

***Sensoria* Special Edition on Sexual Orientation and Gender: Editorial**

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Introduction

Gay men and lesbians have long been victims of personal and social discrimination. Until relatively recently, not being heterosexual was so problematic that it was considered to be a mental illness (Hooker, 1957)¹. Though this is typically no longer the case, gay people still frequently face prejudice and discrimination in the form of ostracism from their social groups (Rivers, 2000) or family (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009), as well as physical and psychological abuse (i.e., hate crimes; Herek, 2009). In addition, 79 countries around the world still have criminal laws against homosexual activities (The International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association [IGLA], 2014), and a further 10 countries have laws where (even alleged) homosexual activities can be punished by public whipping or by being stoned to death (Rupar, 2014).

Gay people also face more subtle and insidious discrimination, including being paid less than heterosexual people (Berg & Lien, 2002)², being more likely to be overlooked for employment (Tilcsik, 2011), being less likely to receive help when needed (Gabriel & Banse, 2006), and being evaluated more harshly when they make decisions that are unsuccessful (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2014). As can be seen from these examples, there are social and cultural norms and practices that result in the unfair treatment of gay people (Kelley, 2001). Ranging from physical violence or incarceration, to lack of support, there is abundant evidence that gay people around the world face prejudice and discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation.

The motivation for this special edition arose from our observation that researchers in the field of psychology often approach the studies of gender and sexual orientation in isolation, without consideration of how these constructs overlap. Homosexuality is inherently tied to gender, and as

such, exploring these constructs independently cannot fully capture the complexity of the phenomena. We believe that the psychology field is ready to take a nuanced approach to understanding the processes and consequences relating to the interaction between gender and sexual orientation, and that this might help create a better sense of the negative intergroup relations experienced by gay individuals. Thus, in this special edition of *Sensoria*, we present a range of theoretical and empirical articles that focus on the social categories and theoretical constructs of gender and sexual orientation in combination, and consider how this affects a variety of psychological outcomes.

The Papers

It is with pride that we present to you a range of quality papers that address these exact issues. From historically informed calls to action and conceptually-based models for intervention, to findings that demonstrate the importance of real life disparities and disadvantage experienced by gay men and lesbian women, we are particularly content with the variety of work that is available in this special edition.

The special edition opens with one discussion paper and one theoretical analysis, which provide context to the special edition by situating the field in terms of historical precedents and contemporary social psychological theory, respectively. We open the special edition with our brief appraisal of the evolution of medical classifications of non-heterosexuality, we document the diagnostic classification of homosexuality over the last century, and review the processes that led to the reclassification in the nomenclature. We pay particular attention to the implications that the historical psychiatric treatment of homosexual orientations and behaviours has on current attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Finally, we make an appeal for researchers to continue work in domains that may help to extinguish remnants of this medical legacy.

Techakesari, Louis, and Barlow conduct an analytical review of the literature on intergroup contact. While they concur with the consensus that

¹ See Anderson & Holland (2015), and Venn-Brown (2015) in this special edition, for exhaustive reviews.

² See Kaufmann (2015) in this special edition for evidence of perceptions of the gay wage gap.

positive contact with sexual minorities is reliably associated with reduced sexual prejudice among heterosexuals, they notice that the gender of contact partners in this field has been largely overlooked. Thus, they propose a theoretical framework to argue that the relationship between positive contact and intergroup attitudes likely varies as a function of the gender of each individual involved in the contact.

Following these theoretical papers, we present a series of four empirical papers that explore the experience of being a gay man or lesbian woman in various social milieus. Each paper contributes novel insights to a relatively under-developed literature. To commence the empirical contributions, Kaufmann, Williams, Hosking, Anderson, and Pedder present data exploring the role of gender and sexual orientation in how willing individuals are to disclose personal information about their sexual activeness and their sexual orientation. This work addresses important differences in the perceptions of in-group and out-group disclosure of sex- and sexuality-related personal information, and provides central information on variations in discomfort of whom this information is disclosed to. These new findings will help practitioners to understand levels of discomfort and even failures to disclose information around these sensitive topics.

We then present work by Steffens, Jonas, and Scali in which they tackle the controversial topic of adoption by same sex couples. After highlighting that most prejudice studies overlook individual characteristics and multiple minority status (i.e., identity intersections) they empirically investigate whether such oversights overestimate specific sources of prejudice. Across a range of experiments they explore the German population's perceptions of suitability for adopting specifically considering the candidates sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, and age. This work has obvious implications for the real-life prejudicial experiences of gay men and lesbians.

Continuing this theme, we present two studies that explore sexual prejudice in the workplace. First, Kaufmann looks at the sexual orientation and gender wage gaps, or the significant disparity in the wages of women, and gay men and lesbians, compared to the wages of straight men. In this paper, Kaufmann uses explicit and implicit measures to explore attitudes based on gender and sexual orientation and their relationship with work-related associations (e.g., skill) in relation to wage gap estimates. While the gender-based wage gap has received some media attention and public awareness in recent years, the sexual-orientation wage gap has yet to receive the same attention.

The final empirical contribution in the special edition takes an inversed approach. Niedlich and Steffens explore whether certain stereotypes that

are attributed to gay men and lesbians could be construed as advantageous in certain work-related contexts. Specifically, they explore the potential for gay job applicants to transgress traditional gender roles to the extent that gay men could be perceived as having better social skills than straight men while lesbians could be perceived as being more competent than straight women, and if this affects subsequent hiring abilities. This contributes to the limited literature that focuses on harnessing the positive outcomes of stereotypes.

Following the empirical segment of the special edition, we are honoured to present a personal contribution by author and former Australian evangelist Anthony Venn-Brown as he describes his exposure to Australia's first ex-gay program. In essence, Venn-Brown details his first-hand experience of trying to have his sexual orientation 'cured', and discusses the pattern of procedure he has observed within Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (i.e., sexual realignment / conversion therapies) that still occur today. Venn-Brown's contribution to this special edition is part of his ongoing efforts to create an intelligent yet respectful dialogue about issues related to sexual orientation within the Christian communities.

Finally, we close the edition with a book review; Prakash reviews the recently published original work of Lucy Nichols entitled *Queer Post-Gender Ethics: The Shape of Selves to Come*. After presenting a synopsis of the overall content, the review presents a chapter-by-chapter critique of the content presented within. Nicholas' work is presented as a complex yet nuanced contribution to the literature.

We hope that this special edition of *Sensoria* will promote continued discussion on theoretical and empirical treatment of sexual orientation as a construct that both shapes and is shaped by gender. Our aim is to provide an arena for people to share their work with researchers in this field, and that this would culminate in inspiring new work and encouraging collaborative ventures as we strive to reach our scientific goals. In particular, we hope that sustained research in this field will continue to ameliorate conditions for sexual minorities encountered across the globe.

Conclusion

This Special Edition of *Sensoria: A Journal of Mind, Brain, and Culture* presents a series of integrated papers that address the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. It has been designed to outline the historical context from which our current understandings of sexuality have stemmed, to situate these understandings in currently relevant theoretical frameworks, and to present new evidence on the contemporary state of knowledge in this area. It aims to help stimulate the

wider scientific research community into engaging with these issues.

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