

inclusive lesbian, gay, and bisexual psychology: A look to the future. In D. Greene and G. L. Croom (eds.), *Education, research and practice in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered psychology: a resource manual* (pp. 1–45). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

In this chapter US psychologist Beverly Greene develops arguments around inclusivity and diversity and the need to explore the 'different lenses and realities' of LGBTQ people.

Meyerowitz, J. (2002) *How sex changed: a history of transsexuality in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chapter 1 of Joanna Meyerowitz's comprehensive history of transsexuality provides an engaging insight into the work of early sexologists and the development of the concept of 'sex change' and of sex change surgery.

Sullivan, N. (2003) *A critical introduction to queer theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Chapter 1 of Nikki Sullivan's accessible introduction to queer theory provides an overview of the work of early sexologists and explores how their work contributed to the contemporary organisation of sexuality into sexual identity categories such as 'gay' and 'lesbian'.

Overview

- Social constructionism versus essentialism
- Liberalism versus radicalism
- The relationship between LGBTQ psychology and feminism
- The relationship between LGBTQ psychology and queer theory
- The relationship between LGBTQ psychology and critical psychology
- The relationship between LGBTQ psychology and positive social c

In Chapter 1, we introduced you to the history and contemporary development of LGBTQ psychology as a recognised sub-field of psychology. In this chapter we further equip you to be an LGBTQ psychologist by exploring some theoretical and political issues that inform the field. We start by exploring key debates underpinning much work within LGBTQ psychology: confront between essentialist and constructionist theories and between liberal and ideologies. Don't panic about our mention of theory, **ideology** and politics that make a lot of psychologists panic! – these concepts can all be defined as an organised collection of ideas, a way of looking at things, a way of expressing things. At the same time, we acknowledge that these debates are rather complex and we encourage you to return to them once you have read some of the based chapters and you have an understanding of the empirical research on these debates are brought to bear.

In discussing the essentialism versus social constructionism debate we to a controversial issue – the aetiology or origins of homosexuality. Our view research on the aetiology of homosexuality is deeply problematic, as we see below. However, understanding how individuals and groups of people co-identify with particular labels and conceptions of sexuality and gender, and particular understandings of sexuality and gender come into being in particular moments in history, is interesting and very different from the search for a 'gay gene'. Our discussion of the essentialism versus social constructionist debate is designed to provide you with tools to engage critically with the research.

Our exploration of key debates is followed by a discussion of some of the theoretical and political movements both within and outside of psychology

have influenced the work of LGBTQ psychologists. We focus on three broad traditions: feminism, queer theory and critical psychology. These are not the only traditions to shape the work of LGBTQ psychologists, but they are the ones that are least likely to be familiar to readers. We end the chapter by exploring the relationship between LGBTQ psychology and positive social change for LGBTQ communities.

Social constructionism versus essentialism

Essentialist theories

As Kitzinger *et al.* (1998) noted, until the mid-1980s gay affirmative psychology (as it was known then) was for the most part rooted in essentialist theories. Sexuality was ‘assumed to be an inner state or “essence”, which the individual “represses” or “discovers”, “denies” or “acknowledges”’ (p. 531). Essentialist theories often conceptualise sexuality in terms of ‘sexual orientation’, which implies the existence of an inner psychological or biological structure that organises people’s sexual feelings and desires and directs their sexual behaviours and practices (as typically either homosexual or heterosexual). Although it is acknowledged that people sometimes behave in ways that conflict with their essential sexual orientation (in homophobic social climates people may ‘repress’ their true desires and act in accordance with social convention), the ‘truth’ of their sexuality is thought to reside in their sexual orientation. Essentialist theories of sexuality assume that sexual orientations are either biologically determined (in some way) or acquired very early in life (as a result of early childhood socialisation or an interaction of nature and nurture), and are fixed and unchanging. Similar theories have been proposed for the origins of trans (see Box 2.1) and gender identity.

Many non-heterosexuals feel that their sexuality has a biological basis (Gottschalk, 2003), and many lesbian and gay political movements and campaigns have used essentialism to argue that homosexuality is not chosen and should not therefore be a basis for discrimination. The first people to harness essentialist arguments were early sexologists and reformers such as Magnus Hirschfeld and Havelock Ellis, who challenged the prevailing view of homosexuality as wilful and immoral (and therefore criminal) behaviour by instead presenting homosexuality as **congenital inversion** (see Chapter 1).

There have been numerous attempts to discover the ‘cause’ of homosexuality and numerous different theories have been proposed for the origins of homosexuality. Our brains (LeVay, 1991), our genes (Hamer *et al.*, 1993), the lengths of our fingers (Martin *et al.*, 2008), our map reading abilities (Rahman *et al.*, 2005)

Box 2.1 Highlights: essentialist theories of the aetiology of homosexuality, bisexuality and trans

The ‘gay gene’ theory. Some researchers have argued that there is a genetic basis to homosexuality and point to evidence from family, twin and genetic studies (Bailey, 1995). Some family studies of homosexuality have found that gay men have more gay brothers than straight men (Pillard and Weinrich, 1986). An early twin study found a 100 per cent concordance rate for thirty-seven male monozygotic twin pairs, compared to 15 per cent for twenty-six dizygotic pairs (Kallman, 1952). However, the methodology of this study has been severely criticised. Although subsequent twin studies have produced varied and inconsistent results, Bailey (1995) concluded that the evidence from twin studies suggests that both male and female homosexuality are moderately heritable. In 1993, the geneticist Dean Hamer and colleagues reported evidence of a ‘gay gene’ associated with the Xq28 marker of the X chromosome.

The ‘gay brain’ (or neuroendocrine) theory. This theory posits that the brains of gay men have something in common with those of heterosexual women and that the same is true of the brains of lesbians and heterosexual men. The brain differences between men-preferring and women-preferring individuals are thought to be largely innate and result from pre-natal hormone exposure, although parental socialisation may also play a role (Bailey, 1995). Evidence for this theory includes an association between sexual orientation and (recalled) childhood gender nonconformity (Green, 1987). The UK-based psychobiologist Qazi Rahman and colleagues have conducted a number of studies testing the neuroendocrine theory. They have found that, for example, gay men use a blend of male and female map-reading strategies (Rahman *et al.*, 2005).

Nurture during the ‘developmentally critical’ early years. The psychoanalyst Irving Bieber (1965) notoriously proposed that male homosexuality was the product of a ‘close-binding-intimate’ mother and a ‘detached and hostile’ father. In Bieber’s theory, homosexuality was viewed as a pathological reaction to poor parenting.

Bisexuality. Most biological studies exclude bisexuals or classify them as homosexuals (e.g., LeVay, 1991). There is very little evidence supporting the proposition that bisexuality has a biological basis; however, some researchers have attempted to discover whether bisexuals are more like homosexuals or heterosexuals in relation to variables such as childhood gender nonconformity. A common finding is that bisexuals occupy an intermediate position between homosexuals and heterosexuals (Bell *et al.*, 1981).

Trans. Various essentialist theories have been proposed to explain transsexualism: some theorists suggest early nurture is key (Stoller, 1968), whereas others argue that transsexualism is determined by biological factors (Zhou *et al.*, 1995); indeed, some researchers have recently claimed that transsexualism should be understood as a form of neurological injury (see Jeffries, 2008).

he media and instigate debates about whether homosexuals are 'born that way' or made that way'.

Let's consider a classic example of one of these types of studies: Simon LeVay's (1991) 'A difference in hypothalamic structure between heterosexual and homosexual men'. LeVay dissected and compared the INAH nuclei in the hypothalamus of forty-one subjects: nineteen homosexual men (including one bisexual man), sixteen presumed heterosexual men, and six presumed heterosexual women. All of the homosexual men, six of the heterosexual men and one of the women had died from AIDS-related causes. LeVay categorised some of the men as homosexual on the basis of their disclosures to their doctors and he assumed the other men to be heterosexual on the basis of 'the numerical preponderance of heterosexual men in the population' (p. 1036).

There are four INAH nuclei in the anterior hypothalamus – INAH 1, 2, 3 and 4. LeVay replicated the previous finding that INAH 2 and 3 are sexually dimorphic (that is, systemically different in form between men and women), but failed to replicate the previous finding that INAH 1 was sexually dimorphic. LeVay's key finding was that the INAH 3 of the homosexual men were smaller than those of the heterosexual men and similar in size to those of the heterosexual women.

Numerous critiques have been made of this and other essentialist studies:

- *Some critics have asked why the origins of homosexuality matter.* They highlight the dearth of research on the origins of heterosexuality, which indicates that heterosexuality is widely regarded as normal and natural, and not in need of explanation, whereas homosexuality is seen as a developmental anomaly that demands explanation.
- *Some critics have argued that essentialist research relies on social formations of sexuality.* In a queer reading of LeVay's study, British-based LGBTQ psychologist and key researcher (see Box 2.2) Peter Hegarty (1997) argued that LeVay's claim to discovery relied on the social construction of sexuality as 'sexual orientation'. In other words, LeVay and other essentialist researchers present as fact (as universal, ahistorical and acultural) a model of sexuality that is one among many possible models of sexuality, and that is particular to contemporary western culture (Hegarty, 2003a).
- *Bisexuality is ignored or is treated as a variant of homosexuality.* LeVay classified his participants as either homosexual or heterosexual (something that is common in other studies), and included a bisexual-identified man in the homosexual group. In doing so, LeVay 'assumes and reinforces the norm that there are two types of person, homosexuals and heterosexuals, and that they can be considered biologically distinct' (Hegarty, 1997: 361). By including a bisexual man in the homosexual group, LeVay recycles the belief that 'one

Box 2.2 Key researcher: Peter Hegarty on why I study the sexual politics of science

About fifteen years ago, I moved from Ireland to California, began my PhD research at Stanford University, and came out. At the time, the US media were enamoured of recent claims about the discovery of a gene that could predict who will come out, and my sense that such knowledge would have made the coming out process harder, not easier, for me got me thinking about what kinds of science lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people do, and do not, need, want, and deserve. Since then my research has taken me down three interlocking paths. First, I became sceptical of the hypothesis that biological research brings about improvements in heterosexual people's attitudes to LGB people. The survey evidence supporting this claim was a robust correlation between tolerant attitudes and biological determinist beliefs among heterosexual people. I observed that the correlation between tolerance and biological beliefs was found only among students who also thought that biological determinist attitudes expressed tolerant views toward lesbian and gay people (Hegarty, 2002). More recently, I've found that essentialist views predict prejudice against trans people (Tee and Hegarty, 2006), and that teaching people biological beliefs doesn't affect their attitudes toward stigmatised groups (Hegarty and Golden, 2008).

In the last paragraph, I wrote 'students' where 'straight students' might have been more precise. Did you notice? My second line of research examines how privileged identities are taken as the norm. (Try and make 'LGB students' the norm for 'students'. It feels different, right?) In social science thinking these slips lead published psychologists' and psychology students' explanations of group differences to focus on lower-status groups such as lesbians and gay men (Hegarty and Pratto, 2001, 2004), and women (Hegarty and Buechel, 2006). As a result, these groups are more likely to be stereotyped in 'expert interpretations' of data.

My third way of working is historical. Some of my attempts to inform psychological science with LGBTQ studies have led me to research how psychological technologies like the Rorschach test (Hegarty, 2003b) and the IQ test (Hegarty, 2007a) intersect with LGBT history in the USA. Throughout, I've been inspired most by critical thinking in fields like queer theory, feminist studies and science and technology studies. But I also find psychological science to be too important, and too much fun, either to allow it to escape criticism, or to engage with it only by critique. This positions me betwixt-and-between opposing sides in debates about quantitative and qualitative methods and **realism** and social construction. Is my work 'mainstreaming' critical LGBT ideas or reclaiming the psychology lab as queer space? I want you to be the judge.

model of sexuality (Hegarty, 1997). As Hegarty outlines, the only alternative to including bisexuals in the homosexual group is to abandon a dichotomous model of homosexuality and (possibly) the concept of 'sexual orientation', and to acknowledge that sexuality is more fluid and messy than the dichotomous model suggests.

- *Homosexuals are assumed to be 'gender inverts' or to have an excess of gender.* Many biological theories draw on and reinforce the notion that gay men and lesbians are 'gender inverts', that gay men have an excess of femininity (they have feminised brains or bodies) and lesbians have an excess of masculinity (they have masculinised brains or bodies). In western thought, desire for a man is often understood as a feminine desire and desire for a woman as a masculine desire. In the words of the feminist philosopher Judith Butler (1990), sexual desire (even same-sex sexual desire) is conceived of within a 'heterosexual matrix'. Interestingly, some findings suggest that gay men are more masculine than heterosexual men; however, this is also presented as an excess, a developmental anomaly, and the bodies of heterosexuals are assumed to be 'normal' – appropriately masculine or appropriately feminine (Hegarty, 2003a).
- *Some critics have asked what manifestation of sexuality biological studies are seeking to explain.* Some men identify firmly as heterosexual but have regular sex with other men (e.g., men in prison or in the armed forces and other men who might be labelled 'situational homosexuals' or men who have sex with men (MSM)). Some people identify with a particular sexual identity because of political or ideological reasons (e.g., **political lesbians**). Some people identify as bisexual but are in a long-term monogamous relationship with someone of a different sex. Some people feel that their engagement in particular sexual communities or practices is a more important indicator of their sexuality than the sex/gender of the people they have sex with (e.g., some people who engage in **BDSM**). These are just a few examples of the complexities in how people identify their sexuality and experience and express their sexual desires. If these people were invited to participate in a biological study, how would they be classified? Which aspect of sexuality – how we label and identify our sexuality (now or in the past), how we behave (now or in the past), what we desire (now or in the past) – counts as 'the truth' of our sexuality? Typically, essentialist researchers ignore the meanings people give to their sexualities and attempt to classify them in terms of the dichotomous heterosexual/homosexual model (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of defining populations in LGBTQ research).

Social constructionist theories

In the mid-1980s, social constructionists began to challenge essentialist concep-

contexts (e.g., Kitzinger, 1987). Social constructionist research on sexuality and gender identity has explored how people actively construct their identities (e.g., Flowers and Buston, 2001; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1995; Mason-Schrock, 1996), how sexual and gender identity categories are made 'real' through social processes and interactions, and the variations in the conceptualisation of sexuality and gender identity across time, place and culture (see Box 2.3). Social constructionists have also sought to unravel the taken-for-granted status of 'heterosexuality' and the ways in which individual heterosexuals construct their identities (e.g., Demasi, 2003; Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1993).

Box 2.3 Key study: Peter Jackson (2000) on the categorisation of sexual and gender diversity in Thai culture

The experience of sexuality and gender in non-western cultures is often very different from how they are experienced in western cultures. Australian-based Asian studies scholar Peter Jackson points to the limitations of western theories of sexuality for understanding same-sex cultures within Thailand. Thai culture categorises sexuality in terms of different forms of 'phet', eroticised genders, rather than in terms of sexual identities. A person's location on the gender scale of phet (from 100 per cent masculine to 100 per cent feminine) determines their erotic preference. It is more important to know how masculine or feminine someone is, than to know the types of sexual bodies and gender performances they find erotically appealing.

Jackson has identified at least seven contemporary forms of phet: (1) man (in western terms, 100 per cent butch masculine and heterosexual), (2) gay king and (3) gay queen (both categories for what western cultures would call gay men, kings taking a sexually insertive role and queens a receptive role), (4) kathoey (previously considered an intermediate or third sex/gender incorporating the western categories of homosexuality and transsexuality, now referring more specifically to trans and intersex people), (5) tom and (6) dee (both categories for what western cultures would call lesbian women, toms being masculine and dees feminine), and (7) woman (100 per cent feminine and heterosexual). There are four distinctive sexual communities in Thailand based on identification with one of four erotically paired categories: (1) man and woman, (2) gay king and gay queen, (3) kathoey and man, and (4) tom and dee.

It is important to note that gay and kathoey are not distinguished as a type of sexuality and type of gender respectively, they are both forms of phet. Many 'gay men' describe themselves as 60/40, 70/30 and so on – these refer to imagined percentage blendings of king (sexually insertive) and queen (sexually receptive), and reflect an increasing recognition that homosexually active men engage in a wide variety of sexual behaviours. But this versatility is understood as emerging from a masculine/feminine blending.

or as a gay king is simultaneously erotic and gendered. Whereas western cultures tend to privilege sexuality over gender, many non-western cultures privilege gender over sexuality. Jackson argues that it is important not to see the western history of sexuality as true and Thai culture as underdeveloped.

It is important not to confuse social constructionism with socialisation theory. Socialisation theory presents sexuality and gender as a product of early childhood experiences and conditioning by the media and other social institutions (and sex as the product of biology). The idea that social norms or 'gender stereotypes' determine the boundaries of acceptable gender role behaviour for women and men, and that these norms are historically and culturally specific, is relatively non-controversial (Kitzinger, 1995). Social constructionism goes much further than socialisation theory and explores the ways in which the most basic categories for organising our experience of ourselves and of the world in which we live (woman, man, homosexual, heterosexual) are themselves social constructions, products of social processes and interactions.

Social constructionists reject the 'sex = biology, gender = culture' formula, and argue that both sex and gender are socially derived. The 'natural fact' (Garfinkel, 1967) of two, and only two, sexes is thought to be an ideological (rather than a 'natural') system, a lens through which we view and interpret the world. The US historian Thomas Lacquer (1990) maintained that the **two-sex model** is a relatively new way of understanding sex, which was invented during the eighteenth century alongside the development of modern science. Prior to the emergence of the two-sex model, a one-sex model was dominant, in which women's bodies were understood as different (and inferior) versions of men's bodies. As the Norwegian sociologist Tor Folgerø (2008: 137) outlines: 'the new scientific disciplines prepared the way for an understanding of the sexes as essentially different, and the differences were manifested in everything from the reproductive cells to a person's character and personality'.

Some theorists have suggested that the existence of intersex people (people who are born with 'sex' chromosomes, external genitalia and/or an internal reproductive system that are not considered 'standard' for either male or female) and trans people troubles the two-sex model and the homosexual/heterosexual model of sexuality. For example, US social psychologist Suzanne Kessler (1998) argued that rather than treating the existence of intersex people as a sign that there are not two natural sexes, the bodies of intersex infants are altered in line with the two-sex model, in order to maintain that model as a natural fact (e.g., some infants born with ambiguous genitalia have had their phallus reduced in size, so that it looks like a 'normal' clitoris, and have had a 'vagina' constructed). The existence of the categories homosexual and heterosexual relies on the two-sex model: heterosex-

'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' are also the products of an ideological system rather than 'natural' expressions of sexuality.

Social constructionists maintain that in essentialist theories sexuality and gender are reified: for social constructionists, sexuality and gender are abstract concepts but essentialists treat them as real things. One question we are often asked about social constructionism is 'if something is socially constructed does that mean it is not real?' Social constructionists argue that our socially constructed realities are intensely powerful; as Victoria and her colleague New Zealand feminist psychologist Virginia Braun put it, the effects of language and **discourse** 'can feel as real as the sun on our skin or the wind in our hair' (Clarke and Braun, 2009: 241). We find the following quotation about AIDS from US professor of art history and AIDS activist Douglas Crimp a really useful way of explaining the relationship of social constructionism to things like 'reality', 'biology' and the 'material world'. Crimp (1988: 3) wrote that:

AIDS does not exist apart from the practices that conceptualise it, represent it, and respond to it. We know AIDS only in and through these practices. This assertion does not contest the existence of viruses, antibodies, infections, or transmission routes. Least of all does it contest the reality of illness, suffering, and death. What it does contest is the notion that there is an underlying reality of AIDS, upon which are constructed the representations, or the culture, or the politics of AIDS. If we recognise that AIDS exists only in and through these constructions, then hopefully we can also recognise the imperative to know them, analyse them, and wrest control of them.

Crimp's argument is that social constructionism does not deny the existence of a material reality; we clearly have bodies and 'minds' that do and feel things, that, for example, experience sexual desire and pleasure and arouse desire and pleasure in others. At the risk of sounding like a cheesy romance novel (!), when we experience such feelings, we may also experience our pulses quicken, our hearts race – even though our experience of sexuality is mediated through socially constructed categories, it nonetheless has a material 'reality'. It is important, however, to distinguish between materiality and biological determinism. To say that sexuality has a material reality is very different from claiming that our genes or our brains determine (at least in part) our experience of sexuality.

Just as many people feel that their sexuality has a biological basis, some people feel that their sexuality is chosen or a product of social processes (Gottschalk, 2003). Some gay and (especially) lesbian movements have used choice or social constructionist theories as a basis for political action. In the 1970s, feminist challenges to essentialist theories of sexuality empowered women to feel that they could reject heterosexual relationships and choose lesbian relationships (Gottschalk, 2003). This is not to say that social constructionist theories of sexuality are commensurate with the notion that we can *choose* our sexual identities. Rather, social constructionism creates the possibility of choice and

Weighing up essentialism and social constructionism

Although social constructionism is an important strand of contemporary LGBTQ psychology, essentialism continues to dominate the field. Debates about the aetiology of homosexuality reached their peak in the early 1990s. As Kitzing *et al.* (1998: 531) noted, 'debates between social constructionists and essentialists ... left neither side convinced, and research now proceeds in parallel within each framework'. This is partly because of the impossibility of resolving the essentialist/social constructionist debate (Kitzing, 1995). It is possible to claim that sexuality has a basis in biology and that the expression of sexuality is influenced by cultural and social mores (indeed, some researchers argue for 'integrationist' understandings of sexuality that take account of biological, psychological and social influences). It is also possible to argue that sexuality is socially constructed and sexuality has a material 'reality'. However, essentialist and social constructionist explanations of sexuality are fundamentally incompatible: homosexuality cannot be both a social category and a genetically determined trait. Kitzing (1995) argued that social constructionism does not provide alternative answers to questions posed by essentialists; rather it raises a whole different set of questions about the social and historical processes through which particular categorisation systems are produced, and the ways in which people live out particular categories (e.g., how the **heterosexual/homosexual binary** came into being, and how and why individual people come to identify with particular sexual categories).

Both the essentialist commitment to science and the essentialist construct of 'the homosexual' have been useful to campaigns for LGBTQ rights. Essentialist arguments have also been used to undermine LGBTQ rights (some people have welcomed the 'gay gene' theory because it allows for the possibility of aborting gay foetuses). Some LGBTQ activists have been critical of the use of essentialist arguments because they are defensive and apologetic. As Kitzing (1995) pointed out, essentialist theories call for tolerance and acceptance on the grounds that LGBT people 'cannot help it' and being LGBT 'is not contagious'. Essentialist arguments present non-heterosexuals as a minority, a group that has always existed and always will exist as a variation from the heterosexual majority. As such, essentialism supports the notion that heterosexuality is normal and natural, rather than a socially constructed social institution.

Just as essentialist conceptions of sexuality have been used in political campaigns, so have social constructionist arguments. For example, as noted above, **lesbian feminists** have maintained that if sexuality is socially constructed, it can be changed, and women can choose to be lesbians in opposition to **patriarchal oppression** (e.g., Rich, 1980). As we noted in Chapter 1, some therapists and some religious groups have argued that homosexuality is chosen behaviour that can be changed through therapy or religious practice. Like essentialism, social

'intellectually weak' (p. 8). The emphasis on fluidity and narrative in constructionist work draws attention away from the regularities of sexuality, and constructionist research fails to provide empirically robust accounts that allow us to differentiate between and evaluate competing models on the basis of the strength of evidence.

Kitzing (1995) concluded that neither social constructionist nor essentialist arguments are inherently 'lesbian and gay positive'; both can be used to support and to undermine LGBTQ rights.

Liberalism versus radicalism

In certain social contexts, to be considered liberal is generally a good thing; liberal people are thought to be tolerant and accepting of diversity. This view is reinforced by much LGBTQ psychological research. As we discuss further in Chapter 5, research on homophobia has found that people who score low on homophobia tend to be more liberal in outlook and are less likely to be sexist and racist or to hold conservative religious beliefs. Anti-homophobia education often centres on encouraging people to adopt a more liberal perspective on homosexuality – to see LGBTQ people as the same as heterosexual people and not to 'judge' people in terms of their sexuality. Liberal-humanism is a dominant ideology in late modern western cultures and emphasises the uniqueness and rights of the individual. In relation to sexuality, this ideological framework stresses the essential humanness of LGBTQ people and the relatively trivial nature of their sexuality. As Celia Kitzing (1989: 85) outlined, the liberal-humanist 'rejects classifications that pigeonhole people into labelled boxes and emphasises that the lesbian [or the gay man] should not be segregated as an alien species, but accepted as part of humanity in all its rich variety'. Many LGBT political movements are founded on liberal principles and seek equal rights for LGBT people. Such political organisations seek social reform rather than social revolution: they campaign for, for example, partnership, parenting and employment rights on a par with heterosexual and non-trans people.

Radical theorists and activists have criticised liberal political movements as **assimilationist** or normalising (see Clarke, 2002a, 2002b). They argue that the goal of such movements is achieving the acceptance and tolerance of the majority (tolerance literally means putting up with something you don't like), in other words, fitting in. The liberal message that 'we are all the same' has been criticised for ignoring the ways in which LGBTQ people are socially marginalised (Brickell, 2001), and therefore different from heterosexual and non-trans people.

Other political movements – like **gay liberation**, lesbian feminism and queer – have had more radical goals. Such movements have tended to argue that LGBTQ people should not seek to 'fit in' with the heterosexual majority, and that hetero-

existing social system and sought respect for LGBTQ people's lives and perspectives.

In many contemporary cultural contexts, radicalism is often viewed with suspicion; self-proclaimed radicals (of any variety) are viewed as militants, as extremists. What radicalism literally means is 'going to the root', so LGBTQ radicals, such as gay liberationists, lesbian feminists and queer activists, have understood themselves as going to the root of LGBTQ social marginalisation, and seeking completely to transform that state of affairs. For example, lesbian feminists have argued that lesbians as a group are socially marginalised, and **heteropatriarchy** (the organisation of society around male dominance and heteronormativity) lies at the root of this social marginalisation (Rich, 1980). Lesbian feminists have sought to resist and challenge heteropatriarchy, and to bring about a new social order based on principles of economic equality and anti-capitalism, peace and anti-militarism, and so on.

From a liberal standpoint, radical movements are often seen as (hopelessly) idealistic and as achieving very little, while liberal campaigns seek and achieve concrete goals (such as partnership recognition). Concern has also been expressed about the potential for radical campaigns to 'go too far' and alienate potential allies by using 'in your face' tactics and making 'unrealistic' demands.

Debates between liberals and radicals have also played out within LGBTQ psychology. The British psychologist Celia Kitzinger, in her groundbreaking text *The social construction of lesbianism* (1987), critiqued the liberal assumptions of gay affirmative psychology from her standpoint as a **radical lesbian feminist**. Kitzinger argued that liberal models of lesbianism present it 'as no more than a choice of lifestyle, a sexual preference, the outcome of "true love", or a route to "true happiness"' (p. vii). By contrast Kitzinger as a radical feminist rejected **individualised** interpretations of lesbianism and theorised lesbianism as a political institution and challenge to heteropatriarchy.

One example of Kitzinger's critique is her analysis of the (then) emerging body of research on homophobia and homophobia scales. As we discuss further in Chapter 5, homophobia scales typically consist of a number of items, with a response format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree: 'The diagnosis of homophobia thus depends upon the investigators' decision as to which items to count as "pro" and which as "anti" gay. The decision is made uniformly, throughout the homophobia literature, in accordance with the dictates of liberal ideology' (p. 59). For a summary of Kitzinger's critique of homophobia scales see Box 2.4. Kitzinger argued that if a radical lesbian feminist completed a homophobia scale, she might be given a 'high on homophobia' score. This is because radical lesbian feminists view lesbians as different from heterosexual women, they view lesbianism as a threat to the social order and to the nuclear family, and many advocate political lesbianism and invite and encourage heterosexual women to identify and live as lesbians.

Box 2.4 Highlights: Celia Kitzinger's (1987) radical feminist analysis of homophobia scales

Kitzinger's critique	Examples of homophobia scale items
Homophobia scales equate a lack of prejudice with the notion that there are no differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals; homosexuality is merely a sexual preference or a choice of lifestyle. The non-homophobe must agree with items such as those listed opposite:	Homosexuals are just like everyone else, they simply chose an alternative lifestyle (Hansen, 1982). A person's sexual orientation is a totally neutral point upon which to judge his or her ability to function in any situation (Thompson and Fishburn, 1977).
Homophobia scales adhere to the liberal humanistic belief that homosexuality is natural, normal and healthy. Non-homophobes must disagree with the items listed opposite:	Homosexuality is unnatural (Price, 1982). Homosexual activities are abnormal (Hansen, 1982). Homosexuals are sick (Black and Stevenson, 1984).
Following on from this non-homophobes must agree with the items listed opposite:	Just as in other species, homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in humans (Millham <i>et al.</i> , 1976). If homosexuality is allowed to increase it will destroy our society (Price, 1982).
A lack of prejudice is equated with the belief that homosexuals can play a productive role in society; they are not a threat to the social order and the nuclear family. Non-homophobes must disagree with the items listed opposite:	Most homosexuals will attempt to seduce 'straights' if given the opportunity (Thompson and Fishburn, 1977). Homosexuals should not be allowed to vote (Aguero <i>et al.</i> , 1984).

sound empirical data – see, for example, Fiona Tasker's (2002) summary of the lesbian and gay parenting literature). For radicals, this is at best 'tinkering around the edges' of a problem that requires major social change (compare Tasker's approach to lesbian and gay parenting with that of Victoria's (Clarke, 2002b) lesbian feminist social constructionist analysis). Just as debates between social constructionists and essentialists are impossible to resolve, it seems likely that liberals and

The relationship between LGBTQ psychology and feminism

Feminism

Feminism is often referred to (jokingly) as the 'F word' because it is perceived as a 'dirty' word, something that should not be mentioned in 'polite company'! As university educators with a strong interest in feminism, we often perceive a great deal of hostility to feminism, as well as a great deal of misunderstanding of feminist goals and perspectives. The first thing to note is that feminism is not a homogeneous body of thought, and that there is as much (or probably more) debate among feminists as between feminists and others. Broadly speaking, feminism comprises a number of different movements and theories concerned with social relations between women and men, and women's rights and interests. Feminists are often negatively stereotyped as man-hating, angry lesbians who want to rule the world. While some feminists identify as lesbian and there are branches of feminist theory and practice specific to lesbian communities (such as lesbian feminism), lesbianism and feminism are not synonymous. Furthermore, although some (**separatist** and radical) feminists identify men as a social group as their 'political opponents', most feminists do not hate men as individuals (rather they are critical of the **power** and **privilege** invested in men) and have very little inclination to rule the world!

Over the years, many different subtypes of feminist theory and practice have developed, far too many to summarise here (for an overview see Beasley, 1999; Douglas, 1990). Feminism has been a hugely influential social force. Feminists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, known as first-wave feminists, campaigned successfully for women's right to vote. Second-wave feminists (from the late 1960s onwards) have campaigned (often successfully) for, among many other things, women's abortion and reproductive rights, women's right to protection from rape, sexual assault, domestic violence and sexual harassment, and women's rights in the workplace (including maternity leave and equal pay).

Although it is often claimed that we now live in a 'post-feminist' era (McRobbie, 2004) and, more colloquially, that 'everything is equal now', feminists remain concerned about the infringement of women's rights. Contemporary feminism is also concerned with understanding how women's experience intersects with racism, classism, heterosexism and colonialism. For much of its history, the voices and concerns of white, middle-class, western women have dominated feminism. Since the 1980s, the alternative feminisms proposed and developed by women of other races and cultures have gained increasing prominence; alongside this, there is an increasing awareness of the rights of women in non-western countries. For some, this backlash against an over-emphasis on the concerns of white, middle-class, western women constitutes a 'third wave' of feminism (see

Feminist psychology

There has always been tension between the (heterosexual) women's movement and lesbian feminism to a greater or lesser extent: lesbian feminists have been highly critical of the neglect of lesbian issues within feminism, and lesbians have been singled out as the 'lavender menace', as dividing and discrediting the women's movement, by heterosexual feminists. These tensions are also evident in the relationship between feminist psychology (sometimes called the psychology of women) and LGBTQ psychology. Like LGBTQ psychology, feminist psychology is a recognised sub-field of psychology, with groupings in all of the major professional bodies (see Unger and Crawford, 2003, for an excellent introduction to feminist psychology). Feminist psychology has been defined as a 'psychological theory and practice which is explicitly informed by the political goals of the feminist movement' (Wilkinson, 1997a: 247) and is concerned with topics of relevance to women's lives and the operation of gender within society. The different topics studied by feminist psychologists are too numerous to list here, but include issues like: pregnancy and motherhood (Marshall and Woollett, 2000), the lives of women immigrants in western countries (Espin, 1995), gender and language (Crawford, 1995), masculinity (Archer, 2001) and violence against women (Gavey, 1996).

Lesbian psychologists such as Celia Kitzinger (1996a: 120) have criticised feminist psychology for relegating lesbian concerns to 'the token lesbian chapter' (feminist psychology has also largely ignored bisexual and trans women, whose interests rarely warrant even token coverage). Kitzinger's argument is that lesbian issues are given only token attention within feminist psychology (usually under headings like 'difference' or 'diversity' or in relation to sexuality), while feminist psychology as a whole remains resolutely heterosexual. Kitzinger highlights the 10 per cent rule: 'While a token lesbian presence is considered very important, anything more than tokenism is construed as a "takeover"' (1996a: 132). The exclusion of lesbian and bisexual women's experience from discussions of, for example, childhood and adolescence, pregnancy, motherhood, work and violence against women suggests that lesbian and bisexual women do not grow up, do not get pregnant, do not mother, do not work and do not experience violence (as women). Lesbianism and bisexuality are reduced to sexualities, things to be discussed in relation to sex, but not in relation to any other aspect of women's lives. The tokenistic treatment of lesbianism within feminist psychology parallels other forms of tokenism (for example, in relation to black women and disabled women), and signals a failure on the part of many feminist psychologists to give thorough-going consideration to differences between women.

At the same time, as we briefly noted in Chapter 1, some lesbian psychologists have been critical of the male bias of much LGBTQ psychology. Some have felt so frustrated by the ignorance of feminist and gay psychologists that they have attempt-

organisations to promote lesbian research under the banner both of feminist and of lesbian and gay organisations (e.g., Rothblum, 1992) and some continue to call for a separate psychology of lesbianism (e.g., Rothblum, 2004). Several lesbian psychologists have chosen to align with feminist psychology and others with LGBTQ psychology (and some have a foot in both camps), and many feel frustrated with the marginalisation of lesbian concerns in both camps (Clarke and Peel, 2005).

There have also been tensions between some feminist and trans and queer scholars and communities. The radical feminist theorist Janice Raymond is famous (or notorious) for writing a book, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-male* (1979), that is widely perceived as transphobic within trans communities. In this book, Raymond argued, among other things, that **male-to-female (MTF) transsexuals** and the doctors who treat them promote sexist notions of gender and that MTF transsexuals are part of a plot by men to infiltrate the women's movement. There has been a great deal of discussion of Raymond's arguments (see trans feminist Sandy Stone's (1991) much cited response to Raymond). A number of radical feminists remain highly critical of trans people and trans politics (e.g., Jeffreys, 2003, 2008), and some feminist community events have sought to exclude trans women (by requiring women who attend to be 'women born women'). At the same time, some feminist scholars (including trans feminists) have sought to develop a feminist analysis of trans that is sympathetic to the needs and goals of trans people (see Elliot, 2009). For more information about historical and contemporary political tensions between members of LGBTQ communities see Clarke and Peel (2007b). It is important to acknowledge that an inclusive LGBTQ psychology has a complex history, and that LGBTQ communities are heterogeneous (and often non-harmonious) in constitution (Elliot, 2009).

To conclude this section, feminism and feminist psychology are important to LGBTQ psychology because many LGBTQ psychologists identify as feminist or are strongly influenced by feminist ideas (including all of us), even if they don't locate their work within feminist psychology. Furthermore, feminist ideas and feminist activism have shaped the perspectives of many LGBTQ people. There is some debate about whether men can call themselves feminist. Some men do, whereas others identify as 'pro-feminist' in response to the argument that feminism as a theory and a practice is grounded in the experience of being, and living as, a woman, so only women can authentically identify as feminist.

The relationship between LGBTQ psychology and queer theory

Queer theory

theory is its reclamation of the word 'queer'. Queer used to be a term of abuse for non-heterosexuals, and connoted strangeness and peculiarity. In reclaiming this word, queer activists and theorists invested queer with positive, and often defiant and confrontational, meanings. Queer is 'in your face'; queers do not want to fit in, they want to rebel against and resist heteronormativity.

Queer theory developed in the 1990s out of the fields of **lesbian and gay studies** and **women's studies**. Key queer theorists include Judith Butler (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) and David Halperin (1990). Queer theory is strongly influenced by the work of the French post-structuralist theorist Michel Foucault (1926–84), famous for his critiques of social institutions such as psychiatry and the prison system and his work on the history of sexuality. Foucault's (1978) *History of sexuality*, vol. I is regarded by many as the most influential book within queer theory (Hegarty and Massey, 2006). In this book, Foucault theorised power as operating through the production of sexuality and sexual categories as much as by their repression. This was a radically different model of power from that offered by gay liberationists and lesbian feminists: these groups understood power as a possession (something that men or heterosexuals have) and as repressive (power is used to marginalise individuals and groups). By contrast, Foucault understood power as relational (power operates between people and institutions, rather than through a top-down model where some people have power and some people don't) and productive (power produces knowledge rather than simply repressing it). This means that power is everywhere: we cannot liberate ourselves from power and **oppression**, and freedom cannot operate outside of power (Minton, 1997). The goal of queer is working against power not seeking freedom *from* power.

Queer theory built on feminist critiques of essentialist constructions of gender and sexuality. Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 2004), in particular, is famous for her theorisation of the performativity of gender. To simplify her rather complex and subtle argument, Butler theorised gender as performative, as something that people do, or more accurately that is done, rather than as something that people have or are (see Clarke and Braun, 2009). The things that we typically treat as outward expressions of our inner gender identity – the type of jewellery we wear, how we style our hair, what clothes we wear, what type of bag we carry, how we walk and hold our bodies – are actually how gender is done. This is not to suggest that gender is simply voluntary and we can take off gender just as we would take off a coat. Butler uses the concept of 'performativity' rather than 'performance' to signal that gender is not something within our conscious control; that the whole of society is organised around the belief that there are two and only two genders, and that our gendered practices are shaped by and read through that lens. So any attempt on our part to 'queer' gender risks being undone by the two sex/gender system.

Queer defines itself against conventional lesbian and gay and feminist politics. One of the hallmarks of queer is its rejection of the sexual identity

'gay' and 'lesbian' as regulating and limiting the expression of sexual desire (see Box 2.5). Butler (1990: 13–14) argued that: 'identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalising categories of oppressive structures, or as rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that

Box 2.5 Key study: Daniel Warner (2004) on the normalisation and regulation of homosexual identities in Evelyn Hooker's research

In Chapter 1, we summarised Evelyn Hooker's (1957) comparative study of the adjustment of homosexual and heterosexual men, and noted that it is generally assessed very positively as making a groundbreaking contribution to the development of gay affirmative psychology and the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness. US psychologist Daniel Warner offers a slightly different view of Hooker's research, drawing on queer theory. He argues that it both selectively normalised homosexuality and represented a new development in the regulation and control of homosexual subjectivities. Hooker's research did not eliminate the notion that there are differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals; rather it created a distinction between 'normal' homosexuals and deviant queers.

Hooker chose explicitly to avoid people who had been the subject of research on homosexuality up until that point – prisoners, patients and sex workers. If Hooker's intention was simply to show that there is no psychological difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals (and to challenge prejudice based on an assumption of difference) she could have easily used a prison or a clinical population. She could have shown that despite both groups' 'deviancy' from social norms, there was nothing that distinguished them as heterosexual and homosexual. Such a strategy would have avoided making any statement about norms and avoided dehumanising prison or clinical populations.

Hooker's task was in fact twofold: to show that homosexuals are no different from heterosexuals and to show that homosexuals are 'normal'. Hooker secured funding for her research partly because she had access to a hidden population of 'normal' homosexuals, many of whom were members of the Mattachine Society (part of a wider gay and lesbian political movement prominent in the 1950s and 1960s known as the homophile movement). In the 1950s, locating 'homosexuals' meant not finding men with a certain desire but finding men who were willing to name their desire in a way that could be recognised and measured by researchers. The men Hooker considered 'normal' were not normal if normal means the way most homosexual men of the time lived their lives and made sense of their sexuality and their identity. The men Hooker knew were mostly white, middle-class men in monogamous relationships, who understood themselves as part of a gay community and were committed to advancing gay rights. The Mattachine Society encouraged members to participate in research, and as such Mattachine homosexuality 'got its name and face out there first, and thus established a new grid

In Hooker's study, models of 'normal' homosexuality are mapped onto class and race, and, in extending the boundaries of 'the normal' to include white, middle-class gay men, working-class, non-white 'queers' remain on the outside, the deviant sexual other. It is this model of white, middle-class, monogamous homosexuality that represents the 'normal homosexual' in contemporary discourse. Hooker's research did not discover the normal homosexual; rather it constructed it, and provided a baseline against which other non-heterosexuals' 'normality' would be judged.

very oppression'. From a queer standpoint, because power operates through sexual identity categories, **deconstructing** and refusing sexual identity categories is the key to meaningful **resistance**. This means that there are no clear membership criteria for queer, unlike the lesbian and gay movement, in which self-identification as lesbian or gay is key. Queers are defined not by their sexual identities but by their opposition to heteronormativity (which raises the controversial possibility of **queer heterosexuals** (see Thomas, 2000, on queer heterosexuals, and Walter's, 1996, critique of this notion). Queer draws its boundaries more inclusively than the lesbian and gay movement, including potentially anyone, especially non-heterosexual and trans people, who reject heteronormative concepts of sex/gender and sexuality.

Queer psychology

Insights from queer theory have been applied to a wide range of topics in psychology, including the aetiology of homosexuality (Hegarty, 1997), the concept of 'locus of control' (Riggs, 2005) and anti-homosexual prejudice (Hegarty and Massey, 2006). In spite of the growing application of queer theory within psychology, it remains highly controversial and has been the subject of heated debates within academia (see Clarke and Peel, 2007b, for a summary of the numerous criticisms that have been made of queer theory). Some lesbian and gay psychologists have argued that queer theory has little to offer this area of psychology (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996a), whereas others vigorously disagree. For instance, Warner (2004: 335) suggests that a queer-informed LGBTQ psychology would stop demonstrating that queers are normal and abandon the search for the origins of homosexuality. Instead, queer psychology would focus on how particular sexual categories come to be, how individuals and groups of people come to identify with particular sexual categories, and how these categories are lived on a daily basis. In Warner's (2004: 335) words:

This would be a methodology of the margins that does not seek to make things intelligible in terms of the heteropatriarchy, but tries to find the words of the margins itself. Ultimately, it would be a methodology that understands the

'gay' and 'lesbian' as regulating and limiting the expression of sexual desire (see Box 2.5). Butler (1990: 13–14) argued that: 'identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalising categories of oppressive structures, or as rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that

Box 2.5 Key study: Daniel Warner (2004) on the normalisation and regulation of homosexual identities in Evelyn Hooker's research

In Chapter 1, we summarised Evelyn Hooker's (1957) comparative study of the adjustment of homosexual and heterosexual men, and noted that it is generally assessed very positively as making a groundbreaking contribution to the development of gay affirmative psychology and the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness. US psychologist Daniel Warner offers a slightly different view of Hooker's research, drawing on queer theory. He argues that it both selectively normalised homosexuality and represented a new development in the regulation and control of homosexual subjectivities. Hooker's research did not eliminate the notion that there are differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals; rather it created a distinction between 'normal' homosexuals and deviant queers.

Hooker chose explicitly to avoid people who had been the subject of research on homosexuality up until that point – prisoners, patients and sex workers. If Hooker's intention was simply to show that there is no psychological difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals (and to challenge prejudice based on an assumption of difference) she could have easily used a prison or a clinical population. She could have shown that despite both groups' 'deviancy' from social norms, there was nothing that distinguished them as heterosexual and homosexual. Such a strategy would have avoided making any statement about norms and avoided dehumanising prison or clinical populations.

Hooker's task was in fact twofold: to show that homosexuals are no different from heterosexuals and to show that homosexuals are 'normal'. Hooker secured funding for her research partly because she had access to a hidden population of 'normal' homosexuals, many of whom were members of the Mattachine Society (part of a wider gay and lesbian political movement prominent in the 1950s and 1960s known as the homophile movement). In the 1950s, locating 'homosexuals' meant not finding men with a certain desire but finding men who were willing to name their desire in a way that could be recognised and measured by researchers. The men Hooker considered 'normal' were not normal if normal means the way most homosexual men of the time lived their lives and made sense of their sexuality and their identity. The men Hooker knew were mostly white, middle-class men in monogamous relationships, who understood themselves as part of a gay community and were committed to advancing gay rights. The Mattachine Society encouraged members to participate in research, and as such Mattachine homosexuality 'got its name and face out there first, and thus established a new grid

In Hooker's study, models of 'normal' homosexuality are mapped onto class and race, and, in extending the boundaries of 'the normal' to include white, middle-class gay men, working-class, non-white 'queers' remain on the outside, the deviant sexual other. It is this model of white, middle-class, monogamous homosexuality that represents the 'normal homosexual' in contemporary discourse. Hooker's research did not discover the normal homosexual; rather it constructed it, and provided a baseline against which other non-heterosexuals' 'normality' would be judged.

very oppression'. From a queer standpoint, because power operates through sexual identity categories, **deconstructing** and refusing sexual identity categories is the key to meaningful **resistance**. This means that there are no clear membership criteria for queer, unlike the lesbian and gay movement, in which self-identification as lesbian or gay is key. Queers are defined not by their sexual identities but by their opposition to heteronormativity (which raises the controversial possibility of **queer heterosexuals** (see Thomas, 2000, on queer heterosexuals, and Walter's, 1996, critique of this notion). Queer draws its boundaries more inclusively than the lesbian and gay movement, including potentially anyone, especially non-heterosexual and trans people, who reject heteronormative concepts of sex/gender and sexuality.

Queer psychology

Insights from queer theory have been applied to a wide range of topics in psychology, including the aetiology of homosexuality (Hegarty, 1997), the concept of 'locus of control' (Riggs, 2005) and anti-homosexual prejudice (Hegarty and Massey, 2006). In spite of the growing application of queer theory within psychology, it remains highly controversial and has been the subject of heated debates within academia (see Clarke and Peel, 2007b, for a summary of the numerous criticisms that have been made of queer theory). Some lesbian and gay psychologists have argued that queer theory has little to offer this area of psychology (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996a), whereas others vigorously disagree. For instance, Warner (2004: 335) suggests that a queer-informed LGBTQ psychology would stop demonstrating that queers are normal and abandon the search for the origins of homosexuality. Instead, queer psychology would focus on how particular sexual categories come to be, how individuals and groups of people come to identify with particular sexual categories, and how these categories are lived on a daily basis. In Warner's (2004: 335) words:

This would be a methodology of the margins that does not seek to make things intelligible in terms of the heteropatriarchy, but tries to find the words of the margins itself. Ultimately, it would be a methodology that understands the

The relationship between LGBTQ psychology and critical psychology

Critical psychology is not a unified approach to psychology, but an umbrella term for a range of radical approaches to the discipline that share some key assumptions (see Fox, Prilleltensky and Austin, 2009, for an accessible introduction to critical psychology). Critical psychology developed out of a critique and rejection of the core principles of mainstream psychology (see Gergen, 1973). Critical psychologists have developed alternative approaches to psychology drawing on a variety of theoretical traditions that are usually overlooked by mainstream psychology. These traditions include feminism, **Marxism**, **post-modernism**, **post-structuralism** and social constructionism. As the editors of an early collection on critical psychology noted, critical psychologists 'believe that psychology's traditional practices and norms hinder social justice, to the detriment of individuals and communities in general and of oppressed groups in particular' (Prilleltensky and Fox, 1997: 3). Critical psychologists argue that psychology is not a neutral and value-free discipline detached from the larger social and political context; rather the theories and practices of mainstream psychology are value-laden and support an unjust society. Gough and McFadden (2001: 14) discuss this argument in relation to the pathologising model of homosexuality. For psychologists and psychiatrists to 'proclaim heterosexuality as normal and homosexuality as alien, for example, is not to state the nature of things ... but to produce one powerful version of reality within contemporary society'.

Although not all critical psychologists would accept the label 'social constructionist', many of the assumptions of social constructionism form the foundations of critical psychology (see Box 2.6). Let's consider one of the central propositions of critical psychology and social constructionism – that knowledge is partial and subjective and it is not possible to accumulate objective facts and complete knowledge about the world – in more detail. Mainstream psychologists attempt to minimise the impact of the researcher as much as possible (reduce 'bias', minimise 'extraneous variables') and knowledge is viewed as something the researcher 'discovers' or 'finds' through the correct application of scientific procedures. By contrast, critical psychologists view knowledge as something that is generated by the researcher in interaction with the participants. In other words, knowledge isn't out there waiting passively to be uncovered; knowledge is something that we actively create.

Take an interview study, for example: a mainstream psychologist would attempt to ask the participants the same questions in exactly the same way, and to minimise the impact of the researcher on the interview. The interview is viewed as a tool for discovering what participants think and feel (the participant is viewed as a container of feelings and cognitions that is emptied out by the researcher), but like all self-report

Box 2.6 Highlights: key differences between mainstream psychology and critical psychology

Key issues	Mainstream psychology	Critical psychology
What is psychology?	The science of mind and behaviour	A set of discourses and practices that produce particular versions of reality and that regulate and normalise particular versions of subjectivity
What is the goal of psychological research?	To measure, understand and predict human behaviour and cognitions, to produce reliable and valid knowledge about the world	To challenge oppression and promote social change; research should be useful
Guiding epistemic frameworks	Positivist-empiricism, realism, essentialism	Social constructionism, post-structuralism, critical realism
Core methods	Quantitative and experimental: surveys and structured interviews, questionnaires, experiments, statistical analysis	Qualitative and critical: discourse analysis , Q-methodology (Kitzinger, 1987), interviews, focus groups, naturalistic data (see Chapter 3)
Position on truth and objectivity	The goal of research is hypothesis testing and discovering facts about the world; objective knowledge (truth) is possible, through the appropriate application of scientific procedures	It is not possible to discover objective facts about the world; all knowledge is partial and subjective; there is no one truth; the goal of research is to construct and deconstruct meaning; good research is rigorous and reflexive
View of language	Language reflects reality, it is a window on the world; we look through language (e.g., responses to questionnaire items) to discover what is going on inside people's heads or	Language constructs reality; language is a form of social action, and has a performative role in constructing our social and psychological worlds; language (or discourse)

View of the person	The 'lab' is the most appropriate place to study human behaviour, because relevant variables can be controlled and measured, it is possible to discover generalisable rules and patterns about human behaviour	People are always located in social contexts and always occupy positions of marginality and privilege in relation to social norms; these contexts must not be stripped away by the research process; human experience is varied and complex; research should capture the contradictions and complexity of people's lives
Relationship between the researcher and the researched	The researcher has control over the research process and the subjects' engagement in the research	Researchers should acknowledge the power they hold in the research process; measures can be taken to attempt to minimise the power and control of the researcher and empower participants

For the critical psychologist, the interview is a flexible tool for generating accounts of experience, and interviewing is an organic process; new questions might occur to the researcher throughout the interview and the interviewee might raise unanticipated issues. Researchers inevitably shape the interview process and the knowledge generated from it: their standpoint shapes the questions they ask, what they perceive to be relevant, what they sideline as unimportant, how they interact with the participant, and the choices they make in analysing and presenting the data. The social location of the researcher is viewed as a positive resource rather than something that can be engineered away through the appropriate application of scientific methodology. The researcher's influence on the research process is openly acknowledged (there is no such thing as 'researcher bias' in critical psychology!), and it is usual for researchers to give some consideration to how their social positioning may have shaped their research.

Hopefully this brief discussion gives you some indication of major differences

and methodological practices of critical psychologists. Critical psychologists work in many of the major sub-fields of psychology, including social psychology (e.g., Ibáñez and Íñiguez, 1997), health psychology (e.g., Murray, 2004b; see also Chapter 6), clinical and counselling psychology (e.g., McNamee and Gergen, 1992) and developmental psychology (e.g., Burman, 1994). Many LGBTQ psychologists are increasingly drawn to critical psychology because of its explicit concern for social change and the generation of liberatory knowledge, and because of their desire to understand the lives of LGBTQ people in all their complexity. LGBTQ psychologists are also drawn to critical psychology's concern for power (something that it rarely acknowledged within mainstream psychology) and its analysis of the role of psychological knowledge in supporting the status quo (see Chapter 9).

The relationship between LGBTQ psychology and positive social change

Over the decades, LGBTQ psychologists have sought to contribute to social change in myriad ways:

- Some LGBTQ psychologists argue that simply doing (affirmative) research on LGBTQ issues is a political act, especially when there is huge pressure not to do such research. Some of the early pioneers of LGBTQ psychology risked their reputations and their careers in conducting their research.
- At the most basic level, LGBTQ psychological research can give members of LGBTQ communities 'a voice'. One of the ways in which people and communities are socially marginalised is by silencing them, denying them an opportunity to 'have their say'. On an individual level, the opportunity to have one's experiences listened to and documented can be extremely empowering.
- Research can be a tool to raise awareness of issues, especially if the findings of a study are well publicised in the media and/or brought to the attention of key stakeholders such as policy makers.
- Research can challenge faulty and prejudiced assumptions. The history of LGBTQ psychology provides numerous examples of this. For instance, Evelyn Hooker's research challenged the assumption of homosexual pathology and was used by gay and lesbian activists to support their case against the inclusion of homosexuality as a mental illness in the DSM.
- Through research we can gain a better understanding of the unique perspectives and experiences of LGBTQ people. This knowledge can be used productively to improve services for LGBTQ individuals and communities.
- The work of LGBTQ psychologists can lead to positive social change for LGBTQ people *and* heterosexual and non-trans people: by examining the

- Some research has an applied focus in that it tests out the efficacy of interventions (for example, the best way to reduce prejudice) and helps practitioners to engage effectively in social change.
- Research can also feed into social change in a more indirect way. Some research invites us to pause and consider the implications, costs and benefits of our interventions and proposes alternative strategies for facilitating social change.

Many LGBTQ psychologists seem to assume that the steady accumulation of scientific knowledge about LGBTQ lives is the best way to influence policy and practice in relation to LGBTQ communities. Celia Kitinger (1997: 214) argued that:

As long as the legal and political apparatus that governs us is (or affects to be) responsive to scientific 'evidence' in making decisions about who is allowed to teach what in state-run schools, who is permitted to adopt or foster children or to use medically provided artificial insemination services, who is imprisoned, and what acts of violence count as crimes, one can argue that it is important for gay and lesbian psychologists not to vacate the field [of mainstream psychology].

Kitinger illustrates that LGBTQ psychologists are frequently torn between the (often opposing) goals of helping individuals and transforming society. Let's consider an example: As we discuss in Chapter 9, since the 1970s psychological studies have shown that children of lesbian mothers are remarkably similar to the children of heterosexual mothers (i.e., most are heterosexual and 'appropriately' gendered). These studies helped to change the attitudes of the courts in many western countries towards lesbian mothers, and a mother's lesbianism is now extremely unlikely to be grounds for denying her custody of her children (as it was in the 1970s). However, critics have argued that these studies reinforce many traditional norms and values (that it is better to be heterosexual, that it is better to conform to gender norms), and some LGBTQ psychologists want to challenge such assumptions and conduct research that contributes to longer-term social transformation. There are no easy or obvious answers to the dilemma of how best to contribute to positive social change, and we encourage readers to develop their own standpoints on this issue.

Gaps and absences

- Although there were debates about social constructionism and essentialism in the 1980s, on the whole, positivist-empiricism and essentialism continue to dominate LGBTQ psychological research and there has been little examination of the theoretical and political foundations of LGBTQ psychology.
- Following on from this, non-mainstream theories and approaches such as critical psychology and queer theory occupy a more or less marginal status

This is not to say that LGBTQ psychologists should abandon mainstream psychology, but that, for example, insights from queer theory might advance the use of experimental methodologies in important ways (Hegarty and Massey, 2006).

- There has been little consideration of how LGBTQ psychologists can best contribute to social change for LGBTQ people. Although some scholars have highlighted the limitations of liberal and essentialist approaches to LGBTQ psychology, they have been less forthcoming about demonstrating the effectiveness of alternative approaches.
- As we highlighted in Chapter 1, and as we will continue to highlight throughout the book, LGBTQ psychological research is often based on the experiences of relatively privileged – white, middle-class, educated, professional, urban-dwelling – gay men and lesbians. This means that LGBTQ psychologists often develop theories that are based on the lives of a particular sector of the LGBTQ population and are problematically generalised to include all LGBTQ people. One such theory (see Chapter 8) is that **same-sex relationships** are based on principles of equality and are not organised around hierarchical power imbalances. Given that a lot of relationship research is based on samples of white, middle-class, educated, professional couples, where both partners have similar backgrounds, this may well be true for these couples. It may also be the case that if researchers look for equality, they find it! Some researchers, such as the sociologists Christopher Carrington (1999) and Jacqui Gabb (2004), have found evidence to challenge the 'equality norm' for same-sex partners. Interestingly, their research was based on more socio-economically diverse samples and, in the case of Carrington, on the use of intensive qualitative data collection (he actually lived with some of the families he studied), rather than one-off interviews. We suspect that these researchers were more open to the possibility of generating evidence that challenged the 'equality norm' for same-sex relationships; and their samples and methodologies may have pointed the way to this evidence. What this brief example hopefully demonstrates is the need for more **intersectional** theorising within LGBTQ psychology and more consideration of how participants' positioning in relation to race, culture, gender, social class, ability and age both shapes how they live and shapes our theories of their lives.

Main chapter points

This chapter:

- Outlined debates between essentialists and social constructionists about the origins of homosexuality, bisexuality and trans

- Outlined debates between liberals and radicals about the goals of LGBTQ politics and LGBTQ psychology.
- Summarised some of the key features of feminism and feminist psychology and the links between feminist psychology and LGBTQ psychology.
- Summarised some of the key features of queer theory and the relationship between queer theory and LGBTQ psychology.
- Overviewed some of the core aspects of critical psychology and the relationship between critical psychology and LGBTQ psychology.
- Discussed the relationship between LGBTQ psychology and positive social change for LGBTQ communities.

Questions for discussion and classroom exercises

1. In 1989, US psychologist and feminist therapist Laura Brown proposed an alternative model for psychological inquiry based on the experiences of lesbians and gay men in a groundbreaking article entitled '*New voices, new visions: toward a lesbian/gay paradigm for psychology*'. She argued that lesbian/gay reality is defined by biculturalism (membership of mainstream and lesbian/gay culture), normative creativity (there are no rules or role models for lesbians and gay men to follow in living their lives as lesbians and gay men, so they have to create their own) and marginality. In what ways would psychology be different if it was based on a lesbian/gay (and BTQ) standpoint rather than a heterosexual one? Can you 're-imagine' one of your psychology textbooks or courses from a lesbian/gay (BTQ) standpoint?
2. Why are people heterosexual? Do people choose to be heterosexual? Is it a product of socialisation and early childhood experiences? Are people born heterosexual?
3. Reflect on some of the questions from the 'heterosexuality questionnaire' (Rochlin, 2003); e.g., What do you think caused your heterosexuality? When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual? Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase that you may grow out of? Is it possible your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex? What assumptions do these questions, and the heterosexuality questionnaire as a whole, draw our attention to?
4. What are the desired and expected qualities of girls/women and boys/men in your culture? Why do you think gender conformity is so strictly enforced? Imagine you are a 'gender terrorist' for a day: what would you do to transgress gender norms?

5. Compare and contrast Fiona Tasker's (2002) mainstream and liberal approach to lesbian and gay parenting with Victoria's (Clarke, 2002b) critical and radical approach. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach (see Kitzinger and Coyle, 2002)? Which approach do you prefer and why?

Further reading

Clarke, V. and Braun, V. (2009) Gender. In D. Fox, I. Prilleltensky and S. Austin (eds.), *Critical psychology: an introduction*, 2nd edition (pp. 232–49). London: Sage.

In this chapter, Victoria and Virginia Braun explore different models of gender and sexuality within mainstream and critical psychology, and critically examine the concepts of gender and sexuality from a queer-informed, feminist social constructionist standpoint.

Clarke, V. and Peel, E. (2007b) From lesbian and gay psychology to LGBTQ psychologies: a journey into the unknown (or the unknowable)? In V. Clarke and E. Peel (eds.), *Out in psychology: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer perspectives* (pp. 11–35). Chichester: Wiley.

This chapter explores the shift from lesbian and gay psychology to LGBTQ psychology and examines some of the debates that have taken place between members of LGBTQ communities.

Kitzinger, C. (1987) *The social construction of lesbianism*. London: Sage.

In Chapter 2 of her classic text Kitzinger outlines her critique of the liberal assumptions of gay affirmative psychology from her standpoint as a radical lesbian feminist.

Myerson, M., Crawley, S. L., Anstey, E., Kessler, J. and Okopny, C. (2007) Who's zoomin' who? A feminist, queer content analysis of 'interdisciplinary' human sexuality textbooks. *Hypatia*, 22(1), 92–113.

An incisive analysis of the heteronormative assumptions underpinning most human sexuality textbooks that provides a great introduction to queer theory, and in particular a queer-informed feminism.

Wilkinson, S. (1997a) Feminist psychology. In D. Fox and I. Prilleltensky (eds.), *Critical psychology: an introduction* (pp. 247–64). London: Sage.

In this chapter, British feminist psychologist Sue Wilkinson provides an accessible introduction to feminist psychology.