formulation, it has proven its efficiency in describing and explaining many different situations, such as environmental governance, urban policies or trans-frontiers relationships. Initially developed by Jean Rémy *et al.* (1978), the STP has been further developed by, among others Maurice Blanc (1992 to 2009) and others (Foucart *et al.*, 2013; Freynet *et al.*, 1998; Fusulier & Marquis, 2008; Gibout *et al.*, 2009; Schurmans, 2013).

During the early 90's, the STP has been mobilized by Van Campenhoudt and others (Van Campenhoudt *et al.*, 1994). In the sociology of sexuality and gender, specially concerning the question of AIDS governance and of loose relationships with the AIDS risk the gay libertines had to trans-act between the "sexual wandering" and the infectious risk bound to the pandemic.

These initial studies of the nineties were followed up more recently by new studies dealing with new sexual practices, such as transsexuality, the picking up of young people, swapping, cruising-for-sex, gay barebacking or sex tourism, etc. (Audouit & Gibout, 2013; Carvajal-Sánchez, 2013-a & b; Dayer, 2005 to 2013-b; Gouyon, 2013; Gourarier, 2013, etc.) After a relatively quiet period of two decades, researchers seemed to rediscover the scientific value of the STP for doing sociological research, and for the sociology of sexuality in particular. The fact is that, suddenly, many researchers saw the value of this paradigm to question scientifically these objects. The social transaction approach is useful to imagine a compromise without dishonest compromise, a compromise that is limited in the space and in the time and is the result of the balance of powers at the *hic-et-nunc* of the social situation. The social transaction help to imagine and to interpret a situation of negotiations and "*reasonable settlements*"[1] (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008), where to transcend the initial situation of "*disagreement*" (Rancière, 1995) is accepted "*the continuity of the gain and the loss*" (Simmel, 2009). Thus, sexual relationships are seen as unstable and

1 Unless otherwise specified, all the translations are of the author.

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temporary transactional products, which return insight into the livable social situation and authorize the resilience (Cyrulnik, 2012; Segal, 1986) without denying the conflictual nature of relationships in society.

In this discussion, I will critically evaluate the usefulness of the STP for sexuality studies. First, I will briefly present the paradigm, its genesis and its theoretical foundations. Second, I will give an overview of some of the major researches concerning the question of the sexuality mobilizing the paradigm. The founding works will be presented in order to show the way this paradigm seized the question of the sex and of the gender. For its most recent works, I will use a scalar approach, from the sexuality in the public space to the interactions within the individual himself, from the transactions that mobilize numerous actors to the ones that people do with themselves. I will conclude this discussion by critically discussing the value of the STP for doing sexuality studies.

A brief overview of the STP

For a better knowledge of the STP we need to look at the social context in which it was developed and the theoretical questions it sought to address. Understanding the social transaction supposes a historically situated proofreading by its genesis and through the words of those who have "invented" it. The social transaction is the fruit at the same time of a historic circumstance – the political, academic and religious context within Belgian society (Servais, 2013) and the linguistic crisis within the Belgian University of Leuven during the 1960's and the 1970's – and of a critical review of Georg Simmel's works in order to solve the scientific crisis into sociology.

On one hand, "the social transaction appeared in the Jean Rémy, Liliane Voyé and Emile Servais founding work (1978). It testifies of the will of his authors to go out of a double crisis, social and scientific. They were all three teachers at the Catholic University of Leuven and, when the linguistic crisis returned its inevitable partition, the French-speaking part being expelled from Leuven in Flanders, they belonged in the exit of the crisis by the creation of the Catholic University of Leuven to Louvain-la-Neuve, in Wallonia. This practice of the transaction fed their theoretical reflexion and has been its compost or its substratum" (Blanc, 2009-a : 26)

On the other hand, "*To produce or to reproduce? Toward a sociology of social transaction*" (Rémy *et al.*, 1978) is also an answer to a scientific crisis that has crossed French speaking sociology from the 1960's to the 1970's. The hypothesis that the cleavage between structuralism – widely dominating – and the "sociology of the actor", between the "Self-Production of Society" (Touraine, 1973) " and "the Inheritors" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964) or the "Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) can be transcended by a transaction between these two scientific currents.

As written by Georg Simmel (1981), society is crossed and structured by inflexible but necessary oppositions – one to another (male/female, tradition/modernity, innovation/preservation, closeness/distance, etc.). To reduce the tension, without ever

Reflections on methods in research in sex and sexuality with disabled people

Emma Sheppard

Abstract: This discussion explores the state of research into sex and sexuality for disabled people and reflects upon how research methodologies can be developed to include disabled people, both as researchers and participants.

Introduction

Research into sex and sexuality amongst disabled people[1] is a minority affair, and it is an area that has been, and largely continues to be, under-researched, for a host of reasons. Developing this body of research, and bringing disability into sex and sexuality research as a wider field presents an opportunity to rethink how research methods can be made accessible – that is, how research can be carried out, in a way that reflects and meets the needs of disabled participants, whether or not their disability is a focus of the research. The following reflections are based around my own work[2] with interviews in the field, together with a careful reading of the observations of other researchers. I hope to demonstrate that an inclusive approach is not only ideal, but is also relatively straightforward, and can be integrated into research that is not specifically concerned with the social world of disabled people, but with other social areas as well.

1 A brief note on a linguistic choice: I use the term *disabled person*, rather than *person with a disability (PWD)*. This is, in generally, the preferred term by disabled people in the UK (with the exception of people with learning difficulties, who prefer person-first language, and therefore identify as *people with disabilities*). This term derives from a preference for the social model in research and activism. The argument as to which term is "best" is lengthy, and while I acknowledge the importance of language in discourse, both sides make valid points. As a disabled woman, working primarily with people who identify as disabled people, I have chosen to stick with that particular term, but I have not discounted research or experience from those who choose otherwise.

2 PhD research, with the working title *Kinked and Crippled: disabled BDSM practitioners' experiences and embodiments of pain*, expected 2016, as well as a forthcoming publication on earlier research (Sheppard, 2012) into queer sexual identities and acquired impairment.

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Concepts of disability

These reflections are premised on the basis that disability is a social process as well as a lived experience, along the lines of the social model (see Davies, 2006), a process that informs the formation of a disabled identity shared by a diverse group of people that is nonetheless situationally dependent and socio-culturally derived. Disability, therefore, is socially produced and inscribed upon certain bodies with certain impairments[3], but it is important to remain aware that not all of those bodies may identify themselves as disabled – for varying reasons, including the negative impact that being disabled may have on people, or feeling that they do not "fit" the model of who a disabled person is, especially as "the paradigmatic person with a disability is healthy disabled and permanently and predictably impaired" (Wendell, 2001, p. 21).

The basic premise of the social model of disability is "a clear focus on the economic, environmental and cultural barriers encountered by people who are viewed by others as having some form of impairment – whether physical, mental, or intellectual" (Oliver, 2004, p. 21). However, while the social model is a useful *basic* way of understanding disability, it does not necessarily lend itself well to deeper explorations of the interaction of disability within an intersectional understanding of identity – and some, particularly people with "learning difficulties", feel that the social model is an inadequate explanation of their own situation (Goodley and Moore, 2000). At this point, Kafer's political/relational model (2013) is more useful, in that it softens the line between impairment and disability, acknowledging the role of discourse in the perception of both, allows for further engagement with medical/clinical assistance, and repoliticizes both disability and impairment (Kafer, 2013). This approach also fits with a critically crip approach; McRuer's crip theory (2006) presents disability as an issue in which the sociocultural discourse presents a normative ideal of the compulsory able-bodied, able-minded neoliberal subject – with the disabled subject as forever unable to meet this ideal. While my understanding of disability, like Kafer's (2013), owes a great deal to the social model, it is nonetheless critically crip, acknowledging the sociocultural forces that create impairment and disability, and looking critically at those forces and the ways in which they interact with other constructions and discourses, such as gender and race.

Disability, sexuality, and sex

Disabled people are frequently viewed as asexual and infantile, with sex cast as problematic because their bodies are supposedly undesirable, or because their reproductive capacity is feared (Gillespie-Sells et al., 1998; Goodley, 2014; Guldin, 2000; Kafer, 2013; Marks, 1999; McRuer, 2006; Shakespeare et al., 1996; Tepper, 2000; Waxman Fiduccia, 2000; Zitzelsberger, 2005). This discursive construction has been "controlled by professionals from medical and psychological and sexological back-

3 What counts as impairment is itself discursively constructed; changing over time, but within the social model can be understood as a medical diagnosis.

Researching trans people: Ethics through method

Christina Richards

Abstract: Trans people are those people who are not content to remain in the gender assigned at birth. They are a group who are increasingly being researched, however the method and findings of such research are often used as a means or 'lens' to buttress a particular theoretical stance such as queer theory, psychoanalysis, or medical positivism. This discussion considers the ethics of continued research of this group which have been historically marginalised and are still often at the edges of the academy. In particular it examines the power implications of 'giving a voice' as the ethical centre of such research; alongside issues of the intelligibility of trans people being mediated by the academy, and the voice of the academic expert. It also briefly considers the inherent problems associated with reflexivity; whether through its absence or though the positioning of the reflexive researcher as inside or outside the group being researched. It then proceeds to outline some methodological means by which trans people may be engaged in research in a way in which the method, and not merely the outcome, is inherently ethical.

Introduction

Trans people (sometimes referred to as transgender people) are those people who are not content to remain in the gender assigned at birth. If a person makes a transition to another gender, perhaps involving physical interventions such as hormones or surgeries, they may be referred to as a 'transsexual' person, although this is a medical term which is falling out of favour. More acceptably, if a person has made a transition to a male role they may be called a trans man or simply a man (in circumstances where their trans status is irrelevant), or if a person has made a transition to a female role they may be called a trans woman (or similarly, simply a woman). In contrast, some people may wear clothing not usually worn by their birth assigned gender (and possibly identify as another gender) for some periods of time and spend other times in their birth assigned gender. This may be for reasons of comfort or periodic identity. In this case, the person has sometimes been referred to as a 'dual role transvestite'; or if it is undertaken for reasons of sexual gratification, as a 'fetishistic transvestite' - although again these are medical terms which are not generally accepted by trans people and are given here only for [historical] information purposes.

Within the broad rubric of trans are also those people who identify outside of the gender binary of male and female; whether because they have a fluid gender identity, a static gender identity which is not 100 % male or 100 % female, or perhaps because they do not believe in the very construct of a gender binary. This group of people often identifies as genderqueer, queer, or non-binary, whereas those people who identify as neither male nor female (rather than having aspects of both) may identify as

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neutrois, gender neutral, or agender. All of these people may come to the attention of people researching trans identities[1] in the widest sense.

Such a range of identities – intersecting as they do with sexuality, embodiment, and the nexus of philosophy, medicine, and lived experience – often appeal to researchers with perhaps no intent other than a fascination with the subject (e.g. *The metric features of teeth in female-to-male transsexuals* – Antoszewski, Zadzinska & Foczpanski, 2007). Research of this sort can often be undertaken skilfully[2] in that it adheres to all of the usual protocols – perhaps it has been through a university ethics committee and publishes power, effect size, confidence intervals and the like; or if from a qualitative tradition, it may be grounded in a philosophical epistemology and include explicit reflexivity. However, such mechanisms often fail to take into account embedded power dynamics between researchers and participants and so may not be sufficient to ensure truly ethical research with marginalised people and communities[3] such as trans people (McNeil, Bailey, Ellis, Morton & Regan, 2012). This is especially the case as trans people's lives have historically been appropriated by researchers and used to buttress theories (e.g. Hakeem, 2006; for more on the problems with this see Green, 2008) or to progress the careers of researchers without making apparent the explicit benefit of that research to the participants or the groups they have been drawn from beyond the trope of 'giving a voice' (see below).

This discussion therefore considers these common pitfalls of research with trans people through examining: the benefits and costs of the philosophies commonly underpinning such research; the issues with researcher reflexivity which may fail to ensure ethical practice; and how the common notion of 'giving a voice' as the benefit of the research to participants consists of problematic power relations. It then goes on to suggest some ways in which these pitfalls may be avoided such that useful research may be undertaken which is ethically grounded throughout, rather than that which has been simply signed off by an ethics committee as having an ethically sound method of data collection.

Philosophy

One of the primary pitfalls facing the researcher into trans people's lives is that of the inherent power dynamic between the researcher and the researched (Hale, 1997). This remains the case even if the researcher identifies as trans themselves as the researcher's identity and personal philosophy may inflect their work, just as it likely will if the researcher is cisgender[4] (see Reflexivity below for more on this).

1 Who may themselves be trans of course.

2 Although this discussion concerns an expansion of the scope of that which is deemed skilful research such that it encompasses ethics more fully.

3 I am cautious about using the term *community* singular as trans people are members of many different communities – younger, older, genderqueer, person with a trans history, etc. For this reason *communities* is preferred, however, as many trans people are not members of any trans communities the simple term *people* will also be used here (cf Richards & Barker, 2013; 2015).

4 A cisgender person is a person who is content to remain the gender they were assigned at birth. (cf Harvey & McGeeny, forthcoming 2015)

Conducting ethical sexuality research with children and young people: Tensions, ambiguities and contradictions

Allison Moore

Abstract: This article surveys the problems and issues that arise when researchers seek to conduct ethical sexuality research with children and young people and identifies key themes and ideas that researchers should consider when developing their research proposal, design and project. It explores how ethical concerns in sexuality research have to be reframed in relation to working with children and young people.

Introduction

Since the emergence of the 'new' social sciences of childhood in the 1990s, there has been a growing body of research *with* and *by* children and young people. Although there was a long tradition of child research prior to this, it tended to be based on adult observations of children and assessment of their development against a sequentially and temporally ordered set of standardised and universalised stages (Einasdottir, 2007). Alternatively, what was known about children's experiences came, not from their voices, but from the voices of their adult caregivers such as parents, teachers, social workers and medical professionals (Alderson, 1993; Neill, 2005). Children were subsumed and made invisible within the adult-ordered and adult-centred institutions that structure their unequal power relations with adults. Children were seen as passive objects and research was conducted *on* them rather than *with* them.

However, the 'new' social sciences of childhood challenged this deficit model (see, for example, Jenks, 1996; James & Prout, 1997; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; James & James, 2004; Prout, 2004; Smith, 2010). Rather than passive objects of research, it was posited that children should be understood as social actors and social agents whose views and opinions are worthy of study in their own right. This development in academia ran parallel to wider societal changes which afforded children greater say in matters that affect them and gave them the right to participate in decision-making processes (See, for example, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; The Children Act 1989[1]; Department of Health, 2001).

The paradigmatic shift from viewing children as objects to subjects, from passive to active, from incompetent to competent has resulted in a proliferation of research with and by children and young people that explores issues that directly affect them.

1 Available at http://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents

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In light of this, most research bodies and funders, children's organisations and university institutions have developed guidelines for conducting ethical research with children and young people. Although these guidelines differ in their focus, scope and disciplinary framework there are some recurrent themes concerning consent, confidentiality and protection from harm. Research with children does produce unique ethical dilemmas that the researcher has to navigate through and negotiate with the participants but these ethical dilemmas are compounded in research into childhood and youth sexuality. This discussion will suggest that childhood and sexuality are positioned as antithetical to one another; sexuality is something that adults do and children should be protected from. Consequently, the ethical dilemmas presented by research into childhood and youth sexuality may result in a project being denied ethical approval from the outset. Further, if granted approval, the ethical guidelines on consent, confidentiality and protection from harm create tensions, contradictions and ambiguities that can leave the researcher in a vulnerable position.

As Stevi Jackson (1982) has observed, discussions of childhood sexuality produce considerable and, to some extent understandable, anxieties in adults. In part, this is due to an overly narrow conceptualisation of sexuality which equates sexuality with sex acts. However, sexuality is not confined to acts and is experienced in multi-faceted and multi-layered ways. The term 'sexuality' refers to, amongst other things, sexual identity and its relationship to gender identity; the ways in which heteropatriarchy produces hierarchical and uneven gender and sexual categories; the ways in which children make sense of and interpret heterosexist representations of love and monogamy in popular culture; and the ways in which individuals experience their bodies in a society that promotes idealised and hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity. Discussing childhood sexuality in a research context, therefore, does not necessarily refer to sexual activity, although, of course it may, depending on the age of the participant.

Given the anxiety and concern that discussions of childhood sexuality provoke it is necessary to clarify and qualify the position that I will be adopting throughout this discussion. The arguments presented herein should not be seen as a call for treating adults and children the same with regards to sexuality and sexuality research. Instead, as I have argued elsewhere (Moore, 2013), children and young people should be recognised as both sexual beings and sexual becomings. If we are to make sense of their sexual subjectivities, we must do so from their perspectives rather than applying adultist discourses of sexuality to their experiences. There is now a small, but growing, body of research that illustrates that gendered and sexual identities are important features of children's everyday lives and this is the case even for very young children. Emma Renold (2005), for example, conducted ethnographic research with girls and boys in their final year of primary school in England. She suggested that sexuality was central to children's gendered identities and found that children actively "produce their own sexual identities, cultures and relations within the constraints of the adult world" (Renold, 2005: p.22. See also, Epstein, 1997a, 1997b; Epstein & Johnson, 1998, Renold, 1997; Thorne, 1993). Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child is anyone under the age of eighteen but one does not need to subscribe to a developmentalist 'ages and stages' paradigm to see that there will be considerable differences in the sexual subjectivities of the ten

Researching sexuality and drug addiction

Gabriele Di Francesco

Abstract: The paper presents the methodological and technical aspects of a research project that set out to explore the relationship between sexuality and drugs addiction, with the twofold aim of a better focusing of the phenomenon which is hidden and difficult to read and at preparing appropriate strategies for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. The survey was carried out in the border area between the Italian regions Marche and Abruzzo, which is identified as the "*pole of sex*" [Ricci S., 1998:23] and where there are high rates of drug addiction. The survey involved the population of prostitutes, transvestites and transsexual who regularly attend the road called "*Bonifica del Tronto",* between the provinces of Ascoli Piceno and Teramo and who are regular users of drugs (heroin, cocaine and others). It is a marginal population with various ethnic backgrounds, coming from Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America, which now has a quite stable settlement in this area and is perceived almost as a "sub-culture of sex". The majority of the subjects recruited for the research are users of the local Services for drugs addiction. This made the initial contact and recruitment less difficult as it was done through the mediation of the Service operators. The research adopted a qualitative methodological approach and has been carried out through individual interviews – mostly in the headquarters of the Services.

Introduction

Sexuality is a key principle in the organization of social life, a basis of identity as well as one of the main axes around which social inequalities are produced and reproduced. It is through sexuality that we understand ourselves and how identities are hierarchically organized. Sexual behavior sometimes includes force and coercion, often involves negotiations and ethical differences (Kimmel M., 2013: 11).

Moreover, it is now amply clear (P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann, 1966, M. Foucault M., 2001–1976; C. Cipolla, 1996) that human sexuality is constructed within social contexts.

Although classical sociology does not consider sexual behavior as a scientific object of study, there have been sociological analysis of sexuality, but it has been study in the context of the family or social and economic group dynamics.

For Durkheim the separation of sexes and the extreme specialization of their duties in the home is essential for the life and the survival of society, because sexual division of labor enables marital solidarity. The union of a couple in a marriage brings restrictions and increases their obligations. There are norms that penalize the violation of marital duties and laws that explain how and when the marriage contract can be dissolved (Durkheim E., 1969). This configuration of marriage entailed a differentiation of sex roles and sex sites.

As the man saw his horizons broaden and his duties become more specialized in terms of work, politics, defense and space of life, the woman was required to be more "careful" of the family life, the care of her children and husband, narrowing

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her places to the house and the kitchen, his true exclusive “kingdom”. The rest of the marriage was the shelter from the dangers of life and from external attacks. The stability of marriage, for Durkheim, is an essential fact to combat the conjugal *anomie*, through the observance of social norms that have been established over time. The state of conjugal anomie can occur in the event of widowhood or divorce: functions and tasks primarily and socially feminine need to be addressed by the man, who does not have the tools, expertise and social legitimacy to carry them out.

The woman on the other hand, according to Durkheim, “living more than the man out of the community life, penetrates common life less and the society is not required because it is less impregnated with sociability. She has just needs addressed this way, and satisfied them with little expense” (Durkheim E., 1969:264).

As a result, women would present less risk of suicide than men because of their exclusion from public and social life. This will reduce the risk of suicide due to conjugal anomie. But to do this it would be necessary to achieve legal parity which would require at least psychological equality.

“First of all a man and a woman are beings of the same nature so that they can be equally protected by the same institution” (Ibidem:454). The issue is understood as division of roles not only as sexual reaffirmation of male supremacy. Man is capable of social relations as a person, while the woman does not have a specific social role, does not have the same intellectual development and cannot be on the same level of her partner. Its conjugal subservience is primarily expressed in sexual terms, because she has a strong naturalness, a kind of primitive simplicity.

The woman is always subordinate to man in classical sociology. In the analysis of Max Weber (2001 and 1978), for example, which mainly considers the economic aspects of sexual relationships. With regard to women, her economic interests are aimed at communion and the sharing of resources.

The sexual relationship would only be an act of interest on which social groups orient and control the economic relations. Taking a “brief analysis of the essence of the kind of community” that Weber himself considers most important to determine the relationship between the economy and types of communities, he takes into consideration the relationship between the economy and “the general shapes of the structure of human communities”.

“Contents and directions of social action are discussed only insofar as they give rise to specific forms that are also economically relevant” (Weber M., 1978:356).

Before that in connection with the category of power, the forms of relationship are expressed in ways that are at the basis of the family community.

“The relationships between father, mother and children, established by a stable union, appear to us today particularly “natural” relationships. However, separated from the household as a unit of economic maintenance, the sexually based relationship between husband and wife, and the physiologically determinate relationship between father and children are wholly unstable and tenuous. The father relationship cannot exist without a stable economic household unit of father and mother; even where there is such a unit the father relationship may not always be of great import. Of all the relationships arising from sexual intercourse, only the mother-child relationship is “natural”, because it is biologically based household unit that lasts until the child is able to search for means of subsistence on his own. Next come

The sociologist as cruiser: Masculinities, deviance and sexuality in gay sex work arenas

Cirus Rinaldi

Abstract: This article explores the methodological and ethical issues that arise from ethnographic research in sexual practices in the study of non-normative sexualities. It explores the researcher as a subject in the research as well as doing the research. Taking a queer approach, it identifies key themes and issues that the reflexive researcher faces when in the field.

Introduction

The aim of this discussion is to present a series of epistemological and methodological reflections on the use of qualitative research methods, and specifically ethnographical practice, in the study of non-normative sexualities. These reflections are divided into two main sections: a) the first will look at the main destabilizing factors in queer methodological reflections, while b) the second will focus on an analysis of the role, the body and the emotions of the researcher in the reflexive research process and in encounters with the *Other*, as well as looking at the progression of self-narration in the so-called autobiographical techniques, and at the consequent methodological and ethical implications, which are particularly evident in the study of non-normative genders and sexualities. This last section and the final reflections will look specifically at the analysis of contexts, processes and modes of sociological production which form the basis for a series of ethnographic observations of an ongoing research project which I'm working on in Naples and Palermo, on male sex work, involving native subjects and immigrants.

Queer concerns: The researcher and (self)reflexive implications

Sociological analysis has neglected the subject of "sexualities", "desires" and pleasure, of Eros and bodies, rendering it marginal and subordinate to the dominant orientations and themes in *standard* research. It is impossible to consider here the various political and cultural impediments, therefore I will simply refer you to Rinaldi (2008, 2013b). At the beginning of the nineties a series of studies heavily influenced by French post-structuralism, deconstruction and Jungian psychoanalysis, especially in literary and social criticism, assumed a radical constructivist position with primarily cultural and political effects (Butler, 1990; de Lauretis, 1991; Fuss, 1991;

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Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1993). Though movements developing theory and politics did exist, most of the new theoretical stances brought together under the term *Queer theory* (Stein and Plummer, 1994, p. 181). Queer theory involves analysis of all those dimensions of gender, sex and sexuality which can't be investigated within the margins of the category of "normality" and which lie, in fact, beyond social typicalities, casting doubt on them because of their conflicting, contradictory, indefinite nature; in summary all of those states of desire which *exceed* our capacity to name them (Edelman, 1995, p. 345; my italics, author's note).

Plummer notes, however, there is not much that can really be "considered as new or surprising", other than the underlined interest of social research in reflexivity (Plummer, 2005, p. 369) and a deep reconsideration of categorical orthodoxy. Greater qualitative awareness enables the experiences of the subjects to be emphasized, they are no longer considered merely as objects of research but as *co-researchers* able to define, and therefore to highlight, the position of the researcher, who looms over like a disembodied, general, abstract, unemotional, asexual institutional entity. Gender-sensitive research, symbolic interactionism and the interaction between qualitative methods, biographical, ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Adams and Holman Jones, 2008), along with humanistic critical projects (Plummer, 2001), seem to be the most plausible ways, within a rigorous agenda, to use empathetic, reevaluation research strategies, to interpret, through a vision "from within".

But how does queer theory enable a different research procedure to be considered? Queer theory introduces, though in the context of contradiction and discontinuity, severe criticism of dominant models of scientific research both in terms of their research practices and the research policies which they use. From the point of view of the political practices of scientific text and methodology, it can be considered that queer theory: a) enables the experience of the non-normative subjectivities to be understood in their social worlds and through their "categories"; b) questions scientific knowledge and its methods, which aim to identify and reproduce normal and *normative* bodies, genders and sexualities; c) uses a new vocabulary through which non–normative sexualities can express themselves; d) demands change in the relationship between researchers and the object/subject of research. The experiential components are fostered and cannot be disregarded and, therefore, there is a significant element of *co-involvement* between the researcher and the object/subject of research, as repeatedly underlined by reflexive sociology and summarized in the methodology of symbolic interactionism and other constructivist approaches (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). Queer social research calls into question the traditional dimensions of objectivity and the separation of the experiential role of the researcher: the researcher's personal characteristics assume particular relevance precisely because they influence the whole process of knowledge development. All social actors (researchers included) have sexual, gendered and embodied experiences of the social world which cannot be concealed by their supposed neutrality in observing in a research process, even in its more orthodox versions, without undervaluing the role of both the research and the other subjects of the research. A neutral and detached presentation of their data and analysis usually has the following effects: a) it keeps the reader in the dark in terms of what happens in the places and relationships which

Between ethics and norms: The problem of normative perceptions of sex and sexuality research

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Abstract: This article seeks to explore the problems of inconsistent and contradictory understandings of the relationship between normative values in society and ethical understandings in relation to sex and sexuality research. It argues that these judgements are peculiarly vulnerable to moral prohibitions and prejudices, that have contingent relevance to an ethical approach to doing research into sexuality. The very values and normativities that give rise to increased perceptions of risk in this area often reflect pathologies and prejudices that are directly and indirectly critically rejected in the research itself. This discussion will explore this problem and make some suggestions for a more satisfying ethical approach to sexuality research.

Introduction

Research ethics as a distinct field of study and a feature of scientific approval has its roots in the Nuremburg code of 1947 and the desire of the international medical establishment to prescribe ethical standards for research on human subjects.[2] This is exemplified in the subsequent World Medical Association Helsinki Declaration, now in its tenth edition.[3] From these bio-medical origins, ethical guidance for researchers has developed across a range of disciplines, particularly but not exclusively those that involve human (and animal) participants. The main perspective that has driven and characterised this development is Principlism. Principlism establishes four fundamental principles for ethical research: that research practice should seek to be respectful of the autonomy – agency and dignity – of the participant; justice; and be beneficent and non-malfeasant in its objectives and practice (to draw from the most commonly used formulation of bio-medical research ethics – see Beauchamp and Childress, 2013). Principlism has been articulated through ethics training programmes, ethical codes, ethical scrutiny or forms of scientific review and specialist professional bodies of knowledge about both research ethics and research participant groups. Normative theories of ethics – such as the classical theories of virtue ethics, deontology, consequentialism – may contribute to how researchers think ethically about their practice may take place, but research ethics training, codes and scrutiny have been mainly informed by Principlism[4].

1 I would like to thank Tom Claes, Allison Moore and Alessandro Porrovecchio for their comments on a previous draft
2 http://www.cirp.org/library/ethics/nuremberg/
3 http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/
4 For a concise account of normative theories of ethics, see Graham (2004) and on the classical approaches, Darwell (2003 a, b, c)

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Within the applications of these principled guidelines, there is a general recognition that some subjects or fields of research and some groups of research participants require more sensitive handling than others or are more potentially vulnerable to harm caused by research practice. Researching someone's recall and experience of violent assault requires more care that researching someone's supermarket shopping habits, and researching with children about their play requires more care than researching adults about recreational hobbies. Behind that general understanding, however, lies a complex problem: how do we recognise who is vulnerable and what a 'sensitive' topic is, and from that determine what extra measures or prohibitions to research should be imposed on the researcher? More, to what extent is the sensitivity of a subject or vulnerability of a participant not simply a factor to considered in designing and practicing research but a factor that might prohibit the research? When the practice of research in a particular field directly challenges conventional wisdoms as to vulnerability and/or sensitivity, how should we assess and act upon what might be a threshold between beneficial research and what malfeasance might be caused? Where do the thresholds lie?

When the subject is sex or sexuality, and the research participants are being researched about some feature of their sexual identities, orientations, relationships, behaviours and/or acts, vulnerability and sensitivity are conventionally considered significant and the risks of the research are assumed to be high. Should they be? Both in respect of research practice and the ethical scrutiny of research, sexuality are often seen as areas with enhanced levels of risk, sensitivity and vulnerability. Is that the case, and how should researchers respond to such a proposition?

This discussion will explore these conceptual issues and contradictions that arise from ethical judgements on sexuality research. I will argue that these judgements are peculiarly vulnerable to moral prohibitions and prejudices, that have contingent relevance to an ethical approach to doing research into sexuality. Conventional values and positions on sexuality are reproduced in perception of sexuality research by the characteristics of vulnerability and sensitivity that are ascribed to and often constraining of it. The very values and normativities that give rise to increased perceptions of risk in this area often reflect pathologies and prejudices that are directly and indirectly critically rejected in the research itself. This discussion will explore this problem and make some suggestions for a more satisfying ethical approach to sexuality research.

The confusion of ethics and morals

A central part of the problem with assessing vulnerability and sensitivity in sexuality research and taking an ethical approach that judiciously balances harm and benefit is the general confusion of ethics and morals. This confusion is grounded in the interchangeable and inconsistent nature of the two terms in their historical use. Aristotle and Spinoza write of ethics whilst Kant and Mill write of morals, and substantially they are writing on similar questions. In some languages other than English, the words are more synonymous, or indeed one is used rather than the other in all contexts. The most that can be said for their use is that they often reflect common distinctions used in everyday speech. Ethics has emerged in Europe, North America and Australasia as the dominant discourse within post-war research largely through an assumption that to speak of ethics rather than morals is more 'scientific'. It is commonly used where codes of conduct and guidelines for best practice are formulated in applied fields – the professions, medicine, research, business. Yet these codes fundamentally inform individual, group or institutional moral agency.

There are various distinctions that are sometimes drawn between ethics and morals (figure 1, below) but they are neither constant in the literature nor sustainable in their usage, such is the extent of their lack of clarity between the two concepts. The most common distinction, that morality is an individual matter and ethics refers to community codes and guidelines, falls when it is recognised that moral beliefs are propagated from specific institutions – religious, schools, government – and so cannot be simply regarded as individually held. At the same time, the act of ethical deliberation can be both an individual and a collaborative meditation. So does the distinction matter at all?

There is one sense in which the confusion of ethics and morals (or ethics *or* morals) might be useful in drawing out particular tensions. That is to recognise that ethics often involves an explicit deliberative process, where the invitation is given to think through the balance of benefit and harm, whereas morals are often associated with particular positions or beliefs, that are held and applied as articles of principle. This distinction, however contingent, is useful in reinforcing the material and ideological contexts to the production of morals in society, and emphasising the particular historical and cultural development of institutional pedagogies reinforcing dominant and universalised norms and values within societies.

Ethics	**Morals**
A system of rules and guidance that inculcates normative values in a community	A personal choice and judgement based on values
A science and systematisation of morals	An assessment of character and conduct
External forces and pressures to act morally	Internal perceptions and feelings that influence moral behaviour
Rule following conduct	A commitment to do right or good
From the Greek ‚ethos' meaning character	From the Latin ‚Mos' meaning custom
Derives from a particular culture, conjuncture and context within which the rules are set	Principles held as basic values beyond social contexts and mores
Subject to amendment and change within the community	Resilient to change as personally held beliefs

Figure 1. Common and ordinary working distinctions made between ethics and morals

The most commonly associated institutions for moral propagation are faith-based religious institutions, of which the Christian Church is a dominant historical example in the West and Europe. The church's entire institutional edifice is organised on the basis of moral pedagogy. The production of Christian norms and values evolves from the constitution of canonical texts, from the Bible through the litanies of the Catechism and the Liturgies. These emerged from a process of institutional pedagogy that developed from the production of Roman Catholicism through Constantine's marriage of the Christian church to the ailing Roman Empire. The process of systematising Catholic values and beliefs (ironic in that Constantine had and professed a relative tolerance for individual religious belief in the Edict of Milan in AD 313) began with the First Council of Nicaea, convened by Constantine in AD325, which formulated Canon Law and began to give Christianity one recognisable schema of observance. This process continued with St Athanasius's articulation of the canonical New Testament from existing scriptures AD 367 and St Jerome's composition of the Latin Vulgate Bible. This thinking then receives its most eloquent philosophical defence in St Augustine's *City of God*.

The purpose of this brief excursus is to stress that the emergence of Christianity, and its subsequent divergences, are not constituted as they are propagated, as abstract patterns of universal ethical knowledge and discourse, but historically and culturally instantiated in the particular political contexts of their gestation through successive claims pedagogies that established the core of what is regarded as Catholic orthodoxy today. It draws its legitimacy from those historical articulations, and emerges as a canonical moral system through its pedagogy. Hence morality discursively produces bodies of knowledge and propagates this knowledge on the basis of belief. This is an apposite example precisely because it is the moral prohibitions and prejudices and moral permeation of scientific pathologies that form the basis for 'conventional' views of sexuality as a subject of moral concern. It is also precisely these Christian moral values, prohibitions and prejudices that constitute the general moral terrain of common-sense from which general ethical suppositions are drawn.

Two caveats should be immediately offered in relation to assertions of 'conventional' and 'traditional' views on sexuality. First, there is ample evidence that these overarching ideological constructs did not preclude sub-cultures and practices that departed from convention (Indicatively Fout 1990, Duberman *et al* 1991). Secondly, this conventional position has been at least superficially rendered more diverse and fluid unevenly within different discursive spaces with legal, social, media and cultural change since the 1960's, though the extent to change is open to dispute. This narrative follows the position that there might be more ingrained continuity over superficial change, but the position is contested (for contrasting accounts, Weeks 2007 and Drucker 2015).

The propagation of these moral values constitute a persuasive pedagogy as Foucault (1981, 2002) understands it, necessitating an archaeology of knowledge to excavate the cultural contexts that decode and disrupt orthodox pedagogies that present historically specific and culturally contextualised morality as universal and absolute. For Foucault, this pedagogy, seemingly seamless from parents to moral and social institutions but actually a product of their disparate discursive practices, draws from a reservoir of common norms and values, and recreates and perpetuates them. The consequences of these processes are discursive longevity and adaptability and permeation into social institutions, so as to constitute orthodoxy and accepted wisdom. As Foucault observed, reflecting on the discursive continuities revealed in his studies problematising orthodoxies of madness, crime and sexuality:

> Problematisation doesn't mean the representation of a pre-existent object, nor the creation through discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It's the set of discursive or nondiscursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and false, and constitutes it as an object of thought … (Foucault in Lotringer, 1996: 457)

The normalisation of particular morals and values as pre-discursive and not historically contextualised reproduce them as orthodox and universal moral discourses, underpinning pedagogies that result in the internalisation of prevailing morality (or moralities) as a means of self-regulation. As a result, critical interrogations frequently become more difficult to sustain as they become more acute in their deconstruction because they are increasingly alien to the patina of ingrained values that have constituted dominant discourse. Or put simply for this discussion, the propagation of conventional sexual values and morality as based on universal or commonly held discourses and understandings ingrains them within the institutions of pedagogy and ensure they are internalised within common culture. Even if actual social practices depart from these values and they become more diversified in contemporary culture, it is against a strong residual normalising context of conventional sexual values that moves slowly, gradually and with a socially conservative impetus. The particular articulation of conventional sexual values can be found in traditional medico-moral discourses, compulsory heterosexuality and homonormativity as a feature of the gradual and limited nature of social and cultural change (Mort, 2000: Weeks, 1985; Rich, 1992; Duggan, 2002).

In contrast to the way in which public morals are constituted, ethics is more associated with addressing questions of morality not through historically and culturally constituted bodies of knowledge that claim or produce orthodoxy, but through the use of theoretical approaches and the application of reason that requires a deliberative process in making judgement and decision. To engage in ethical thinking is to use ethical theories and perspectives or a particular judgement of a particular case based on prior learning to think through the moral problem and develop a coherent and persuasive argument that balances maximum benefit against minimum harm.[5] It is this approach that is most commonly prefigured by its applied focus – professional, research, business – and instantiated by codes of conduct, guidance and training. These codes tend to provide a regulatory function, demarking prohibitions and advising on how particular concepts – such consent, confidentiality, respect for dignity – provide means for observing non-malfeasance and encouraging beneficence. These codes have a legal or quasi-legal status, and are at least nominally subject to continual review and refinement to underscore the deliberative processes that are implied as having produced them (if their instantiation can produce rigidity and atrophy in codes as they become *coda* and orthodoxy).

Researchers are expected, as a feature of their training and learning of their skill set, and simultaneously in their induction into a particular occupational craft or profession or achievement of their credentials, to engage with their extant ethical frameworks and codes. Best practice might be to move from simple engagement, which might be little more than observance of constraints set during research design, to active consideration of ethics in every stage of the research process. This is considered a duty or obligation if their research is to be regarded as legitimate (and is now a principal feature of legitimacy in both medical and academic research in respect of funding and publication).

5 Selectively, see Baggini and Fosl (2007), Graham (2002) Graham (2004), Mackie (1977) and Thomson (1999) for different approaches to using theoretical models and structuring the deliberative process

Ethics is recognised in this form as being somewhat different from people's morals or their conscience, and there is recognition that this can produce moral-ethical tensions. A researcher might be an evangelical Christian who cannot condone the sexual practices and orientation of non-heterosexual identities, but is bound by ethical codes to treat all research participants with dignity, and to conduct their research and analyse their data without bias. This only contributes to the confusion of whether ethics and morals can be regarded as distinct and what distinctions are important *in their instantiation.* Conceptual questions put aside, the confusion of ethics and morals is most apparent in the course of either doing research or reading and scrutinising research – when it is instantiated in the research process and its articulation and reception. It is here that some of the core problems of sexuality research are rooted.

Researching sex in a heteronormative context

> Against the certainties of [the naturalistic and scientific, medicalised and psychiatric] tradition, I intend (…) to offer an alternative way of understanding sexuality not as a primordially 'natural' phenomenon but rather a product of social and historical forces. 'Sexuality' (…) is a 'fictional unity' that once did not exist, and at some time in the future may not exist again (…). (Weeks, 2010, p.7)

Sexuality is a discursive field in which particular identities, relations, orientations, behaviours and practices are *named* and characterised, and so held as distinct or different from other forms of personal or social practices. The very act of naming creates distinctions pregnant with meanings, and it is the character of those meanings that have a significant influence over how what is named is perceived.[6] Sexuality has traditionally been seen in a *naturalistic* context, with moral and medical discourses reinforcing sex as determined by biology and thus procreative and heterosexual. These discourses – Mort (2000) frames them as medico-moral discourses deriving from Foucault's deconstruction of sexuality as presented in discourse – frame what forms of sexuality are legitimate and morally appropriate, and what are not.[7] Moral discourse in Europe, North America and Australasia derives directly from the Christian church and broadly conceives sex as primarily procreative under a sanctified relationship – marriage (or more recently its civil equivalent). Outside of that exception, sex and the erotics of the body are prescribed as sinful, distracting from a sacred notion of life as penitence for original sin and for spiritual devotion. Agape – the unconditional love of God – is put in opposition to Eros and sensual love. Medicine, rather than being constituted in the enlightenment rupture with religious orthodoxy and shift towards secularism underpinned by emergent science, absorbs Christian moral values and assumes a natural sexual order from norms to deviance, where normal sex is based again on procreative, heterosexual relations. Whilst it is science

6 For an extended conceptual discussion of naming, see Derrida J (1995) On the Name Bloomington: Stanford University Press

7 This analysis discounts, for the purpose of brevity in argument, the moral conceptions propagated by other religions and concentrates on the religious impetus behind the development of concepts of sexuality in Europe, North America and Australasia

and medicine that begins to widen understandings of sexuality, particularly with the emergence of sexology in the latter half of the 19th century and the emergence of sexuality as a distinct social discourse, the scientific language or normal and abnormal and natural and unnatural overlays the moral language of good and bad (Mort, 2000; Weeks, 1985, 1991). Hence the production of sexual knowledge and the development of social values around sexuality which are informed by this knowledge are impregnated with these medico-moral pathologies and prejudices.

This construction of sexuality evolves from a straightforward historical demarcation of prohibition and silence (as permission) to a hierarchy of normalcy and abnormality in which legitimacy migrates over time, based on new scientific studies that query pathological prescriptions, and political dissent and opposition to the legal and cultural prejudices discrimination and legal prohibitions that arise from medico-moral discourse. So, for example, the history of the latter half of the 20th Century was a history of the shifting from homosexuality as crime and deviance to homosexuality as a legitimated identity (if still subject to prejudice and discrimination) (Dunphy, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Richardson and Munro, 2012; Stychin, 2003). The underlying structure of these discursive understandings, however – that different sexualities are understood in relation to normal and natural standards from which there are legitimate and illegitimate forms of difference/deviance – is sustained.

Sexual normality is encapsulated in the idea of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity emerged as a concept that described dominant orthodoxies that privileged a notion of sexuality derived from medico-moral discourses, understood principally through: bio-medical paradigms of the body and sexual composition; naturalised practices to elide normal sexual pleasure with procreative sex by genital-centricity; dichotomous sex roles of male and female and their normal instantiation culturally in masculinity and femininity; and morally instantiated suffused with Christian values, socially manifest as monogamous, conjoined with love and commitment, private and intimate in character and so shrouded in moral public discourse.

Heteronormativity has its recognitions in the hegemonic structure of concepts of sexuality as they evolved discursively, creating and being created by hegemonic masculinities, patriarchal notions of femininity as subordinated and secondary to masculinity and a sex/gender system which Rubin described as "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied." (Rubin, 2011: 34 – see also Connell, 1987 and Tong, 1992). Adrienne Rich's (1993) 'compulsory heterosexuality' is antecedent to the concept of heteronormativity, emphasising that this discursive construction of sexuality is not passive, but is actively transmitted by social and cultural institutions in a way that encourages conformity and the legitimacy of social recognitions – whether by those who are different or the mainstream – that difference does not correspond to the 'norm'. Heterosexuality is not simply a conceptualisation of a particular sexual identity, but a hegemonic construct that necessitates by its presence the oppression, subordination and marginalisation of difference. Hence Michael Warner's (1991:08) entreaty that "Even when coupled with a toleration of minority sexualities, heteronormativity has a totalizing tendency.." and his resolve that queer politics should be "..no longer content to carve out a buffer zone for a minoritized and protected subculture, [but] to challenge the pervasive and often invisible heteronormativity of modern societies" (1991: 03).

This last is important, since heteronormativity manifests as a discreet hegemonic project, propogating a set of moral and social norms and values that are constituted by distinctions around what is 'natural' and 'normal'. These discourses can appear to be flexible and changeable, but that obscures their entrenched hierarchical presence, power and inequality in moral and social discourse (with the caveat that such an analysis might undervalue points of change). The legitimacy of homosexuality in the late 20th and early 21st century has led to a conceptualisation of homonormativity to describe that features of that identity. Homonormativity establishes a legitimate space for same sex sexuality that does not constitute a challenge to the persuasiveness or persistence of heteronormativity. As Duggan (2002:179) observes, in equating homonormativity with neo-liberal politics:

> ..it is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them whilst promising the possibility of a demobilizied gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.

Hence heteronormativity and the constitution of sexuality in hetero-patriarchal society – even where there has been some accommodation of non-heteronormative values – provides the moral context for research. Moral judgements about the efficacy and moral character of research are shaped by these contextual features – regardless of their criticism within a now significant literature on sex in society. What is considered beneficent and what might produce malfeasance, what offends human dignity or can be characterised as vulnerable in research participants, what corresponds to good moral practice in research and what does not is influenced not only by the development of research ethics as a particular field of study, but also by the moral and cultural context within which research is done.

This state of affairs extends to a variety of avenues of research, such as: sexual commerce; prostitution; pornography; sexual abuse; rape and violence, particularly survivor research; sexually dissident communities; and people engaged in sexually pathologised practices. The extent to which sexual research is constrained or limited is contextual and conjunctural. For example, in the UK research into lesbian and gay community issues, particularly sexual behaviour in the contexts of sexual health, is far easier to undertake than it was 40 years ago. Likewise research around the sexual behaviour of particular groups of teenagers and young people would be far easier to undertake in European states than some other parts of the world.

The ethical deliberative process by which ethical research is produced is contextualised through, or supplanted by, common moral values. This leads to dissonances between ethical deliberation and judgement and moral norms and values, and the confusion of ethics and morals is manifest in how sexuality research is approached as a particular field of study and how it is seen in the wider community.

The implications and consequences of the juxtaposition of ethics and morals

This tension and contradiction between ethics and morals has a number of implications and consequences that make researching sexuality far more difficult than many other fields. First and foremost, it creates a 'double-bind' for sexuality research. Sexuality is always a field of sensitive' subjects. Participants will always be 'vulnerable' when they are participants in sex or sexuality research. As the focus of research focuses on participants sexual desires and pleasures that are 'private' or behaviour or practices that depart from orthodox notions of decent and appropriate behaviour, so the research becomes more 'delicate'. With the exception of research that seeks to respond to pressing social problems – teenage pregnancy, the proliferation of STD's, abusive sex/sexual abuse – the vulnerability of participants and sensitivity of the subject matter mediates towards questions about whether the research should take place at all, or how much it requires stronger regulation. Even research that is often legitimate principally in its bio-medical rather than critical social forms. Sexuality research will always been seen as somewhat more 'risky'.

Yet the very morals that these presumptions are based upon are subject to cogent criticism that they constitute discourses that limit, shroud and pathologise sexual knowledge. In doing so, they represent serious impediments for greater sexual openness and wellbeing. Whilst other forms of sexual representation – pornography, advertisement and media – proliferate and are barely influenced in their penetration of social space by voices that point out their fetishised and possibly offensive content, sexuality research is often the subject of questioning well beyond that of other fields of research.

The 'double bind' is that these pathologies and prejudices are culturally constructed in within mainstream sexual culture. Considerations of research ethics, and of research ethics scrutiny, involves a judicious engagement with reasoning about the beneficence or malfeasance of the research. Yet because that judgement is made against a cultural construction that has a bias towards social conservatism, the threshold of beneficence or malfeasance is moved towards a greater degree of risk aversion than most other forms of research. The subject matter of the research conditions the decisions about the ethics of the research. So research that might enlighten and empower within the context of subordinated and prejudiced minorities, for example, is itself limited by the very cultural milieu it is proposed within. The rationale for this is that is it more risky precisely because sexual culture is sufficiently impoverished for it not to be. So research is constrained by the very subject matter that research might contribute to improvement.

This is evident in a number of concerns that are raised by sexual research, all of which map moral concerns onto research practice:

1. Will it cause the participant to become distressed, embarrassed or discomforted?

   Participants 'sensitivity' is weighted far more prominently in sexuality research. The assumption is that since sex is a sensitive subject there is a greater degree of chance that participants may become distressed, embarrassed or discomforted.

This belies the fact that much of this sort of research involves self selecting participants who choose to participate, that there is a greater openness to discussing sexual issues in contemporary societies and that not all sexuality research will necessarily produce more significant opportunities for harm. Undoubtedly research that looks into sexual violence or abuse is likely to take a participant into difficult territory, but sexuality research are in a small minority of fields where the subject matter *itself* is presumed to be sensitive.

Research that asks participants about their choices, their practices, their understandings and their experiences, however, may not be as difficult. Indeed, it may be that any research on intimate or personal relations, experiences of work and domesticity, participations in sub-cultures or groups, or experience of political or recreational activities might produce similar impacts (some of which may touch on sexual abuse).

Rightly, research into sexual violence, abuse and harm is often undertaken with strict recommendations and limitations. These might prescribe senior and experienced researcher participation and close supervision of junior researchers, care in the construction of the research process and the support and referral processes and sensitivity in research design and the deployment of research tools (interview scheduling) for those who experience distress through, for example, reliving their bad experiences in abuse survivor research. It might also involve research ethics committees rightly requiring projects to report on their progress at a mid-point in the research. The problem lies with the degree to which these sort of measures are assumed – in both the application and their extent – in sexuality research. It is assumed from the beginning and the most rigorous measures should be taken, because it is about sex rather than about the nature and focus of the research. Commensurate to other forms of research, the assumption of distress or discomfort is considered to be acute. This assumption conforms to a general sense that sexuality can be a distressing subject, and so carries with it cultural prejudices, and therefore might appear to validate the notion that sexuality research has the capacity to distress or to offend. This produces a vicious circle, where the cultural contexts that sex research might unpack if it is able to penetrate, challenge and uncover sexual subjects are the basis for prohibitions, restrictions or constraints to sex research.

2. Is the balance of beneficence and non-malfeasance appropriate to undertaking the research?

Particularly given the relatively limited and fetishised sense in which sex enters into public discourse, research is also likely to be productive if it contributes to understanding the problems of the prevalence and incidence, and perspective and impact of sexual phenomena, It is important for exploring contributory factors to more sensitive subjects of violence and abuse. There is certainly scant reason beyond the normative ascription of sexuality within medico-moral discourse to believe other enquiries about sexuality might be any more sensitive than any other subject. If this normative ascription of sensitivity is allowed to make sex research more difficult, it follows that it reinforces the very values and assumptions that it might usefully deconstruct, sexuality research is inherently political. Negotiating sex research and making the judgement between conventional concerns about the research itself and the way in which research contributes to greater degrees of sexual knowledge in the public domain is inherently taking a position on the efficacy of wider and dominant social values and attitudes.

In judging the balance between beneficence and non-malfeasance, the minimisation of harm becomes a distinct problem if research into sex is seen as more inherently harmful than other forms of research. Where research ethics committees, who are engaged with political issues of the reputation and liability of the institutions of which they are part of research governance as well as ethical issues, consider risk, they tend towards a conservative approach. The possibility of negative media exposure or public offence or claims of harm will lead to a greater calculation of risk for sex research than other forms of research, not on the basis of evidence but of expectation and public values. In this sense, the priority of non-malfeasance becomes value loaded and the judgement of balance precipitated in one direction – towards more limitations and constraints to sex research. The underlying source of actual or perceived malfeasance is the very heteronormative constructions that produce deleterious effects. Researching sex is problematic because sex is problematic, and shying away from engaging in research into sex simply perpetuates the notion that it is problematic. Sex is sensitive, so it is treated as more hazardous, and so maintains the very characteristic of hazard that is partly produced by the heteronormative construction of sex, producing the 'double bind'

For research that will add to understandings of sexual diversity and difference and previously shrouded sexual experience and phenomena, It is important to maintain open spaces for research. Processes or judgements that restrict, restrain or limit research, that close intelligent and non-fetishised discourse invariably close that space.

3. Will the researcher be safe or become distressed, embarrassed or discomforted?

   Again, the researcher is deemed to be more vulnerable and more prone to be distressed by their work than other researchers in different fields. This belies their experience, their choice to work in this area (in most cases), and their knowledge of a field that explains the social construction of sexual prejudices and pathologies all preclude or prepare them for the possibility of personal distress caused from producing sexual data.

4. Does sex research require special conditions in respect of consent, confidentiality, anonymity or other ethical criteria?

   Undoubtedly, like all areas of research, sex research has particular demands. If it is accepted that contemporary sexual cultures are still impoverished, it might be expected that a little extra care might be shown in the process of collecting data, valid consent assured and privacy in the undertaking of data collection (such as interview) preserved. There will always be levels of sensitivity in any research that should be judged on the individual composition and demands of that research. Yet again, research into sex does not of necessity require an increased sensitivity compared to other research. Or, if there is a sense that increased sensitivity is necessary to conform to the values that members of the public might have, it should be recognised within the research community that such a sensitivity should be weighed against the clear advantage of how sexual knowledge might improve an impoverished sexual culture, which once again raises the issue of judgements or beneficence and non-malfeasance.

Reflections

It would be exaggerated to say sexuality research was being prevented or impeded by the double-bind produced by an impoverished sexual culture bleeding into ethical considerations of sexual research. Undoubtedly, however, some research into what are considered more 'extreme' sexual subcultures is either not approved by ethics committees or subject to such cautionary conditions as to make it difficult or impossible for research to be undertaken. More, such a different research focus often deters researchers who are concerned by the perceived resistance to approval, the amount of work it might take or simply the stigma attached. As a problem of discursive mediation, it is not surprising that research into Gay men and Lesbian's might be normalised and not subject to such a double bind, but the line will be drawn on less normalised sexualities. Again, this is not necessarily the same at every institution, (and it will vary if the institution has research expertise in sexuality) and it will not apply even across all forms of sexuality research. That said, where liability and reputation drive 'ethical' scrutiny, the risks associated with sex research are likely to require additional attention from researchers just because it is sex research as opposed to most other research. Sex research is not the only form of research that is seen as additionally risky – research into terrorism and research into conflict zones are other examples.

That said, sex research is often talking to people about their experiences, lives and desires, with participants who usually wish to discuss these things and wish to engage in bettering sexual knowledge. The perception, for researchers and research participants, of such research as risky, dangerous, offensive and harmful is often greater than systematic ethical thinking suggests. At the same time, precisely because of the sexual cultures within which the research is done, it cannot avoid working within this more risk averse and sensitive context. That may ease, and be easing, as sexuality research expands and as sexual cultures become more progressive (if they come progressive and if that progression is not superficial). The present double bind that makes sexuality research often more difficult than it should be impedes possible progress, robs research participants of contributing to sexual knowledge and makes researchers of sexuality subject to at best additional scrutiny, at worst prohibitions or constraints ranging from the bothersome to the severe. This is certainly a subject for further and more empirical research.

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