Perceived Discrimination in LGBTIQ Discourse from Australia: A Typology of Verbal Discrimination

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New within the field of discourse analysis, perceived discrimination (PD) is the study of discourse that focuses on the perspectives of the victims of discrimination. This article explores the experiences of verbal discrimination as reported by eighteen LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning) participants during semi-structured, co-constructed interviews. Data was classified in order to develop a taxonomy of discrimination based on Mellor (2003; 2004) who foregrounds two types of discrimination: verbal and behavioural. In this paper, I identify the forms of verbal discrimination encountered by the participants and offer an analysis of the discourse used in the construction of the experiences and effects reported. The results show that verbal discrimination is mainly triggered by a perceived transgression of the normalised standards of people's behaviour, movements and appearance in a heterosexist society. I identify and describe three subtypes of discrimination through the analysis of keywords, effects and expressions. Participants resorted to several discursive strategies when conveying their intentions: mitigation strategies when wanting to minimize the experience; and hedging and repetition for emphasis and to convey urgency and pervasiveness. Metaphorical expressions related to internal or external injuries were also used to express the powerful effect of verbal discrimination on people.

LGBTIQ discrimination in Australia

Discrimination in general is classically defined as a phenomenon that involves 'deny[ing] to individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may

wish' (Allport 1979: 51). Recognized as a worldwide experience, discrimination in terms of gender and sexuality is no exception (Koken, Bimbi & Parson 2009; Chin 2004; Dougherty, Baiocchi-Wagner & McGuire 2011; Griffith & Hebl 2002; Hebl *et al.* 2002). Australia is not known for being a LGBTIQ-friendly place at a macro level, that is, in the legal and social arenas. There is little protection under federal law from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (AHRC 2011). While religious and other institutions are exempted from anti-discriminatory laws, in most states same sex couples do not have the possibility of marrying and adopting children. Federal law still considers '(homo)sexual advances' a mitigating factor in cases of violent assault, while the law in the state of Queensland discriminates against LGBTIQ people in terms of the age of consent (see Waites 2003 for the case of the UK). Research also confirms negative attitudes among the Australian population toward LGBTIQ people and rights (Johnson, Madisson & Patridge 2011), although more recent polls on same-sex marriage (2009–2012) have shown that 64 percent of Australians approve changes in the existing law (Galaxy Research 2012).

In the Australian media LGBTIQ people are almost invisible and hence are not considered a 'normal' part of society; thus their appearance in the public sphere often elicits immediate controversy. Two examples can be noted here. One was a public attack on the children's program Play School (ABC) in 2004 for showing a segment in which a girl had two mothers (Allan & Burridge 2006). The other was in 2011 when billboards displaying an ad for condoms featuring two men were taken down after public outcry in Brisbane. In 2011 the Australian Human Rights Commission published a report showing the results of public consultation on the experiences and views of people who may have been discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation or sex and/or gender identity. The majority of the participants identified a need for greater legal protection given the high levels of discrimination, violence, harassment and bullying faced by LGBTIQ people in Australia (AHRC 2011).

Perceived discrimination and discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is a method of carrying out linguistic and social research that has its basis in the ancient study of rhetoric (van Dijk 1996). Generally speaking, it studies language in use in the form of text, written or spoken, and within a context, to help understand human systems. Discourse analysis assumes two elementary assertions: first,

that language is 'constitutive,' meaning that language is not considered static and referential only but as 'the site where meanings are created and changed' (Taylor 2001: 6). Second, discourse needs to be understood in its situated context as linguistic activity brings forth cognitive and cultural resources (Fauconnier 2004).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has traditionally studied elite discourse in order to expose unequal power relations and manipulation (Fairclough 1995, 2002; van Dijk 1997; Wodak & Meyer 2009). It centres on those who have the power to impose their views and how their discourse is used to perpetuate and 'normalize' dominant ideologies. My research, however, belongs to a small number of studies that have focused on the perspectives of the victims of discrimination to develop a greater understanding of their discourses by classifying their accounts and examining how people who have experienced discrimination convey these stories (Mellor 2003, 2004; Merino 2006, Merino *et al.* 2009). This article is guided by the following research questions: How can the participants' experiences of discrimination be classified? What examples of verbal discrimination can be found? How are these experiences manifested in discourse?

Participants

In attempting to uncover answers to the above questions, my research involved interviews with eighteen people who self-identified as LGBTIQ members of the community. The sample included an age range of 18 to 62 years old; however, fifteen of the participants were young adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Sixteen of the participants had tertiary qualifications and two had completed secondary education. The interviewees were all interviewed in the Brisbane Metropolitan Area. Fifteen of the interviewees were Australians, one was a US citizen, one a UK citizen and one a Singaporean. Nine people identified as gay or lesbian, three as bisexual, six as transgender, seven as queer, and five used other terms not included in the acronym. Some participants used more than one term to refer to their self-identification. They were recruited using a snowball sampling technique (Lindlof & Taylor 2011), the starting point being the Queer Collective organization at The University of Queensland.

Procedure

Ethical Clearance from The University of Queensland was obtained before initiating the research. Open-ended interviews were conducted in different locations, according to

which venue was more comfortable for the participants (their home, the researcher's office, university spaces). Being aware that an interviewer has an impact on the way that the participants respond, a trained research assistant who was a member of the LGBTIQ community conducted the interviews. Hence, the 'active interview' (Holstein & Gubrium 1995) and 'co-constructed interview' (Miller 2011; Talmy 2011) approach was used, as these accept that both participants are involved in the process of constructing meaning. In these cases the interviewer intentionally activates narrative production (Holstein & Gubrium 1995), engaging with the participant by offering their own experiences as an example, asking definitions for clarification, using colloquial and in-group language, and providing narrative linkage and narrative shift, among other strategies. The participants in my study received an information sheet and a consent form that explained the aims and nature of my research, and that they would expect to be asked about experiences of discrimination. They were told that their participation would be anonymous and confidential.

Analysis methods: taxonomy

The data were transcribed and then classified manually into themes in terms of frequency and salience. I used the software *Leximancer* to create semantic fields and validate the classification. Mellor's taxonomy of discrimination (2003; 2004) was then used as a guide to classify discrimination. Mellor used his taxonomy for the first time in the case of Aboriginal Australians (2003) and replicated it for Vietnamese immigrants (2004). The taxonomy was again used and adapted by Merino *et al*. (2009) for the case of Chile's Mapuche people, evidence of the taxonomy's applicability across social and cultural groups. The taxonomy identifies four categories of perceived discrimination: verbal racism; behavioural racism; discrimination (for example, denying opportunities available to others in the community and excessive targeting); and macro racism. The last two categories include discrimination at a level that involves institutional participation, and that may also involve legal issues, cultural dominance, and biased historical accounts. Given those features, I adapted the taxonomy according to the specificity of the data collected and the interests of the researcher. That is, given that I concentrate on everyday speech and interactions, the last two forms of discrimination were not included in this analysis.

Results

After coding the data on themes that emerged in the semi-structured questions answered by the participants, a taxonomy of discrimination was created based on the taxonomy of racism and discrimination proposed by Mellor (2003, 2004), and Merino *et al.* (2009). I identified in the data two major categories of discrimination: verbal and behavioural. In this section I identify the forms of verbal discrimination encountered and offer an analysis of the discourse used in the construction of the experiences and of the effects reported, as is evident in Figure 1 below.
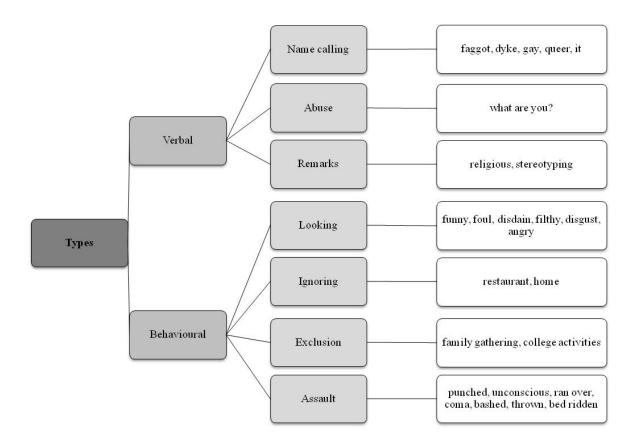

Figure 1. Taxonomy of discrimination according to the experiences reported by LGBTIQ participants.

Verbal discrimination: name-calling, abuse, remarks

Research has proven that language plays an important role in the reproduction of social inequality, with both quantitative and qualitative studies reporting that verbal harassment is the most common form of victimization among minorities (Pilkington & D'Augelli 1995; Thurlow 2001; Merino *et al.*, 2009). However, it is common to encounter attempts in the mass media and popular culture that are intended to discredit some language uses such as 'inclusive language' and attention to 'political correctness'

(Lakoff 2000; Allan & Burridge 2006). Political correctness (an unfortunate term that emphasizes mandating) has at times inspired resistance given it can be considered to be a form of manipulation in which speakers are told to change their linguistic habits (Allan & Burridge 2006). Interestingly, opposition to political correctness is more often found in people with conservative political views who do not themselves hold stigmatized identities (Santos 2007). Nonetheless, anti-discriminatory language policies have been effective in changing habits and foregrounding issues around discrimination that were socially invisible until recently. Indeed, homophobic and/or heterosexist language is a psychological stressor that begins early at home, is perpetuated in the school system, and is disturbingly common in everyday life. In spite of this, it does not receive the same attention and sanctions as those found in the case of insults related to ethnic or religious backgrounds (Thurlow 2001).

Triggering

In general, verbal discrimination seems to be triggered by a perceived transgression of the normalized standards of people's behaviour, movements and appearance (look). People who perform verbal discrimination seem to do so in order to chastise their victims as they feel 'discomfort,' which is part of a cultural aversion to non-heterosexual people who do not conform to the gender/sexuality roles assigned in a heterosexist society (Judith Butler cited in Taylor 2010). People, especially people in groups, may feel the need to police what is considered normal and to regard participants as perpetrators, active offenders 'doing' something in a violating way (Fernández Díaz 2003; see Mellor 2004 for a similar explanation in the case of Vietnamese immigrants). Figure 2 summarises the types of actions that triggered the act of discrimination in my data.

The cases of verbal discrimination presented are classified as circumstances of heterosexism. For heterosexism, I use Herek's (1991: 90) definition as it applies at both the individual and the cultural levels (religion, law, media and popular culture), that is, as an 'ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship, or community.' Verbal discrimination presented three forms: name-calling, abuse and remarks. These subcategories are presented and illustrated below.
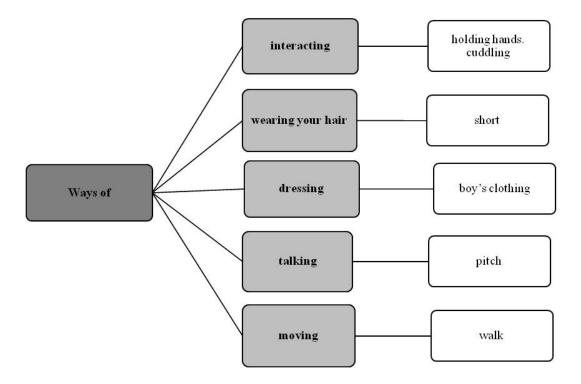
Figure 2: Types of gender performance that triggered discrimination in the experiences reported by LGBTIQ participants.

1. Name-calling

To be called a name is among the first forms of linguistic injuries that one learns (Butler 1997). In name-calling a person is abused directly 'by assailing them with contemptuous, perhaps insolent, language that may include an element of bragging.' (Allan & Burridge 2006: 79). The intention is normally to hurt the 'other' as well as to find acceptance in or sense of belonging to a specific group. The motive for name-calling may initiate as fear of what one does not understand or know, or fear of becoming the very other that is being rejected. In the cases at hand, verbal insults were triggered by gender performance, that is, physical appearance and behaviour that did not comply with heteronormative conventions (Tikkun 2010). Participants were aware that their defying of gender norms had produced the reactions.

Name-calling was reported to be the most common form of discrimination among the participants (16/18). In fact, name-calling was so common that its mention was made almost *in passim* by several of the interviewees, as if its commonness made them not worth mentioning it as a case of discrimination. Name-calling came from strangers in groups or individuals (in all cases identified as young males); they were not reported as coming from family members whose discrimination more often took the form of

remarks and insults in relation to both gender and sexuality. Consider the samples below:

> Sample 1
> P3[1]: I've never gotten anything like overtly negative. None of my lecturers have ever had a go at me about it. You get the *usual* stupid people walking through the Great Court like calling you a faggot or something, but as far people I've actually met face-to-face, I don't think there's been anything. (My emphasis)

> Sample 2
> P4: There was a lot of shit from when I lived in Mackay, but Brisbane is a very different place. The worst I've gotten is *numerous* people yelling at me from cars as they're going past, calling me a poofter, a faggot, a dyke. (My emphasis)

Samples 1 and 2 provide an example of the discursive strategy called 'mitigation' (Flores-Ferrán 2010; Martinovski 2006), where the experience of discrimination is blocked with a preceding generalization: 'never gotten anything like overtly negative'; 'There was a lot of shit from when I lived in Mackay.' We know that for cognitive reasons English would normally topicalize at the beginning of a sentence; thus the information that comes second would be secondary in importance. Moreover, the use of ambiguous intensifiers of frequency and quantity ('usual,' 'numerous') in a general and open-ended way foregrounds the idea of these events being common and expected, and therefore unimportant in comparison with other unstated experiences. This is because important events are supposed to be remembered and described in detail. These participants seem to suggest that because these experiences are pervasive, anticipated and perpetrated by strangers (not 'face-to-face' as expressed in sample 1, by unknown 'numerous people' as in sample 2), they are not 'serious' cases of discrimination.

Mitigating name-calling in this way could be a coping strategy in which downgrading its importance in discourse would downgrade it in the mind of the experiencer (Martinovski 2006). It may also respond to the wish of not wanting to position oneself as a helpless victim but as a resilient experiencer (Quinton 2003; Branscombe & Schmitt 1999; Taylor, Wood & Lichtman 1983). This is supported by the demographics of this group, which present the cultural capital of education and the social capital of network connections. Sample 1 refers to name-calling within a university campus. This participant does not show surprise at this behaviour although other participants did expect less discrimination in campus (see sample 3 below). Research has identified a

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[1] The use of the letter 'P' stands for 'participant,' followed by a number associated with the chronological order of the interviews.

'narcissism epidemic' within the Millennial Generation (Henderson & Murdock 2012; Twenge & Foster 2008, 2010), that is, in comparison with other generations 'Millennials may have trouble empathizing with other groups due to an elevated sense of entitlement and the tendency to view higher education from a consumer's perspective' (Henderson & Murdock 2012: 186). Unlike samples 1 and 2, sample 3 does not mitigate the experience and reflects on the negative effect of name-calling ('dykes' in this case) that emerges, especially when participants are caught by surprise.

> Sample 3
> P10: But then the mood of enjoying whatever night it was is effectively ruined for some time, yeah. I think, also, that is how we reacted because we were in an environment where we felt supported in general. Like I said, where I expected people to know better and I expect people in general to look down on any behaviour that's discriminating against you because of your sexuality. Whereas, I think, if I was in a scenario where I felt unsafe or worried and that happened to me in my country town, where I don't really know how safe it is in general, I would be more likely to then try and act straight. As possible as that is.

As explained in sample 3, the shock of name-calling is strong when discrimination takes place in spaces that are supposed to be exempt from these situations. Verbal assault here is magnified by being unanticipated. The unforseen nature of the situation unsettles the private frame the recipient was in before the act, and creates a violent, instantaneous, 'loss of context' (Butler 1997), that is, a context in which the participant was performing their gender naturally (not 'acting straight' as mentioned later). Overt discrimination was not part of the 'university' frame (Lakoff 2010), as it would be of the frame 'country town' for participant 10 (and 8 below, see sample 4): this created a situation of uncertainty. Most people with a stigmatized identity tend to be constantly on their guard. This is pervasively present throughout my data in the use of key words such as 'lucky' which foregrounds the idea of unpredictability and lack of control, and hedges such as 'most of the time,' 'not yet,' 'so far,' and the downtoner 'just' (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989) marking (minimal) presence. Sample 4 shows a reflection on this point, emphasized by the repetition of 'just':

> Sample 4
> P8: But the fear of it happening is just—it's just significant … You know, it's not like we're in some country town in the middle of nowhere—it's Brisbane. It's like the most progressive part of Queensland; I should be like okay here, and it just—I don't know; it just doesn't feel like you can be a hundred per cent safe, you know?

Faggot and dyke

The most common words used in name-calling were 'faggot' ('poofter' was mentioned

only by older informants which may mean that the term is in disuse), 'gay,' and 'dyke,' accompanied by the emphatic general pejorative 'fucken' (Croom 2014). Depending on the situation, the degree of aggressiveness and intentionality varied; however, they were always uttered with a pejorative connotation. The triggering factor was visual in terms of physical appearance ('looking the stereotype' according to the perpetrator) and of behaviour (mainly holding hands or 'snuggling').

Studies have shown that the use of the word 'faggot' when indirectly expressed in a group of young males refers to anything that is viewed as uncool, cowardly, and unmanly (Aerts *et al.,* 2012; Thurlow 2001; Plumer 2001), which seems to be the case in sample 5 below. 'Faggot' and 'poofter' are especially marked as having a developmental history that is important in adolescent male peer-group dynamics. Their meaning and frequency of use vary from childhood to adolescence, foregrounding the homophobic meaning as age increases. All these meanings emphasize otherness— 'specifically of being different from the collectively authorized expectations of male peers, in lacking stereotypical masculinity and/or in betraying peer group solidarity.' (Plummer 2001: 21).

> Sample 5
> P8: But the other half were like I guess bogans—yeah, really intolerant and—I'm glad not to see them because I went to a party just like I think it was a couple of years ago. Yeah, they got really drunk and just started calling everyone faggots. It was really like soul-crushing, I guess; heartbreaking, that they're all so backwards.

Participant 8 in sample 5 is a university student and is here referring to their old high school classmates. What seems to be disappointing to the participant, manifested in the use of metaphors for internal injuries ('soul-crushing,' 'heartbreaking'), is that these ex-classmates had not changed from their adolescent years. Notice that internal injuries, like hidden identities, are more concealable than external ones. The perpetrators' behaviour is explained in their categorization: they are 'bogans,' a group characterized as 'intolerant' and 'backwards' (and 'drunk'). All other reports of name-calling were registered in circumstances of direct address.

Gay

This word was reported as being used on its own or in the phrase 'that's so gay.' Both uses had a negative connotation, and the impact of the word was especially important in terms of the 'way' (tone, disposition) the term was used. Studies have reported the

negative use of 'gay' as widespread for describing 'anything undesirable such as a lack of interest in sport, academic success or lack of aggression' (Thurlow 2001: 33). Lalor & Rendle-Short studied the contemporary use of the word gay in Australian English and concluded that younger people (18-30 year olds) would more likely understand gay in the negative sense as 'indicating that something (or someone) is "stupid," "bad," "lame" or "pathetic,"' especially in conjunction with the intensifier "so"' (2007: 148). Sample 6 shows a metalinguistic comment on the associations that it foregrounds by proximity:

> Sample 6
> P1: If you think about the saying, "that's so gay," it's a pretty discriminatory thing to say. The whole idea about that sense is "that's so crap," which is just associating being queer or homosexual with being crap.

Using the term carelessly and without consciously knowing that it may be offensive seems to make it even more so. Consider,

> Sample 7
> P16: One of the ladies had to do a story on a dolphin who is hanging around in the bay and one of her co-workers said something like "oh, you have to do a story on that gay dolphin" and you could kind of tell she meant it in a negative way (…)

That 'gay' is a word used so frequently among teenagers in Australia (Lalor & Rendle-Short 2007) shows that there is a tacit licence to use it, which is not the case for abusive terms related to ethnicity or religion (Unks 1995; Thurlow 2001), as the following interchange illustrates:

> Sample 8
> P3: Then one day we were sitting in front of the X-Box, just mucking around and he was like, "oh that's so gay." I'm like, "why do you keep saying that?" He was like, "I don't know, it's just a thing." I explained about—I actually had an etymology discussion with my brother and I told him all about how it was really offensive to certain people and stuff.

Queer

The use of 'queer' by non-LGBTIQ people in certain situations was condemned for its intentional association with weirdness and aberrancy. Participant 1 in sample 9 tells the story of being in a class where the lecturer used 'queer' to characterize a writer well known for his strange behaviour and paedophilic inclinations. Typifying lists establish a relationship between the elements of the list and suggest identification; therefore, by mere association these terms transfer their features to neighbouring terms (Rojas-Lizana 2011).

Sample 9
P1: It was a gothic literature class and she was talking about this one author who was quite eccentric and weird. She was referring to him as if he was like a Michael Jackson figure; he was really reclusive and he had all these eccentricities and things that he would do that were quite weird to everybody. She said: "you know he's eccentric, he's flamboyant, he's queer, really queer." At the time, *the way she was talking about it* was like *whoa*, what are you talking about? So I felt quite upset and taken aback by this person associating somebody who's been considered a paedophile with somebody who's been queer … It was just such a horrific thing to say *and the way she said it was really careless and dismissive. She was really, really confident and arrogant almost in the way she was speaking.* (My emphasis)

The 'speech situation' (Austin 2000) is very important in the assessment of what is considered discriminatory and the extent of the discrimination. The participant not only emphasizes the fact that the lecturer was associating the term with a negative behaviour, they considered it important to establish the 'way' in which it was said, that is, the attitude of the person. This is marked by the use of intensifiers ('whoa,' 'really') and repetition ('really, really'). Another important element that made this 'just such a horrific thing to say' was that the setting placed the lecturer in a position of power and influence over people in a context where discrimination is supposed to be opposed (as in sample 3). The participant commented that when this type of incidents happens in this particular context, students feel disempowered to speak up and oppose what has been stated for reasons of embarrassment, and in this case, of disclosure.

Finally, the importance of the 'total speech situation' is confirmed when these words are not used as forms of verbal injury but as part of in-group speech. Hence they would signify something else depending on who says it, with which disposition, and under what circumstances (Croom 2014). Consider their use in an in-group situation:

Sample 10
P9: … and I thought she was the cutest dyke I'd ever met in my life.

P10: I think of myself as queer, to be very specific. I like that because it's a political term which just, to me, means not straight, which is my little political stance on not having to box yourself into a certain category and not having to say I'm a lesbian and that means I'm only going to like girls for my entire life, because I feel like you can't be sure.

2. Abuse and remarks

Abusive language and negative remarks were reported to come mostly from people known to the participant, that is, acquaintances at work, fellow students, and family members (parents, brothers, sisters, and grandparents). The examples of verbal discrimination previously presented were triggered by what the perpetrator of discrimination would consider a transgression of gender rules. There is another

triggering situation, however, that has to do with gender indeterminacy in the eyes of the perpetrators and that affects mainly transgender or transsexual people who are transitioning. Not being able to place a person within the normative binary for gender and sexuality seems to unsettle heterosexist people. Participants reported that trans people appear to be subjected to a higher level of violent discrimination than other members of the community, which confirms studies stating that trans people are attacked more frequently because of their non-normative expression of gender (Valentine 2003).

Abuse expressed in indexical expressions

The use of indexical expressions in everyday life situates and contextualizes speech and communication moments precisely because these expressions have indeterminate referents until placed in a concrete situation (Bamberg 2000). In a collaborative interaction their use would create bonds, solidarity and reflect a common disposition, which was the case in the interviews where participants used the singular 'they' with different degrees of fluency. Pronouns are especially important in the context of gender and sexuality as their use discloses identities and how these identities are perceived or want to be perceived (Rojas-Lizana and Hannah 2013). Their conscious use was referred to by participants as the 'pronoun game.'

> Sample 11
> P16: I used to really play a pronoun game, which if you don't know, that saying 'they,' or 'their' or 'my partner' instead of saying 'she' or 'he,' or you know, just to absolutely disguise what pronoun they have and thus what gender they are.

A well-known indexical expression mentioned was the pronoun 'it' used as a form of abuse to refer to and address trans people. This is considered a strong insult not because people do not distinguish between male and female, which may be welcomed in cases, but because the addressee is dehumanized. From what has been reported, verbal abusers know the gravity and violence of this offense. An extreme example of behavioural discrimination (physical assault) related to 'it' is illustrated by Tikkun in a footnote: 'As this thesis was being completed, a trans student … was beaten, his clothes ripped off, and the word 'IT' carved deeply into his chest as he was leaving a class' (2010: 16). However, sample 12 below proposes that the use of it is unintentional ('a slip of the tongue') and could be considered a coping strategy for this participant. However, this is clearly not the case in sample 13 below.

Sample 12
P2: But every now and then someone will drop the word 'it.' I just have this reaction of like, you did not just 'it' someone, you did not just 'it' me did you? Often I think that the words that I've—the ways that I've had it used when someone's been talking to me is—it was like more of a slip of the tongue … but I'm sure people use it in a mean way but I haven't had that ...

Sample 13
P3: [H]e refuses to learn pronouns, he keeps referring to me as—he referred to me as an 'it' once in an argument, like repeated attempts … He's just like, well, you're this invisible minority, I don't even have to pay attention to you, because you don't even have a pronoun, you stupid creature.

The force of the insult in sample 13 lies in the use of repetition, listing and the hedged comment: 'you don't *even* have a pronoun.' The connotations of the 'it' pronoun are listed clearly: an 'it' is invisible (a minority within a minority), stupid, and a creature. The use of 'creature' brings out the non-human implication of the term. Participant 3 reported that this insult came from a gay man who seemed to share with heteronormative thinking the binary notion of sexuality (either homosexual or heterosexual) as the only valid one. This discrepancy found within a marginalized group points to an epistemological difference in the in-group members' thinking. As Booth says, '[t]ransexuals occupy a liminal position fundamentally at odds with hegemonic paradigms of sex, gender, and sexuality, and reactions ranging from fearfulness to rage have often led to discrimination and violence. The ultimate solution suggested by queer theory would be a paradigm shift away from these rigid, hegemonic structures' (2011: 202).

Another example of abusive language indicating a similar meaning occurs in sample 14:

Sample 14
P2: The manager—who'd been there before and after the new owners—received an email from the managers who'd been into the pub and they said, '*what is that thing that* works behind the bar? You need to fire them.' That was it. (My emphasis)

From the categorization of gender that rules the heteronormative paradigm, the abusive language in sample 14 reveals the following beliefs: there are two genders, and only two genders; gender is invariant; there are no transfers from one gender to another; and everyone must be classified as either one gender or another (Tikkun 2010 from Garfinkel 1967). That abusive language and the assumptions underpinning it also confirm that the importance given to gender identity is such that gender indeterminacy removes humanity from someone's identity ('that thing').

Stigmatized identities have points in common, and differences in the way they experience discrimination and how they cope with it (Quinn & Chaudoir 2009). This group was poles apart from other stigmatized identities in that they would have had to cope with discrimination very early in life which may come from their own family groups (not so much the case of ethnic or class stigmatized identities, for instance). Most cases of people making discriminatory remarks were reported from family members in connection with religion and stereotyping.

Religion played an important role both in discrimination and in disclosure. Participants stated that it is one of the reasons for not disclosing or befriending people. They also mentioned it to explain why their families discriminated against them.

> Sample 15
> P15: I did [experience discrimination] with my parents—quite a bit from my parents. I'm from quite a religious family.

> Sample 16
> P7: But I sometimes still think about that kind of stuff. It's like a mantra; it gets into your brain and becomes part of your reality. So it was just all that reinforcement hearing from her, 'you're going to go to hell, I don't want you to go to hell, I love you. Can't you just come to church and we'll sort it all out.'

Studies show that discrimination coming from family has deep consequences in the lives of those affected (Koken, Bimbi & Parsons 2009). Ryan *et al*. (2009) found in their US-based study that higher rates of family rejection during adolescence were significantly associated with poor mental health outcomes in an LGBTIQ group. As parents (the term includes anyone with primary caregiving responsibilities) are the most important people in a person's life at a vulnerable age (emotionally, materially, physically), their rejection creates a strong impact: 'Parents tend to be uniquely important to children because children's sense of security and other emotional and psychological states are dependent on the quality of relationship with their parent(s).' (Rohner 2004: 833). The participant in sample 16 mentions rejection (in the word 'hell') and 'love' in the same line, which makes these types of remarks powerfully charged with emotionally contradictory messages. The participant can still bring the experience to their mind, years after, because these remarks were not expressed once but many times. This is articulated in the repetitions, and in words with reiterative meanings and associations such as 'mantra,' 'reinforcement,' 'get,' 'become' and 'still.'

Religion was mentioned in other instances of discrimination that did not relate to family. Consider sample 17:

> Sample 17
> P17: During prayer they actually pray that the government will make the right decision to abolish gay marriage.
>
> P5: What I didn't realise was it was a Bible group and he sent me Facebook mes s with Bible verses about gay people going to hell. Basically trying to convince me otherwise which went on until I cut contact and made it so he couldn't contact me anymore.

Sample 17 refers to the Christian church the participant attended at the time of the interview (which may be felt as a rejection coming from the extended family). The remark had a deep effect on the participant (see sample 18) who indicates the wounding power of words in their choice of vocabulary. This is clear in the use of two types of metaphor for physical injury to refer to emotional injury emphasized below:

> Sample 18
> P17: … and I'm like, I mean it's *like an outright slap in your face*. It was like that's clearly wrong, it's an abomination and you should not do it kind of thing. So I was like, yeah, *it kind of hit me*. I felt really judged by that one statement and I felt really weird the whole week.

Finally, parental rejection took other forms of discrimination such as stereotyping, forbidding the participant to disclose to others (sample 19), stop talking to them (sample 20), or excluding participants' partners (sample 21) from their presence. It also took the form of behavioural types of discrimination that are not discussed here.

> Sample 19
> P14: He's so adamant that I don't tell anybody, I think, especially my grandmother. I asked if he, they had told her and he's like, no. It's like, well are you going to? He said, no. You realise I'm going to tell her at Chris'—, no.
>
> P15: Over the years since then, she told me I'm still not allowed to tell my siblings because they are younger and she doesn't want them exposed to it if I am not sure and things like that. She told me not to tell my dad because he had issues with his dad being bisexual as well and she said that he'd find it too hard to cope with.
>
> Sample 20
> P14: When I came out my parents wouldn't talk to me. My mother didn't talk to me for two weeks and it was around her birthday and Mother's Day as well. So it was really hard and then my father wouldn't.
>
> Sample 21
> P3: They're just like, we want to meet you and you can't bring your partner.

Conclusion

Language plays an important role in the promotion of social inequality. Quantitative and

qualitative studies have reported that verbal harassment is the most common form of victimization among minorities and that it can have serious effects on mental health. The purpose of this article was to present and analyse qualitative data on Perceived Discrimination from people identifying as LGBTIQ in Brisbane, Australia. After building a taxonomy of discrimination based on Mellor's work (2003; 2004), I concentrated on describing, exemplifying, and analysing verbal forms of discrimination.

Three types of verbal injury were identified in my research: name-calling, abuse, and remarks. Name-calling was the most pervasively experienced and concentrated on the words 'faggot,' 'dyke,' 'gay,' and 'queer.' Some participants mentioned it as a minor form of discrimination, while others elaborated on its strong effects. There is a relation between the type of verbal injury and the perpetrators performing them. In general, name-calling came from people who did not know the experiencers whereas abuse and remarks were uttered by acquaintances and family. A particular connection was established between discriminatory remarks and (Christian) religion.

The data show that discrimination experienced by this stigmatized identity is overt and that participants are stressed by the ever-present possibility of facing it. Verbal discrimination is triggered by a performance of gender that disturbs the perpetrator's heterosexist beliefs. Participants resorted to several discursive strategies to convey their intentions. They used mitigation strategies when wanting to minimize the experience resorting to contrasts and ambiguous expressions. This could be a form of coping, or of not wanting to appear as a victim, as victimhood connotes passivity and lack of agency. Hedging and repetition were used for emphasis, and to convey urgency and pervasiveness. Metaphorical expressions related to internal or external injuries were used to express the powerful effect of words on people.

This work is part of a larger project on Perceived Discrimination that aims to contribute to the investigation of the phenomenon of discrimination, stigma, and exclusion by documenting and analysing the discourse of PD reported by people with stigmatized identities during semi-structured, open-ended interviews. LGBTIQ discourse on PD identified a discriminatory ideology (heterosexism) that is present and active in contemporary Australia. Verbal forms of discrimination have been identified as pervasive, overt and expected.

Studying the discourse of PD offers ways to explore discrimination and social identities from multiple and complex angles and allows the experiencer to represent themselves to readers in their reflective and active dimensions. These findings will help to establish the state of discrimination in specific settings in terms of awareness, disposition, and priorities, as well as show how widespread, settled or rejected certain views about the 'other' are. This information can then be used in applied disciplines such as social psychology, human resources management and mental health. In terms of field contribution, this study aims to advance the knowledge base of Discourse Studies by addressing the gap in the literature on Perceived Discrimination.

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