ABSTRACT

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LESBIANS, GAYS AND BISEXUALS: THE “VELVET TRIANGLE” OF RESEARCH, SOCIAL MOVEMENT AND POLICY

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We use the concept of the velvet triangle (Alison Woodward, 2001), which underlines the interrelations between research, social movement and policy, to investigate equal opportunities for lesbians, gays and bisexuals (LGB’s).

It seems important to us to look at the structural and cultural chances and impediments in relation to homosexuality in thinking about equal opportunities for LGB’s. Therefore we examine the judicial position of LGB’s, the position of LGB’s in society (Elchardus, M., Chaumont & Lauwers, 2000; Waene, H. & Agneesens, F., 2001) and, finally, the influence of the LGB movement on the well-being of LGB’s (Baert, H., Cockx, F. & Seghers, A., 2001; Vincke, J., 2002).

An active equal opportunities policy for LGB’s in Flanders is of recent date (1995). Influences of local, federal and European directives, research and movement lobbying will be analyzed.

We focus, on a structural level, on the legal discriminations and from a cultural perspective we analyze concepts as ‘superficial tolerance’, ‘heteronormativity’, ‘LGB (in)visibility’, ‘negative anticipation’ and ‘internalized homophobia’. The LGB movement has both a structural component (organizational aspects) as an implicit cultural base.

On doing research on LGB’s we are confronted with certain specific methodological challenges. How do we reach the hidden LGB population (Vincke, J. & Stevens, P., 1999)? How do we define and conceptualize LGB’s as a research subject? It is a challenge to describe the LGB group with its inherent diversity (the race, gender and class differences). The absence of the T (transgenders) is remarkable in the light of European LGBT policy (Adam, B.D., Duyvendak, J.W., & Krouwel, A., 1998).