

Minoritization vs. Universalization: Lesbianism and Male Homosexuality in *LCSH* and *LCC*

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Abstract: In 1990 Ellen Greenblatt published a study of gay- and lesbian-related terms in the Library of Congress Subject Headings. No such study has been published since, nor has such a study been conducted on the Library of Congress Classification system. This article returns to Greenblatt's *LCSH* study to see what progress has been made in the last two decades, then uses her study as a template to examine gay- and lesbian-related terminology in *LCC*. Greenblatt's objections to then-current headings are examples of a tension defined in the research of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and later Grant Campbell: between a "universalizing view," which values unmarked representation of all parts of the population as a whole, and a "minoritizing view" like Greenblatt's, which values visibility for the minority "at any cost." Catalogers and classificationists should be aware of this tension and respectful of current preferred usage of the minority group being represented.

1. Introduction

In his application of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1990) theories of human sexuality to bibliographic access tools, Grant Campbell posits that "survival within a marginalized group depends on the regular and frequent subversion of traditional classification categories" (2000, 127). In the world of American libraries, there is no set of classification categories more traditional than the Library of Congress's Subject Headings and Classification systems (heretofore referred to as *LCSH* and *LCC*, respectively), and yet little has been done to subvert the categories assumed by these systems in regard to one of the most marginalized groups in contemporary America, lesbians and gay men. One of the few systematic analyses—and certainly the most thorough—of the representation of lesbianism and male homosexuality in *LCSH* is Ellen Greenblatt's "Homosexuality: The Evolution of a

Concept in The Library of Congress Subject Headings," published in 1990. A comparable analysis of gay and lesbian concepts represented in *LCC* is notably absent from library and information science literature, perhaps because *LCC* and its underlying structure and terminology is not quite so visible to library users and therefore the potential for offense seems to be lesser. In this article I will follow up on Greenblatt's study, noting changes relevant to her critique that have been made in the past two decades. Then I will take the complaints Greenblatt raised against *LCSH* and see how *LCC* holds up to the same criticism, looking at Greenblatt, *LCSH*, and *LCC* through the lens of the *minoritizing vs. universalizing* concept Campbell adopts from Sedgwick. In the process I hope to show that it is just as important to avoid unintentional biases—whether against homosexuality in general or lesbians specifically—in *LCC* as it is in *LCSH*, as these biases also have an impact on the user.

2. Greenblatt and LCSH

Greenblatt proposes two changes to then-current headings and seven new headings. Of these, two partial changes have been made and six headings added, most of which may be considered a sort of compromise between the old status quo and Greenblatt's suggestions. The first change she proposes is that all instances of *Gay* or *Gays* referring inclusively to homosexual men and women be replaced with *Lesbian and gay* or *Lesbians and gay men*, respectively. So while the noun *Gays* would become *Lesbians and gay men*, adjectival uses such as *Gay youth* would be replaced with *Lesbian and gay youth*. Greenblatt notes that *gay* as an umbrella term referring to women as well as men is no longer reflective of current usage, as indicated by the number of gay- and lesbian-oriented groups that have consciously changed their names to incorporate both terms (1990, 85). LCSH, meanwhile, continues to use the noun *Gays*, which includes the narrower terms *Gay men* and *Lesbians*. Adjectival uses of the term inconsistently employ *gay* to mean *gay male*, *lesbian and gay*, or both. *Gay nurses* and *Gay youth* list as narrower terms *Lesbian nurses* and *Lesbian youth*, respectively, but not *Gay male nurses* or *Gay male youth*. *Gay liberation movement*, *Gay rights*, and *Gay Pride Day* are to be used for *Gay and lesbian liberation movement*, *Gay and lesbian rights*, and *Gay and Lesbian Pride Day*, respectively. To be fair, the last is reflective of current usage—a Google search for “*gay pride day*” returns nearly one hundred times as many results as “*gay and lesbian pride day*.”

A few changes reflective of Greenblatt's proposal have been made: in 1995 the term *Gay and lesbian studies* was added to LCSH. Interestingly, though, this term is not intended to complement the terms *Gay studies* and *Lesbian studies*; rather the broader term has replaced the more specific terms. This means that works on lesbian studies, works on gay studies, and works on both will all be lumped together under one heading. The same is true of *Gay and lesbian dance parties* and *Gay and lesbian film festivals*, which are both meant to replace the equivalent terms using only the adjective *gay*, with neither “use for” nor “narrower term” references to equivalent headings modified only by *lesbian*. How does this satisfy the bibliographic need for specificity? In these cases it seems LC has taken one step forward and two steps back.

The second change Greenblatt suggests is from *Aged lesbians* to *Senior lesbians*. She explains that this change is advocated “due to age-related bias, rather

than heterosexist bias” (1990, 86). Apparently recognizing the age bias of the term *aged*, LC has replaced it, but with *older* rather than Greenblatt's proposed *senior*. In light of the previous complaint, it's notable that *Older lesbians* is considered a narrower term of *Older gays*.

The first new heading, or rather pair of headings, that Greenblatt proposes is *Gay men—Coming out* and *Lesbians—Coming out*. She points out that the “coming out” process is an important element of gay and lesbian discourse, that many gays and lesbians in the midst of this process turn to libraries and books for support, and, most importantly as far as LC is concerned, there is literary warrant within the LC collection. Again, LC has responded to this need but used a slightly different heading. In 1990, the same year Greenblatt's paper was written and published, the subject heading *Coming out (Sexual orientation)* was added, followed later by the narrower term *Coming out (Sexual orientation) in literature*. The difference between Greenblatt's proposed terms and the one chosen by LCSH points back to differing philosophies—it is important to Greenblatt to highlight the differences between the gay male and lesbian experiences, while whoever is responsible for this particular subject heading is content to group them together.

Greenblatt's second proposed addition is *Gay Holocaust (1939-1945)*. The concept has been added, but is represented as *Gays—Nazi persecution*. A note on the subjects record indicates that this decision was influenced by a 1998 *Washington Blade* article entitled “Researcher says Nazi persecution not systematic,” indicating that while many gay men were tortured and killed by Nazis, there was no systematic Gay Holocaust, per se (Library of Congress). Here the non-preferred terms *Gay men—Nazi persecution* and *Nazi persecution of gay men*, as well as the fact that the notes refer specifically to “homosexual men,” seem to indicate that *Gays* means *gay men*, as opposed to its inclusive uses elsewhere in LCSH. This question of terminology, then, is not only a question of current usage, but also of consistency and disambiguation. How can a user of LCSH know when *gays* means one thing and when it means another?

The third new heading Greenblatt proposes is *Heterosexuality*. She cites literary warrant and the following quote from lesbian feminist Marilyn Frye (quoted in Greenblatt 1990, 91):

One of the privileges of being normal and ordinary is a certain unconsciousness. When one is that which is taken as the norm in one's so-

cial environment, one does not have to think about it.... If one is the norm, one does not have to know what one is. If one is marginal, one does not have the privilege of not noticing what one is.

Less than four years after Greenblatt's paper, *Heterosexuality* was added to LCSH. The fact that *Homosexuality* and *Bisexuality* were subject headings long before *Heterosexuality* was is representative of this unconsciousness of the majority—that which is considered normal does not have to be labeled. As I will discuss in more depth below, the logic calling for *heterosexuality* to be named is not unrelated to the logic calling for *lesbianism* to be separated from *male homosexuality*; these are two sides of the same coin.

The fourth and fifth of Greenblatt's proposed additions, *Lesbian feminism* and *Lesbian separatism*, stem from the same driving force. In this case it is not the larger group of homosexuality from which she wishes to differentiate lesbianism, but the larger groups of feminism and separatism from which she wishes to differentiate the lesbian aspects of these concepts. *Lesbian feminism* has been added to LCSH; *Lesbian separatism* has not.

Parents of lesbians and gay men, Greenblatt's sixth proposal, is a call for greater specificity based on literary warrant. LC responded to the literary warrant, but again lacking the specific terminology Greenblatt prefers: *Parents of gays* was added in 2002.

Greenblatt's final proposed addition, *Violence against gay men and lesbians*, is based not only in specificity of gender terminology but also in clarity of meaning. The subject headings commonly assigned for works on violence against gay men and lesbians at the time of Greenblatt's writing were *Homosexuals—Crimes against* and *Gay men—Crimes against*. Not only do these headings marginalize or exclude lesbians, but they are also misleading, as those who perform violent acts against lesbians and gay men are often not convicted of any crime. In 2005 the performed heading *Gays—Violence against* was added, addressing the latter objection, and the free-floating subdivision *Violence against* has been available for use "as a topical subdivision under classes of persons and ethnic groups" since 1999, allowing for at least the option of recognizing violence against lesbians.

3. Greenblatt's Standards Applied to LCC

Before applying Greenblatt's criticisms of LCSH to LCC, it's important to recognize that LCC is an en-

tirely different beast. Although LCSH and LCC have in essence grown up together—LCSH began as a list of subject headings developed by the Library of Congress toward the end of the nineteenth century and was first published in 1914 (Chan 1994, 171), while LCC Class Z, the first of the classes to be formed, was adopted in 1898 and published in 1902 (Chan 1994, 328)—the two are very different in form and function. LCSH is a unified vocabulary of terms chosen to represent the subjects of the Library of Congress's collection. In theory, at least, terms and concepts exist in a one-to-one ratio in LCSH; there is only one preferred term for each discrete concept and only one concept described by each preferred term. Terms are connected to each other through hierarchical relationships represented by NT (narrower term), BT (broader term), RT (related term), UF (use for), and USE cross-references. While cataloguing librarians all over the world propose new or changed headings to LCSH, these changes are regulated by a single governing body. LCC, on the other hand, is a set of twenty-one classes developed by different groups of specialists. There is no common index or controlled vocabulary across the classes. Even within a single class different terms may be used to describe the same concept in different places. Here the hierarchical structure, denoted by the place in the notation scheme as well as the arrangement of the schedules, is more important than the terminology. The terminology is invisible to the end user—its primary purpose is to guide the cataloger or classifier in choosing a notation. As we will see, though, the language of the headings, invisible as it may be, still matters.

In Table 1 below, I've placed Ellen Greenblatt's proposed changes to LCSH next to the current headings in LCSH and their equivalents in LCC. In cases where there is not a close equivalent in LCC or when the seeming equivalent is not the notation actually used in conjunction with the subject heading, I've entered the heading for the notation that is used most commonly for materials with the indicated subject heading. In these cases the heading has an asterisk (*) before it. As the concept represented by the subject heading *Gays* is very general and is represented throughout LCC in a variety of forms, I've listed all of these terms with the number of occurrences of each term in the LCC schedules in parentheses. In addition, I've put the terms from both LCSH and LCC that I believe match up with Greenblatt's recommendations in bold, in order to highlight the differences between the two systems. I will discuss these in more detail below.

| Greenblatt | LCSH | LCC |
|--|--|--|
| Lesbians and gay men (instead of Gays) | Gays | *Homosexuality. Lesbianism Gay men and lesbians (3) Gay men. Lesbians (4) Gays. Lesbians (3) Homosexuality. Gays. Lesbians (1) Gays. Lesbians. Homosexuals (1) Homosexuals (9; 1 of which lists “Gay men” and “Lesbians” as non-preferred terms with <i>See</i> references, and 1 that lists “Gays” as a non-preferred term with a <i>See</i> reference) Gays (29; 4 of which offer “Lesbians” as an equivalent term) Homosexuality. Gays (2) |
| | Gay nurses (NT Lesbian nurses) | Gay nurses. Lesbian nurses |
| | Gay youth (NT Lesbian youth) | Gay youth. Lesbian youth |
| | Gay and lesbian studies (UF Lesbian studies; UF Gay studies) | Gay and lesbian studies |
| | Gay and lesbian dance parties (UF Gay dance parties) | -- |
| | Gay and lesbian film festivals (UF Gay film festivals) | -- |
| | Gay liberation movement (UF Gay and lesbian liberation movement; UF Lesbian liberation movement) | Homosexuality. Lesbianism—Gay rights movement. Gay liberation movement. Homophile movement |
| | Gay rights (UF Gay and lesbian rights; UF Lesbian rights) | Homosexuality. Lesbianism—Gay rights movement. Gay liberation movement. Homophile movement |
| | Gay Pride Day (UF Gay and Lesbian Pride Day) | *Homosexuality. Lesbianism |
| Senior lesbians (instead of Aged lesbians) | Older lesbians (UF Aged lesbians [Former Heading]) | Middle-aged lesbians. Older lesbians |
| Gay men—Coming out, Lesbians—Coming out | Coming out (Sexual orientation) | *Homosexuality. Lesbianism—General works |
| Gay Holocaust | Gays—Nazi persecution | *Holocaust—Other victim groups, A-Z—Gays |
| Heterosexuality (complementary to Homosexuality and Bisexuality) | Heterosexuality | Heterosexuality (added 7 Nov. 2007; previously represented as The Family. Marriage. Woman—Sexual life—Sexual behavior and attitudes. Sexuality—General) |
| | Homosexuality | The Family. Marriage. Woman—Human sexuality. Sex—Sexual minorities—Homosexuality. Lesbianism |
| | Bisexuality | The Family. Marriage. Woman—Human sexuality. Sex—Sexual minorities—Bisexuality |
| Lesbian feminism | Lesbian feminism | *Lesbianism *Feminism |
| Lesbian separatism | -- | -- |
| Parents of lesbians and gay men | Parents of gays (UF Parents of gay men) | Parents of gay men or lesbians |
| Violence against gay men and lesbians | Gays—Violence against | *Victims of crimes. Victimology—Special classes of persons, A-Z—Homosexuals |

Table 1. *Ellen Greenblatt's Proposed Headings vs. Current LSCH and LCC Headings*

A quick glance at the table shows a concentration of bold LCC headings in the top right, corresponding to Greenblatt's *Lesbians and gay men*, and a greater number of bold LCSH headings in the bottom middle, corresponding to her other suggested headings. This points to a stronger trend in LCC than LCSH of unambiguous gender inclusion and less of an emphasis in LCC than LCSH on representing specific aspects of homosexuality. This may be reflective of the distinct purposes of the two systems: LCC's terminology makes it clear to cataloging librarians that whether the work at hand is about gay men or lesbians, it is covered by the classification that includes both terms, while the greater variety of gay- and lesbian-related subject headings in LCSH delineate for users the many narrower topics an item classified under "homosexuality" might be about. In most library systems that use LCC and LCSH, only one class number is chosen for each item while many subject headings may be applied, calling for more specific subject headings and broader class numbers.

For the terms referring to lesbians and gay men generally, I've bolded those that make an explicit distinction between gay men and lesbians, such as *Homosexuality*, *Lesbianism*, *Gay nurses*, *Lesbian nurses*, and *Gay and lesbian studies*. Although several of these terms, such as *Gays*, *Lesbians*, use the ambiguous *gays*, its complementary juxtaposition with *lesbians* makes it clear that it refers specifically to gay men. It should also be noted that while there are a greater number of explicitly gender-inclusive LCC terms in this section, the ambiguous *Homosexuals* and *Gays* are distributed throughout the schedules with a much higher frequency. As Greenblatt points out, the term *homosexual* as a noun is not only ambiguous but it is outdated; she cites a work on nonsexist terminology that states that gays and lesbians alike reject the term as "alien, clinical, and much too limiting to properly denote a whole lifestyle" (quoted in Greenblatt 1990, 86). It's particularly interesting to note that of the nine occurrences of *Homosexuals* in the LCC schedules, in one position *Gay men* and *Lesbians* are also listed on the same level of the hierarchy but with *See* references to *Homosexuals*, and in another *Gays* is listed with the same cross-reference. The preference of the term that goes against current usage, then, is someone's conscious choice—perhaps in an attempt to acknowledge changes in terminology while remaining consistent with previously assigned class numbers.

The problem with the term *Gays* is that its meaning is unclear. It is commonly used to mean *gay men*, as reflected in the four places in the LCC schedules

where it is listed adjacent to *Lesbians*, but it is also used—contrary to most lesbians' wishes, according to Greenblatt—to mean *gay men and lesbians*. Because LCC is not a classification system that attempts to classify all knowledge but rather a finite system based on the literary warrant of the LC collection, it's difficult to say in the twenty-three places where *Gays* occurs without an adjacent *Lesbians* whether the term is meant to include both men and women or if it's just that up to this point all the books that LC has classified on this particular topic have been exclusively about gay men. When LC catalogers come across a book focusing on lesbians in a discipline and subject area where there is not yet a notation corresponding to lesbians, will they assume the already-existing *Gays* includes lesbians or will they assume a new notation needs to be created? Furthermore, when there is a heading for *Gays* meaning *gay men* and another for *Lesbians*, a work on both gay men and lesbians is likely to receive the notation corresponding to the seemingly-inclusive *Gays*. This is exacerbated by the fact that subdivisions are often broken down not by logical hierarchies but alphabetically, meaning that between the notation corresponding to *Gays* and the notation corresponding to *Lesbians* there may well be notations for *Grandparents*, *Hispanic Americans*, *Infants*, *Joggers*, and *Latvians*. This easily translates into several shelves of books, meaning the user looking for lesbian literature is less likely to come across the gay and lesbian collection classified under gay literature. This is a problem with multi-topical works regardless of the terms used, but in this case the ambiguous terms will influence catalogers to classify with a bias toward the *gay* side of the *gay/lesbian* divide rather than based strictly on the content.

LCC is notably lacking in notations reflecting Greenblatt's proposed terms *Gay men—Coming out*, *Lesbians—Coming out*, *Lesbian feminism*, *Lesbian separatism*, and *Violence against gay men and lesbians*. All of these concepts tend to be classified under more generic notations like that for *Homosexuality*, *Lesbianism—General works*. Items with the subject heading *Gays—Violence against* are most commonly classified in HV6250.4.H66, which refers to homosexuals as a class of victims of crimes; again, the question of whether *violence* and *crime* can be treated as synonyms is raised. The concept equivalent to *Gay Holocaust*, consistent with LCSH's decision not to classify it as a discrete event, is classed under *Holocaust—Other victim groups, A-Z—Gays*.

Until very recently—November of 2007—the concept *heterosexuality* was not represented in LCC.

Even more telling than the absence of the concept is where books on this subject were placed in the schedules, as opposed to those on homosexuality or bisexuality. While books about heterosexuality were classed as *Sexuality—General*, those about homosexuality or bisexuality were classed by these terms, which fall under *Sexual minorities* in the hierarchy. Thus the minority or “other” status of homo- and bisexuality were emphasized in contrast to the general or “normal” status of heterosexuality. The hierarchy has been adjusted a bit now with the addition of *Heterosexuality*, but even now its majority status is emphasized by its position parallel to *Sexual minorities*, which includes both *Bisexuality* and *Homosexuality. Lesbianism*.

Table 1 and my discussion thus far contain a fallacy I alluded to at the beginning of this section—they speak of LCC as if it were a unified whole, rather than the disparate parts it is made of. With that in mind, I’ve listed in Table 2 the various gay- and lesbian-related terms found throughout LCC by the subclasses where they appear. Again, I’ve bolded the terms that seem to fit Greenblatt’s ideal of unambiguous gender inclusion, whether by themselves or in conjunction with other terms at the same level of the hierarchy—when *Lesbians* appears adjacent to *Gays*, for example, I consider the combination to be unambiguously inclusive. Classes, indicated by the first letter of the subclass, are differentiated by alternating blocks of gray and white in order to highlight the larger trends.

| SC | Term |
|----|---|
| BF | Homosexuality |
| BF | Gay men |
| BF | Gays |
| BL | Homosexuality |
| BL | Gays |
| BM | Homosexuality. Gays. Lesbians |
| BP | Homosexuality |
| BX | Homosexuality |
| BR | Homosexuality |
| BS | Homosexuality (with “Lesbianism” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |
| BS | Gay interpretations |
| BS | Lesbianism |
| BV | Gays |
| BV | Gays. Lesbians. Homosexuals |
| BV | Gays, Services for |
| BX | Homosexuality (with “Lesbianism” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |

| SC | Term |
|----|--|
| BX | Homosexuality. Gay rights |
| BX | Homosexuals |
| BX | Gay marriage |
| BX | Lesbianism |
| BX | Lesbians |
| D | Gays |
| D | Gays. Gay military participation |
| GN | Homosexuality |
| GV | Gay and lesbian dance parties |
| GV | Gay Games |
| GV | Gay men. Lesbians |
| HD | Gay business enterprises |
| HD | Gays. Lesbians |
| HE | Homosexuals |
| HF | Vocational guidance for gays |
| HQ | Homosexuality. Lesbianism |
| HQ | Gay and lesbian culture |
| HQ | Gay and lesbian studies |
| HQ | Gay conservatives |
| HQ | Gay fathers |
| HQ | Gay men |
| HQ | Gay parents |
| HQ | Gay press publications |
| HQ | Gay pride parades |
| HQ | Gay rights movement. Gay liberation movement. Homophile movement |
| HQ | Lesbian mothers |
| HQ | Lesbians |
| HQ | Middle-aged lesbians. Older lesbians |
| HQ | Middle-aged gay men. Older gay men |
| HQ | Parents of gay men or lesbians |
| HQ | Special classes of gay people, A-Z |
| HQ | Children of gay parents |
| HQ | Same-sex divorce. Gay divorce |
| HQ | Older gays |
| HQ | Homophobia. Heterosexism |
| HS | Lesbianism |
| HV | Homosexuals |
| HV | Gay and lesbian adoption |
| HV | Gay men. Lesbians |
| HV | Gay youth. Lesbian youth |
| HV | Gays |
| HV | Alcohol and gay people |
| HV | Deaf gays |
| HX | Homosexuality |
| JK | Homosexual men and women |
| K | Gays |
| KB | Gays. Lesbians |
| KE | Gays |
| KF | Gays |
| KF | Gays. Lesbians |
| KJ | Gay men. Lesbians |
| KJ | Gays |

| SC | Term |
|----|---|
| KJ | Sodomy. Homosexual acts. Homosexualité |
| KJ | Same-sex marriage. Mariage des homosexuels |
| KK | Homosexuals |
| KK | Lesbians |
| KK | Sodomy. Homosexual acts. Unzucht zwischen Männern |
| LB | Gay teachers |
| LC | Homosexuality and education |
| LC | Gays. Lesbians. Bisexuals |
| LC | Children of gay parents |
| M | Gays |
| ML | Gay music |
| N | Homosexuality |
| NX | Homosexuality |
| NX | Gay artists. Lesbian artists |
| NX | Lesbians |
| P | Homosexuality |
| P | Gays |
| PA | Homosexuality |
| PA | Homosexuality, Male |
| PE | Gay men |
| PG | Homosexuality. Gays |
| PJ | Homosexuality |
| PL | Homosexuality |
| PN | Homosexuality (with “Lesbianism” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |
| PN | Homosexuality. Gays |
| PN | Gay and lesbian film festivals |
| PN | Gay authors |
| PN | Gay men |
| PN | Gay theater |
| PN | Gays (with “Lesbians” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |
| PN | Lesbian theater |
| PN | Lesbianism |
| PN | Lesbians |
| PQ | Homosexuality (with “Lesbians” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |
| PQ | Homosexuals |
| PQ | Homosexuals, Male |
| PQ | Gays |
| PQ | Lesbians |
| PR | Homosexuality (with “Lesbianism” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |
| PR | Gay men |
| PR | Gays (with “Lesbians” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |
| PR | Lesbianism |
| PR | Lesbians |

| SC | Term |
|----|---|
| PS | Homosexuality (with “Lesbianism” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |
| PS | Gay authors |
| PS | Gay culture |
| PS | Gays (with “Lesbians” offered as a complementary term at the same level of the hierarchy) |
| PS | Lesbianism |
| PS | Lesbians |
| PT | Homosexuality |
| PT | Gay men |
| PT | Lesbianism |
| QP | Sexual orientation. Homosexuality |
| R | Homosexuality |
| R | Gay nurses. Lesbian nurses |
| RA | Homosexuals |
| RA | Lesbians |
| RC | Gay men |
| RC | Gay men and lesbians |
| RC | Gay psychiatrists. Gay psychotherapists. Lesbian psychiatrists. Lesbian psychotherapists |
| RC | Female homosexuality. Lesbianism |
| RC | Male homosexuality |
| RJ | Gay and lesbian teenagers |
| TR | Homosexuals |
| UB | Gays |
| VB | Gays |
| Z | Homosexuality |
| Z | Homosexuality. Lesbianism. Gay and lesbian studies |
| Z | Homosexual men and women, and health |
| Z | Gay men and lesbians |
| Z | Gays |
| Z | Lesbian libraries |
| Z | Lesbianism |

It would be fruitless, at least for my present purposes, to compare quantities across the classes—each class represents a discipline, and again LCC headings and notations are determined by literary warrant, so of course the H (social sciences) and P (language and literature) classes are going to have a greater number of gay- and lesbian-themed headings than the other classes. It is also logical that H and P, being the two classes that deal most extensively with homosexuality, are relatively up-to-date and inclusive in the language used. In the P’s, for instance, almost every occurrence of *Gays* or *Homosexuality* is accompanied by an equivalent *Lesbians* or *Lesbianism*, thus clarifying that the former terms refer specifically to men. (As noted above, though, the use of *Gays* or *Homosexuality* here instead of *Gay men* or *Male homosexuality* is likely to

lead to items about men and women being grouped together with the items about men only.) What is more interesting is the classes that perhaps don't treat homosexuality and lesbianism so extensively, but where unambiguously inclusive language is used. The two that stand out to me are R (medicine) and Z (bibliography and library science).

4. Greenblatt, Campbell, and Sedgwick

Thus far I've taken Ellen Greenblatt's value system favoring *lesbian and gay* over *gay*, along with *heterosexuality* over an unstated assumption of normalcy, for granted. Grant Campbell would probably not do so. Campbell's analysis of homosexuality in bibliographic access tools relies heavily on the tension between two viewpoints that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990, 1) defines as

the contradiction between seeing homo/heterosexual definition on the one hand as an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority (what I refer to as a minoritizing view), and seeing it on the other hand as an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities (what I refer to as a universalizing view).

Campbell (2000, 129) elaborates on this tension between minoritizing and universalizing as it applies to classification:

If the gay community is split between two concepts of survival—integration into a universal whole and separation into a visible minority—then a classification system will have to negotiate that split. The universalizing tendency will tend to treat explicit subject headings with suspicion. [...] The universalizing approach implies that the explicit presence of a topic in a subject access system implies a deviation from the norm. The minoritizing view, on the other hand, may well argue [...] for “visibility at any cost”; “I'd rather have negative than nothing.”

The difference between the minoritizing and universalizing views as they apply to classification can be summed up as a question of marked or unmarked representation. The minoritizing view calls for marked representation, terminology and hierarchical structure that draw attention to difference, making the

part stand out from the whole. The universalizing view, on the other hand, calls for unmarked representation, terminology and hierarchical structure that don't call attention to differences, emphasizing instead the unified whole.

Whereas Campbell is speaking of the universalization and minoritization of homosexuality in the context of the general population, Greenblatt is more concerned with lesbianism within the context of homosexuality. Despite the different focus, the same tension exists: Should lesbianism be integrated into the universal whole of homosexuality or should it be separated into a visible minority? Whether in this primary argument for the explicit inclusion of gender in terms related to homosexuality or in her secondary argument for the explicit inclusion of sexual orientation in terms related to heterosexuality, Greenblatt is on the side of minoritization—visibility at any cost. In both cases, it's a question of which facets we highlight and which we ignore. Just as ignoring the sexuality facet of that which is not explicitly homosexual implies heterosexuality as the norm, ignoring the gender of that which is not explicitly lesbian implies male homosexuality as the norm. If the ambiguous term *gays* swallows up the specific terms *lesbians* and *gay men*, she argues, lesbians are hidden in the assumed male world of *gays*. If homosexuality is explicitly present in *LCSH* but heterosexuality is not, homosexuality becomes a deviation from the norm.

After examining these inherent conflicts in bibliographic access to gay and lesbian materials, Campbell (2000, 130) concludes:

Community members [...] want to belong and to remain apart. By acknowledging these inevitable ambiguities, classification researchers will be well-positioned to create new, better subject access tools. But they will do so only by acknowledging that the tough questions are here to stay, and that complexity, debate and controversy can be negotiated, but not banished.

The tensions between heterosexual and homosexual, between gay and lesbian, are not going anywhere. No perfect classification system will make them disappear. Ellen Greenblatt's criticism of the Library of Congress Subject Headings sheds light not only on the potential problems in *LCSH* but also in *LCC*. We should not, however, forget that Greenblatt represents only one side of the debate; while Greenblatt calls for the minoritization of lesbianism and male homosexuality, there are those in and out of the gay and lesbian com-

munity who argue for the opposite, and the Library of Congress, in its role providing classification and subject headings for libraries across the nation, would not do well to ignore either side.

5. Change Based on Current Usage

In a paper discussing the use of faceted classification to provide access to gay and lesbian information resources, Campbell (2004) suggests that to do so effectively one must first understand how lesbians and gay men categorize themselves and their own knowledge domains. He cites Hjørland (1997, 9), who says that “knowledge of an individual person, his benefits from information systems, and the problems and barriers he meets in the utilization of knowledge [...] are illuminated by the knowledge of the social background of the person, his social roles and working commitments, his educational background, and his cooperative relationships.” But what of a group made up of thousands and thousands of individuals whose backgrounds, roles, commitments, and relationships are each unique? How can we definitively state how lesbians and gay men categorize themselves? Hjørland says that human concepts “primarily emerge as a result of human cooperation and communication,” and so “individual structures of knowledge can only be understood from a collective analysis” (9). We may not be able to define how each and every lesbian or gay man categorizes her or himself, but we can approximate the self-categorization of the collective LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered) community through an analysis of the terminology they use when cooperating and communicating among themselves and with the world at large.

In this case, even a cursory glance at the titles of gay- and lesbian-themed publications reveals a trend toward minoritization (such as *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, and *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*) over universalization (such as the now-defunct *Gay Community News*). In a 2002 article for the *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy*, Holly Devor presents the case for addressing the concerns of transgendered people along with those of “gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer people” in “LGBT groups” (2002, 5). More recently, articles in peer-reviewed journals as diverse as the *Journal of Teacher Education* (Macgillivray 2008), *The American Journal of Public Health* (Corliss 2007), and the *Journal of Homosexuality* (Lovaas 2006) have all used the phrase “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender” when re-

ferring to sexual minorities as a whole. This is only a surface sampling of an overwhelming majority of scholarly literature in and outside the LGBT community that favors terminology that separates the *lesbian* (and *bisexual* and *transgender*) from the *gay*.

Even the term *queer*, frequently used as a universalizing term to encompass all non-standard sexualities, is more often than not swallowed up as a single Q in a string of letters representing the various minorities individually (such as GLBTQIA: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual). This hesitance to use *queer* as an umbrella term encompassing these others rather than as a parallel term alongside them comes down to a question of identity politics, as described in Sally O’Driscoll’s (1996) examination of the tension between queer theory and lesbian and gay studies.

Given this context, Greenblatt’s request that LCSH recognize lesbians as an entity separate from gay men is entirely appropriate. If the various LCC schedules are to reflect current usage, they should also adopt this minoritizing view. Thanks to the living and constantly changing nature of both the subject heading and classification schedules, this kind of improvement is not only possible, but has historical precedent. While Library of Congress catalogers cannot be expected to keep on top of the evolving needs of users from every minority group across the country, the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) allows participating catalogers from other institutions to propose changes and additions to LCSH and LCC. This process is augmented by the impetus created by people like Greenblatt, Campbell, and Sanford Berman, whose 1971 tract on LC subject headings concerning people has led to improvements in subject headings that formerly reflected racist, sexist, heterosexist, ageist, and other biases. In the case of lesbianism and male homosexuality in LCSH and LCC, as with other areas, there is still work to be done and likely always will be. To have a thesaurus and classification system that reflect current terminology and ideologies is not an end result but an ongoing process that requires constant vigilance on the part of catalogers, other librarians and scholars, and library users.

6. Conclusion

Although the terminology used in classification schedules is not as visible to the end user as subject headings are, biases and prejudices can be just as vi-

sible. When choosing this terminology and its place in the hierarchy, we should keep in mind the different groups of people these terms represent, whether homosexual or heterosexual, gay or lesbian. We should also keep in mind that the people who make up each of these groups may have nothing more than sexual orientation in common, meaning that individuals will vary greatly in how they wish to be represented—as invisible parts of a unified whole or as visible minorities in a fractured multitude. Keeping up with current connotations and usages of various terms won't ensure we please everyone, as there's no denying that's impossible, but it will allow us to classify and describe concepts in a way consistent with current usage and with as much respect as possible to the various people these terms describe.

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