University Students' Experience of Homophobia and Heterosexism in Tertiary Accommodation in New Zealand.

By

Sara Fraser

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Grateful thanks to my supervisor, Doctor Lesley Hall.

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Abstract

This research looks at the way LGBT people live in university Halls of Residence at Victoria University of Wellington. I research homophobia, heteronormativity, bullying and its effects, including suicidality and how this can be overcome. Using an online questionnaire aimed at first year halls residents (128) I was able to collect information on how they viewed homophobia, whether they thought it happened in their hall and reporting of homophobic incidents. I also briefly look at university administration in regard to these matters.

Keywords: halls of residence; homophobia; heteronormativity; bullying; suicidality.

Chapter One

Introduction

> Homophobia and heterosexism are endemic problems in our society. Despite the frequent 'liberal' attributions about university environments, college campuses are not immune from the larger socio-political context or the zeitgeist in which they are embedded.[1]

This thesis examines the existence of heteronormativity and/or heterosexism in Halls of Residence (Halls) and the impact and implications of these for students. A Hall is a place of accommodation provided either directly by a university, or by a company contracted to a university; they are generally for first year students, though not always. The Halls reviewed for this particular project are used predominantly

1 Lugris, V.M. and Share, T.L. Addressing Homophobia and Heterosexism on College Campuses, *Journal of College Student Development*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Jan/Feb 2004, 110-111.

by first year students (17-18 year olds), who come to university direct from school and, in most cases, are away from home and family for the first time. Whilst I accept the complexity of catering for all differences, it is important the university to be more aware of sexual identity in all its variety in order to provide support if necessary. Not to do so could lead to young people dropping out of university, a disadvantage not only for the student, but also for the university.

My interest in this topic of research comes from my own experience working as a Residential Assistant and then Manager of three different Halls in Wellington during the mid-2000's. My personal observation is that universities aim to do all they can to make the first year at university safe, memorable, 'education' positive and an overall enjoyable experience. However, research shows that this is often not the case for LGBT students. This thesis aims to shed some light on the experience of LGBT students in Halls at Victoria University of Wellington.

Research Aims

In this thesis I discuss the existence of homophobia and heterosexism in the Halls. I conducted a survey with first year residents, focusing on Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). By conducting such a survey, I aimed to discover whether students were aware of heterosexism and homophobia; if so whether they had witnessed it in the halls; and how such incidences were manifested.

This thesis is informed by both feminist and queer methodologies, in particular the work of feminist Shulamit Reinharz and also lesbian feminists Suzanne Pharr and Alison Laurie. Judith Butler's work has also been useful for my analysis.

According to Brickell in Aotearoa/New Zealand society homophobia is entrenched and, although it is not always expressed overtly, heterosexuality is positioned as normative yet neutral.[2] In this project I examine how this is manifested in Halls of Residence at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). Specifically I examine the degree to which homophobia, heterosexism/heteronormativity form part of the experience of being a resident in tertiary accommodation at VUW.

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2 Bennachie, C. 2009. *Controlling Anti-Gay Hate Speech*; Wellington, VUW Press.

My experience

My four years' experience in working with first year university students has shown me that for many 17/18 year olds, university is a daunting, challenging and very different experience to many had before. From observation one of the biggest challenges faced by any student (especially those choosing to reside in Residential Halls), is the ability to 'fit in' and be accepted by their peers. Add to this a sudden freedom to explore who one is (e.g. sexual orientation), and the ability to fit in can seem overwhelming. Educationalist Sonja Ellis claims that:

> ...university is typically the first time that young people have been away from home for an extended period. For young LGBT students this is often the first opportunity to explore their identity…[3]

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3 Ellis, S. J. 2009. Diversity and inclusivity at university: a survey of the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) students in the UK. *Higher Education,* 57 (6), 723-739.

Personal experience suggests that events organised by the Residential Assistants, have a very 'straight' audience in mind. In my view this arises from a lack of awareness of the rich diversity in the residential community. Much emphasis is placed upon inter-hall activities (without rivalry) with annual events such as a rugby and netball contest; a dance/choir competition and debate. Whilst in theory nothing stops any student from participating in these events, in practice two immediate issues arise: the need for a young gay man to 'man-up' to be able to play rugby, or, should he choose to play netball, he will be doing so because a group of other males want to for a joke, or because he 'must be a homo'. Although I am personally unaware of anyone actually attempting this, I would argue that the environment would not be at all accepting of same-sex couples entering the dance competition and could even be unsafe. An integral part of this research is to examine, from the perspective of the residents, the experience and impact of activities such as these.

It is my belief that Halls operate with a similar attitude to that of a small rural town, everyone

knows each other, knows what everyone is up to, to the point of actually knowing where anyone is at any given time of the day or night. Therefore, it would be almost impossible for a resident who is not public about their sexuality to attend a Uni-Q[4] event without other residents knowing about it. In my view it is very easy for someone to lose their identity when living in Halls. Everything surrounding a new student becomes about community: the community of the Hall; the community of Halls together; the community of the university; and the wider student community. All this raises the challenge of how to 'fit in'. The environment of Halls is very unfamiliar, often isolating and the support networks of home are, in many cases, hundreds of miles away. Although the issue of unfamiliarity and isolation may only be experienced initially when coming to the Hall (generally speaking), if a student considers themselves 'different' to the majority, the feeling of being lonely may remain with them. This thesis shows this feeling of being 'different' or being excluded can and often has ongoing effects, even outside the Hall.

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4 Uni-Q, on campus, student run queer positive support group, VUW.

I have been able to gain knowledge, first hand, of the difficulties experienced by those students (predominantly first years) who live outside of the so-called 'normal' lifestyle of heterosexuality. I have also undertaken a number of roles in a support capacity within my own LGBT community in Wellington. I consider this insider knowledge to be crucial to my examination of the Hall and university services. As a feminist and lesbian researcher, I argue for the validity of using my own experience in this research. As Letherby argues:

> Our own 'debts'…cannot be passed off in a ritualised paragraph, summed up and dispensed with before we turn to the proper business of theorising[5]

Also, C. Wright Mills (quoted in P. Coterill *Weaving Stories: Personal Auto/Biographies in Personal Research*) argues that the 'self' is imperative to Social Science research:

> The social scientist is not some autonomous being standing outside society. No-one is outside society,

5 Letherby, G. 2003. *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice.* Open University Press, Philadelphia.

the question is where he

(*sic)* stands within it.[6]

By examining other New Zealand university

policies, I have made comparisons between each

as to the extent to which they understand and/or

acknowledge LGBT students.

Concepts and Terminology

Lesbian feminist and activist Suzanne Pharr

defines homophobia as:

>...the irrational fear and
>
>hatred of those who love
>
>and sexually desire those
>
>of the same sex.[7]

Heterosexism systematically privileges

heterosexuality relative to homosexuality, based

on the assumption that heterosexuality, as well as

heterosexual power and privilege are the norm and

the ideal.[8] Feminist psychologist Celia Kitzinger

6 Cotterill, Pamela, and Gayle Letherby. "Weaving stories: Personal auto/biographies in feminist research." *Sociology* 27.1 (1993): 67-79.

7 Pharr S. 1988. *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism,* Chardon Press, Arkansas.

8 Chesir-Teran, D, 2003. Conceptualizing and Assessing Heterosexism in High Schools: A Setting-Level Approach. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 31, Nos. 3/4, June 2003

defines heteronormativity (sometimes used interchangeably with heterosexism) as:

> the mundane production of heterosexuality as the normal, natural, taken-for-granted sexuality[9]

The previous definitions are provided by way of explanation for my observation that in many instances the privileging of heterosexuality in Halls of Residence is not deliberate. As Pharr argues it is more likely to be a result of unawareness:

> Hetero-sexism creates the climate for homophobia with its assumption that the world is and must be heterosexual and its display of power and privilege as the norm.[10]

Language is ever changing and in some cases, what may mean one thing to one person may mean something different to another. The definitions I give below are how I understand each

9 Kitzinger, C. 2005. Heteronormativity in Action: Reproducing the Heterosexual Nuclear Family in After-hours Medical Calls. *Social Problems* Vol. 52, No. 4 Pages 477-498
10 Pharr, 1998.

word and what I use them to represent throughout

my thesis.

- gay refers to males who desire or
  have sex with other males; 'same
  sex couples'.[11]

- lesbian relates to women who desire
  or have sex with other women; 'same
  sex couple' (ibid).

- bisexual relates to sexually attracted
  to individuals of both sexes.[12]

- transgender: A person whose gender
  identity is different from their physical
  sex at birth. (New Zealand Human
  Rights Commission.[13])

- LGBT: A term used to include
  lesbian, gay, bisexual and
  transgender identifying people.

- Queer: Has been used as a
  derogatory term for gay and lesbian
  people but is increasingly reclaimed
  as a positive term, particularly by
  young people. It is sometimes used

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11 Feu'u, Poiva Junior Ashleigh. *Ia e Ola Malamalama I lou Fa'asinomaga: A comparative study of the fa'afafine of Samoa and the whakawahine of Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Master's Thesis, VUW Press. 2013, pg 5.
12 http://www.oed.com/ viewed 27/04/2013
13 https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/9914/2378/4830/HRC_H_Trans_Terminology.pdf viewed 27/04/13

as a broader term to also include transgender people.[14]

- Transphobia: Intense dislike of or prejudice against transsexual (sic) or transgender people.[15]

Organisation of thesis

In chapter 2, I give a brief overview of the history of university accommodation, particularly how it relates to women students, as they were at one time considered a marginalised group, much the same as LGBT residents are, in my view, today. Therefore comparisons can be made between the two groups and the changing position of women students exemplify how changes can be made for other marginalised groups such as LGBT. Chapters 3 and 4 show the methodologies used and the methods chosen to conduct my survey.

In chapters 5 and 6, I discuss the findings of my survey focusing on topics such as rural versus urban background, class, masculinity, heterosexism and heteronormativity. In my conclusion, I make suggestions as to how to deal

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14 https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/9914/2378/4830/HRC_H_Trans_Terminology.pdf viewed 27/04/13
15 http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/transphobia viewed 27/04/13

with these issues. I have attached appendices

which include my questionnaire and ethics

approval.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Although there is a growing body of work looking at the effects of homophobia and transphobia, discrimination against and violence towards people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; how/why negative attitudes and behaviours occur; and suggestions as to how LGBT people might be treated better, there is little literature examining the New Zealand experience of LGBT students either at university or their experience in Halls of Residence. Consequently, I have focused here mostly but not exclusively on literature from other western societies such as the United States and the United Kingdom. There are similarities and differences in these societies, but previous research allows comparison and contrast of relevant issues within New Zealand.

By providing an overview of accommodation at the Victoria University of Wellington I consider how some of the issues faced by women in the early days, can be usefully compared to some issues faced by LGBT students in this research. I also discuss the experiences of young people at high school, including looking at how homophobia is expressed and the impact of this on LGBT youth. I

conducted an examination of the experiences of coming out, as the literature shows, coming to university provides the opportunity for some people to be more open about their sexual identity. Evidence shows that the value of providing a supportive and inclusive environment can have a positive effect on young people and may go some way to encouraging them to remain at university and ultimately graduate. By examining masculinity and its relation to homophobia I show how, in a Hall, this is often displayed in an aggressive manner. I look at the research which shows how heteronormativity relates to Halls and the related problems. I discuss VUW policy on bullying and policy relating to LGBT students, as well as the role of the Residential Assistants/Advisors in the Hall. The latter are crucial to the day to day running of a Hall as they have an integral role in creating a safe and accepting environment for LGBT students. Other institutions, such as boarding schools, may provide similar environments for LGBT students. I will therefore discuss these with a view to making useful links with Halls.

The History of Student Accommodation

In this chapter I begin with giving a brief overview
of the history of accommodation provided at
Victoria University, Wellington, or as it was until
1967, Victoria University College of The University
of New Zealand. My focus will be mostly on
women in Halls, as in the early 20th Century
women were seen as a minority, (much in the
same way as LGBT people are viewed today). Due
to loss of the early records of the University
College, it is difficult to put an exact figure on the
number of women attending, but in a section on
examination results in *Redbrick and
Bluestockings: Women at Victoria,* Hughes and
Ahern suggest the percentage of female students
historically was substantial:

> Statistics on the first
> classes are hard to come
> by but one source states
> that of the 101 students
> who enrolled in 1899 and
> attended lectures for at
> least one year, 36 were
> women.[16]

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16 Hughes, Beryl & Ahern, Sheila, *Redbrick and Bluestockings: Women at Victoria 1899-1993* VUP (1993) pg 18.

The majority of student accommodation providers in early 20th Century New Zealand had a religious connection:

> In the Reichel–Tate survey taken in 1925, 17% of Victoria's women students and 10% of the men were living in hostels run by religious or philanthropic organisations. What the college wanted, but couldn't afford, was a hostel of its own. Its opportunity came in 1926 with the death of William Weir, a timber merchant, bachelor and friend of Robert Stout, who left the bulk of his estate – £77,500 – to the college for a hostel for male students.[17]

The first women's hostel was established as a result of the death of a woman student from

17 Barrowman, Rachel. *Victoria University 1899-1999 – A History* VUP (1999): P 87.

tuberculosis "said to have been aggravated by poor living conditions."[18]

The wife of the Bishop of Wellington, Margaret Wallis, was responsible for starting the plan to create a women's hostel – the College Council and Professorial Board did not support the idea "due to its religious affiliations"[19] even though the "advantages of her proposed hostel"[20] were to better the lives of women students through creating the right environment. One of Margaret Wallis' expectations was that:

> Everyone in it will belong to the College so that there will be a sort of diffused atmosphere of the same interests.[21]

She continued in this vein of academic collegiality stating:

> We intend there shall be few rules to be observed by the Students in it, but what we do hope is that those who make use of it

18 Hughes, Beryl & Ahern, Sheila. *Redbrick and Bluestockings: Women at Victoria 1899-1993* VUP (1993).
19 Ibid
20 Ibid
21 Ibid

will always be loyal to its principles, and will create a sort of orderly, cultured atmosphere which will be worth any amount of hard and fast rules. The house will hold about 40 girls and I am sure we shall not have the least difficulty in filling it with the pick of the Colleges. Thereby we shall not only be supplying a real want in Wellington, but shall be setting a noble example to all the other University Colleges, who only want to be shown the way in order to do it themselves. Forward, Wellington![22]

This particular hostel is still operating today as Victoria House. Mrs Wallis' aim was for:

...the house is to be of a good Christian character,

22 Ibid

although no one will be
forced to go to Prayers or
Church[23].

Hughes and Ahern argue that concerns about religious affiliation were unfounded.

Women have been attending Victoria University (Victoria University College from 1899) from when it first began accepting students. This present focus on the experience of women at Victoria and the changes made over the years is relevant to my research because women initially faced issues now common to other minorities, in this instance people who do not identify as straight.

Accommodating Victoria University students has always been problematic, whether it be the problem of the Professorial Board and their concern with religious organisations owning and operating the hostels as discussed previously the earlier lack of a College owned hostel (see page 15). As mentioned previously, Weir House was owned (and built) by the then College, along with Victoria House for women. These were the two main student hostels. Helen Lowry Hall, Karori, opened in 1949 to cater for Teachers' College

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23 Ibid

students.[24] It was also run by a religious organisation and is still operating today, albeit on a different site, and not exclusively for the Karori Education Campus, nor is it any longer women only, though it is still run by a religious board. Some things have remained the same, but generally speaking, more things have changed, not least being the integration of the sexes. In the early days and right up to the 1950's and into the 1960's the hostels were single sex, although I have not been able to find any material confirming when the change occurred or for what reason. Today's Halls are all mixed and some provide the option for a women only floor. The reasons behind these women only floors are specific to each Hall and are often a result of the particular intakes request for such a space. However, during my time working in Halls I noticed that the request to be accommodated on the women only floor usually came from parents; from women belonging to certain religions; but very rarely from the students themselves. The reason, generally, for parents requesting their daughter have a room on the female only floor is, I would argue, often because they believe she will study better without the

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24 Ibid.

distraction of the male residents. In my experience, this does not necessarily prove to be the case. Twin share rooms or two bedroom options are not mixed, despite protests from some of the residents. There is little evidence in the literature to suggest that LGBT students are given similar consideration of having a floor which is LGBT only, despite the university's assurance to provide a welcoming space for all:

> In a Hall – [is provided] a safe and supportive community of students from different backgrounds and with varying interests, with or without meals provided.[25]

This quote is taken directly from the Victoria University of Wellington's website on the section relating to accommodation. My interpretation of this statement is that VUW Halls provide an all-inclusive, widely welcoming environment.

However, Halls of Residence are heteronormative spaces and therefore problematic for LGBT students. Assuming everyone is heterosexual

25 http://www.victoria.ac.nz/accommodation/about/index.aspx viewed 15/03/14

often leads to a feeling of being unsafe for those who do not identify that way:

> It has been argued in the geographical literature that public space - and specifically urban space - can be understood as heterosexual space....it is expected that those present will be heterosexual rather than lesbian or gay. The heterosexualisation of urban space occurs through processes both subtle and overt, including self-policing by lesbians and gay men...the manifestation of moral disapproval, and the threat or use of violence.[26]

I would argue that the argument promulgated here applies to Halls which in my view exemplify heterosexual space.

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26 Brickell, Chris, Heroes and invaders: gay and lesbian pride parades and the public/private distinction in New Zealand media accounts. 2002. *Gender, Place and Culture* Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 163–178

Young People's Experience of Homophobia

pre-university

Experiences of homophobia for LGBT high school students have wide reaching effects. Research shows that depression, self-harm, substance abuse and suicide are some of the outcomes of bullying at high schools:

> Research on LGB adults suggests that LGB youth experiencing sexual orientation victimization may show greater distress than their heterosexual peers who experience similar levels of victimization.[27]

This section discusses the literature pertaining to young people's experiences of homophobia.

One of the most comprehensive New Zealand studies of young people which include sections on LGBT people is the *Youth '07 Report*[28], a

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27 Bontempo, Daniel E. & D'Augelli, Anthony R., Effects of at-School Victimisation and Sexual Orientation on Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual Youths' Health Risk Behaviour. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Issue 30 2002. Pg 365.

28 Rossen, F.V., Lucassen, M.F.G., Denny, S. & Robinson E. *Youth '07 The Health and wellbeing of secondary school students in New Zealand: Results for young people attracted to the same sex or both sexes*. Auckland:

longitudinal study of adolescents in high schools starting in 2000, with the latest edition being issued in 2013. The report was produced by the Adolescent Health Research Group at the University of Auckland. It is one of few New Zealand focused studies which highlights issues facing LGBT people in an institutional organisation, in this case, schools. Some of the people examined in this report are likely to go on to university study and the issues faced at high school, I would argue, are unlikely to disappear upon doing so. It seems reasonable to suggest that the same people who tease and bully queer people at high school may bring the same negative attitudes with them to university, unless there are sanctions against such behaviours in place.

Along with looking at a wide range of issues facing young people today, the Youth '07 report included an investigation into the bullying[29] of young queer people. The statistics clearly outline the difficulties of being young and queer. The discussion of higher rates of self-harm, depression and anxiety among same sex and both sex attracted young people in this report lead me to be conclude that

The University of Auckland. 2009.
29 Rossen et al 2009: page 26.

bullying is not only likely to have long term effects on the victim but also that someone who is the perpetrator at high school is likely to continue the same behaviour at university. As Rossen claims:

> …same/both-sex-attracted students [are] three times more likely to exhibit significant depressive symptoms when compared to their opposite-sex- attracted peers and [are] also more than twice as likely to have deliberately self-harmed…[30]

Similar findings to the *Youth '07 Report* were made in a study in the U.S:

> Students frequently report hearing negative or homophobic comments from other students and school staff and a high number of students report that they are harassed on a daily basis by other

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30 Ibid.

students because of their

sexual orientation.[31]

The Youth '07 report states that among same sex/both sexes attracted youth, fear of harassment or even violence was common:

> …twice as many same/both-sex-attracted students as opposite sex-attracted students had been afraid that someone would hurt or bother them at school.[32]

Bontempo and D'Augelli conducted an examination of the effects of bullying of LGBT youth whilst at school. They found the rates of risks to health were higher amongst this group than their heterosexual peers

> Recent studies using state-level representative samples have found victimization, substance abuse, and sexual risk

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31 Horn, Stacey S., Heterosexual adolescents' and young adults' beliefs and attitudes about homosexuality and gay and lesbian peers. *Science Direct Cognitive Development*, Issue 21. 2006.
32 Rossen, F.V. et al. 2009.

behaviours among LGB

youths to be significantly

higher than among their

heterosexual peers.[33]

Similarly, *Youth '07* reports that in New Zealand

same sex/both-sexes-attracted young people are

at a higher risk of substance abuse than their

heterosexual peers[34]

Both studies have suggested the reasons behind

these behaviours are due to negative experiences

had by LGBT people:

Researchers studying LGB

youth use "gay-related

stress" to refer to stresses

associated with coming out

as LGB, being discovered

as LGB, or being ridiculed

because of being LGB. In

addition, external stressors

related to sexual

orientation such as verbal

and physical abuse are

33 Bontempo, Daniel E. & D'Augelli, Anthony R., Effects of at-School Victimisation and Sexual Orientation on Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual Youths' Health Risk Behaviour. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Issue 30 2002. P 364.
34 Rossen et al 2009: page 29

prevalent in studies of LGB

youth.[35]

The statistics compiled in the *Youth '07* report
show some startling figures, especially around
depression and self-harm concerning disparities
between [same/both sex attracted] and opposite-
sex attracted students:

In particular, same/both sex attracted
students were three times more likely to
exhibit significant depressive symptoms
when compared to their opposite-sex
attracted peers and were also more
likely to have deliberately self-
harmed…[36]

It seems reasonable to assume that some first
year students at university will be dealing with the
after effects of such treatment not possibly
because victimisation issues have not been
resolved. In addition, some first year students are
likely to have been bullies at secondary school and
may continue in such behaviour at university and
in Halls. Consequently, LGBT students may
initially struggle with not only being able to study,

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35 Ibid Pp 364-365.
36 Rossen et al 2009: page 20.

but also feeling unsafe and may even drop out of altogether:

> [T]here is considerable
>
> research evidence to
>
> suggest that LGBT youth
>
> are overrepresented in the
>
> statistics for truancy,
>
> underachievement, and
>
> premature exit from
>
> education at secondary
>
> school (see Rivers 2000).[37]

If the university and Hall environments feel unsafe, or are not inclusive, I would argue that outcomes such as Rivers refers to above may be replicated in tertiary institutions.

One of the more startling findings to come out of the *Youth '07* report is the higher prevalence of self-harm and suicidality among same sex and both sex attracted youth, compared to their opposite sex attracted peers. This is important as it shows how, if bullying is not dealt with, the outcomes can be harmful and on occasion life threatening. While many same/both sex attracted

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37 Ellis, S.J. Diversity and inclusivity at university: a survey of the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) students in the UK. *Journal of Higher Education* 57:723–739 2009.

students are doing well with regard to their mental health, [there are] some concerning disparities between them and opposite-sex-attracted students. The authors go on to claim that:

same/both sex-attracted students are three times more likely to exhibit significant depressive symptoms (as assessed by the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale – Shallt Version) when compared to their opposite-sex attracted peers and were also more than twice as likely to have deliberately self-harmed in the previous 12 months (53% of same/both-sex-attracted compared to 19% of opposite-sex-attracted students). Of the same/both-sex-attracted students who had harmed themselves in the previous

12 months, 18% could be

considered severe

incidents (i.e. requiring

medical treatment).[38]

It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that

a student who is depressive and has developed

self-harm techniques as a method of coping may

well continue to do so, especially when confronted

with a major new event such as starting university.

The rates of suicide amongst same/both-sex-

attracted students were also reported as high, and

higher than their opposite-sex-attracted peers.

During my time working in Halls, I observed that

incidents of suicide attempts were an issue in the

Halls, and although it is not always easy to

establish the reasons for someone attempting or

completing suicide, it is possible that trying to deal

with sexuality could play a part in one's feelings

and subsequent actions. The *Youth '07* report has

these statistics for secondary school students:

Same/both-sex-attracted

students were much more

likely to report thoughts

38 Rossen, F.V., Lucassen, M.F.G., Denny, S. & Robinson, E. (2009). *Youth '07 The health and wellbeing of secondary school students in New Zealand: Results for young people attracted to the same sex or both sexes.* Auckland: The University of Auckland.

about attempting suicide

(39%) or an actual suicide

attempt in the past year

(20%) compared to

opposite-sex-attracted

students, of whom 13%

reported suicidal thoughts

and 4% suicide attempts.[39]

The report also shows an increased risk of alcohol

and drug misuse for same/both-sex-attracted

youth. These statistics are troubling and any one

of these young people could become a university

student or Hall resident.

An overview of previous research about high

schools provides a basis for comparison about

university students. Henrickson's data[40] shows

how people who choose to remain closeted for

longer are not only happier, healthier and more

satisfied with their identity, but that they also

achieve well in higher education and are earning at

a higher rate:

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39 Ibid.
40 Henrickson, Mark(2008) '"You Have to Be Strong to Be Gay": Bullying and Educational Attainment in LGB New Zealanders', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 19: 3, 67 — 85

> These data also suggest
> that coming out early as
> LGB appears associated
> with lower levels of
> educational attainment.[41]

Coming out and being open about one's sexuality is a big decision and should not be taken lightly. In the next section I will look at the coming out process.

Coming Out

There is often much consideration given by prospective students as to which university to attend and whether or not it may be a safe and inclusive place to be. Richard Taulke-Johnson is a British researcher in the fields of sexuality and gender, with a strong focus on queer theory. He is associated with Cardiff University School of Social Sciences. His research has focussed on the experiences of LGBT people attending university in the United Kingdom. In his research of gay male students and their choice of university, he

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41 Ibid.

examines what factors and influences lead to the final decision:

> The influences of participants' sexuality [those in his study] on their university choices are most evident in selecting an institution requiring a migration *away from* heterosexist and homophobic home communities and/or a migration *towards* locales expected to be supportive and accepting of alternate (i.e. non-hetero)sexualities.[42]

The expectation that university will be a more liberal and a less homophobic place is sometimes anticipated by LGBT young people thinking of taking on study. However, the effect when one finds one's hopes dashed may reinforce earlier findings of poor self-worth or the tendency to high risk behaviour:

42 Taulke-Johnson, Richard (2010): Queer Decisions? Gay male students' university choices, *Studies in Higher Education*, 35:3.

> For young LGBT students
>
> this [attending university] is
>
> often the first opportunity to
>
> explore their identity
>
> without the limiting
>
> constraints of the home
>
> and the secondary school,
>
> both of which in many
>
> cases are not gay-
>
> affirmative settings in
>
> which to 'come out'
>
> (Epstein et al, 2003).[43]

The links between school and university and the long term effects of bullying impact on the decision of when to reveal their sexual identity. Many young LGBT people see coming to university as their chance to finally live out in the open, they take this as an opportunity to come out. (See Ellis: 2009).

However, it often turns out that a Hall is not the best place to 'come out' and reveal one's sexuality. Psychologist Ellis reports:

> Many of the specific
>
> incidents of homophobic

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43 Ellis, S.J. Diversity and inclusivity at university: a survey of the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) students in the UK. *Journal of Higher Education* 57:723–739 2009

harassment and
discrimination which were
reported occurred in
student accommodation
(e.g. Halls of residence;
university assigned flats).
These incidents tended to
be much more
troublesome for the
individuals affected by
them.[44]

Ellis is not clear as to whether or not she thinks homophobia and harassment are worse in Halls than schools or society more generally, but what is clear is that her research reveals that Halls can provide a hostile environment for coming out.

Many factors have to be taken in to consideration prior to coming out. This is no less relevant at university. As stated earlier university may or may not be a good environment in which to do this as gauging the reactions of one's peers may be difficult to assess correctly, particularly initially.

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44 Ellis 2009.

D'Augelli found that hostility expressed by peers prevents many students from reporting victimization:

> Fear was also central to the substantial proportion (94%) of those who had been victimized who did not report the incident to appropriate university officials.[45]

Evans and Broido undertook a qualitative study of the 'coming out' process[46] which delves into many aspects of coming out, such as if and when, to whom, what it might mean to stay in the closet as opposed to revealing one's identity; how coming out might affect not only the individual concerned, but those around them; what might encourage a person to come out, such as support networks, involvement in LGBT politics, whether or not student services staff would be understanding or not. 'Coming out' or declaring ones sexual orientation to another they argue is a very stressful event; one has to try and determine how the other

45 D'Augelli, Anthony R., Lesbians' and gay Men's Experiences of Discrimination in a University Community, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1989.
46 Evans, Nancy J., Broido, Ellen M., Coming Out in College Residence Halls: Negotiation, Meaning Making, Challenges, Supports, *Journal of College Students Development*, 40, 6, (1999).

person is going to respond. The response issues

may be reduced if 'coming out' to a friend,

someone who is likely to have an understanding

about homosexuality. However, coming out in a

Hall to someone, such as a roommate (initially a

stranger), could be problematic because their

attitudes, and resulting response may be unknown

or uncertain:

> Coming out to one's
>
> roommate whether lesbian,
>
> gay, bisexual, or
>
> heterosexual, [presents]
>
> particular challenges.
>
> Several factors [make]
>
> coming out to roommates
>
> unique. Often the choice of
>
> a roommate [is] not
>
> voluntary, and because of
>
> the close contact and
>
> necessary interaction, the
>
> stakes [are] higher with
>
> regard to coming out. For
>
> instance, one male
>
> participant reflected "I felt
>
> like I was in a position

where if I said anything
about his repeated
homophobic comments
that I was in danger of
being beat up or
harassed." Not being out
[requires] significant self-
censorship and risk if the
roommate [finds] out. [47]

As the extract above demonstrates, the coming out
process is fraught with danger. There is also the
added risk that roommates will disclose the
information shared with them to others, thus
'outing' individual LGBT people to all in the Hall,
often albeit unknowingly or unwittingly, without
consideration of the consequences. As the Hall is
likely to be representative of the society at large,
responses are likely to be varied, but the likely
possibility is that a significant number will be
homophobic and this is what overseas research
claims, (see for example Taulke-Johnson,
D'Augelli).

It is important to understand that Halls are indeed
a microcosm of the outside world, what happens in

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47 Evans, & Broido. 1999.

the wider society is reflected in the confines of a Hall. As such, Halls are more likely to be heteronormative spaces within which particular human traits are played out such as masculinity. In the next section I will look at and discuss heteronormativity and masculinity and how they manifest in a Hall of residence.

Heteronormativity and Masculinity

Research shows that heteronormativity and masculinity are often found to be closely connected with one another in the area of Halls. As stated previously, Halls are heteronormative, a space used predominantly by heterosexual young people and as a result, they can be heterosexist, making it a complex environment for LGBT people to exist in. Most people, who enter Halls, in my experience, are assumed to be straight, initially by the staff, and also by other residents. However, it does not take long before other residents start to make their own judgments, even though in the initial stages of residence any ideas of a person's sexuality can only be assumed. There may be a rare occasion when this does not occur, for

example students have attended the same high-school, during which time an individual has come out and has ended up in the same hostel. However, in my experience sexual identity is largely unknown initially.

Taulke-Johnson has argued that some of what happens is a result of the heterosexualisation of such spaces. His findings show the often over-emphasised masculinity performed by the Hall's male inhabitants and how this impacts on their non-heterosexual roommates:

> Male flat-mates performative reinscription of prized forms of straight masculinities was key in the construction of these spaces as dominantly straight.[48]

It is often felt by young males that homosexuality is a direct threat to masculinity and therefore the overt display of masculinity, or hyper-masculinity, becomes paramount to proving heterosexuality.

48 Taulke-Johnson, Richard. 'Assertion, regulation and consent: gay students, straight flatmates, and the (hetero)sexualisation of university accommodation space.' *Gender and Education*. 2010.

Alexandra Farren Gibson examines the effects of this behaviour:

> …the men in the study had greater negative beliefs about gay men and lesbians than women, but … their views towards lesbians were more positive than their views of gay men. Arndt and de Bruin (2009) suggest that the males' negative attitudes could be explained by the threat that homosexuality poses to masculinity.[49]

Hyper-masculinity is often performed as a response to the perceived 'threat' or challenge of homosexuality. The desire of young adult males to remove themselves as far as possible from any accusation about their own sexual orientation becomes imperative in a Hall and at university. Taulke-Johnson discusses the issue of hyper-masculinity in the wider context of university. He

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49 Gibson, Alexandra Farren, *Beyond Coming Out: Lesbians' Stories of Sexual Identity in the Context of a Historically White University*, Master's By Thesis, Rhodes University. 2010 pp 50.

claims that his participants' perception was that the

Student Union was:

> ...being governed by
>
> heightened macho
>
> masculine rules of
>
> behaviour, embodied and
>
> perhaps policed
>
> by…'typical lager lout lads'
>
> and being a place where
>
> any transgression of
>
> 'acceptable' (i.e.
>
> heterosexual) behaviour
>
> was expected to be
>
> punished, perhaps
>
> severely.[50]

Although there is no mention of what the

punishment may be, some of the participants

spoke of a fear of getting their heads 'kicked in'[51].

The heteronormative and heterosexist attitude of

some of the students at university (though not

necessarily purposeful or malicious) creates an

unsafe space for anyone who does not identify as

heterosexual. Consequently, those who fall outside

50 Taulke-Johnson, R. 2008 "Moving beyond homophobia, harassment and intolerance: gay male university students' alternative narratives, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596300701802813> accessed 1/5/2014
51 Ibid.

of heterosexuality often behave self-protectively, they are acutely aware of how to behave in order to remain safe. Taulke-Johnson's data supports this:

> What became apparent from my data was how aware my participants were of this heterosexist and heteronormative discourse operating at university and how it determined and decreed what was acceptable and unacceptable conduct in particular environments and situations. They were highly conscious of the unmarked and unspoken boundaries which regulated and restricted behaviour, reflexively monitoring and modifying their gendered performance to ensure they did not purposefully

transgress heterosexual

norms.[52]

Many of these young LGBT people who are monitoring and adjusting their behaviour are already well practiced in doing so having often come from an unsupportive or homophobic home environment. In the next section, I will examine the move away from such places to what is thought by most to be a more inclusive welcoming place.

Migration – from a homophobic environment towards one expected to be more liberal

Although it is possible to argue that one of the reasons young people, whether LGBT or straight, choose to attend a university far from home in order to gain as much freedom as possible, in more recent times this has changed, likely due to cost and so if the option is available (i.e. home is in a university town) then staying at home is possible and in some cases preferred. However, it is not always the case. Due to a smaller population in New Zealand and less universities to choose from compared to the UK or USA, many residents who

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52 Ibid.

choose to live in a Hall, do so because staying at home whilst studying is not possible, especially if one comes from a small town or rural area.

In addition to examining the effect of class and sexual orientation on settling into Halls in the U.K., Taulke-Johnson examines how it can be difficult to come to terms with being gay if one comes from a small mining town or rural background and what that might mean in one's decision of where to attend university:

> Being in a small town
> where everyone knows
> everyone else – my
> grandmother has this
> network of old lady spies
> who she employs… It
> spreads, people talk. It's
> very close-knit, there's a lot
> of alliances and stuff, but
> at the same time it's very
> enclosed and very
> constricting….[53]

53 Taulke-Johnson, Richard, (2010) Queer Decisions? Gay male students' university choices, *Studies in Higher Education*, 35:3, 247-261

Comparisons can be made about this with New Zealanders coming from rural backgrounds, small towns where it might be difficult to be openly gay. However, one stark difference between Taulke-Johnson's small UK town and that of a New Zealand one is that some of his participants chose to come to universities in large cities as they were less likely to come across anyone from 'back home'. At VUW, at least, in my own experience, one is more likely to be placed in a Hall with others one was at school with, which can present its own issues. Two of Taulke-Johnson's participants expressed how they did not wish to attend the same university for this reason:

> In addition to basing their university choices on wanting to study away from their heterosexist and homophobic home communities, both Jake and Simon [participants in Taulke-Johnson's survey] said they did not want to attend the same institution

as people from these

environments.[54]

Being followed to university by the same people

who harassed and bullied you throughout high

school is problematic; however, in a small country

such as New Zealand the occurrence of such

happening is likely quite high. New Zealand is a

country with a small population and therefore

anonymity is less easily achieved. [55]

Some students who identify as LGBT may come to

university thinking, even expecting, it to be a more

liberal, open and accepting place and so the

thought of finally being able to live the life they

want and being able to express sexual identity with

more freedom becomes an influencing factor when

deciding where to enrol:

> The influences of
>
> participants' sexuality on
>
> their choices are most
>
> evident in selecting an
>
> institution requiring a
>
> migration *away from*
>
> heterosexist and

54 Taulke-Johnson, Richard. 'Queer decisions? Gay male students' university choices. *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 35, issue 3. 2010.
55 Hall, Lesley, discussions 2013

homophobic home communities and/or migration *towards* locales expected to be supportive and accepting of alternate (i.e. non-hetero)sexualities.[56]

By living in a place which supports one and is understanding of one's sexuality, a place which has a zero tolerance for bullying and knows what homophobia looks and sounds like, can surely make one's life easier. In this next section I will examine the effects of a supportive environment on the lives of LGBT Hall residents.

Supportive Environment

In my personal experience and having witnessed many others' personal journeys, coming out is often a time of high emotions; anyone thinking of sharing this part of their life has much to consider: Will I be safe? Will I be accepted? Will I lose my job? Will my family disown me? All of these things are considered (sometimes for a great length of

56 Ibid.

time) before deciding whether or not to come out to others. Trying to establish whether someone will be supportive, or not, is not easy. It is not a foregone conclusion. And it seems families are often the hardest people to come out to. There is little research on the incidence of young LGBT people being "thrown out" of home in New Zealand:

> There are no figures in
> New Zealand for homeless
> teens, but stats out of
> America show gay youth
> are 4 TIMES more likely to
> be homeless than their
> straight peers. The
> reasons in America are
> religious parents who will
> not accept that their child is
> gay. NZ needs clear
> studies and we need
> numbers on what the stats
> are like for our country in
> relation to homeless gay

teens. And we need to help them.[57]

Anecdotal evidence suggests it is less likely to happen here, at least for someone who comes out as gay or lesbian. However it does still happen to transgender youth. This is evident from my own knowledge through the volunteer work I do within the LGBT community. A young person may think their parents are supportive; the parents may have expressed liberal views in regard to homosexuality. However in my experience, there is often a big gap between theory and practice.

One of the common themes in many coming out stories is support. People who take the risk of coming out to another or others often reveal how this experience is made far easier, with better outcomes when they have received a response of support and acceptance. Evans and Broido (1999) cite D'Augelli's findings that:

> [people more] likely to disclose their sexual orientation to others...individuals who receive support and

57 http://thedailyblog.co.nz/2013/04/16/what-are-the-real-issues-facing-the-gay-community-in-new-zealand/

acceptance from others.[58]

In researching what are labelled as coming out
stories online, I noted an interesting pattern; the
positive stories are posted on official type
websites, such as Auckland's Rainbow Youth[59] (a
youth support group), whereas those with a more
negative theme seem to be posted mainly on
personal blogs or other people's blogs. Whilst I
acknowledge the benefit in sharing 'good' stories,
thus enabling the reader to get a feeling of worth
for their own coming out, it seems to me a little
naive to show only positive stories. The danger is
that someone considering coming out but initially
fearful of people's reactions may become
disillusioned by the actual responses. The
following extract from a US blog is instructive:

> When I came out as a
>
> lesbian to my mother, I
>
> was locked out of my
>
> house and screamed at for
>
> days. Now my mother
>
> pretends it never
>
> happened. I am out to

58 Evans, & Broido. 1999.
59 http://www.rainbowyouth.org.nz/ viewed 18/4/2012

most of my friends, they're

mostly accepting, but don't

take it as seriously as I'd

like them to. They still think

I'll end up with a guy. Don't

think I've ever had a

pleasant coming out story,

but I envy those who do.[60]

Negative responses, not only at home but also at

school and/or university may have a detrimental

effect on many aspects of one's life, including

one's education. According to Ellis there is a

correlation between homophobia and educational

attainment, particularly at a university level. Ellis'

research drew on a sample of 291 LGBT students

from 42 universities across the UK. In it, she

provides data to show the effects of homophobia

and transphobia in higher education and on the

successful educational outcomes for LGBT

students. She argues that under the circumstances

of homophobic bullying, it is difficult to retain these

students:

Since there is a paucity of

work on the participation

60 Anonymous, *whenicameout.com*, September, 2013.

and prospects of LGBT

students in Higher

Education, and information

on the sexual

orientation/gender identity

of students not collected; it

is impossible to determine

the extent to which LGBT

people are

underrepresented in HE

and what retention rates

look like for this group of

students. ….It would

therefore seem reasonable

to presume that **LGBT**

people should be

included within policy

and practice aimed at

facilitating access to HE

and actively supported to

ensure their retention.[61]

(emphasis mine).

This is backed up by an Australian article about

homeless university students:

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61 Ellis, S.J. Diversity and inclusivity at university: a survey of the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) students in the UK. *Higher Education* (2009) 57:723–739

> [S]afe stable
>
> accommodation...meant
>
> the difference between
>
> progressing their studies or
>
> becoming disengaged. The
>
> importance of stable
>
> accommodation as a
>
> platform for other
>
> achievements is well
>
> recognised.[62]

In order to provide support on a consistent basis, it is important for universities to develop appropriate policies and have open 'indicators' of support. Displaying obvious indications for LGBT is a good way to signal acceptance. In his PhD dissertation, James Kenneth Jackson, researched the LGBT student high-school-college experience, in which he discusses the use and benefits of supportive indicators:

> Having visible signs [of]
>
> LGBTQ students'
>
> existence and LGBTQ
>
> supportive indicators
>
> create an environment that

62 Grace, Marty, Keys, Deborah, Hart, Aaron, Homeless University Students: Experiences with Foyer-type Service, *Journal of Social Inclusion*, 3(1) 2012 43-57.

is more supportive and

affirming.[63]

It is likely that this kind of visibility is encouraging

those who are deemed 'different' and may make

them feel at ease in new surroundings. Staff can

also play an important role in making LGBT

students feel more welcome, I discuss this further

in the following section.

The role of university administration in the

perpetuation of homophobia

Ellis[64] argues that many universities have

developed policies for addressing discrimination

on the grounds of sexual orientation, but the

implementation and enforcement of these policies

is much harder in practice. It would seem

reasonable to assume that VUW has similar

difficulties in enforcing their policies and it was

certainly my experience that homophobia and

bullying in general are difficult to prevent. Such

issues as identifying the bullying and the

perpetrators; asking students to report such acts;

or naming perpetrators is problematic.

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63 Jackson, James Kenneth, *The LGBTQ Student High School-College Experience*, Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia. 2012, pp 196.
64 Ellis (2009).

Victoria University has a clause under its policy documents in the section 'Equality and Diversity Policy' which states:

> The University encourages
> diversity as a distinctive
> and positive element of the
> university community and
> endeavours to model a
> culture that is supportive,
> free from discrimination,
> harassment and bullying
> and creates an attractive
> place to learn and work.[65]

Although this is placed within the policy documents and is presented as the "Equality and Diversity Policy", it does not specifically mention LGBT students. How such a culture is to be achieved or how complaints will be dealt with is not specified. There is no specific mention of issues of homophobia and what to do in the case of homophobic bullying, whether in a Hall or the university in general. However, Waikato University, The University of Auckland and Otago University

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65 VUW Policies, Equity and Diversity Policy 2010.

all mention LGBT students in specific related policies. For example, in the University of Auckland's Equity Policy, LGBT people are specifically mentioned:

> Equity groups whose requirements need to be established and monitored include students... and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) staff and students...[66]

Under the heading Students of All Sexualities, the University of Waikato states:

> The University of Waikato is open to students from all backgrounds. The University has a strong anti-harassment policy...[67]

Mark Henrickson examined the situation for LGB students in New Zealand high schools. He concurs

66 The University of Auckland Equity Policy, 2009, pg 2.
67 http://www.waikato.ac.nz/students/student-support.shtml 12/9/13

with Ellis' view that there is a strong association between being LGB and lack of educational success. He argues that the younger a person 'comes out' the less likely they are to achieve academically and even goes so far as to state coming out at an early age may lead to unhappiness in later life:

> ...[G]ay teens who are open about their identities are subject to high levels of harassment that result in their dropping out of school, running away from home, and a host of other social challenges. Stigma results in a combined negative effect on educational achievements and that deciding one is gay during or before high school (age 17) reduces the odds of achieving a bachelor's degree. This research seems to posit a kind of heteronormative

educational Darwinism that

results in young LGB's,

who are aware of and act

on their identities relatively

early in life, self-select out

of education because of

overt hostility and

discrimination that they

encounter in their families,

society and educational

environments.[68]

The freedom associated with attending a university

away from the constraints of the family

environment and school "...wanting to be free from

town and family vigilance, scrutiny, boundaries and

restrictions."[69] will potentially allow for an

expression of self, which though not specific to

sexual identity, (e.g. political views, religious

association, sporting contact etc.) sexual identity is

likely the most problematic. If the university and

staff are not being supportive, expression of sexual

identity becomes ever more difficult. There is also

a reinforcement of heteronormativity (not

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68 Henrickson, Mark (2008) "You Have to Be Strong to Be Gay": Bullying and Educational Attainment in LGB New Zealanders', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 19: 3, 67-85.
69 Taulke-Johnson, Richard, Moving Beyond Homophobia, Harassment and Intolerance: Gay Male University Students' Alternative Narratives, Discourse: *Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 29: 1, (2008) Pg 124.

necessarily consciously) by university staff and so LGBT students have to negotiate themselves in this context:

> Instead of being havens assenting to the experimentation, exploration and engagement of gay sexualities, university spaces have been described as 'threateningly straight' (Epstein et al, 2003, pg 138)....[70]

Residential Advisors

Residential Advisors (sometimes called wardens in other literature) are an integral part of the operation of any Hall of residence:

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70 Ibid.

Residential Advisors (or RAs) are high-achieving senior students employed by the University to support residents' transition into tertiary study, to develop and maintain the Hall community and to provide leadership through the provision of social and academic learning opportunities. RAs live on-site and are assigned a group of residents. They are often the first point of contact for residents needing assistance or support as they negotiate the challenges of living in a communal environment away from home.[71]

The role of the RA is used, in the early days/weeks of residing in the Hall, to assist the residents to settle in, to familiarise themselves with life in a

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71 http://www.victoria.ac.nz/accommodation/halls/support/ra.aspx 12/9/13

Hall. This is the perfect opportunity to be sure LGBT residents are made to feel welcome from day one. Before the residents arrive, there is a training session for the RA's. When I undertook this in 2005 having been taken on as an RA for one of the VUW Halls, it took place over 3 days. There was no discussion about LGBT identities or issues which might be faced by young people such as coming out, no training on how to deal with homophobic bullying etc. However, there was some discussion on respect for people with religious affiliations and on dealing with people from other cultures.

Each Hall provides its residents with an online handbook which contains information about living in the Hall, including rules and regulations. Some of the Halls have put their handbooks online and I have looked at these to examine what, if anything, is said in regard to sexual orientation. Only one Hall uses the words 'sexual orientation' with reference to the matter of harassment. The other handbooks state harassment will not be tolerated saying residents are bound by the Student Conduct Statute. When referring to this, there is a brief section on discrimination, which in turn refers

readers to the Human Rights Act, 1993 definition

of discrimination. Although there is a hyper-link

included if you are viewing all of this online, which

takes the user through to the 'home' page for

Parliamentary Counsel Office: New Zealand

Legislation, it is difficult to find the relevant

information required.

Gibson claims that in their research with students

in the U.K.

> Rivers and Taulke-
>
> Johnson (2002) found that
>
> "homophobia is a feature
>
> of university life". Herek
>
> (1989, as cited in Rivers &
>
> Taulke-Johnson, 2002)
>
> posits that heterosexism
>
> has been recorded on
>
> every campus on which a
>
> study on LGB students has
>
> been conducted. Given
>
> more recent findings, this
>
> does not appear to have
>
> changed in the last two
>
> decades.[72]

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72 Gibson, Alexandra Farren, *Beyond Coming Out: Lesbians' Stories of Sexual Identity in the Context of a Historically White University*, Master's by Thesis, Rhodes University. 2010. pp 49.

I have used U.K. and U.S. research to make a comparison to the New Zealand situation of homophobic bullying in universities, but it is far from limited to only these three countries:

> Victimisation and discrimination is not only experienced by [LGBT] students in the USA and UK, but in South Africa as well. For instance, Graziano (2004b) reports, in his study of a South African university, that participants were met with verbal and physical abuse in their university residences, social isolation, and a paucity of support from university counsellors or faculty members.[73]

There is evidence of homophobia, bullying and harassment within universities overseas; it is, I would argue, unlikely therefore that the same thing

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73 Ibid pp 49-50

is not happening here in Aotearoa. I have discussed the evidence of the same problems occurring in high schools; however, university is not the first place it will be seen, expressed or experienced and in my next section I will discuss the familiarity with homophobia in an environment which, in some ways, is similar to that of university accommodation, boarding schools.

Other Institutions

Another area of research to make comparisons with the university Halls environment is that of boarding schools. Boarding schools are generally single sex, so in that respect they differ from Halls of Residence, however, similarities such as putting groups of strangers together to live and study are evident. Other similarities such as loyalty, competiveness and masculine performance all add to the mix and homophobic bullying can become part of this milieu:

> Although strongly
> competitive, both required
> 'loyalty' (to the school, the
> team, maybe the class), a
> degree of homosociality

(although too close
friendships were to be
discouraged) combined
with a performance of
homophobia, even while
same sex relationships
(especially between older
and younger boys) might
be countenanced with a
degree of equanimity. An
important part of the
formation of masculinities
in elite schools in both
countries [Britain and
South Africa] has been the
place which violence, often
in the form of organised
bullying, has occupied.[74]

In their article about sexual abuse in an Australian
'ruling-class' boys school, Scott Poynting,
Professor of Education, University of Western
Sydney and Mike Donaldson, National Tertiary
Education Union–New South Wales Division,
discuss the occurrence and effects of homophobic

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74 Epstein, Debbie. Marked Men: Whiteness and Masculinity, *Agenda*, No. 37, The New Man? (1998), pp. 49-
59

bullying in an all-boys boarding school. Although the article is based on a series of sexual assaults by boarders on other boarders, the manner in which the school dealt with it and tried to cover it up goes some way to showing the harm of homophobia in such an environment.

> The routineness and matter-of-factness with which the spreading knowledge was concertedly dampened by all of the school's agents involved indicates years of practice and the embeddedness of the [hegemonic masculine] culture.[75]

An often reported problem with homophobic bullying is one of reluctance to report it, often on the grounds of not being believed or of incidents not being treated seriously:

> The deafness and blindness of the school's

75 Poynting, Scott and Donaldson, Mike, Snakes and Leaders: Hegemonic Masculinity in Ruling-Class Boys' Boarding Schools, *Men and Masculinities* 2005 7: 325. Pp 329.

hierarchy coexists with the culture of the boys, which makes "dobbing" taboo, in an environment where brutalizing, humiliation, and sexual violence are normalized.[76]

LGBT and homophobia's impact on accommodation

There are many international reports on the numbers of homeless LGBT youth and adults, including reports from Stonewall Scotland a network working towards improving life for LGBT people:

According to Stonewall's research, one in five gay and lesbian people believe they are likely to be treated worse than heterosexuals when applying for social housing. The figure rises to one in four among young

76 Ibid pp 331.

(18-24) and older (over 55)

gay people.[77]

There are no official numbers for New Zealand,
however, as stated earlier, my own knowledge and
experience tells me that homelessness amongst
New Zealand youth (or at least in Wellington) is a
problem. The reason to raise the issue within this
thesis is to show that in general, LGBT people
have housing problems and therefore, it should be
assumed that tertiary accommodation will be no
different.

What came out of the literature review was
confirmation of a lack of New Zealand based
evidence, particularly relating to university
accommodation. It is also evident that from
international research that homophobia and
heterosexism are prevalent amongst tertiary
students and in my thesis, I use this research to
make comparisons with the New Zealand situation.

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77 http://www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/scotland/media/current_releases/5869.asp

73

Chapter Three

Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical

approaches and theorists that have been most

useful in the production of this thesis. I have drawn

on both feminist and queer methodologies, which

for the purposes of this thesis will in many

instances overlap i.e. the feminist theory will be

queer theory and the queer theory will be feminist:

> Queer theory, like lesbian and gay studies, has acknowledged its intellectual debts to feminist theory and women's studies, just as feminist theory has recognized the influence of queer theory. For many in the academy, feminism and queer theory are most easily understood as two branches of the same family tree of knowledge and politics, …[78]

I refer to the work of Suzanne Pharr, Richard Taulke-Johnson, Gayle Letherby, Alison Laurie, Annamarie Jagose and other feminist and queer theorists. Some of these theorists are both queer and feminist, and therefore, it could be implied their approach to research is intersectional.

Taulke-Johnson has been very useful; his research is very close to mine, in that he too has examined life in Halls for (predominantly male)

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78 Weed, E. *Feminism Meets Queer Theory,* (1997).

LGBT people, from a British point of view. As such, his work has been used as a compare/contrast type of frame work for my own analysis.

Pharr has provided an exceptional close examination of what homophobia is, and how it manifests. Her analysis of how homophobia is a heterosexist construct and therefore used as a "weapon" has helped me argue that, although homophobia does exist in Halls, it is often a case of its presence being only due to the prevalence of the heterosexist norm. In other words, the homophobia is unintentional and is a by-product of the assumption that all residents are heterosexual.

Feminist theory

In order to produce a successful, thorough thesis, I have used a variety of sources, including the media, personal accounts (both my own and others) as well as relevant academic texts. Feminist theory explores gender inequalities, which in turn links to other forms of inequalities such as those that are experienced by people who do not identify as heterosexual. Feminist theory pays close attention to the researched, particularly in relation to the human as research subject. It

tries to reduce or at least make the relationship more equitable and acknowledges that the research relationship is a power relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Because of the scarcity of relevant academic literature I shall draw on the work of Judith Halberstam (1998) who uses what she refers to as 'scavenger methodology', to provide a complex and variegated picture of 'sexuality and its construction by using diverse qualitative research methods'. This methodology allows the use of a variety of sources:

> ...information "culled from people", plus information "culled from texts", refusing "the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence"[79]

My research been informed by such data and includes reading research (New Zealand and international) on homophobia and the commonly held belief of a now wider acceptance of differing sexualities and gender variance.

79 Halberstam, J. *Female Masculinity*. Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina. Pgs 12-13 1998.

As a feminist it is important to acknowledge my research will have a feminist ideology. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain what actually makes a research topic 'feminist'; is it so because the researcher identifies as such? Is it so because the research subject (often human) is about women and issues relating to them? In my case, I believe what makes my research feminist is my self-identification as a feminist. In *Feminist Research in Theory and* Gayle Letherby explains:

> Within feminism, the term
> 'feminist methodology' is
> also sometimes used to
> describe an ideal approach
> to doing research – one
> which is respectful of
> respondents and
> acknowledges the
> subjective involvement of
> the researcher.[80]

Being an openly identifying lesbian allows me to immerse myself in this particular research topic in order to understand the common experiences, the shared knowledge and have greater empathy for

80 Letherby, G. 2003. *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice.* Open University Press, Philadelphia.

the subject matter; my sexual identity allows me to bring the reality in to a clearer focus:

> Scholars who possess the double vision of reality are also in a better position to understand various responses to oppression, particularly between action and consciousness.[81]

The term "double vision" as I have used it here, refers to my own identity which brings with it the understanding of homophobia and bullying, both generally and within Halls.

It is imperative for my research to include the 'voice' of the residents themselves. Feminist research has shown that hearing from those having the experience gives a greater understanding to the problem.

Along with Jagose, Letherby and Sedgwick, I have used Reinharz to gain a better understanding of the use of feminist theory in my research.

81 Cook, Judith A, and Fonow, Mary Margaret, *Knowledge and Women's Interests Issues of Epistemology and Methodology in Feminist Sociological Research*. In Nielsen J M, (ed) Feminist Research Methods Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences. (1990:71) Westview Press Boulder, USA.

Reinharz identifies ten themes of feminist research, and those of which are useful to my thesis are outlined here:

> Feminism is a perspective, not a research method; feminist research is guided by feminist theory; feminist research strives to represent diversity; feminist research attempts to develop special relationships with those studied; feminist research may use a variety of methods; feminist research aims to create social change; and feminist research includes the researcher as a person.[82]

I have found Reinharz' approach to feminist methodology extremely useful. In particular, my subject matter is representative of diversity; I would like my research to in some way lead to

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82 Reinharz, S. 1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research.* Oxford University Press, New York (1992: p. 240).

social change and I have included myself in the research.

Queer theory

Queer theory has also been a useful approach for this study. Queer theory has developed from feminist theory. Annemarie Jagose refers to the use of queer and its development over time in academic research:

> As queer is unaligned with any specific identity category, it has the potential to be annexed profitably to any number of discussions.

I use Jagose's (1996: p. 3) definition of queer, as an 'umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual-identifications'. This allows for a more inclusive definition of any sexual identification which is neither heterosexual nor binary; queer has been used more widely, as a term which is all encompassing, i.e. not just gay or lesbian, but to include transgender, bisexual, asexual, etc. and is shorthand for LGBT+.

Although much of feminist theory is about the gender binary and the differences between men and women, these same models can be applied to other differences, such as between white people and people of colour; between poor and wealthy; between educated and non-educated people and between heterosexuals and those who do not identify as heterosexual.

Insider/outsider research and self as source

Utilising my personal biography has been useful in this research and like Black Feminist Patricia Hill Collins, I acknowledge "in terms of 'choice of topic" its relevance to this research topic. I was also subject to homophobic treatment in the Hall as both an R.A. and Hall manager, though more so during my time as the former. Placing oneself in the research as not only researcher but researched can prove problematic, however and I have had to pay very careful attention to not pre-judge the outcomes. As someone who has been in Halls and often observed incidences of homophobia, I have had to be sure to conduct my research as someone who has insider information, but is open to other perspectives than my own. I acknowledge my subjective position and in

accordance with feminist theory refute the possibility of being objective and producing 'hygienic' research.[83] However, by openly reclaiming my position, the reader may decide for themselves whether I have acted with intellectual rigour in the production of this thesis.

The fact that I have personal knowledge and experience allows me to engage with the subject matter, with a different understanding than someone who does not have this information, someone who is an 'outsider'. I will discuss this point more in my method chapter as it has a bearing on the survey I conducted.

Dr. Robyne Garrett, Health Sciences lecturer at the University of South Australia discusses the rationale for a researcher using themselves as a source argues:

> Feminists along with other critical researchers concern themselves with what constitutes valuable knowledge and in whose interests it operates. For

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83 Oakley, Ann. *The Ann Oakley Reader: Gender, Women and Social Science*, Policy Press, Great Britain, 2005. Pg 231.

these reasons, in feminist research the researcher is encouraged to 'place' herself within the research process. Each researcher brings particular values, interests and experiences to the research and has lived through particular circumstances. While these values, interests and experience do not necessarily determine particular points of view they do give researchers perspectives in relation to topics and discussions.[84]

The knowledge and information I gained working in Victoria University's Halls of Residence are useful sources of data in my research. The values of my own perspective, not only as someone who worked in Halls, but as a self-identifying lesbian means I have 'insider' knowledge of both the university and as a lesbian. This puts me at an

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84 Garrett, Robyne. *Feminist Research Dilemmas in How Young Women Move* ® http://www.aare.edu.au

advantage and disadvantage at the same time. It is an advantage over someone who is not LGBT and has had no experience in a Hall of residence as I come to the research already understanding the difficulties for LGBT Hall residents. The disadvantage is for the same reasons; the information I already possess means I may be unable to look at the issues without a fresh eye on, I have already made judgments and reached conclusions. I have consequently made every effort to be open to differing perspectives on this subject including research that both supports and challenges my personal experience. I am a researcher who has an understanding of the situation for someone who is not heterosexual and what it means to be in the heteronormative culture of tertiary accommodation. The stories and experiences I had during the period I worked as a Residential Assistant and Hall manager provide a valid 'first person' point of view:

> An important part of…
> feminist methodology,
> more widely, is being an
> active participant in our
> own research. However,

we are mindful of

Reinharz's (1992) caution

on the problems of self-

disclosure and

'generalising exclusively'

(p.34) from our own

experience. Insider

research is modified by

hearing alternative stories

from other people.[85]

The use of my questionnaire to get an idea of how

other people experience living in Halls was my use

of modifying my 'insider' knowledge by hearing

from an alternative source to my own.

In her PhD thesis, Dr. Alison Laurie (retired senior

lecturer, Gender and Women's Studies, Victoria

University of Wellington) refers to her own situation

as an insider and talks of being both insider and

outsider at once; something which is relevant to

my own thesis:

As Trinh Minh-ha puts it, I

am "both in one

insider/outsider". Trinh

85 Giddings, L.S. and Pringle, J.K.. 2011, "Heteronormativity at work: Stories from two lesbian academics", *Women's Studies Journal*, Vol 25, No.2, December, 91-100

suggests that a researcher who "looks in from the outside, while also looking out from the inside" behaves as an outsider when she "steps back and records what never occurs to her the insider as being worth or in need of recording" (Trinh 1991, pp.74−75).[86]

This is applicable to my research in that I am an out lesbian and someone who has worked in Halls of residence. And then, as the researcher, I become the outsider by stepping back and evaluating the situation from a research perspective.

The research of Maithree Wickramasinghes has explored feminist critical theory and methodology, gender in organisations and workplaces, as well as women and gender in development. In particular, she has looked at the use of 'self' in research and the benefits gained from doing so, in her book:

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86 Laurie, Alison J., *Lady-Husbands and Kamp Ladies Pre-1970 Lesbian Life in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Victoria University of Wellington Doctor of Philosophy in Women's Studies Victoria University 2003. Pp42-43

I subscribe to the view of
attributing the researcher's
subjectivity, an integral
crosscutting role in feminist
research methodology
(along with ontology,
epistemology, theories,
research methods,
ideological politics and
ethics). Reflecting on the
subjectivity of the
researcher in researching
can give validity,
methodological rigour and
credibility to a research
study.[87]

Sociologist Jennifer Brayton claims that a feminist
researcher may be both insider and/or outsider to
the environment and topic they are exploring.

As insider, they have a
stronger understanding of
the dynamics and play of
social relationships that

87Wickramasinghee, Maithree. *Feminist Research Methodology, making meanings of meaning making*. Routledge, USA 2010. Pg55

inform the situation under

investigation.[88]

I have been an insider in the sense that I have worked and resided with students in the Halls of Residence. I have been able to gain first-hand knowledge of the difficulties experienced by those students (predominantly 1st years) who live outside of the heteronormative/binary lifestyle, many of whom appeared to feel more comfortable approaching me, as a self-identified lesbian, when they were confronting problems. However, I am also an outsider in the sense that I myself have not been a resident in tertiary accommodation as a student. I consider my personal experience to be crucial to my examination of the services and as a researcher, something which cannot be ignored. However, it is also important to acknowledge the potential problems with this in relation to research bias. As Bennachie has demonstrated, in feminist research:

...the problems caused

from being that experiential

insider are modified by

88Brayton, J. What Makes Feminist Research Feminist? The Structure of Feminist Research within the Social Sciences. http://www.unb.ca/PAR-L/win/feminmethod.htm 2010.

including opposing views.
Self-reflexivity, a central
tenet of feminist research
methodology, reduces the
risk of simply confirming
what you already know.[89]

As the literature review reveals, I have discussed
research from a variety of perspectives and
throughout this research I have continually
reflected on my research and my role as
researcher.

Otherness and power

Aside from the connection of intersectionality
between queer and feminist theory, is the
argument of 'other'. Other is the term often used
when referring to those who do not identify as
heterosexual, we may be feared; not accepted in
the mainstream, marginalized; treated differently;
even to endure different laws (such as in the
United States where an employer is still able to

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89 Bennachie, C., *Controlling Anti-Gay Hate Speech*; Wellington, VUW Press. Pg 55. 2009.

discriminate against a person for being

homosexual or transgender:

> There is no federal law that
> consistently protects LGBT
> individuals from
> employment discrimination;
> there are no state laws in
> 29 states that explicitly
> prohibit discrimination
> based on sexual
> orientation, and in 32
> states that do so based on
> gender identity. As a
> result, LGBT people face
> serious discrimination in
> employment, including
> being fired, being denied a
> promotion and
> experiencing harassment
> on the job.[90]

LGBT have also experienced the lack of marriage

equality, which, until recently, applied in New

Zealand.

90 http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/employment-non-discrimination-act 19/7/2015

'Otherness' (or 'alterity', from the Latin word for other) sits somewhat awkwardly in English (which is why we have given it quotation marks). Here it indicates the process of constituting/being actively constituted as 'other' in relation to 'one', rather than having a fixed, authentic or essential identity or social location. The idea that 'otherness' is a fluid, socially constituted, repeatedly performed relationship, rather than a stable essence, challenges the notion of an 'other' as naturally different from, and properly subordinate to, a dominant category of normal self.[91]

91 Ramazanoğlu, Caroline, and Janet Holland. *Feminist Methodology.* SAGE Publications Ltd., 2002. *SAGE Research Methods.*

The relation of 'other' in my own research is somewhat complicated; I have a variety of connections to the researched subject; a) self-identifying lesbian/queer woman; b) working knowledge and experience in Halls of residence; c)researcher. All of these identities give me some type of 'power' and knowledge. The issue of power and knowledge for a researcher using feminist methodology is problematic:

> The researcher is in a potentially powerful position to specify what differences exist, what they mean, whether they matter, and how they should be represented in research findings. This power lies in the authority, or effective ability, to name difference and to specify the boundaries and meanings of relationships.[92]

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92 Ibid. pg 107.

Therefore, the researcher can be deemed to be in a better position, to not hold 'power' over the researched, if they share commonality with the researched, if they are, as I am, to some degree an insider. However, specific to my research, being an insider is also problematic. As previously mentioned, my subject matter is of a sensitive nature; the subject of declaring ones sexuality, "coming out", requires a great deal of courage. Therefore, any participant would need to consider if "coming out" technically to me, the researcher, could potentially risk a wider revelation, could risk having their identity exposed; of specific concern would be for other residents to discover this identity (especially relevant if the participant is not 'out' in their Hall). And so, my 'power' as an insider must be handled with extreme care, whilst at the same time recognising my being an 'insider'.

Having a better understanding of my research topic can be seen as ideal; there is no need for me to gain an understanding of Hall life, of what it is to experience homophobia, or what it means to be an out lesbian. I have a closer appreciation for all of these points which a total 'outsider' may not. Linda Tuhiwai-Smith uses this very fact to explain why

research about Maori, about Maori language, history and culture should be undertaken by Maori themselves:

> ... in the aftermath of imperial and colonial encounters, indigenous people can and should initiate their own research agendas within their own communities, making the knowledge their own.[93]

Non-traditional resources

I have looked at journals, such as the *Journal of Homosexuality,* where I found an article about 'Homophobia in Heterosexual Female Undergraduates' (Matchinsky, Debra J, Iverson, Timothy G.; Vol. 31, Issue 4, 1996, pgs 123-128); and also the *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services* article Heterosexual Attitudes to Homosexuality, Homophobia at a Rural Australian University.' (Hopwood, Max, Connors, John; Vol. 14, Issue 2, 2002, pgs 271-281.). I have searched

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93 Ibid.

for information pertaining to New Zealand schools, finding only one or two newspaper articles with any relevance. However, the Youth '07 Report was based on research with New Zealand students and I have drawn heavily on this. A search of homophobia and the military produced few results that were useful. This is in line with Halbestam's scavenger methodology discussed in the Methodology section of the proposal. In addition I have used myself as a useful source of information drawing on Robyn Garrett's (Lecturer: Health and Physical Education, School of Education, University of South Australia) feminist research project:

> A key feature of feminist research is the acknowledgment that the production of knowledge is a social process in which the researcher herself plays an important part (Wolf, 1996; Flintoff, 1997). Feminists along with other critical researchers concern themselves with

what constitutes valuable
knowledge and in whose
interests it operates
(Humberstone, 1997). For
these reasons, in feminist
research the researcher is
encouraged to 'place'
herself within the research
process.[94]

I have observed, first hand, difficulties experienced
by those students (predominantly 1st years) who
live outside of the so-called 'normal' lifestyle of
heterosexuality. I consider this knowledge to be
crucial to my examination of the services and as a
researcher, something which cannot be ignored C.
Wright Mills (quoted in P. Coterill *Weaving Stories:
Personal Autobiographies in Personal Research*)
argues the 'self' as imperative to Social Science
research:

> The social scientist is not
> some autonomous being
> standing outside society.
> No-one is outside society,
> the question is where he

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94 Garrett, Robyne. Feminist Research Dilemmas in How Young Women Move® University of South
Australia: 2010 http://publications.aare.edu.au/99pap/gar99199.htm

> (*sic)* stands within it. 'The data of personal experience in feminist scholarship usually assume the form of women's personal narratives about the events of their lives, their feelings about those events, and their interpretations of them*.

I shall show that the majority of Halls of Residence in New Zealand (at least) operate with very similar guidelines and policies, examination of these shall show how this affects the LGBT wider community; although it is by no means a given that all LGBT students have the same experience, everywhere.

As a feminist it is important to acknowledge my research will have a feminist ideology. Being a feminist conducting feminist research allows me to appreciate, understand and have empathy for my subject as well as participants. In *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice* Gayle Letherby explains:

Within feminism, the term

'feminist methodology' is

also sometimes used to

describe an ideal approach

to doing research – one

which is respectful of

respondents and

acknowledges the

subjective involvement of

the researcher.[95]

Being an openly identifying lesbian allows me to

immerse myself in this particular research topic in

order to understand the common experiences, the

shared knowledge and have greater empathy for

the subject matter; my sexual identity allows me to

bring the reality into a clearer focus.

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95 Letherby, Gayle. *Feminist Theory in Research and Practice*, Open University Press: 2003.

Chapter Four

METHOD

My chosen method for collecting data was an online survey. I considered this the most appropriate method as it allowed me to reach the biggest numbers, meant I could offer anonymity, was useful as a means to collate the received information and provided the best means in which participants could complete the survey and return it to me.

It was important that the process undertaken to form my research and ultimately the outcome, personal experience play a heavy part in the construction of my thesis; whether it be my own or that of those living in Halls of residence, Victoria University. The setting of the Halls provided my primary data source. Although my questions are in the area of sexuality/homophobia/discrimination, the questions themselves were somewhat broad and responses were typically statements made from the point of view of heterosexual residents. The inclusion of heterosexual students was important to forming any conclusions, as a)

heterosexual people are in the majority and b) any form of discrimination toward those who do not identify as 'straight' comes, in my experience, predominantly, from heterosexual identifying people.

I chose to conduct an online questionnaire as the main method for my research, as the means to getting to hear the 'voices' of those living in a Hall of residence that may identify as LGBT. In order to create the right kind of survey, I first needed to establish what it was I wanted to find out. Although I have my own history as an out lesbian in a Hall, in which I experienced homophobia, I needed more than just my story to validate my thesis. I spent a great deal of time defining and refining what I wanted to ask. I needed to be sure the wording of my questions did not prompt a particular response and the questions were not leading. I needed to be able to allow the participants to provide as much information as they were willing in their own words.

Two of the first things I had to consider were a) the questions and b) ethics approval; obviously, the questions had to be set first before ethics approval could be requested. One of the biggest

considerations is that of the sensitive nature of the subject matter. Not only am I investigating the manner in which Halls handle homophobia and the heteronormativity of such environments, by conducting a questionnaire I also directly asked students to engage with the subject matter. I needed to consider how to approach the setting of my questions so as to elicit as much information as possible. I did not want to write them in such a way as to prompt particular responses, but rather allow the participants to express their own views and observations. In the earlier stages of my research I considered also conducting interviews with residents; possibly focus group type interviews or even one on one. I offered the opportunity for participants to contact me through advertising my email address on the end of the questionnaire. However, only one person took me up on this offer and after meeting with him, decided not to use the information he provided as it did not add new data to the results from the questionnaire. I could have persisted with trying to conduct interviews, but due to ongoing health issues, other aspects of my thesis completion became more important. The questionnaire was also an interesting method to

see if my own experiences were the same as the

residents of the Halls. The subject matter of my

research could be perceived as sensitive. Asking

people to share their sexual orientation and their

experiences of where they live could be seen as a

personal intrusion and so, would mean the

participants in my survey would need to trust me.

The sensitivity of the subject matter may have

reduced the number of participants. After

formulating the questionnaire (which I will discuss

later in this section), I applied to the VUW ethics

committee seeking written consent to conduct my

research, they commented on the sensitive nature

of my thesis (see appendices). Sieber and Stanley

define socially sensitive research as:

> ...studies in which there
>
> are potential
>
> consequences or
>
> implications, either directly
>
> for the participants in the
>
> research or for the class of
>
> individuals represented by
>
> the research.[96]

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96 Sieber, J. E. And Stanley, B. (1998) Ethical and professional Dimensions of Socially Sensitive Research. *American Psychologist*, 43, 49-55.

I attended a presentation, Questionnaire Design, by Dr. Phil Gendall, School of Communication, Journalism & Marketing at Massey University. He covered various aspects of questionnaire construction, and set out some of the better methods to use. He explained the necessity to firstly decide what it is you wish to answer/discover by using a questionnaire in your research; will the responses add anything to your knowledge? In order to achieve this, you need to be clear as to what your objective is in order to form the response from the respondents; in being clear in what it is you are trying to achieve, it is important to not assume respondents are aware of what you are talking about. It is also necessary to set the questions in a manner which will allow the respondents to use their own language, the questions should be "respondent oriented" and to understand the difference between 'open' and 'closed' questions. A 'closed' question will generally provide a one word answer, such as 'yes' 'no' or a short, brief reply and will limit the amount or type of information received. 'Closed' questions give the facts and are easy and quick to answer. For my research, 'closed' questions would

not be beneficial. It was important for me to encourage the respondents to provide as much information as possible, thus allowing me to provide a well-balanced argument. Open questions, on the other hand, generally lead to a longer answer, will likely prompt the respondent to reflect on the question and think about their answer. It will hopefully prompt the participant to express their feelings and opinions; it allows for a more 'free' answer. Although 'open' questions can be problematic in being time consuming and difficult to analyse, if the questionnaire is designed properly it will provide a greater, wider set of responses. Glendall emphasised importance of using the correct language when creating the questions; it will not elicit adequate responses if words are used which are not be understood by the participants, so if specific words need to be used, it is helpful to have an explanation of what they mean. It is also better to avoid the use of jargon, information carrying words, broad concepts and leading or loaded questions. Using any of these options could lead respondents to not being able to understand the questions or to provide irrelevant answers. Sometimes it can be beneficial

to have a qualifying clause at the beginning of your question. Due to the nature of my questions, I used this option for some of mine; for example "Overseas research suggests that Halls of Residence are often homophobic. In your view, does this apply in New Zealand?" This provided the respondent with a brief slice of information, allowing them to put their response into some form of context. By using a qualifying clause, the respondent can get a better understanding of the type of information the question is asking for, but at the same time, prevents the question from being 'leading' or 'loaded'. The use of these types of questions may actually lead the respondent to giving a reply which suits the researcher rather than providing a response which is their own observation or experience. For my questionnaire particularly, it was imperative that I got a very personal answer to the majority of my questions, because I am more than aware of my own observations and experience, but needed to be able to compare and contrast these with the views of the residents.

Once I had formulated the set of questions for my needs, I sent it to a number of friends, some who

identify as 'straight' and some who identify as LGBT; asking them to complete the survey and offer their feedback on such points as were the questions easy to answer? Did they flow thematically? And how long did it take to complete? By doing this, I was able to get some good feedback and felt I did not need to make any changes. Of course, it should be pointed out that they may have felt the need to give me the responses I wanted and may not have been impartial.

I then had to consider various elements to cover the confidentiality issue. Because my subject matter was sensitive, I wanted the respondents to feel they could be as honest as possible, without any repercussions. When dealing with 17 and 18 year olds and directly asking them to talk openly about their sexuality, about the Hall they are living in and their experiences with both, from their point of view, they could have been put off by fear of being 'outed' (their sexual orientation being publicly revealed) so I needed to reassure them their responses would be treated with the strictest confidentiality. To do this, I made it quite clear in my opening statement that it was impossible for

me to trace back through the survey mechanism who they were and that their responses and the survey itself would be deleted upon completion of my thesis. The first point I needed to consider in maintaining this confidentiality was how to give the residents access to the questionnaire itself.

What I wanted to learn from this questionnaire was how the LGBT residents who took my survey experience heterosexism and homophobia in the Victoria University Hall of Residence in which they resided. I have included a copy of the questionnaire in appendix 1.

From the respondents' point of view, open questions can be time consuming (not only to read, but to answer); and often the respondent does not have enough information about the topic in order to provide a good answer. For instance, my use of words such as 'heterosexism' might not be a widely or completely understood word. And so explanations of terminology were useful. Given that each response was different, it could prove problematic to analyse open question surveys. Because each response was different, based on the experience and knowledge of the individual respondent, a variety of data was collated. In order

to be able to analyse the responses in a simpler fashion, I created 'response' categories, such as (in my case) homophobia; Hall staff; background; sexual orientation identification; this helped place each response into the appropriate category and so made it easier to define the data. As there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers with open questions, there are no specific numbers to 'count'. However, by formulating categories, it was easier to claim "30% of respondents feel..." etc. I will discuss this further in my analysis chapter, but at this stage point out that this is one of the methods I used to analyse the responses to my questionnaire. It was relatively easy to provide statistics using this response category format. I could tally up the figures and give a good indication of what percentage of people answered in which particular manner.

Having decided what information I wanted to collect from my questionnaire and the questions I would use, I had to work on my ethics application. Aside from ensuring the participants could complete the questionnaire completely anonymously, I also needed to assure the ethics committee of this, to provide them with a step by

step process for achieving this and then how I would store the responses received to provide confidentiality. In order to let the committee know how I would do this, I needed to decide how I would do this. As I wanted to reach as many participants as possible, I decided to conduct the survey online. I chose this particular method for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, it was the most practical way to conduct an anonymous survey. It was important to me and the Education Department Ethics Committee that individuals could not be identified by any means. By keeping the anonymity of the respondents, I also hoped for more honest and frank answers; it is necessary to acknowledge that if a respondent understands no one will know who they are, they could also feel comfortable enough to make things up, however, this is unavoidable regardless of the method used. I also wanted to use the online method for my questionnaire, as I felt it would be the easiest way to reach the most people and young people are familiar with and often use such technology. Being able to provide a link for people to follow means more people will have access to it. I can see how this may not always be the case, as not everyone

has access to a computer, but as my respondents are all enrolled university students, I knew they should all have access to a computer. The ability to complete the questionnaire online also meant it could be done at any time, 24 hours a day and at any location; not only was it important for anonymity as explained previously, but also for the respondents to be able to complete the questionnaire without other Hall residents seeing what they were doing, the ability to complete the questionnaire in their own time and in a place of their own choosing.

I then had to assess how to create access to the questionnaire without emailing it to individual email addresses – therefore having some kind of identification from the participant – and so I examined a number of online survey software providers. I selected the university recommended software Qualtrics.com. This is easy to use software (beneficial for someone who has no experience conducting online surveys, such as I) and offered step by step instructions and a variety of questionnaire designs. As requested by the ethics committee, I provided an introduction about myself and my research, a disclaimer, contact

information – for myself and my supervisor, a consent form, a statement informing participants I had gained ethics approval. This is attached in the appendix 3. All of this was achievable with the Qualtrics software. Once I had formatted the questionnaire, I had to establish a manner in which participants could see the questionnaire and answer it without having my access logon information. I ended up using the website wikispaces.com which allowed me to create my own page, link the questionnaire to it and provide a platform for participants complete the questionnaire at their own time and pace.

The online survey was advertised around campus and in two Halls. Although the closing date was extended twice (due to low numbers and personal health issues) and the survey was re-promoted, initially, uptake was not as high as I would have liked. Whilst it is very difficult to ascertain why the take-up rate was low, several factors may be pertinent. It was very important to me to not limit the respondents to only those who do not identify as heterosexual and so my posters (which I used to advertise the survey around campus) did not specifically mention anything related to sexual

identity; therefore it may have appeared too general and thus unable to appeal to residents to participate. Not feeling as though they had enough information about the questions may have led to them just not engaging. As first year students, they may also have been busy juggling work, study and social commitments that prohibited them from undertaking another task.

The cessation of homophobia and transphobia in any community is the responsibility of all members of that community and this applies to Halls of Residence, as well as any other larger community. Therefore, my desire to encourage all residents to undertake the survey was necessary. Also, the nature of the questionnaire could be considered sensitive and being aware of this I needed to take measures to ensure those who completed the survey would remain anonymous and feel as though I had taken every agency to keep their identities unknown (see appendix 1). The explanation ends with a tick box option which participants wishing to continue on and answer the questionnaire had to tick to say they were in agreement; of course, whilst they could also tick the box to specify the did not agree to the terms

and conditions, there was no device preventing

them from simply closing the window and thus not

participating. In the opening statement I refer to my

own sexuality; my hope was this would put any

participants who identify as LGBT at ease,

knowing their responses would be viewed by

someone who is already aware of their possible

marginalisation and in telling them about myself I

was adhering to a central tenet of feminist

methodology. Of course, it is possible it also had

the opposite effect; those people who were

interested in completing the questionnaire and who

refer to themselves as heterosexual may have felt

somewhat intimidated by this revelation,

considering my sexuality as some kind of bias.

Those who fall outside of the heterosexual norm

may have been fearful of my expressing my

sexuality as a means to being able to discover

their identity. The LGBT community here in

Wellington is quite small and thus being able to

keep their anonymity may have seemed, at the

time, impossible. I did everything I possibly could

to reassure participants they would remain

anonymous, but if they felt they could be

recognised through their answers, no amount of reassurance would have helped.

In order to elicit more participants, I sent a request to the Accommodation Services at Victoria University, Wellington, asking if they could send the link to the online questionnaire to their Halls. As I conducted the survey with complete anonymity, there is no way of knowing which Halls assisted in disseminating the link; however, I did get a greater response to the survey once Accommodation Services was enlisted. In hindsight, it would have been useful from the beginning to enlist their assistance as I may have got even more uptake and would not have had to resort to promoting the questionnaire several times.

One Hall contacted me stating they were very happy to assist and asked that I provide them with a copy of the approval from the Human Ethics Committee.

Apart from my own personal experience and observations whilst working in the Halls, conducting the online survey is the only tool I have used to gather other voices. At the end of the

questionnaire, I gave a contact email address and asked participants if they wished to take part in a face to face interview, to contact me at the address provided. Again, I stressed I would keep their confidence and when transcribing any interviews in my thesis, they would not, in any way, be identified.

In the next two chapters I analyse responses to the survey.

Chapter Five

A 'straight' perspective

For the purposes of analysing the questionnaire data I have chosen to separate responses from LGBT students and straight-identified respondents (71% of the questionnaire respondents identified as heterosexual). I acknowledge that this is not unproblematic for at least two reasons. Some LGBT students may have chosen not to declare their sexual identity for a variety of reasons (see page 33), and some respondents may not have been reassured by my assurance of confidentiality.

It is not possible to discuss all the themes covered in the questionnaire. Therefore, I have chosen to discuss here the following: rural and urban responses to homosexuality and homophobia, hyper/masculinity and students' understanding and experience of homophobia, heterosexism and heteronormativity (see chapter one, page 10, for definitions of these terms).

Rural versus urban

Although I have been unable to get statistical information about the breakdown of demographics of residents' home locale, I am aware from my own experience that a significant percentage of first year students in Halls of Residence come from rural areas or small New Zealand towns, due to the location of universities. There is some research to support the view that people from rural areas may have more conservative views about homosexuality than those from urban centres. This response from one of my survey participants seems to support this:

> …Halls of Residence tend
> to house both
> cosmopolitan and non-
> cosmopolitan types of
> people [rural and urban]
> and so if people that are
> non-cosmopolitan and do

not know people that are

homosexual, then their

views might deepen even

more when they come into

contact with people that

are in the hostel, and are

homosexual.

This respondent differentiates non-cosmopolitan or rural people, and others. There is an assumption made on the part of the respondent that people who are not used to or "do not know" anyone who may identify as LGBT may become even more homophobic upon meeting someone within the Hall who does identify as LGBT.

This response is, again, an example of what Hopwood and Connors refer to in their research of rural versus urban and the idea that rural people generally hold traditional values. My questionnaire asked for a student's place of origin, with 24% stating they come from a rural background, 72% of respondents come from an urban background.

In New Zealand, urban is defined as a town or city with a minimum population of 30,000. There is no

internationally recognised definition of a 'rural'

area. Rural areas have traditionally been residual

areas not included in the urban definition.[97] Halls

are an environment which students often

experience as harsh and homophobic. Living in a

rural environment hiding one's sexuality and

deciding not come out may be more common than

in urban centres. This is often because rural areas

are very traditional, often religious and perhaps not

as tolerant of difference as evidenced in Darryl

Yarborough's examination of gay adolescents in

United States rural areas:

> Rural communities often
>
> place a much higher
>
> emphasis on traditional
>
> moral values based in
>
> fundamentalist religious
>
> beliefs than do urban
>
> centres (Lindhorst, 1997;
>
> Smith, 1997), and
>
> conformity to traditional
>
> values is demanded
>
> (Foster, 1997). These
>
> communities are also

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97 Statistics New Zealand, Defining Urban and Rural New Zealand. http://www.stats.govt.nz/ February 2013

characterized by a lack of

tolerance for diversity

(Rounds, 1998).[98]

This attitude may (to a lesser or greater extent) be

replicated here in New Zealand. A response from a

rural person in my survey claimed:

> Yes. Back at home people
>
> discriminate against gays,
>
> which may be a form of
>
> homophobia.

Although this respondent is unsure as to whether

the act of discrimination is homophobia, he or she

is clear that in the rural community from which they

come, discrimination against non-heterosexuals is

not uncommon. It must also be acknowledged that

their response may show a previous unfamiliarity

with the term 'homophobia' and so possibly stating

"may be homophobia" might suggest a reason as

to why they are unsure of any actions being

homophobia. Preston and D'Augelli also discuss

the difficulties of being gay in a rural setting. They

found that religious bias, and a lack of knowledge

added up to homophobia:

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98 Yarbrough, Darrell G. LMSW Gay Adolescents in Rural Areas, *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment*, 8:2-3, 129-144, 2003.

...casual conditions that

fuelled marginalisation of

gay men included social

homogeneity, lack of

anonymity, residents' lack

of knowledge about

homosexuality, and

traditional religious

beliefs.[99]

Having come from a rural environment, a resident

in a Hall may bring such prejudices with them as

well as negative experiences. My personal

observation of first year students in Halls is that

coming from a rural background to the capital city

in addition to identifying as homosexual is often

difficult; Halls are an environment which students

often experience as harsh and homophobic. I

would liken a Hall of residence to a small village.

Not long after arrival, everyone in the Hall knows

one another (though perhaps not particularly well),

they come and go freely from each other's rooms,

several groups from one Hall often study the same

subjects so they often spend large amounts of time

in study groups and will almost certainly socialise

99 Preston, Deborah Bray, & D'Augelli, Anthony R. The Challenges of Being a Rural Gay Man: Coping with Stigma. *Journal of Homosexuality* 2013.

together. As Preston and D'Augelli claim above such close proximity means that students' attitudes, including those towards homosexuality, may be expressed. Homophobic and heteronormative comments, especially perhaps from people from non-urban areas, may proliferate, as shown by this comment made in answer to one of my questions:

> My friends back home
> often talked about gays or
> lesbians in a disgusted
> way and I would often tell
> them to stop. I've never
> witnessed any violence or
> direct insults but they often
> criticise when out of
> earshot.

This person appears to suggest they are from a rural environment and definitely has heard friends expressing homophobic opinions. This seems to show this person is not unaware of homophobia and has acted to counter comments made by their friends; this may go some way to showing not all people from rural homes are intolerant.

A rural upbringing is likely to impact on a person's understanding and level of acceptance of those perceived to be 'different', whether queer or straight. A U.S. study which looks at the effects of bullying on young men, jointly conducted at the Universities of Nebraska and Harvard Medical School in their departments of psychiatry, in respect of the school massacres in the U.S.A. highlights differences between rural and urban areas:

> Noting the geographic locations of these events [school shootings] primarily white, middle-class rural or suburban schools, not inner cities more associated with violence, suggested that attitudes toward gender non-conformity, particularly for boys, becomes a foundation for bullying and, ultimately in some tragic

cases, for lethal school

violence.[100]

This research demonstrates bullying towards

victims was related to other students' perception of

them as different. One of the respondents to my

survey stated:

> … I have seen people at
>
> school be discriminated
>
> against by fellow peers for
>
> being gay.

Whilst New Zealand has, to date, not experienced

such horrendous acts at schools, it seems

reasonable to speculate that anyone who is bullied

may become an 'outsider' or a 'loner'. The

evidence from the U.S claims that nearly all the

young men in the U.S. school shootings were

identified as victims of bullying. This has relevance

for the current research because:

> Experiences of bullying
>
> were pervasive among
>
> GLBT youth and were
>
> related to higher rates of

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100 Swearer, Susan M., Turner, Rhonda K., Givens, Jami E. And Pollack, William S. "You're So Gay": Do Different Forms of Bullying Matter for Adolescent Males? *School of Psychology Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2008.

post-traumatic stress and

depression in adulthood.[101]

The New Zealand based Youth '07 report confirms that bullying toward LGBT youth is also occurring here. The risk of bullying and victimisation continuing into adulthood is likely and the impact of these on LGBT students is particularly instructive:

> More than half (54%) of same/both-sex-attracted students had been hit or physically harmed in the previous 12 months, [at the time of the study] compared with 42% of opposite-sex-attracted students.[102]

The report goes on to say:

> Of those students who had been bullied five times as many (33%) had been bullied because they were gay or because people

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101 Ibid.

102 Rossen, F.V., M.F.G. Lucassen, S. Denny and E. Robison. 2009. *Youth '07 The Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand: Results for Young People Attracted to Same Sex or Both Sexes.* The University of Auckland, Auckland.

thought that they were gay compared to their opposite-sex-attracted peers (6%)[103]

Australian studies by Gottschalk and Newton, Hopwood and Connors, suggest that people from rural backgrounds may have particular difficulty accepting homosexual people. As Gottchalk et al say:

Although there is some contrary evidence of supportive communities for gays in rural areas (Dahir 2000) anecdotal evidence, and some studies (see Hopwood & Connors, 2002; Leonard, 2003) note that people from rural communities hold to traditional values, are more conservative, and are less tolerant of diversity especially homosexuality[104]

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103 Ibid.
104 Gottschalk, Lorene and Newton, Janice, Rural Homophobia: Not Really Gay. *Gay & Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2009

Hopwood and Connors researched the attitudes of heterosexual students to their gay counterparts at a rural Australian University. Their research found that:

> The culture of heterosexual masculinity is a defining element of the Australian male. "Maleness" is a highly prized commodity in rural Australia, and many heterosexually identified males may feel compelled to raise barriers between themselves and gay men in order to protect their "prize".[105]

The prize talked of is that of "prized maleness", the emotional and physical state of being seen as a rugged, strong 'bloke', which means being anything but homosexual.

The concept of 'heterosexual masculinity' was raised several times by participants in their questionnaires, and often cited as an explanation

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105 Hopwood, Max and Connors, John 'Heterosexual Attitudes to Homosexuality', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 14: 2. 2002

or excuse for homophobia. This is the focus of the following section.

Masculinity

Responses demonstrated that some students need to strongly reinforce masculinity via societal expected male behaviour to counter accusations of not being masculine enough and therefore possibly gay. One responded that:

> New Zealand hegemony
> suggests that males in
> particular are supposed to
> be rugged, outdoorsy,
> rugby playing men.

The expectation that males should be "rugged, outdoorsy, rugby players" was frequently mentioned and, as Jock Philips has shown, the rugby playing bloke is a strong kiwi icon for masculinity while rugby represents the "sporting triumph of kiwi manhood".[106] Sir Edmund Hillary is described by Phillips as a fine example of Kiwi manhood:

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106 Phillips, Jock, *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male: A History*. 1996 pg 264.

129

> Hillary was the perfect
> expression of New
> Zealand's superior Anglo-
> Saxon manhood. He was
> tall, immensely strong,
> fiercely determined, with a
> long bony face – the
> picture of colonial
> honesty.[107]

Although this kiwi male is from a different generation to the one attending university in the 21st Century, rugby is still enormously popular, the national game, with players like Richie McCaw and Dan Carter being held up as examples of the 'good kiwi bloke' and white, tough, sporting heroes. The ideal of masculinity in New Zealand is white, heterosexual, an outdoorsy person, who if he doesn't play, most certainly likes rugby, racing and beer, a man who does not show his emotions and can relied upon to 'get the task done'.[108]

The import of hyper-masculinity and its impact on homophobia was mentioned by one respondent thus:

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107 Ibid
108 Ibid.

> There are many kiwi males in the Halls, and lots of these men are very masculine and strive to make this known. This could cause fear of homosexuality.

I would suggest that what this person is saying is that anyone who is not expressing ("making this known") their masculinity runs the risk of being perceived as anything other than straight.

> Masculinity is an historic, unchallenged method in which males portray themselves, make their way in the world and signal to one another who they are.[109]

I would argue that this portrayal of masculinity is played out overtly within Halls of residence and is used as a signifier of not being homosexual. It appears that many male students need to reinforce their masculinity in order to be or to feel being

109 Richardson, Diane, (2010) Youth Masculinities: Compelling Male Heterosexuality, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 61, Issue 4, pages 737–756.

accepted by their peers. Richardson argues that masculinity is the key to life as a real man:

> This, I would argue, is especially relevant to understandings of heterosexuality, where to ontologise that which they consider themselves 'to be' heterosexual subjects frequently identify what they are not: 'I'm not gay' (Richardson 2000). Kimmel (2001, 2008), for instance, argues that a central organizing principle of dominant cultural definitions of masculinity is fear of being seen as 'not a real man', especially by other men who scrutinize and ascribe meaning to their masculine performances (Robinson 2008). This fear, Kimmel argues, frequently

manifests as homophobia and anxiety about being associated with femininity.[110]

Richardson's claim reinforces what I observed in my time as an R.A. From the very outset it seems necessary for male students to stake their place in the group and to be sure that they are seen as heterosexual.

From what I have observed during my time in Halls, I would suggest the kind of behaviour which is deemed appropriate for proof of masculinity is heavy drinking, 'hooking up' with the opposite sex, playing some kind of men's sport, late night partying and disobeying rules. Taulke-Johnson's (2010) research pertaining to the (hetero)sexualisation of university accommodation supports this view. His participants talk of the 'laddish' behaviour of their male flatmates:

Male flatmates' performative reinscription of prized forms of straight masculinities was key in the construction of these

110 Ibid.

133

> spaces as dominantly
> straight. For example,
> Todd [a participant in
> Taulke-Johnson's
> research] said of his
> flatmates 'They were sort
> of macho, sort of laddy
> boys' and related 'They
> played football and drank
> cans of beer...They were
> loud'.[111]

This 'laddish' behaviour is often a part of the New Zealand culture, particularly in relation to white, middle-class privilege and many young male Hall residents may be afraid of being accused of being homosexual. One definition of homophobia is 'fear of homosexuality (see terminology page 10). In the following section, I will discuss homophobia.

Homophobia.

Suzanne Pharr argues that homophobia and heteronormativity are common in contemporary society:

111 Taulke-Johnson 2010.

> Homophobia works effectively as a weapon of sexism because it is joined with a powerful arm, heterosexism. Heterosexism creates the climate for homophobia with its assumption that the world is and must be heterosexual and its display of power and privilege as the norm. Heterosexism is the systemic display of homophobia in the institutions of society.[112]

Choosing to live in a Hall involves a financial commitment and so those who make this choice tend to come from a more affluent background, as shown in previous comments from Taulke-Johnson's research. One respondent in my research seems to think this influences the homophobic atmosphere within Halls:

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112 Pharr, 1997.

… Halls of Residences

cost lots of money and

people come from rich

conservative families that

promote homophobia.

Although this respondent's experience is that a

person who is rich is also likely to be conservative

and homophobic, research shows that the working

class are not exempt from holding such attitudes.

For example, Embrick, et al's research about

working class masculinity argued that:

White working class men

have constructed and

maintained a form of White

male solidarity, a collective

practice directed toward

women, People of Colour,

and non-heterosexuals that

maintains racism, sexism,

and homophobia in the

local, national, and global

context.[113]

113 Embrick, David G., Walther, Carol S. And Wickens, Corrine M. Working Class Masculinity: Keeping Gay Men and Lesbians out of the Workplace. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 56 2007.

People who live in Halls come from all over New Zealand and from all over the globe. They come from diverse backgrounds, though anecdotally, more appear to come from wealthy and/or middle class families. As pointed out previously by one of my respondents, living in Halls is expensive.

Taulke-Johnson refers to class and what it means for those attending university in the U.K., saying those who elect to reside in Halls of residence do so because they have financial privilege which allows them to do so:

> However, the greatest indicator of their class status was that they were all studying away from their family homes. This refers again to affluence; in that participants were able to draw upon sufficient financial resources to live away and also cultural habitus in that leaving home to attend university is a (middle)-class-based assumption and

expectation of the

normative student

biography.[114]

It is expected by all Halls that fees for accommodation are either paid in full at the beginning of the year, or paid in large quarterly instalments. I was also aware of many students whose parents provided them with a weekly allowance. Of course, this was not true for every resident.

In the next section I will discuss homophobia and heterosexism and there relation to heteronormativity.

Heteronormativity

As with New Zealand society generally, this study confirms that heterosexism and heteronormativity exist within the Halls environment, thus homophobia which "works effectively" with heterosexism creates a space which may feel unwelcoming to LGBT residents.

114 Richard Taulke-Johnson, Queer decisions? Gay male students' university choices, *Studies in Higher Education*, 35:3, 247-261. 2010

When asked for their understanding of these terms and specific examples students' responses were mixed:

> I have friends who are homophobic, they don't have a problem with gays but they don't like to think about it or see it.

This statement tends to suggest that people 'have no problem' with homosexuality provided they do not have to confront it. It could perhaps be interpreted as referring to discomfort with overt displays of affection or homosexuality as discussed by Gottchalk and Newton, Homosexuality must not be flaunted.[115]

The view that homosexuality should not be expressed in public is one that researchers describe as homophobic. For example, Pharr argues public displays of affection by heterosexuals are common and the absence of affection between LGBT people is one method by which heterosexism is perpetuated:

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115 Gottschalk, Lorene and Newton, Janice, Rural Homophobia: Not Really Gay. *Gay & Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2009

It is acceptable, then, for

heterosexuals to be

affectionate in public, to

talk about their family and

social lives, to be open

about their social networks

and activities, etc., but if

homosexuals do, then they

say that we are flaunting

our deviance.[116]

Many LGBT people in general live in constant fear

of the threat of violence and often experience it.

Many of the questionnaire responses used

language such as "them" and "they" thus 'othering'

LGBT people, and reinforcing the respondent's

heterosexuality. Using such terminology suggests

that 'those people' are not part of 'our society', it

differentiates the respondent (heterosexual) from

the other (LGBT) group.

Heterosexism

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116 Pharr 1997.

What do you understand about the term heterosexism?

Of the approximate 71% heterosexual people answering my survey, 26 of them had some knowledge of it, with responses such as:

> People that think that being straight makes you superior and gays are unnatural.

> Believing that heterosexuality is the only type of relationship that should be allowed and discriminating against LGBT people for their preferences or relationships because of this.

> I would guess it's something about, like, heterosexual supremacy?

What all of these responses reveal is that heterosexuality is the dominant view in society and

that homosexuality is unacceptable. There is an underlying suggestion that heterosexuality is privileged and that prejudice against LGBT people leads to discrimination.

39 respondents either stated they did not know the term or had a lack of familiarity with it. This seems to suggest that in an environment where heteronormativity prevails, many people are unaware of the prevalence of heterosexual privilege and how that in turn impacts on LGBT people.

24 respondents did not answer the question at all, which could mean they have no understanding of the term, or they did not want to answer for some other reason.

My next question on from the one about heteronormativity asks directly about Halls of residence:

> Overseas research suggests Halls of Residence are often homophobic. In your view, does this apply in New Zealand?

Again, the answers from the heterosexual respondents were varied, though the majority said they did not think so:

> No way!!! We fully embrace them and are a part of our hostel fully!! they too feel fully comfortable because they are very 'out their' [sic] and people seem to know who they are and love them for that.

The respondent seems to suggest they know quite a lot about "them" and how they feel. Does this person know for certain that these "out their" (sic) individuals are "fully comfortable"? And what are 'they' comfortable with? It may be possible to assume they are comfortable with the amount of homophobia experienced? I would also argue that this "out their" (sic) behaviour may in fact lead to assumptions on this respondents behalf as to the sexuality of the individuals. Although, it could be that 'they' are open about their sexual identity, as it would not be useful to make a sweeping statement that every single LGBT person in the Halls remains

closeted, but without evidence of this, one can only speculate. Another statement suggesting that this respondent has good friends whom are gay; however, they have made no indication if this "good friend" has actually informed this respondent of their sexuality, or if they are making an assumption.

> Not in this day and age. I'm
> pretty good friends with
> 'the gays' hahaha

Again, the use of "the" in this sentence puts LGBT people into a separate category, outside of the accepted so-called norm.

The comments and responses from the self-identified heterosexual participants show, overall, evidence of the heterosexist/heteronormative culture that prevails throughout society. However, it seems clear that this grouping of residents may not be complicit in homophobic behaviour. These respondents seem to believe they are not nor partake in homophobia. In the following chapter, I will analyse the responses from the residents who self-identify as LGBT and how they have found the situation in Halls.

Chapter Six

A Queer Eye

This chapter will analyse the responses to my
questionnaire from those individuals who identified
as lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual. The
separation may reveal differences as well as
similarities but, in particular, will view LGBT

experiences from the perspective of those who claim such identity.

The responses to some of my questions given by the self-identified heterosexual Hall residents suggest that there is not widespread understanding of homophobia, heteronormativity and the effects of these on themselves and their peers. In this next section, I will review the responses given by the remaining respondents.

Approximately 29% of people who completed the survey self-identified as either gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual. For ease of analysis and discussion, I will refer to all of the people's identities as one grouping and use the term LGBT, except when it may prove beneficial to refer to a single identity which may share commonalities which differ from the group as a whole.

Halls generally run their own events, separate from the other Halls, but with maybe one or two shared activities. Whilst training to become an RA, we were informed that the purpose of Orientation events is to help the residents to get to know one another and to facilitate familiarisation with Wellington. The assumption that everyone is

heterosexual can result in a heteronormative atmosphere, which in my experience is certainly the case at Halls orientation events.

As stated in chapter 2, coming out needs to be given much consideration as well as time to get to know the person/s with which you might share this information. Consequently, the first week living in Halls is probably not the time most would select to do this. However, at the same time, there is a lot going on with regard to 'staking one's place' within the hierarchy of the Hall. A person who may be more reserved or who does not seem interested in the opposite sex may stand out as different. This can lead to ongoing problems for the rest of the year in the Hall, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. As Evans, and Broido demonstrated in their study of the coming out process for university students in the U.S.:

> Individuals who have not
> disclosed their sexual
> orientation often
> experience guilt and
> anxiety as well as
> loneliness and isolation.
> They report thoughts of

suicide, self-doubt, and

self-hatred...Many

individuals stay "in the

closet" because it provides

a degree of safety from

bigotry.[117]

In this study they spoke with 20 LGBT students

aged 18-26 who resided in Halls of residence.

Although they did not specify, it would seem that

these students were at least 'out' to themselves.

This decision needs to be given much thought,

personal safety needs to be considered, as these

are people with whom students live, in close

quarters, sharing meals, bathrooms and in some

cases, bedrooms, for some length of time and

being 'accepted' and feeling safe may make a big

difference to one's ability to be successful at

university (see page 35). Coming out can make

things much easier, it means not having to be

careful of the language one uses, and being more

relaxed around others:

In general, openness to

others about sexual

orientation is associated

117 Evans, Nancy J. And Broido, Ellen M., Coming Out in College Residence Halls: Negotiation, Meaning Making, Challenges, Supports. *Journal of College Student Development*, Vol. 40, issue 6. 1999.

with better psychological

adjustment, although there

are risks associated with

such disclosures.[118]

However, the fear of bullying and homophobia can

sometimes lead to a preference to stay closeted:

The process of disclosure

or coming-out is generally

an emotionally difficult one,

but it is worsened by

negative reactions from

significant others such as

family and friends...and by

discrimination, harassment

and violence directed to

lesbians, gay males, and

bisexual people.[119]

Respondents to my survey were asked about the

orientation events and their own participation in

them and their observation of others' participation.

A high percentage of respondents chose either not

to get involved in any activities or participated in

118 D'Augelli, Anthony, R. And Hershberger, Scott L., Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth in Community Settings: Personal Challenges and Mental Health Problems, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1993 pgs 421-448

119 Ibid.

only a few. One transgender respondent stated that they had gone to all of the events, but were concerned about their compulsory nature:

> I do remember that we
> were forced to participate
> and I tried very hard to get
> out of some of them.

This respondent did not willingly participate in the events, however they claimed that they felt that non-participation was not an option. During my time as a Residential Assistant no-one was forced to participate, but there was a strong recommendation to do so because it was considered to be in the best interest of each individual to become part of the 'Hall culture', taking part in the events would foster a pride in your Hall and, it was believed, if you felt pride for your Hall, not only would you feel more at home but you might be more likely to respect your surroundings. It is of course likely that any first year student in a new Hall would feel unable to challenge the so-called rules whatever their sexual orientation.

When asked to explain the reasons for their non-attendance at orientation events the same person said:

> … I wanted to be left
> alone. And I don't like
> being around very drunk
> people, and I think I partly
> didn't want to just because
> they were compulsory - I
> don't like feeling like
> there's no way out of doing
> things.

Why they wanted to be left alone is unclear and it could or could not have anything to do with the student's gender identity. Similarly, not wanting to be around people who are intoxicated is not specific to queer people. However, research shows that alcohol can reduce a person's inhibitions:

> Alcohol acts as a
> depressant. A depressant
> is a substance that slows
> down the activity of an
> organism or one of its

parts. At the same time,

drinking alcohol also

lowers one's INHIBITIONS.

When this happens,

someone might act more

recklessly than he or she

would normally.[120]

The potential for teasing, bullying, even violence is

probably greater in such circumstances and could

explain this previous aversion to being around

drunk people. Any queer person could possibly

feel vulnerable, maybe even more than usual, at

events where alcohol use is common.

Another respondent explained why they felt

uncomfortable participating in Orientation week

events:

I didn't know the other

residents well, and was

unsure of whether or not

the rest of the participants

knew each other and

would object to someone

120 Bigelow, Barbara C Ed "Alcohol." UXL Encyclopaedia of Drugs and Addictive Substances, Vol. 1. Detroit: UXL, 2006. 26-47. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 22 Feb. 2014.

queer and outside of their

group joining in.

This response indicates that sexual orientation is indeed a factor in her reluctance to participate in orientation events. She clearly states she is concerned about her acceptance into the group.

This person expresses uncertainty about whether or not she will be accepted by the group, and it would seem she is willing to be open about her sexual orientation (questioning whether they would object to someone queer would suggest this) but she is still wary of their reactions and her acceptance . She already sees herself as an outsider, even before making any decision whether to reveal her sexual identity or not. Queer people continually have to decide when and where it is safe to come out. As Evans and Broido (1999) found:

Factors that encouraged

individuals to come out

included being around

supportive people;

perceiving the overall

climate as supportive; and

having lesbian, gay, and

bisexual role models in the

environment.[121]

This particular student's concern for her

acceptance in to the group challenged her ability to

feel comfortable during an orientation week event.

As I have said earlier, some of the concerns

experienced by people who do not identify as

straight can also be experienced by many of the

students during their first week at university.

Doubts about being accepted may be common for

LGBT students, coming out may gradually occur

over time as they feel safe to do so.

In the U.S. there are many incidents of violence

against LGBT people in universities, including the

suicide of Tyler Clementi in 2010 at Rutgers

University[122], New Jersey after he was 'outed' by

his roommate. Although I have no knowledge of

any suicides by Hall residents as a result of

bullying etc. in New Zealand, there have been

several cases of attacks against LGBT people in

Auckland and Wellington over the past 5 years.

These attacks are fairly widely known amongst the

LGBT community and I would argue would likely

121 Ibid.
122 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/30/tyler-clementi-gay-student-suicide

form part of one's consideration when thinking about revealing one's sexuality. However, these incidents may be less well known by anyone new to Wellington, particularly if they have not previously had the chance to follow the gay media.[123] As stated previously bullying is something feared by many people who identify as LGBT during any stage of their life, including whilst at university:

> The process of disclosure or coming-out is generally an emotionally difficult one, but is worsened by negative reactions from significant others such as family and friends and by discrimination, harassment and violence directed to lesbians, gay males, and bisexual people.[124]

A U.S. study conducted by Catherine McHugh Engstrom and William Sedlacek into how the heterosexual peer of gay men and lesbians felt

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123 http://www.gaynz.com/articles/publish/45/printer_13115.php viewed January, 2012
124 D'Augelli, Anthony R. And Hershberger, Scott L., Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth in Community Settings: Personal Challenges and Mental Health Problems *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1993.

about them reinforces the view that queer

residents are right to consider carefully whether or

not to come out to their peers:

> Gay male and lesbian
>
> students also experienced
>
> feelings of alienation by
>
> peers in the residence
>
> Halls and in their academic
>
> programme.[125]

The fear or concern about not being accepted or of

being victimised and bullied, whether verbally or

physically is not just something which needs to be

considered in regard to the treatment of LGBT

people. The emotional toll of such treatment can

also have an effect on a person's ability to learn

and get an education. The consequences can be

serious and may lead to dropping out of university

altogether:

> The importance of stable
>
> accommodation as a
>
> platform for other

---

125 McHugh Engstrom, Catherine and Sedlacek, William, Attitudes of Heterosexual Students Toward Their Gay Male and Lesbian Peers. *Journal of College Student Development*. Vol. 38, No. 6. 1997.

achievements is well

recognised.[126]

In my last year as a Hall manager, a student from
one Hall was transferred to the Hall I was
managing. He was not openly gay, but after
transferring to my Hall he did 'come out' to me. He
had been transferred from his original placing to
my Hall towards the end of his accommodation
contract due to a series of bad behavioural
incidents during which, regardless of what the
consequences were for him, his bad behaviour did
not change and so he was moved to the hostel I
was managing. It did not take long for either one of
us to conclude the other was gay and when I
spoke with him later following his arrival, he
confirmed this saying "He felt more comfortable
being in a Hall run by another gay person." We
had several conversations during his time with me
and it transpired that he had been the victim of
bullying based on his perceived sexual orientation.
He told me he was struggling to come to terms
with his sexuality himself and likely did not respond
in the best manner, however, he did not feel he
could approach the staff with the bullying issues.

126 Grace, Marty, Keys, Deborah, Hart Aaron, (2012) Homeless University Students: Experiences With Foyer-type Service. *Journal of Social Inclusion*, 3 (1) 2012, pgs 44-57.

His acting out was his way of dealing with his

being bullied, he did not feel he had support and

would not get anywhere by reporting the bullying.

During his stay with me, he was extremely well

behaved. Unfortunately, he did not return to

university the following year and I do not know

whether he ever has. Trish Williams et al. discuss

acting out as a response to bullying in an article

about victimisation and peer support and one of

their findings clearly shows a correlation between

trying to hide one's sexual identity and acting up

> Dealing with the
>
> experience of identifying as
>
> a sexual minority may also
>
> result in behavioural
>
> attempts to mask this
>
> status through acting out
>
> behaviours, in an effort to
>
> detract or mitigate the
>
> stress of the questioning
>
> process.[127]

Not reporting incidences of homophobia and

bullying is not uncommon, especially for first year

127 Williams, Trish, Connolly, Jennifer, Pepler, Debra and Craig, Wendy. Peer Victimization, Social Support, and Psychosocial Adjustment of Sexual Minority Adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Vol. 34, No. 5, October 2005, pp. 471–482*

students who may feel as though they should not challenge authority. Also, standing up and making a point of such issues can lead to further victimisation. D'Augelli raises the issues of not reporting abuse:

> In addition, incidents are seldom reported to authorities; the victims fear the consequences of seeking help and expect no effective action.[128]

As a result of this, it is necessary for the university to take a strong role in dealing with homophobia and bullying, with providing a positive, accepting environment which practices 'zero tolerance' to homophobic bullying. A stable, safe environment is a great way to overcome homophobia:

> …safe, stable accommodation… meant the difference between progressing their studies or becoming disengaged.[129]

---

128 D'Augelli, 1993.
129 Grace, Marty, Keys, Deborah, Hart Aaron, (2012)

Mark Henrickson, senior lecturer in Social Work, Massey University, discusses the effects of bullying on educational attainment. Henrickson states:

> High school and university experiences of being gay-identified are more likely to be characterised by stress, familial problems, and poor access to social networks and activities. Further, gay teens who are open about their identities are subject to higher levels of harassment that result in their dropping out of school, running away from home, and a host of other challenges.[130]

Henrickson has also produced data which shows the numbers of young LGB[T] (Henrickson does not include Transgender people) people who had been attacked both verbally and physically:

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130 Henrickson, Mark. You Have To Be Strong to be Gay: Bullying and Educational Attainment in LGB New Zealanders. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services* Vol. 19 Issue 3. 2008.

A large number of respondents reported having been victims of physical or verbal abuse or violence: 2,229 respondents (64.4 percent of females and 76.6 percent of males) said they had been verbally assaulted because of their sexuality, and 18.2 percent of males and 9.2 percent of females reported having been physically assaulted because of their sexuality (total n = 318).[131]

When asked about reporting incidents of homophobia, many respondents (both heterosexual and LGBT) said they did not, though some specifically said they didn't because they felt the staff would not support them:

No. It's too common and I don't think the RAs here would be able to do much

131 Ibid.

anyway because of the joking manner in which the insults are used.

I try to explain to people why saying "that's so gay" can be offensive but idk [I don't know] if anyone would really care if I reported it to staff because everyone says it and there's not really any way to regulate it.

If it's a serious one, yes. Otherwise, not to [the] RA, because they might not want to get involved.

I wanted to find out if any of the LGBT participants had any concerns about participating in any of the orientation week events; more of the heterosexual respondents said they were uncomfortable compared to the LGBT respondents, however, the reasons they gave are more, as might be expected, to do with feeling at ease than the heterosexual respondents. The reasons given by

the heterosexual respondents who did not want to participate were such things as seeing the events as childish, or boring, or not involving alcohol. This last option goes against Halls of Residence rules which prevent Halls supplying residents with alcohol; that is to say Halls do not purchase alcohol for residents to consume, however, there is little done to stop residents pre-loading and buying drinks at events which have bars, the latter usually being orientation events put on by the students association.

Two out of three transgender identifying people said they were uncomfortable, one stating the events were "too straight" and "I was uncomfortable that the events didn't seem to have space for me." These responses show how these students felt excluded by what was being organised by the Halls, that they felt ignored. Unfortunately, the second respondent stated they did feel uncomfortable, but in the second part of the questions which tried to find out why, they gave no response. This may be because they did not feel the discomfort was due to their identity and so thought any reason irrelevant to the survey, or that they were not comfortable enough to offer a

reason or may be the questionnaire did not draw them out. Lack of response to any question is always difficult to account for so I can only speculate as to why they chose not to answer in more detail. Perhaps the incidents they recalled were too painful to recount. One of the respondents who identify as bisexual had felt discomfort at the speed dating event which was arranged:

> I was with the speed dating
> because it has to be a guy
> to girl, not guy and guy or
> girl and girl. I think it placed
> some pressure on some
> people. Not surprising, that
> not everyone came.

I acknowledge that I do not have first-hand knowledge of this particular event but as someone who has worked in Halls of residence, I find it hard to believe it was purely a 'dating' scenario'. My experience would leave me to believe the event was put on as a way for the residents to get to know one another. However, from the perspective of the student this was a 'dating game' and a heterosexist one at that. The orientation week

events for the Halls are organised by the residential assistant team at each Hall. This particular event is a great example of the heteronormativity of Hall life, it does not appear to have occurred to the organisers of this event that not everyone at the Hall is heterosexual; or if it did occur to them, they had no intention of acknowledging it and by restricting the event to opposite gender couplings only, forced anyone who does not identify as heterosexual partaking to pretend to be something else or to not participate. The comment that it was:

> not surprising that not
> everyone came.

shows some understanding of the apparent lack of inclusion for non-heterosexual people within the Hall/s.

I asked if anyone had any suggestions for how to overcome people's feelings of discomfort around the o-week events. One transgender student replied that:

> perhaps inviting some of
> the queer groups in the

university to help with the

organisation more directly.

This comment suggests that the organisers were either unaware of how to be inclusive of LGBT students or hadn't given it any thought at all because of their own heterocentrism. The advantages of including queer groups in the planning would show consideration for queer residents, help prevent all events being heterosexist and give the queer residents a feeling of acceptance at the Halls and a feeling of belonging.

Almost all of the LGBT respondents either said outright that Halls in New Zealand are homophobic or thought they could be, with only three people saying they did not think so.

Homophobia as experienced in overseas studies appears intense and extreme. There have been stories in social media discussing the frequent bullying and harassment of LGBT people at U.S. universities and in a brief report written up by D'Augelli showed that of the 125 lesbians and gay men surveyed:

Nearly three fourths had

experienced verbal abuse;

26% were threatened with

violence; and 17% had

personal property

damaged. Students and

roommates were most

often those responsible.[132]

In Sonja Ellis's study of LGBT students in U.K. universities, she says that for many first year students being at university is often their first experience with openly LGBT others and it is also quite often the first time a person has the chance to explore their identity for themselves.

This too is very much the case here in New Zealand.

Again, the response from one of the trans* participants highlights the feelings of not being included:

Yes, they don't work to be

inclusive and therefore I

often feel excluded and

disadvantaged.

132 D'Augelli, Anthony R. Lesbians' and Gay Men's Experiences of Discrimination and Harassment in a University Community. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 17, No. 3 1989.

This answer, given the previous comments, is in keeping with how the LGBT respondents have felt. What did surprise me was the next answer, from a person who identifies as gay:

> Partially - I've had a couple of incidents in the Hall with homophobia; however nothing too serious and nothing that gets out of hand.

This response shows how young people can learn to accept homophobia and learn to ignore it. As previously stated by Taulke-Johnson, LGBT people learn to adapt. Saying that "nothing too serious" has happened as a way of excusing the behaviour is troubling. I would be curious to know what they consider to be a "serious" incident of homophobic bullying. In a 2008 study conducted in the USA by two Doctoral candidates, an Associate Professor from the Psychology Department at Nebraska University and an assistant clinical Professor from the department of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School concluded that:

Experiences of bullying

were pervasive among

GLBT youth and were

related to higher rates of

post- traumatic stress and

depression in

adulthood....participants

reported that bullying

based on their sexuality

started early, around 10

and 11 years old, and

tended to continue for

more than 4 years.[133]

In a study published in 2007 by Longerbeam,

Kurotsuchi Inkelas, Johnson and Lee in which they

examined the overall college experience of

lesbian, gay and bisexual students, they found

that:

Contrary to prior research

(e.g., Evans & Broido,

1999, 2002; Rhoads, 1995)

the results in this study do

not indicate that LGB

students perceive a more

133 Swearer, Susan M., Turner, Rhonda K., Givens, Jami E. And Pollack, William S. "You're So Gay": Do Different Forms of Bullying Matter for Adolescent Males? *School of Psychology Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2008.

hostile or negative climate in the residence Halls than heterosexual students. However, administrators are cautioned not to assume that the residence Hall climate is no longer a pertinent issue for LGB students. The students in this study, most of whom were in their first year of college, may not have had enough experience with the residence Hall climate to label it as hostile or unwelcoming. Indeed, in one study, LGBT juniors perceived the campus climate more negatively than did LGBT freshman. Alternatively, some students may not have been publicly out and therefore may not have

been subjected to a hostile climate.[134]

This can be related to the New Zealand experience as it supports the responses given in my questionnaire. My survey respondents were also first years, who may not have had any knowledge about being able to say how they were being treated and expecting something to be done about it.

The other answers were of a similar vein; all in agreement that New Zealand Halls of residence had, at least, the probability of being homophobic, if not actually being so. Several of the respondents described how they are not open about their own sexuality:

> Not in my experience, though that being said, there isn't sufficient numbers that I have seen who are openly LGBT in order to create a valid assessment.

134 Longerbeam, Susan D; Inkelas, Karen Kurotsuchi; Johnson, Dawn, R; Lee, Zakiya S. Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Experiences: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of College Student Development*. Vol. 48 Issue 2. 2007.

and

> I have had no experience
> with this; however, I have
> not broadcast my sexuality
> at all, admittedly for fear of
> negative responses. I have
> not had any indication that
> there would be negative
> responses; I am simply not
> willing to broadcast my
> sexuality.

These answers are evidence of what the researchers I have looked at are saying. Many LGBT residents are not being open about who they are in their Halls; they are making a conscious choice not to come out because of a fear of responses from other Hall residents. These answers confirm that people often do not come out until they feel safe to do so.

What stands out most is the difference given by the self-identifying LGBT students and the heterosexual students: the former are (as expected) much more aware of homophobia and are more likely to consider it problematic; whereas the latter might recognise when, for example, homophobic language is

used, but don't think it much of an issue. This is reflected in the international research about feeling safe about coming out at university and in particular, a Hall of Residence.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to find out from the perspective of student residents the evidence and manifestation of homophobia and heterosexism in Halls of Residence in one particular tertiary institution, Victoria University of Wellington. Given the heteronormative nature of New Zealand, it is not surprising to find my research confirms that in many ways Halls are reflective of the society in which they are located but that LGBT and heterosexual respondents have different levels of awareness and different experiences of

homophobia and heterosexism.   In this final chapter I shall discuss the main themes revealed by the existing literature and how some of the issues raised in mostly overseas research compare and contrast with my own experience (see self as source, page 68) and that of the respondents who answered my questionnaire, the main sources of data for this thesis. After summarising the findings from my research and discussing its limitations I shall provide some recommendations for how the university might make Halls more LGBT- friendly and thereby improve the student experience for all concerned.

My review of the existing relevant literature revealed that homophobia has wide-ranging effects on young LGBT people. As shown in the *Youth '07* report, depression, self-harm, substance abuse and suicide are some of the effects of bullying at high schools. As a result many LGBT student residents are likely to have been victims of homophobic bullying while others may have previously been perpetrators. The former is likely to fear repeats of such behaviour in Halls while the latter is likely to continue in the same vein if there

are no overt sanctions to prevent it. If bullying is not dealt with, the outcomes may be harmful and, on occasion, life threatening. Although there is no statistical evidence, anecdotally, suicide attempts are more frequent among LGBT students.

University is often the first opportunity for LGBT students to explore their identity without the constrictions of home and secondary school, and the opportunity to come out may be perceived as presenting itself at a Hall (see Ellis, page 35). However, previous research overseas shows that university may not be the best place in which to do so. The heteronormative culture prevalent in tertiary accommodation has been shown to provide an environment in which males in particular perform forms of "straight masculinities" in order to prove one's heterosexuality.

Homosexuality is commonly seen to pose a threat to masculinity and young adult males frequently remove themselves from any accusation about their sexual orientation.

The expectation that moving away from home, often perceived as restrictive and/or conservative and/or an unsafe environment in which to come

out to a more liberal and accepting environment such as a university is frequently a factor in a student's choice of university. However, the hope that there will be support for the student to finally be able to be open about their sexuality is commonly dashed. Support from other students, Residential Assistants and other university administrative staff is often lacking. A more common experience in tertiary accommodation is that homophobia and heterosexism are perpetuated. University spaces are instead found to be "threateningly straight".

Summary of Findings

In this study, I have surveyed 114 first year Halls of residence students from Victoria University of Wellington by asking a series of questions relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues.

In line with overseas research, most respondents expressed the view that people from rural areas hold more conservative views about LGBT people. Coming from a more urban background they claim increases one's awareness and acceptance of LGBT people. Consequently, as at least a quarter

of my respondents come from a rural area, it is possible that Halls are somewhat more homophobic than New Zealand society generally.

My data show that many people residing in Halls are known to several other people in the Halls prior to their arrival, usually because they come from the same geographical area or went to the same school. This differs from overseas research which shows that in countries with larger populations LGBT often choose to attend universities where they are unlikely to know anyone. This is a luxury more difficult to achieve in a country with a small population and with fewer universities. Previous association with Hall student residents could potentially mean that LGBT students who have previously been the victims of homophobic bullying may be placed in the same Hall as those who bullied them at high school. What the data did not reveal was the degree to which this impacted on LGBT students dropping out.

LGBT respondents claimed that queer students are generally more aware of homophobia and were able to cite examples of heterosexism and homophobia. Previous experience of homophobic bullying and victimisation means that they are

cautious about whether they come out to people and are selective about whom they choose to trust with this information.

Hypermasculinity is often portrayed by young adult males and plays out as a means to emphasise in an explicit manner the 'straightness' of an individual. This is strongly reinforced in the overseas research. Such accentuation of masculinity helps create a more heteronormative/heterosexist culture.

Responses to my question about orientation events show that many activities are heterosexist. Consequently, some LGBT students were wary of attending non-inclusive events and had the effect of emphasising their difference and increasing their feelings of vulnerability. Rather than Orientation being a welcoming time in which students feel part of the Hall community, some LGBT students have their 'otherness' confirmed and feel like outsiders.

The international research shows that homophobic incidents are underreported; this was also evident in my data. If homophobia is observed few if any respondents complain. There is a common view

that complaints would not be taken seriously by Residential Assistants and even that there is a possibility that complaining would exacerbate an already difficult situation.

Limitations of Research

My research cannot be generalised to all tertiary accommodation in New Zealand as only one university was studied. Including more locations could possibly have revealed differences as well as similarities in responses.

The analysis is limited by the number of responses received and that those who did respond self-selected their participation. As such the responses may not be representative of Hall student residents. In addition, the open ended questions which were designed to gain as much detail as possible, did not provide the in-depth, rich data I hoped for. It is difficult to account for this lack of information but one possibility was that as first year students, respondents may not have felt confident enough to write more. Such lack of confidence and/or the sensitivity of the subject matter may also account for why no respondents volunteered for one on one or group interviews.

Recommendations

The single most important recommendation to come out of this research is for Halls of Residence (particularly at VUW) to show more obvious signs of inclusion of LGBT students in their Halls, in their literature and on their website. Unlike Waikato University and the University of Otago, Victoria University does not directly address LGBT students. It does not include language which clearly shows a zero tolerance toward homophobic bullying and what to do in the case of such unacceptable behaviour. I recommend that VUW amends their literature and webpage so that rather than addressing diversity as generally as it does now that it makes direct reference to LGBT students in such a way as to show that sexual identity is no barrier to studying in the capital city.

Training which includes homophobia workshops should be provided for Residential Assistants and administrative staff. This is imperative.

Diversity training for all Hall staff would go a long way to making LGBT people feel included in the student resident community. Sign posts would be very useful, so things such as a notice board for

queer events and information from UniQ could help, though it would likely need to be lockable to prevent vandalism.

Future Research

Conducting a survey which includes more tertiary accommodation providers would be a useful area of future research.

Future research which undertakes in depth interviews with students, such as Taulke-Johnson carried out in the United Kingdom, could provide richer data about LGBT students' experience in New Zealand Halls. Interviews with other interested parties for example RAs, university administration and senior university management could also add to the body of knowledge about heterosexism and homophobia in New Zealand tertiary accommodation.

It would also be useful to extend this area of study to include more lesbians, bisexual and transgender students as much of the international research and responses to my questionnaire focuses on homophobia in relation to gay men. There is still

much more we need to know about the LGBT

student experience.

Appendices

Questionnaire

Please tick the appropriate box or fill in your answer where necessary.

Gender   M ⦙   F⦙   Other ⦙

Race/Ethnicity

Sexual Identity: Heterosexual □ Gay □ Lesbian □ Bi-sexual □ Takataapui □ Transgender □ Inter-sex □ Questioning □ Unidentified □

Country of Origin

Urban background □   Rural background □   Don't know □

By undertaking this survey, you are giving your consent for the information to be used in the research. Please note your identity will remain totally anonymous. At no stage will the researcher be contacting you individually. However, if you wish to make contact for further information, you can do so, but your name and/or contact details will at no point be made public. If you wish to be involved in possible further research such as a focus group or an interview, please inform the researcher of your willingness to be involved. Again, please be aware, your identity will not be revealed nor will any opinions be associated to you.

What factors led you to choosing this particular Hall of Residence?

Are many of the other residents people you already knew?

What do you like about living in the Hall?

List the activities your Hall arranged for Orientation week?

Which did you participate in?

What activity did you enjoy the most and why?

If you did not join in, why was that?

Do you know any LGBQT residents in your Hall

Were you or any other residents (as far as you know) uncomfortable with these activities?

What were you (or they) uncomfortable about?

How could this have been overcome?

What do you understand by the term homophobia?

What do you understand by the term Heterosexism?

Overseas research suggests that Halls of Residence are often homophobic. In your view, does this apply in New Zealand?

Have you observed an incident of homophobia in the Hall? If so, please describe this.

Did you report what you saw or heard?

Have you personally ever experienced homophobia (in Hall or elsewhere)? Explain.

If you haven't observed an example of homophobia, would you consider reporting one to Hall staff if you did?

Does your Hall of residence handbook include any policy to do with homophobia?

How do you think incidents of homophobia should be handled by Residential Assistants?

In your experience, is this done?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Takataapui, Transgender, Inter-sex (LGBQTTI)

It is the researchers intent to run a focus group to further discuss issues around the experience of living in the Hall of Residence. A small number of your peers will meet and talk about any issues raised in this questionnaire, as well as the opportunity to talk about any other points related to the topic. For example, you may feel more comfortable discussing homophobia and/or staffing related problems in this type of meeting. If you wish to be involved in a focus group please contact Sara Fraser on the details provided.

Participant Information Sheet for a Study in to the existence of homophobia in Halls of Residence at New Zealand Universities.

Researcher: Sara Fraser: School of Education Policy and Implementation, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Masters student in Gender and Women's Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. The aim of this project is to discover whether homophobia for Lesbian; Gay; Bisexual; Takataapui; Transgender; Queer;

Intersex exists in Halls of Residence at New Zealand Universities, using Victoria University Halls of Residence as an example. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I am inviting current 1st Year Students (2011) residents of Halls of Residence to participate in this study. Participants will be asked to complete a shallt questionnaire; the questions will clearly focus around homophobia, sexual identity and other related matters. It is understood by the researcher the subject matter is sensitive, which is why great lengths will be taken to maintain participants anonymity.

It is expected that the research findings will add to the body of knowledge about the student experience, particularly as it relates to 'queer' identified students in Halls of Residence in New Zealand Universities.

Should any participants feel the need to withdraw from the project, YOU MAY DO THIS at any time before the data is analysed. Just let me know at the time.

Responses collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on an anonymous basis. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally. Only grouped responses will be presented in this report. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides myself and my supervisor, Dr Lesley Hall, will see the questionnaires. The thesis will be submitted for marking and then deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Questionnaires will be destroyed five years after the end of the project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at frasersara@myvuw.ac.nz or my supervisor, Dr Lesley Hall, at the School of School of Education Policy and Implementation, at Victoria University, P O Box 600, Wellington.

Sara Fraser.

Email: sara.fraser0@gmail.com   Phone: 0212166573

Letter to Halls

Sara Fraser

Gender & Women's Studies Department

Victoria University Wellington

4 August 2011

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sara Fraser and I am conducting a Master of Arts thesis by research. I am writing this letter as a matter of courtesy to inform you of the possibility some of your residents may participate in a questionnaire and/or focus group.

The subject matter is relevant to life within the Halls of Residence.

This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Lesley Hall and Ethics Committee permission has been granted.

If you have questions, please contact me via the email address provided, however, please note some questions may not be answerable due to the delicate nature of the survey.

Yours faithfully

Sara Fraser

sara.fraser0@gmail.com

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