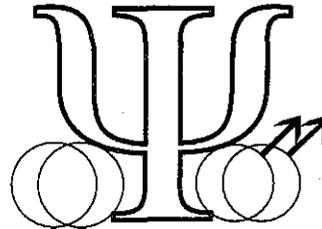


NEWS- LETTER



Association of
Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual
Psychologies (ALGBP Europe)

Nr. 8 (1), 1999

Desperately Awaiting Your 1998 Fees

You may remember that we sent you two Newsletters in 1998. However, most of you forgot to pay your 1998 fees. As announced in the last ALGBP Newsletter, we now want to print the first *Annual Review of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in European Psychology* and send it to all our members. However, we urgently need the 1998 membership fees to do so. By now, only two of the affiliated national organisations and three single members have paid. We are not able to pre-pay the print but we have already

made a commitment to our publisher. So please, send us your membership fee as soon as possible! We are convinced that the *Annual*, in addition to the Newsletters you got already, is more than worth it.

It is cheapest for you to send us a Euro-Cheque over 50 DM. Otherwise, bulk transfers (40 DM/person) are also cheaper than single transfers. Bank account: Owners: M. Steffens & B. Eschmann. Bank: PB Ludwigshafen. Bank Code: 54510067. Account-Nr. 2828 75-672



The Future of ALGBP Europe

You may have wondered why you haven't received any mail from us for so long—if you have thought of ALGBP Europe at all. We have been busy trying to work out what will happen to the association, now that the German Steering Group will “retire”. We have been in office since 1994/5, and it is definitely time for us to pass the responsibility on to somebody else.

We have of course tried to prepare for this step in the last years: It was clear to us and to those responsible for the ALGBP-UK that it would be their turn next. However, by now, they have a new Steering Group, and other people have taken responsibility for that association. They are struggling with their own problems, and it turned out that some of those responsible think they can't afford to take the extra burden of steering ALGBP Europe now.

How can we proceed? Our discussion has centred around the question, who needs what from a European association for lesbians, gay

men, and bisexuals in psychology. We think that our members in those countries where strong national associations exist do not much need an additional European association. However, the fewer members there are in a given country, the more important the European contacts become. In most countries, there are only a few members. Therefore, we think it very important that ALGBP Europe is carried on. So: Please consider whether you (yes, you!) and your friends could take an active part in the association, and if you are even remotely interested, feel free to contact us and get on our nerves with questions!

In closing, I again want to remind those of you who have not paid membership fees in 1998 that we urgently need that money, because we have already spent it on you! It would be a very sad end of our steering group work if we had to pay privately for the expenses due.

Melanie Steffens

VIth European Congress of Psychology in Rome

Following a good tradition, ALGBP contributed to the VIth European Congress of Psychology that took place in Rome, Italy, from July 4th to 9th. After a lot of excitement about the exclusion from the Organising Committee at the last congress in Dublin, Ireland, there was some of excitement this year, too. This time, the excitement referred to the 'Italianità' of the organisation, conveying some chaos concerning information on places and time schedules.

Anyway, our symposium "sexual orientation and psychotherapy" took place with very few participants. Over the time of the symposium the amount of participants ranged from 5 to 10 persons—as the congress as a whole was very poorly attended. That's a pity, because there were a bunch of interesting lectures:

Luca Pietrantonio gave a very stimulating overview of the history of sexual orientation and psychotherapy. Lisa Fox from Boston shared her qualified work on couples therapy for same-sex couples with a history of domestic violence.

From Italy, Mirella Sandonini presented her experience of group therapy with gay and lesbian clients based on a gestalt approach. Margherita Graglia gave a very worthy overview of her interviews with randomly chosen psychotherapists that showed a lot of their prejudices.

As a première, Thomas Heinrich and Margret Reipen also offered a half-day workshop on "Assessing one's own homophobia", with the main focus on sensitising participants on basic life conditions of lesbians and gay men, and on possible biases in therapeutic interactions. Methods of the workshop were Bioenergetical Analysis and Psychodrama. As all of us are used to from national efforts, the heterosexuals preferred to ignore the event. So we were alone with a group of 6 lesbian and gay colleagues from Italy, the United States and Australia. The exchange, however, was extremely rewarding, especially on internalised homophobia and its gender-based differences.

Margret Reipen



Lesbian and Gay Psychology Section in the British Psychological Society (BPS)

On December 18, 1998, the first official Lesbian and Gay Psychology Section within a national European psychological association was founded in the United Kingdom. This historic event is the culmination of nearly a decade of campaigning. Three previous proposals had been turned down (in 1991, 1993, and in 1994) by the BPS Scientific Affairs Board and/or Council on grounds that the field was "too narrow" or "too political". After intensified publishing and lobbying efforts, the fourth proposal was eventually successful, with the highest rate of anti votes, however, ever recorded in a comparable membership ballot.

The officially documented main aim of the section is "to contribute ... to removing the stigma of mental illness that has long since been associated with gay male and lesbian sexual identities and to contribute psychological per-

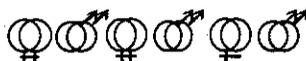
spectives to social policy initiatives which provide for better quality of life for lesbian and gay people, their families and friends" (Kitzinger, Coyle, Wilkinson, & Milton, 1997). Other aims include research, publications, and international networking.

Members of the Section Committee would welcome international dialogue. The inaugural officers are: Chair, Celia Kitzinger C.C.Kitzinger@lboro.ac.uk; Secretary, Adrian Coyle A.Coyle@surrey.ac.uk; Treasurer, Sue Wilkinson S.Wilkinson@lboro.ac.uk.

Reference

Kitzinger, C., Coyle, A., Wilkinson, S., and Milton, M. (1997). *Proposal to the British Psychological Society for the formation of a new Section of the Society on "Lesbian and Gay Psychology"*. Unpublished document.

Sue Wilkinson



NewsNewsNews

Global LGB Psychology Conference

The International Conference "Sexual Orientation, Human Rights, and Mental Health—Toward a Global Psychology" will take place in Washington DC, USA, August 8-10, 2000. It is of interest for members of national psychological associations, other health practitioners, researchers, and consultants with expertise related to sexual orientation, human rights, and mental health. Conference sponsors are the American Psychological Association and *ALGBP Europe*. *ALGBP Europe's* founder Jan Schippers and colleagues from APA's Division 44 are preparing the conference. All national psychological associations were asked to nominate experts and contribute money. However, few have answered. We want to contact them personally now. *We need the help of people in all European countries in order to do that. If you know people in your association, or if you are willing to help us, please contact Jan Schippers (schip044@wxs.nl) or Melanie Steffens (address: see last page).*

For further information, please contact: APA, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns International Conference, 750 First Street, NE, Washington DC 20002-4242, phone: +1-202 3366041, Fax: +1-202 3366040, E-mail: Publicinterest@apa.org

Adolescence Congress

From May 31 to June 4, 2000, the 7th Congress of the European Association for Research on Adolescence will take place at the University of Jena, Germany. The congress will also cover a symposium on LGB youth, organized by Anthony d'Augelli. For further information, please contact: FSU Jena, Psychological Institute, Am Steiger 3, 07743 Jena, Germany. Phone: +49-3641 945240. Fax: +49-641 945242

New Books

Wright, Janet M. (1998). *Lesbian Step Families: An Ethnography of Love*. New York, NY, US: Harrington Park Press.

Life in a lesbian step family, can, at times, be very frustrating and tiring. At least for the mothers. At least in the family I know best. Is that a personality clash between partners, or do they face structural problems that many such families share? The latter explanation is, of course, easier to cope with, all the more so if it is connected to the hope that easier times are ahead. This is one of the messages I took from Wright's portrait of five lesbian step families. It is based on her PhD project and offers insights into five American families, all very different from one another, but nevertheless struggling with similar problems—or having overcome them. Wright's methods are characterized by a feminist and ethnographic approach. She interviewed the families, made

them keep diaries, and observed them when accompanying them to an event, like the eldest daughter's baseball game. She carefully balanced the relationship between researcher and researched, for instance by giving the chapters she had written down back to the families for comments. (That made it necessary to screen the information she got from single family members, for others might be very hurt when getting access to that information.)

After an introduction of the relevant literature and of her methods, each of the families is introduced. Then, Wright focusses on several topics she identified as relevant during the study. Central questions are: What is it like to live or grow up in a lesbian step family? How do the biological mother and her partner share parenting tasks and other chores? What are the typical problems?

For instance, important differences between the mother's and the co-mother's relationship with the children become obvious. In a biological mother's words: "Through all of this, I have never doubted my kids loved me. Never doubted it, even when they told me they hated me and I ruined their life. I don't believe that. And I don't think that for a step parent it's that easy." (p. 120) In the words of a co-mother describing her position in the family: "I'm sure many lesbian step parents would say the same thing, that you're always coming into a preexisting family and forever you are not a member of that family. We may have another thing going here, but there's another family first. And that's dynamic that the mother, the biological parent, contributes to, too. And I'm not saying that fault finding—that's just a reality. There's a relationship there and it is going to be there. And, for a long time, that made me crazy. And sometimes it still makes me feel totally alone." (p. 120)

Wright's book makes it clear that there are issues which have to be discussed, and personal solutions that work best for both partners (and for the children) need to be found: Will the partner take the role of a parent or rather of a friend? How much is she committed to bringing up the children, and how much power over daily decisions does she get in turn?

Wright distinguishes three stances: the co-parent stance: her partner becomes a helper and supporter to the mother; the step-mother stance: the partner takes responsibility for many mother's duties and traditional mothering tasks, without having as much power as the mother; and the co-mother stance: the two mothers have equal rights and responsibilities with the children.

This book is definitely worth reading. For lesbians living in step families, it fills an important

gap because there has not been much literature on lesbian step-families and Wright helps clarify difficult issues and points at different individual ways to cope with this living situation.

Munson, M. & Stelboun, J.P. (Ed.). (1999). *The lesbian polyamory reader. Open relationships, non-monogamy, and casual sex*. New York, NY, US: Harrington Park Press. Co-published as *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 3 (1/2).

It is not that I have ever been really interested in non-monogamy—or, to use the new politically correct phrase, polyamory. Life is so complicated anyway, even if a partnership is only between two: Who could long for more conflict, negotiations, difficult coordination of full time schedules, and the like? Who does have an easy time when her beloved is infatuated with someone else who is just entering the open relationship?

Despite my initial disinterest, I found the *lesbian polyamory reader* fascinating and thought-provoking. It made a great bedtime read (a compliment that few, if any, scientific journals deserve). Its contributions are a splendid mixture of personal accounts, philosophical treatises, and provocative essays. The *lesbian polyamory reader* is divided into several sections: Choosing alternatives; Friends and lovers; Living the dream; and So many women, so little time.

Among the contributors are psychotherapists like Mary Hall who has previously delighted me with her account of healing "lesbian bed death"; JoAnn Loulan who has written and edited several books on lesbian love life; professors specializing in lesbian studies like Karla Jay; and activists like Kitaka, the woman who ran the lesbian ecstasy lounge in San Francisco. Additionally, there are contributions in unconventional formats, for instance, a song text by Alix Dobkin; a newspaper article by Ellen Orleans, writer of humor books (*The butches of Madison County*); and a heart-breaking poem by Amanda Kovattana, in which the protagonist remains in as much of a relationship as she can get for years after the other two women have effectively excluded her from it and live monogamously.

To conclude: There surely is life after monogamy, and lots of different ways to live it, too.

Sutton, L. (1999). *Love matters. A book of lesbian romance and relationships*. New York, NY, US: Harrington Park Press.

Be honest: You always loved to read these advice columns in magazines in which love, sex, and relationship issues were discussed, didn't you? The great pleasure you took in it was maybe somehow reduced because two important things were usually missing there: non-heterosexuals on the one hand, and humor on the other. *Love matters* is a book version of an advice column

that originally appeared in *New Phazes*, a gay and lesbian newspaper in Colorado. Linda Sutton is a psychotherapist working in private practice. Her articles, however, draw more on her personal experiences than on her professional personality. They make an unusual and quick fun read. At times, though, there was a bit too much of "we know how to live the perfect 14-year relationship and you don't" for my taste. Anyway, the articles are packed with important thoughts, reflections, and insights, and I could not wait to discuss them with close friends and with my partner—admittedly, of much less than 14 years.

Atkins, D. (Ed.). (1998). *Looking queer. Body image and identity in lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender communities*. New York, NY, US: Harrington Park Press.

Have you ever felt your relationship with food and weight was not all that easy? Have you ever wondered about appearance norms in our communities? Are you interested in reading personal accounts or scientific studies on these matters? Could moving stories of angry, mutilated intersexuals make a good read for you? Have you ever wondered how it feels to be queer and fat? If you reply yes to any of these questions, the more than 450 pages of *Looking queer* will offer something interesting to you. At times, I wished Atkins had edited the contributions more actively. Some authors make footnotes on the studies they cite, others have a References section, some have both, and—worst of all!—some have neither. And I cannot take claims seriously like "the two studies that have been conducted on intersexuality both found..." unless I find the appropriate references. Anyway, I enjoyed reading the book a lot, including the "non-scientific" contributions.

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NEWSLETTER

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