



Nothing to Fix: Medicalisation of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Arvind Narrain, Vinay Chandra

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The theory and practice of medicine remains central to the concerns of persons identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or others. Individuals who have homosexual desires or feel transgender or are born intersex are often taken against their will to medical professionals. Instead of receiving affirmative support, they have distressing experiences of violence and violations. The narratives of such violence and violation include treatments offered for converting homosexuals to heterosexuals, humiliation of transgender people within the institution, and emergency surgeries of intersex infants who, due to the collusion between surgeons and parents, face the scalpel to convert them into an 'acceptable' gender. Further, everyday struggles of LGBT persons like suicidality and depression are dealt with less sensitively owing to the pathologisation of their identities. The most critical challenge here is the one pertaining to the need to change mindsets of doctors who are still insistently focused on changing their patients' sexual orientation or still exhibit prejudice when it comes to dealing with their transgender patients. As a starting point for change, this anthology brings together writing by medical professionals and queer activists which is beginning to question heteronormativity within the field of medicine.

The essays in this volume begin by outlining the frameworks on which the mental health and other medical sectors have posited homosexual desire and transgender or intersex identities. They then argue that sexual orientation and gender identity are not to be seen as pathologies and suggest forms of engagement that are more affirmative of LGBT identities. Finally, they look at the interface between law, medicine and human rights as a starting point of a change in the perception of LGBT persons. Aiming to incubate serious and sustained work on the centrality of the medical establishment to queer lives, this anthology will be of particular interest to medical practitioners, queer activists, members of the LGBT community, and all readers who believe that every individual should receive medical attention that is shorn of prejudice of any kind.

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