EDITORIAL

In our time the borders of gender categories tend to blur, while sexual orientation issues are being framed in enlarged terms, defying definitions such as lesbian, gay, hetero and bisexual. Whereas poststructuralist and queer theories suggest ways of rethinking gender and sexual identities, we propose a digital publication on lesbian issues.

Is it relevant to have a publication exclusively dedicated to lesbian issues? For us, the editorial team of this publication, the answer is obvious. What needs clarification are our motives.

Queer work has reconceptualised sexual identities as shifting and unstable, as positions offered by discursive structures rather than properties of individuals. The logical link and correspondence between biological sex, gender and desire has been challenged by theorists such as Judith Butler so that all gender is seen as necessarily performative, suggesting alternative ways of examining the particular ways in which lesbians ‘do’ gender and relate to masculinity and femininity (Eves, 2004).

The coexistence of diverse lesbian identities and experiences facilitate the incorporation of new meanings into everyday lives. New ‘alternative’ ways of being coexist with long time established perspectives of lesbian identities (Farquhar, 2000).

We assume a position based on poststructuralist and queer approaches to the concept of space where homosexuality is lived. This concept enabled theorizations to go beyond the reliance on spatial metaphors of inside/outside and which see spaces as multiple, and fragmented. As Valentine (2002, 118) says: “The dualistic categorizations – insider/outside – which are often based on other dualisms such as “white/black”, “male/female”, “heterosexual/homosexual” have also been challenged because of the way they obscure the diversity of experiences and viewpoints between and within various groups.”

Following embodied approaches to research, we believe that knowledge is produced in specific contexts and circumstances and that the acknowledgment of the situatedness of knowledge leads to recognition of the importance of the “position” or “positionality” of the researcher, of her/his specific embodied locations. In this perspective, it is important that researchers are self-reflexive assuming explicit positions in order to overcome false notions of neutrality (Valentine, 2002).

We have a common background of voluntary work in lesbian support groups of a non governmental organization focused on the fight for the civil rights of lesbian women. This experience gave us an insight of the everyday life of women who engage in sexual/emotional relationships with other women; of their social and psychological experiences, expectations, fears and anxieties. We worked with very heterogeneous groups of women but with some common issues, such as being women and living in a social discriminatory context. It became
evident the lack of specific approaches to these women’s realities that included strongly diverse socio-economical, political and psychological dimensions.

We believe that those different dimensions create a specific landscape that is not completely addressable and understandable by using a feminist or LGBT analysis. This question is the starting point of LES Online. We invited researchers and activists to share their views and arguments on the following problem: Lesbian issues are often addressed within the framework of feminist or LGBT issues. Are there lesbian issues that are not visible when using a feminist or LGBT frameworks? Is there a need for a specific approach?

We thank the authors of the following papers for their contributions to a better understanding of these questions.

REFERENCES

