



Breaking out of the Binary: A queer feminist approach to practice in LGBTIQ+ Family Violence / Intimate Partner Violence

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Authors / trainers

Breaking out of the Binary has been developed by Kate Foord and Maryclare Machen, managers at drummond street's queerspace. This training module combines Maryclare's decades-long experience, both as practitioner and as CEO, in the integrated family violence service sector with Kate's background in queer theory, gender studies and mental health practice in mainstream and LGBTIQ+-specialist service delivery.

Kate Foord is general manager of queerspace at drummond street services, and a practising clinician in the team. She has a PhD in social theory, and has published in refereed journals and edited collections on whiteness, gender, psychoanalysis, and a range of LGBTIQ+ issues.

Maryclare Machen is a former CEO of Eastern Domestic Violence Service and manager of queerspace's Q Respect program for queer people experiencing intimate partner or family violence. She has a background in research in lesbian intimate partner violence.

Synopsis

Breaking out of the Binary, the training module was developed in response to a clear absence in the integrated family violence sector of an intersectional practice approach that is inclusive of, and responsive to, LGBTIQ+ people. The module demonstrates a practice approach both for individual practitioners and family violence services in their work with queer people who are experiencing family / intimate partner violence.

The learning outcomes for *Breaking out of the Binary* are to enable practitioners and services to:

- Identify and respond to LGBTIQ+ intimate partner violence and family violence
- Integrate queer feminist thinking into FV/IPV Practice
- Build into practice an approach that questions assumptions within a robust conceptual framework

To enable a queer-sensitive and queer-affirmative practice requires considerably more than adopting a non-discriminatory stance or putting rainbow flags in the waiting room; it requires examining how current practice should change. In *Breaking out of the Binary* we demonstrate why this requires moving beyond the traditional gender lens approach taken by the mainstream integrated family violence sector. We then show how to do this, not by giving up an analysis of the gendered and patriarchal nature of power but by reworking this gendered analysis of power with queer theory's notions of gender, sex and sexuality. In this, we honour and build on women's responses to family violence / intimate partner violence over the last five decades whilst building a practice approach that is truly intersectional, inclusive of the complexity of all people including LGBTIQ+.

There are 6 key elements of the practice model, which work in interaction with each other:

- Understanding LGBTIQ+-specific risk and protective factors, including differential factors across the different cohorts included within the queer umbrella
- Reworking key terms, redefining them to be inclusive of the experience of LGBTIQ people
- Understanding the different experiences of LGBTIQ+ people within queer communities as well as in interaction with mainstream communities and mainstream services
- Describing and applying a queer feminist and postcolonial theory approach, which includes disrupting binary thinking and embracing a practice model that questions the assumptions that are implicit in binary thinking (including responding to people on the basis of sexual or gender 'identity')
- Refining the use of the traditional foundation of the application of the gender lens in mainstream family violence practice---Pence's Four Pillars
- Demonstrating and putting into practice the conceptual components of a rigorous mode of listening to the client's experience and situation

Breaking out of the Binary demonstrates why it is so important to expand practice in the ways described above. It does this by providing two versions of the same case study:

1. an initial version which gives the typical detail of an initial intake, which people are asked to respond to in relation to the violence of the relationships and the associated risk
2. a second version which gives greater detail, and which gives people the opportunity to ask where their assumptions (based on binary thinking) were at play and what consequences these had for their assessment of risk and protective factors and appropriate clinical interventions and referral pathways

In our experience delivering this training, there is no group, whether comprising senior practitioner in family violence or non-practitioners, that does not encounter their own assumptions. The group therefore comes to an understanding of the very real service delivery consequences of such assumptions and the potentially serious outcomes for clients. This chapter includes qualitative analysis of the outcomes for participants.

For all inquiries regarding the training and to book in please call on 9663 6733, email inquiries@ds.org.au or book from the queerspace website www.queerspace.org.au