

Sexual and Gender Minorities in Disasters

Encyclopedia Entry

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Publication date:

2022-06

Permanent link:

<https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000552728>

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Originally published in:

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367854584-23>

SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES IN DISASTERS

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Introduction

Whatever their cause, *disasters* and their associated *crises*, *emergencies* and *humanitarian situations/crises*¹ devastate individuals, families and communities. Numerous planetary processes are colliding and coalescing to impact places at multiple intersecting scales, from local to global. These include, but are not limited to, global environmental and climate change, land degradation, pollution, urbanisation, war, genocide, conflict and human displacement and disasters. Consequently, as the Anthropocene arrives, ‘disasters’ are arguably becoming more common and more intense than before (Brauch, 2019; Cutter, 2020; Dominey-Howes, 2018).

The effects of disasters on people vary between different social groups at a range of spatial and temporal scales. Further, due to the factors that shape vulnerability and resilience of social groups, disaster impacts are neither distributed nor experienced evenly (Finch et al., 2010; Dominey-Howes et al., 2014). Consequently, and as we noted previously (Dominey-Howes et al., 2014), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) argues that social differences be acknowledged and that the specific needs and capacities of all social groups, including minorities, be considered within disaster risk reduction (DRR) policy, planning and responses. This need has been further articulated within the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (UNDRR, 2015).

In recent years, a limited, but slowly expanding, body of research has sought to explore, understand, report and ‘make visible’ the experiences of sexual and gender minorities, which include lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people (Dominey-Howes et al., 2014; Gaillard et al., 2017). Sexual and gender diverse people represent a collection of communities (we use the plural here because to conflate L+G+B+T+Q+I people into a single group is incorrect) for which very little work had been undertaken prior to 2000, essentially because gender studies researchers and activists were almost entirely preoccupied with exploring the needs of heterosexual women, and disaster scholars were disinterested in the experiences of sexual and gender minorities (Gaillard et al., 2017). What work has emerged is a consequence of (1) the occurrence of particular events such as Hurricane Katrina impacting New Orleans and its sexual and gender diverse communities; (2) the recognition that sexual and gender diverse communities had been largely ignored in relation to disasters, their impacts and management (Dominey-Howes et al., 2014; Gaillard et al., 2017; Yamashita et al., 2017); and (3) increasing

interest in and attention to the experiences of vulnerability and resilience of ‘others’ by researchers largely from the Global South (Balgos et al., 2012).

By way of introduction and background, we begin by providing a brief summary of the international research that has emerged in this field (mostly since the early 2000s) demonstrating (1) its slow acceleration, (2) that it comes from case examples all over the world, including the Global North and Global South, and (3) that sexual and gender diverse individuals, families and communities have similar yet differing experiences in different sociopolitical contexts. This brief summary is drawn largely from the excellent overview provided by Gaillard et al. (2017).

We then turn to describing the results and key messages from a 3-year research project using case studies of the experiences of sexual and gender diverse people in relation to a series of disasters occurring in Australia and New Zealand. We then briefly turn to the developing COVID-19 pandemic and note the emerging scholarship that frames the pandemic as a disaster (which indeed it is) and that interrogates the effects on young, sexual and gender diverse people in particular. This provides a useful extension case study to take the scholarship of sexuality and gender minorities in disasters into the subfield of biohazards and disasters – as opposed to the hydro-meteorological and geological events that have dominated the existing literature.

Overview of an emerging field of scholarship

Pincha and Krishna’s (2008) analysis of the effects of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster on the *aravanis* of India represents the first systematic attempt to explore the effects of disasters on sexual and gender minorities. This was quickly followed by studies of the impacts and effects of Hurricane Katrina on the New Orleans communities of lesbian, gay and transgender people (D’Ooge, 2008). As noted by Gaillard et al., (2017), these studies were succeeded by a number of publications exploring the differential impacts and effects of a variety of disaster types on sexual and gender minorities across the globe, including Nepal (Knight and Sollom, 2012), Haiti (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and SEROVie, 2011), Japan (Ozawa, 2012), the Philippines (Gaillard, 2011), Indonesia (Balgos et al., 2012), Samoa (Smith, 2013), Canada (Cianfarani, 2013), the United States (D’Ooge, 2008; Stukes, 2014; Wisner et al., 2016), and Australia and New Zealand (Dominey-Howes et al., 2016, 2018; Gorman-Murray et al., 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2017, 2018; McKinnon et al., 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

The majority of these case studies focused on emphasising the particular vulnerability of sexual and gender minorities when faced with a disaster – regardless of the trigger of that disaster. What commonly emerges is that sexual and gender minorities are differentially (that is, more severely) affected by disasters due to the absence of protective measures more readily available to cisgender men and women. The frequently marginalised position of sexual and gender minorities in everyday life thus places them at higher risk when confronted by disasters, whatever their cause. This vulnerability is reinforced by the lack of consideration of sexual and gender minorities’ needs and concerns in policies and practices of DRR (Dominey-Howes et al., 2016). Such policies and practices therefore lead to the further marginalisation of groups that are already marginalised (Gaillard et al., 2017).

Positively, research has also demonstrated the resilience (we contend even the ‘resistance’ that many find for themselves in an otherwise heteronormative world) and adaptive capacities of sexual and gender minorities in disasters. Balgos et al., (2012) working in Indonesia and Gaillard (2011) researching in the Philippines reveal that, despite being marginalised, sexual and gender minorities display a wide array of capacities which contribute to reducing the impact of a disaster for them *and* the wider communities of which they are part. These capacities often reflect their everyday skills and resources, for example, community leadership, or the very nature of

their identity, for example, their ability to undertake tasks traditionally associated with men and women (and to move between these easily). Unfortunately, these capacities are unrecognised in policies and practices of DRR.

Whilst the extant literature is limited and many gaps in knowledge remain, this area of research is receiving increasing attention and is rapidly expanding.

Anchoring the experiences of sexual and gender minorities in disasters via a project on Australian and New Zealand disasters

In 2013, two of us (D.D.-H. and A.G.-M.) came together, bringing our respective expertise in disaster risk reduction (and geography) and sexuality (and geography). We began a project to explore the experiences of sexual and gender diverse individuals, families and communities in Australia and New Zealand. On securing pilot funding from Western Sydney University and then funding via an Australian Research Council-funded Discovery Project titled 'Queering disasters in the Antipodes: investigating the experiences of sexual and gender people in natural disasters', we were joined by a research fellow (S.M.).

Our original project objectives were fourfold: (1) to interview and survey sexual and gender diverse people about their experiences of recent Antipodean disasters caused by specific natural hazard events and to examine their vulnerability and resilience; (2) to determine any specific needs of sexual and gender diverse populations during and after disasters; (3) to understand relations of social cohesion between sexual and gender diverse populations and their wider social settings in disasters and to determine how social, cultural, political, economic and familial linkages were affected; and (4) to understand similarities and differences in the experiences and needs of sexual and gender diverse populations across different disasters, as differentiated by national, political, social and legal geographies and intersections of gender identity, class, ethnicity, race, age and disability.

Findings about the experiences and needs of sexual and gender diverse people and families from our study (see Dominey-Howes et al., 2018 and references therein), as well as the challenges faced by emergency service providers, reflect (that is, were the 'same' as) the wider literature available at the start of the project and which has emerged since. The following six subsections outline the six key messages that emerged.

Heteronormative policy settings further marginalise and exclude sexual and gender diverse people from disaster risk reduction activity

Government policy settings are either directly exclusionary/discriminatory or 'accidentally blind' by failing to explicitly make reference to the needs of sexual and gender diverse people in disaster planning, response and recovery. Critically, where faith-based organisations have been granted taxpayer funds to provide response and recovery services to community members, those same organisations have sought and been granted power to 'potentially' withhold services from sexual and gender diverse people. Even if they do not, the fact that they can do so (at their will) is known by sexual and gender diverse people and concerns them greatly. Sexual and gender diverse people face discrimination and hatred perpetuated in the name of faith as faith-based organisations and some people of faith blame and victimise sexual and gender diverse people in the aftermath of disasters. Sexual and gender diverse people do not always feel safe or secure in seeking shelter in response and recovery centres. They feel exposed and vulnerable to perceived or actual abuse perpetuated in the close, impersonal, non-private confines of shelter spaces.

The heteronormative policy settings that marginalise and exclude sexual and gender diverse people from post-disaster response and recovery arrangements must change, and leadership comes from the top. Our view is that legislation should change, but until it does, plans and practices can change faster to be more inclusive. Policies, plans and practices should *explicitly* articulate the need to cater for sexual and gender diverse people, and agencies and organisations that receive taxpayer funds to provide services to communities after disasters have occurred should not be allowed to discriminate on the basis of faith or any other ideology.

Sexual and gender diverse people exhibit a range of complex vulnerabilities

Overall, sexual and gender diverse people, their families of choice and their communities are ‘more’ vulnerable than the wider population due to a range of contextual reasons. For example, the mental and emotional well-being of sexual and gender diverse people may be more at risk as their otherwise private lives are made bare and visible in spaces such as evacuation shelters. This increases their perceived and actual stress associated with inappropriate stares, verbal comments and insults or even threats to their well-being.

Critically, sexual and gender diverse people should not be considered as a singular group – they are diverse (as we indicated earlier) and have many different challenges and needs. For example, trans people experience more vulnerability during disasters and have specific needs. Emergency management processes such as shelter registration are heteronormative in style and assume gender binary norms (e.g., gender registration documents that only allow female or male notification), which complicates the experiences of non-binary gendered people registering at emergency shelters. They are especially problematic for trans and intersex people with their tendency to only provide ‘female’ and ‘male’ toilets and washroom facilities. Again, these binary female/male facilities are extremely problematic for trans and intersex people, as well as for genderqueer individuals (i.e., those who identify as non-binary and not exclusively ‘man’ or ‘woman’). Some trans people also require continued access to complex hormone or drug therapy regimes and may be managing ongoing gender affirmation processes including surgical recovery – all of which can be totally compromised in the confines of a public shelter.

The media fail to include the impacts of disasters on sexual and gender diverse people

The media broadly report disasters as heterosexual events impacting ‘heterosexual couples and their families’. The wider media are generally silent on lesbian, gay and bisexual experiences and certainly non-inclusionary of trans and intersex experiences. Even the sexual and gender diverse media tend to give preference to the experiences of (white) gay men over others and, again, are quieter about the experiences and needs of lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex people.

Sexual and gender diverse people, their families and their communities demonstrate a wide range of resilient capacities and adaptive strategies

There is remarkable resilience, social capital and adaptive capacity within sexual and gender diverse communities and networks, and these might act as ‘models’ that can be employed and deployed by other groups in society. Some sexual and gender diverse individuals, couples and families build and then rely upon ‘families of choice’ and networks (thus, their social capital)

to provide practical, material and emotional support in times of disaster – rather than relying on governmental and community support specifically. Moreover, sexual and gender diverse people have and do find ways of navigating either a hostile environment or one perceived to be less supportive of their lives. We found that some sexual and gender diverse people have resilient capacities as part of a specific community, which include access to social capital and emotional support from within their communities and social networks (including friends and support organisations) and provision of alternative forms of material support by sexual and gender diverse organisations and businesses, such as emergency shelter, housing, financial relief and referral services. Building up of these resources and ensuring they are widely communicated can help to speed up recovery processes for sexual and gender diverse people.

Emergency service organisations and individuals demonstrate sensitive and inclusive behaviour

At a broad level, organisations, agencies and others providing emergency management planning, response and recovery services are not overtly discriminatory in their approaches (in Australia and New Zealand anyway). In fact, they seek to ‘treat everyone equally’, but they often indicate that they feel overwhelmed by the expectation to ‘provide special services’ to an ever-increasing number of minority groups [such as sexual and gender diverse people or people with disabilities – see Craig et al. (2019) and Calgaro et al. (2021)] and lack specialised training on the needs of such minorities, guidelines on what to do and resources on how to act.

Positive experiences and impacts

However, there were shining examples of leadership, sensitivity and inclusiveness of emergency service organisations and personnel who worked with sexual and gender diverse people in their homes after a disaster in ways that were entirely unexpected. These positive examples can be built upon by overtly recognising, celebrating and empowering those paid and volunteer emergency service people – who also, importantly, include sexual and gender diverse people.

To return to a key aspect of our introduction, different social groups experience disasters in different ways. It is therefore important to understand social and cultural differences in relation to disaster impacts. This is not simply a matter of addressing the imperative of social justice and inclusion, as important as that is (Calgaro et al., 2020). Rather, understanding the diversity of disaster impacts on different populations will enable federal and state policymakers and emergency services to better plan for disaster response and recovery – that is, to develop a more targeted approach to planning and implementing emergency services. This will make emergency services and the distribution of resources more efficient and, thus, arguably save both money (through more efficient distribution of resources) and lives (through anticipating the specific needs of different social groups – in this case, sexual and gender diverse people).

This project has had a number of major positive impacts. Following its completion, we were invited to work with the Gender and Disaster Pod (GAD Pod), an initiative of Women’s Health Goulburn North East, Women’s Health in the North and Monash University Injury Research Institute. Established in 2015, it promotes the understanding of gender issues in survivor responses to disasters and embeds these insights into emergency management practices (with funding from state and federal governments and agencies). Our involvement with GAD Pod has sought to advance the understanding of sexual and gender diverse issues and needs in disasters – mostly related to drought, bushfires and other weather- and climate-related hazards. Our research contributed to a literature review that has informed new National Gender

and Emergency Management Guidelines (see Parkinson et al., 2018a), which provide strategic guidelines to federal and state emergency management services for integrating sexual and gender diverse sensitive approaches to planning and delivery of disaster relief and recovery.²

Further, to advance sexual and gender diverse inclusive disaster planning and emergency management, the GAD Pod collaborated with Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) and the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet to conduct further research on sexual and gender diverse experiences of disaster and emergency management in Victoria – informed by our project. The GAD Pod also collaborated with GLHV to produce a training package ‘to broaden the understanding of the impact of being LGBTI in the delivery of effective emergency management services and to assist services to develop strategies to address inequalities’.³ These are all excellent examples of policy-relevant impact and practice.

Exploring early insights about the global COVID-19 pandemic effects on sexual and gender minorities

As we are writing (April 2021), the global COVID-19 pandemic continues to bring untold economic and human suffering, with close to 3 million fatalities and more than 1.28 billion confirmed infections (WHO, 2020). As a ‘type’ of disaster (a disaster classified as biological in origin rather than the more common hydro-meteorological, which is weather and climate related and causes most disasters, or geological events such as earthquakes that have been the triggers for other case studies discussed earlier), COVID-19 presents specific new challenges that sexual and gender diverse people are having to address at lightning speed. At this moment, a small literature has begun to emerge that seeks to identify and explore pandemic-related issues faced by sexual and gender minorities. So as to make this chapter as complete as possible, we summarise this emerging work here.

As early as April 2020, Dasgupta (2020), a researcher in Global Communications and Development based at Loughborough University, UK, writing in *The Conversation*, reported on issues for sexual and gender diverse people living in Bangladesh, India and the UK. He reports the following: (1) Gay friends who had been thrown out of their homes for revealing their sexuality were needing to return to their ‘unsafe’, hostile familial homes due to loss of income and insecure housing as a consequence of COVID-19, increasing a sense of isolation and having negative flow-on effects on emotional and mental well-being. (2) Sexual and gender diverse support organisations were advising young sexual and gender diverse people to ‘press pause’ on coming out – thus concealing and hiding their ‘true, authentic’ identities – until after COVID-19 had passed so as not to expose themselves to difficult, hostile or even dangerous situations with unsympathetic families and friends; others were ‘returning to the closet’ and/or remaining silent about their sexuality or gender identity – all of which combine to deny and hide one’s true self. (3) Young sexual and gender diverse people from low socio-economic backgrounds (in the UK) were especially marginalised, experiencing disproportionate levels of homelessness and insecure work and amplifying their marginal status. (4) In the UK, sexual and gender diverse young people were experiencing feelings of dread and lower mental well-being at the thought and process of ‘isolation’ imposed by governments and the need to distance from families and networks of choice – all of which were feeding into actual acts of discrimination and amplifying inequality. (5) Some young sexual and gender diverse people of colour in the UK who are connected with faith groups individually or as part of their cultural heritage, whilst grateful for receiving care packages, also expressed considerable anxiety at the possibility of their sexual and gender identities being discovered by their faith groups, leading to all sorts of potential outcomes. (6) Dasgupta (2020) also reports from sexual and gender diverse activists and friends located in

India and Bangladesh that they are enormously concerned especially about trans community members – many of whom are located in smaller towns and more remote areas – about how the effects of isolation, cutting kinship and friends networks that isolate trans people in often hostile environments was literally a case of ‘life and death’ for these individuals. For example, one trans advocacy group was noting local police brutality and increased home insecurity being faced by trans people – something clearly much worse under COVID-19 circumstances.

On a more positive note, Dasgupta (2020) states that, in India, the Varta Trust that advocates for sexual and gender diversity has organised members and other support groups to create safe, online social spaces for sharing information, stories and support and, more practically, care services, food packages and even anti-retroviral therapies. Also, many online social apps were taking an increasing role in facilitating connections between people, reducing the sense of isolation and also acting as a platform for sharing information.

In June 2020, Willem Stander, a PhD student in Applied Social Sciences working at the University of Brighton, UK, wrote in *The Conversation* about his research, which explores the need for mental health services among young sexual and gender diverse people (Standar, 2020). Specifically, he notes that, in an already greatly under-resourced environment, the particular mental health needs of sexual and gender diverse people facing COVID-19 have dramatically increased. He wrote that gay and bisexual men are often slow to reach out for mental health support in ‘regular’ times, often only doing so at true crisis moments, and the pandemic was making things very much worse. Further, as noted elsewhere but especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, young sexual and gender diverse people are at greater risk of domestic abuse, homelessness and mental health problems, none of which are easy to deal with in the middle of a global pandemic. He goes on to say that, again, the sexual and gender identities of individuals may need to be hidden or repressed for fear of or actual discrimination in home and work environments. Alarming, when young sexual and gender diverse people were approaching health services and/or faith-based organisations for support both in person or online, first there were significantly fewer services specifically for sexual and gender diverse people and, second, those organisations that were available often indicated that, at best, they did not have trained staff to meet the specific needs of sexual and gender diverse people and, at worst, were advocating harmful conversion therapies instead!

Standar (2020) reports that, in the UK at least, there are charities and support sector groups providing a range of support services for sexual and gender diverse people, but these organisations report that, just as the need for their services has increased, the effects of the pandemic, combined with government policies on lockdowns and gathering sizes, have greatly reduced their capacity to raise funds and provide vital services, leaving their sexual and gender diverse clients more highly exposed to harm and ever more marginalised.

Last, in a working paper titled “Queers and pandemics, past, present and forever: sexual and gender diverse health vulnerabilities and public health visibility”, Gibb et al. (2020) write specifically on health-related issues, sexual and gender minorities and the pandemic. They observe that widespread systemic and interpersonal discrimination means that sexual and gender diverse people interact with and benefit or do not benefit from health, healthcare, health systems and health policies differently from the ways in which heterosexual and cisgender people do. This discrimination means that sexual and gender diverse people experience a range of physical, emotional and mental health outcomes that are disproportionately negative, and the ‘long shadow’ of the HIV/AIDS pandemic provides a context for understanding and anchoring contemporary sexual and gender minority experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic (McKinmon et al., 2017b). Writing from Canada as these authors do, they also highlight the effects of lockdown, isolation, disconnection and separation for sexual and gender diverse people – people

who often create, benefit from and need ‘families of choice’ to create safe and welcoming spaces, all of which can and are being disrupted by COVID-19.

Critically, Gibb et al. (2020) ask serious social questions: who exactly are ‘all in this together’? Who is narrating the crisis of COVID-19? And, consequently, whose stories about those impacted are told or excluded? Who has ‘equal’ access to resources and treatment and who does not? Sadly, Gibbs et al. report a litany of discriminatory exclusions from employment, health and mental care and support, and access to social resources, and so it goes on and on in relation to the needs and experiences of sexual and gender minorities. Finally, they conclude that much immediate and urgent research is needed to explore, document and reveal the impacts of COVID-19 on sexual and gender diverse people.

These initial insights into the impacts and effects of COVID-19 on sexual and gender diverse individuals are now being replicated and unpacked in greater detail as new research studies become available. For example, a special issue of *The Journal of Homosexuality* (volume 68, issue 4) has explored the experiences of and impacts of COVID-19 on (with a particular focus on health and well-being) different sexuality and gender identifying people in countries of the Global North and Global South, in college settings, in communities, in parental homes and online (Baumel et al., 2021; Bochicchio et al., 2021; Cerezo et al., 2021; Garcia-Rabines and Bencich, 2021; Gato et al., 2021; Grant et al., 2021; Holloway et al., 2021; Kidd et al., 2021; Moore et al., 2021).

Whilst this limited literature about the effects of COVID-19 on sexual and gender minorities should be expanded as much as possible, the accounts given sadly ‘mirror’ the experiences of sexual and gender diverse people globally in relation to other types of disasters – there are still many lessons to learn.

On some future research priorities

The last section of this chapter outlines future research needs to build upon scholarship that has extended our understanding of sexuality, gender and marginality, revealed homophobic and transphobic views, behaviours and policies within the emergency management workforce (Parkinson et al., 2018b), and identified workplace cultures of gender-based discrimination, which reduces safety, well-being and organisational effectiveness (Eriksen, 2014; Eriksen, 2019). Emergency management workforces have generally been overlooked in terms of their interaction with and support for sexual and gender minorities and in relation to their own staff and volunteers. We contend that these omissions should be addressed in future research.

While studies point towards inequitable workplace cultures, policies and practices, which are likely to negatively impact sexual and gender diverse professionals, no research to date has investigated the lived experiences of sexual and gender diverse workers within the (Australian) emergency management and humanitarian sectors. This contrasts with studies of other Australian workforce sectors, which have identified anti-sexual and -gender discrimination as a significant and continuing problem (AHRC, 2014), with experiences or fear of discrimination marginalising sexual and gender diverse people in the workplace and resulting in reduced workplace efficiency and poorer health and well-being outcomes (Smith et al., 2013).

Consequently, we call for new research to investigate whether, and to what extent, the extraordinary challenges of working in emergency management are escalated for sexual and gender diverse staff and volunteers by workplace inequity and marginality. Such work is vital in the context of the ever-increasing demands on our emergency management workforce, which the drought, heatwaves and bushfire disasters of Australia’s 2019–2020 Black Summer,

immediately followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, have clearly demonstrated (Head, 2020; Sanderson and Fisher, 2020).

We offer as indicative examples three domains of the emergency management sector that we believe reflect the diverse social, political, organisational and geographic contexts likely to impact on, or determine, sexual and gender diverse experiences in emergency management.

First, response services provided by staff and volunteers within emergency management organisations must be examined critically and openly. Research is needed into how the often highly masculinised spaces of emergency management, such as firefighting (Eriksen, 2014; Eriksen, 2019; Wright, 2008), influence the construction and enactment of sexual and gender identities and create inclusive or toxic workplace cultures with consequent risk and well-being issues. Based on insights from other professions in Australia, a lack of understanding of the experiences of marginality among sexual and gender diverse emergency management workers is likely to be a significant problem. Addressing this knowledge gap will advance the capacity of emergency management organisations to respond to the causes, impacts and scale of workforce discrimination. In this context, we define marginality as the peripheral and discriminatory treatment of certain individuals or groups within a society (or organisation such as an emergency management service) due to a failure to acknowledge diverse needs.

Research is needed to identify both the challenges faced by sexual and gender diverse disaster responders and the positive steps taken within organisations to acknowledge and enhance workplace diversity. By examining the experiences of sexual and gender diverse staff and volunteers, it will be possible to enhance the capacities of emergency management organisations to support and retain their workers, while also breaking down the barriers that currently limit the ability of some organisations to support diverse populations. The current absence of research in this area has three significant and interlinked consequences:

- 1 Sexual and gender diverse workers and volunteers are left invisible, leading to an assumption of uniform heterosexuality across the emergency management workforce and the silencing of diverse experiences. As a result, heteronormative workplace policies and practices may implicitly exclude sexual and gender diverse individuals, while explicit instances of discrimination remain unaddressed.
- 2 Sexual and gender diverse people become framed in disaster research as subjects requiring assistance rather than as agents bringing valuable capabilities to emergency management. The absence of information about sexual and gender diverse participation in emergency management work risks ignoring possibilities for building more effective policy and practice through diverse skills and knowledge.
- 3 Relationships remain under-developed between emergency management agencies, sexual and gender diverse community organisations and sexual and gender diverse disaster survivors. Previous research has identified the important capacities of sexual and gender diverse community health organisations to support their clients in disaster recovery and the reluctance of some sexual and gender diverse survivors to seek support from mainstream disaster support services for fear of discrimination (Dominey-Howes et al., 2014). Improvement in these relationships has the potential to increase organisational performance across the sector as well as to minimise response and recovery costs.

Second, a light must be shone on the recovery services provided by staff and volunteers of faith-based organisations. Faith-based groups are a critical element of Australian disaster response and in response to disasters around the globe more broadly. In New South Wales (NSW), for example, the Salvation Army, Uniting Church, Anglicare and Adventist Development and

Relief Agency (ADRA) have Memoranda of Understanding with the state government to provide recovery services. Faith-based groups, some of which maintain that same-sex relations and gender non-conformity are signs of sin, are permitted to discriminate against sexual and gender diverse people in employment and in the provision of services under anti-discrimination legislation in NSW and other states (Dominey-Howes et al., 2016). Research should explore intersecting geographies of faith, sexuality, gender and disaster at local and global scales to examine both the value placed on faith-based social inclusion by staff and volunteers (including sexual and gender diverse people of faith) and the potential for sexual and gender marginalisation through the application of certain scriptural interpretations or teachings within some faith-based organisations. Attention to the work of sexual and gender diverse people in faith-based organisations and sexual and gender diversity-affirming faith-based organisations would develop new and important insights and significant contributions to the geographic and disaster literatures, challenging discourses which place sexual and gender diverse communities and communities of faith only as oppositional forces.

Third, there is a need to explore the response and recovery services provided by Australian (and other) aid workers deployed to overseas disasters. Australian government and non-governmental agencies provide response and recovery services through the deployment of Australian aid workers to international disaster zones – work that carries significant risks to physical and mental health (Brooks and Dunn, 2015). We propose the need for research to examine the experiences of sexual and gender diverse team members deployed to countries in which homosexual acts and/or non-normative gender performances are criminalised or otherwise sanctioned. In moments of crisis, international relief efforts place Australian understandings of sexual and gender identity in direct contact with potentially conflicting local views (Mizzi, 2014). This may have negative emotional, physical and/or legal consequences for sexual and gender diverse emergency workers and for local minority sexual or gender identity populations. Research is needed to identify how workers and relief organisations navigate and manage these significant challenges in the context of disasters.

These three examples reveal the diverse range of spaces and policy contexts in which emergency management work takes place, from rural communities in Australia to international cities struck by disaster. They suggest the value of examining how the spatial construction and enactment of sexual and gender diverse identities affect diverse forms of emergency management within varied spatial contexts. Volunteer bushfire brigades in many rural areas of Australia, for example, are an important element of community collaboration and participation. Understanding of the inclusion or exclusion of sexual and gender diverse locals from disaster risk reduction thus offers potential for addressing broader questions of sexual and gender diverse belonging and place-making within local communities.

Examination of the multiplicity of experiences within the sexual and gender diverse emergency management workforce itself – noting the role of intersecting social markers, including gender identity, Indigeneity, race and disability – will provide greater insights into how each exacerbate or minimise social marginality within and across differing spatial contexts. Such research will help to inform intellectual and practical improvements to Australian – and global – disaster resilience strategies, social and economic disaster-related research practices and organisational policies within diverse areas of the emergency management sector. Ensuring that sexual and gender diverse workers within the sector are supported, and their experiences are heard, will enable a reduction in the harmful impacts of marginality and improvements in organisational diversity and effectiveness. The building of more equitable workplace cultures will aid in addressing the significant problem of volunteer and staff recruitment and retention, reducing training costs and ensuring that highly experienced and skilled team members do not

withdraw from the sector due to discrimination or exclusion. A deeper and fuller understanding of the impacts of sexual and gender diverse marginalisation within emergency management in Australia also offers important lessons for other countries facing similar challenges, as well as for other sectors of the Australian workforce in which the challenges of high-risk work (e.g., police, armed services and medical services) are exacerbated by workplace marginality.

Conclusions

Disasters are increasing in frequency, magnitude and impact and rip individuals, families and communities apart. Disaster impacts are widespread and pernicious, but not uniformly experienced as not all people are the same. Academic scholarship and disaster risk reduction practice are increasingly turning to explore the needs and experiences of and cater for sexual and gender diverse people – a set of communities who are particularly vulnerable to disasters, but communities with extraordinary adaptive capacity and resilience. In this chapter, we have tried to provide an overview of where the scholarship of sexual and gender minorities intersecting with disaster studies has come from and the key messages from numerous studies from across the world, and we have highlighted some research and policy practice steps for moving forward. Much remains to be done if we are to mainstream the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in disaster risk reduction. Last, we call for future updates of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to explicitly acknowledge and make reference to meeting the needs of sexual and gender diverse peoples everywhere.

Notes

- 1 Whilst not wanting to spend too much time bogged down in the differences between each of these terms, they do in fact refer to separate but often connected moments or events in a sequence that may move from one situation or state 'before' to another situation or state 'after' a specific trigger event. A crisis does not need to escalate to an emergency or end up as a declared disaster, but often they do. Each of these terms and actual events requires a specific set of emergency response activities on a continuum, which at worst involves response and recovery to a full-blown disaster. Many, although not all, disasters are related to natural hazard events, but political, environmental and conflict situations can lead to humanitarian crises, emergencies and disasters. These key terms are contested, but here our use of them is largely informed by the 2009 UNDRR Terminology of Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2009). Whilst recognising these various terms, in the remainder of this chapter we specifically refer to 'disasters' because they represent the worst outcome for individuals, families and communities and inevitably encompass first crises, emergencies and, more often than not, humanitarian crises.
- 2 The literature review is available at www.genderanddisaster.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/GEM-Literature-review-V2.pdf, and the guidelines are available at www.genderanddisaster.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Gender-and-Emergency-Guidelines.pdf.
- 3 www.genderanddisaster.com.au/info-hub/education-training/. The training package includes facilitators' and participants' manuals and a disaster evaluation form and is available at www.genderanddisaster.com.au/info-hub/education-training/. These materials are supplemented by videos produced to highlight the training and encourage participation; these are available at www.genderanddisaster.com.au/being-lgbti-during-disaster/.

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