

Promoting the dignity and worth of all people: The privilege of social work

Mark Henrickson
Massey University,
Aotearoa New Zealand

Unuhia te rito o te harakeke, kei hea rā te
kōmako e kō?
Ui mai ki ahau, 'He aha te mea nui o te Ao?'
Māku e kī atu, 'he tangata, he tangata, he
tangata'

If you remove the centre of the flaxbush, where
will the bellbird sing?
If you ask me 'What is the most important thing in
the world?'
I would reply, 'It is people, it is people, it is people'



*Ko Taranaki toku maunga
Ko Whau toku awa
No Tāmaki makaurau ahau*



안녕하세요
Kia ora
おはようございます
早上好
शुभ प्रभात
Buongiorno
Magadang umaga
Talofa lava
Malo e lei lei
Ni sa bula
Bonjour
Buenos días
Bom dia
доброе утро
صباح الخير
בוקר טוב
Guten Morgen
Good morning!



Dame Eileen L. Younghusband



1902-1981

Why *this* topic?

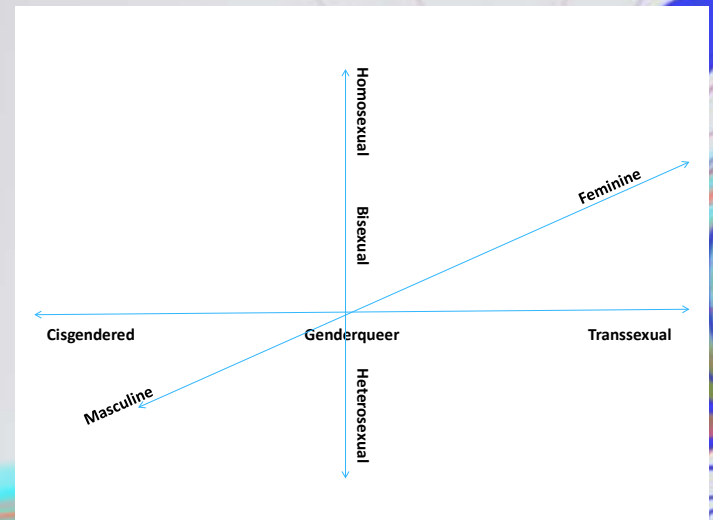
There are so many important topics facing social work right now: Why *this* topic?

If social workers cannot talk about sexuality with our clients, students, colleagues, and policymakers, then we communicate that sexuality is unspeakable, and that sexual and gender minorities are disposable



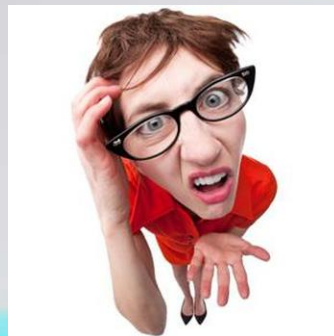
Challenging the binaries

- Male/Female
- Gay/Straight
- Transsexual/Cisgender
- Sex (biology and anatomy), gender identity (individual experiences of femaleness and maleness), and gender expression (behaviour, including appearance) are continua, not binary categories



Vocabulary

- Gender syntonic or cisgendered means that your experience of yourself is the same as the biological sex with which you were labelled at birth
- Gender dystonic, gender dysphoric, gender variant or transgender means that you do not identify with the sex to which you were assigned at birth
- Intersex, gender fluid, gender variant means that you choose not to present yourself in the same way all the time in all circumstances



It's complicated

- That's why I have discarded the old Western binary categories of 'gay', 'lesbian' 'bisexual', etc. and now use the term 'sexual and gender minorities'
- I encourage all social workers to revise their vocabularies, because when we reproduce those Western labels they privilege cisgendered heterosexuality as 'normal', and everything else as 'other'



Simple guides

IF YOU'RE OUT IN PUBLIC AND YOU CAN'T FIGURE OUT A STRANGER'S GENDER, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

CREDIT: @MOPR13TEEN TWITTER

THE TRANS*
GENDERING
GENDER
PROJECT

WWW.TRANS*GENDERINGGENDER.ORG

WHAT PRONOUN DO YOU USE FOR A TRANSGENDER PERSON?

↓

Whatever they use for themselves.

And if you don't know, politely ask, "Which pronoun would you like me to use?"

Vox

IF YOU'RE IN A PUBLIC BATHROOM AND YOU THINK A STRANGER'S GENDER DOESN'T MATCH THE SIGN ON THE DOOR, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, THEY KNOW BETTER THAN YOU.

 University of Bristol
LGBT+ Society

[#transawarebristol](https://twitter.com/transawarebristol)

We have to choose to disclose!



Conchita Wurst, winner of Eurovision 2014

Queer epistemology

- heteronormative:

hɛt(ə)rə(ʊ)'nɔ:mətɪv/

(*adjective*) denoting or relating to a world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation

- Sexual and gender minorities must make decisions to disclose our identities because we live in a heteronormative world.
 - This shapes the way we validate knowledge and determine what is true

Heroes



Recent victories

- Nepalese Constitution (Sept. 2015)



UNDP's LGBTI Inclusion Index

LGBTI INCLUSION INDEX
 FINDING DATA CAPS TO SUPPORT INCLUSION
 AND HELP DRIVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

GLOBAL CONTEXT

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an ambitious roadmap.

"NO ONE MUST BE LEFT BEHIND"

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

HOW WE MEASURE INCLUSION

OUR SOLUTION: LGBTI INCLUSION INDEX

DATA CAN MEASURE

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

POLITICAL + CIVIC PARTICIPATION

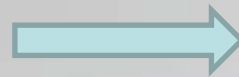
PERSONAL SECURITY AND VIOLENCE

HEALTH

HERE IS HOW THIS DATA WILL HELP

PARTNERSHIPS WILL BE KEY

JOIN US TO PROMOTE LGBTI INCLUSION AND THE LGBTI INCLUSION INDEX



OUR SOLUTION: LGBTI INCLUSION INDEX

DATA CAN MEASURE

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Income disparities and poverty of LGBTI people in a particular country. The existence of employment non-discrimination laws and the degree of their implementation.

POLITICAL + CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The number of LGBTI parliamentarians and decision-makers. Decriminalization of same-sex sexual relationships, freedom of association for LGBTI people and their organizations, political openness.

LGBTI INCLUSION INDEX

PERSONAL SECURITY AND VIOLENCE

Rates of violence against LGBTI people including homicides. Police competency and trainings on LGBTI issues.


HEALTH


Health disparities including inequities in health access, the pathologization of homosexuality and transgender people by a country's medical associations and respect for bodily integrity of intersex people.

Recent victories (cont'd)

- CSWE (US), CSWEANZ and ANZASW condemn 'reparative therapies
- UK GCHQ apologises for historical exclusion and prosecution of gay people, including Alan Turing
- Schwulenberatung Berlin opens 120 bed shelter for sexual minority refugees from Syria

LSBTI* Flüchtlinge
LGBTI Refugees
LGBTI refugiado
Réfugiés LGBTI
اللاجئون/ات المثليون/ات
LGBTI بناهجویان
ЛГБТИ*-беженцы



 SCHWULEN
BERATUNG
BERLIN

Dienstags und Freitags von 14-18 Uhr.
Tuesdays and Fridays, 2-6 pm.
كل الثلاثاء وجمعة بين الثانية والسابعة مساءً.
هر يوم اثنين وجمعة از ساعت ۱۴ الی ۱۸
Каждый вторник и пятницу с 14 до 18.

SCHWULENBERATUNG BERLIN
Wilhelmstraße 115
10963 Berlin-Kreuzberg

Recent victories (cont'd)

- The Supreme Court of India agreed to hear curative petition of 2013 decision that sustained legality of Section 377 of Penal Code (which criminalises same-sex relationships)
- Marriage equality in all or part of 19 countries



British Commonwealth nations that retain colonial anti-homosexuality laws

- Africa: Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia;
- Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka;
- Caribbean: Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines; Trinidad & Tobago;
- Pacific: Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu

Countries that retain the death penalty for homosexuality

- Afghanistan
- Iran
- Iraq
- Mauritania
- Pakistan
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Sudan
- Yemen
- Parts of Nigeria

Know your real history

- If you think your culture doesn't have a history of same-sex love, then you don't know your culture
- If you think your country has 'always' had laws against homosexuality and gender non-conformity, you don't know your history
- It is people who wish to retain their privilege and power who retain laws against minority groups, including sexual and gender minorities

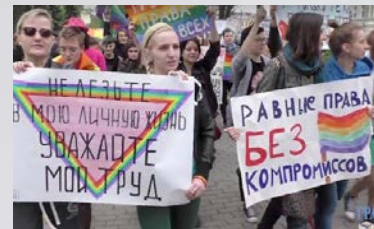
Social oppression

- Black lesbians in South Africa face the highest rates of rape in the world

Betty Melamu holds a photo of her daughter, Motshidisi Pascalina, who was raped and murdered in December, 2015



- Half of bisexually identified women and one-third of men in Canada have considered or attempted suicide
- 40% of homeless in the US are sexual and gender minority youth
- Iran forces sexual minorities to choose between gender transformation surgery or death (Najamabadi, 2011)
- 19 'LGBTI' activists arrested at May Day march in St Petersburg, Russia



Social oppression

- Larry King, age 15, was shot by a classmate in school



- Gabriel Fernandez, age 8, was beaten to death because his parents thought he was gay



Social oppression

- UNHCR workers in Kenya say that they could not work with or talk to gay men who were refugees from Uganda (BBC Africa, 2015)
- Daesh داعش executes gay men identified as homosexual by throwing off tall buildings and then stoning the dead bodies



Social oppression

- On 22 May, armed men invaded a gay nightclub in Xalapa, Mexico, killing 7 and injuring 12
- Less than two weeks ago 49 people were murdered and 53 injured in an Orlando gay nightclub in the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history



Social oppression

- Between January 2008 and December 2015, 2,016 transgender people have been killed in 65 countries around the world, including 1,500 in North and Latin America (803 in Brazil, 229 in Mexico, and 132 in the US) (Transgender Europe 2016)
- 41% of transgender people in the US have attempted suicide (vs 4.6% in the general population) (Williams Institute, 2016)

Social oppression

“Heterosexuality has had to be imposed, managed, organised, propagandized and maintained by force.”

(Adrienne Rich, 1980/86)

Promoting the dignity and worth of people

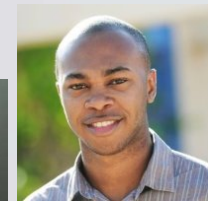
- The conference theme, and the *Global Agenda*, means *all* people, not just people like us, or people we like
 - This includes all genders and all sexualities
- Civil rights emphasise what is different about us;
- human rights emphasise what we share in common;
- human dignity emphasises the worth of every single individual



Promoting the dignity and worth of people

- If we get human dignity right for sexual and gender minorities, we will get it right for indigenous peoples, refugees, immigrants, ethnic and cultural minorities— everyone

Where there is not dignity and worth for all of us everywhere, there is dignity and worth for none of us anywhere



So what's a social worker to do?

- Social workers are privileged
- The role of social work is to challenge oppressive social norms, and to speak out on behalf of those who are silenced
 - This can be risky and dangerous, but we cannot collude with oppression
 - If it is too dangerous for us to speak out for sexual and gender minorities, use our international colleagues



So what's a social worker to do?

- Go home, reflect and learn more
 - Challenge traditional notions
 - Support your colleagues
 - if you don't have LGBTIQ colleagues, ask yourself why not?
 - Do better research
 - Use non-problematising classroom examples
 - Don't assume anything about your clients
 - Work in for justice and dignity for sexual and gender minorities in
 - schools
 - prisons
 - health and mental health care settings,
 - child protection, foster and adoption care
 - domestic violence
 - refugee and migrant settings
 - policy

So what's a social worker to do?

- Live up to the values that lie at the core of the international definition of social work
 - Social justice
 - Human rights
 - Respect for diversity
- Promote the dignity and worth of all people

