



JENNIFER KELLY

# ZEST FOR LIFE

LESBIANS'  
EXPERIENCES OF  
MENOPAUSE

SPRINGER



## Notes

### *Chapter 1*

- 1 Heterosexism is the belief that heterosexuality is the only acceptable form of sexuality.
- 2 Homophobia is the fear and/or hatred of lesbians and gay men.
- 3 As this study focused on lesbians' experiences of menopause, I believe it was essential to include the data only from women who self-identified as lesbian.
- 4 Eight out of the 14 women who did not wish to be interviewed are well known to me and possibly did not wish to be interviewed for this reason.
- 5 This number includes women who have experienced stillbirths and/or neonatal deaths.
- 6 The title of my thesis is 'Lesbians' Experiences of Menopause'.
- 7 For further information on the social construction of sexuality, see Jeffreys, 1987; Coveney et al., 1984; Kitzinger, 1987; Jackson, 1994; Jackson & Scott, 1996; Gottschalk, 2000.
- 8 Heteropatriarchy is a system of structures and institutions created by [heterosexual] men in order to sustain and recreate male power and female subordination (adapted from Rowland & Klein, 1996, 15).
- 9 In Australia, a general practitioner (GP) is a medical doctor who works in the community and treats all kinds of cases, as distinct from a consultant or medical specialist.
- 10 I wish to point out that menopause does not equal old age; however, menopause is a stage that usually coincides with women's midlife – apart from women who undergo premature menopause due to medical interventions such as chemotherapy and/or hysterectomies that lead to early menopause.



## Chapter 2

- 1 See Introduction for further details.
- 2 Throughout this book I use the term 'Westernised' rather than 'Western' as, in addition to Europe, the US, and Canada, it allows me to include industrialised capitalist countries such as Australia and New Zealand, which are geographically located in the southern hemisphere.
- 3 I suggest this means 'malestream', as it reflects the views and ideals of the heterosexual male.
- 4 In order to protect anonymity, interviewees chose a pseudonym and for the questionnaire responses I gave them a code number, rather than using their real names.
- 5 I conducted a literature review on women and body image as part of my doctoral study.
- 6 It is worth noting that since the findings of the Women's Health Initiative study were released in 2002, HRT is now commonly referred to as Hormone Therapy (HT).
- 7 In an attempt to protect anonymity and confidentiality, all participants were issued with a code number. This number is used at the end of quotations cited in square brackets, e.g. [21]. Women whom I interviewed chose their own pseudonym. For this reason a combination of numbers and names are used throughout this book.

## Chapter 3

- 1 Nett Hart (1996, 69) *From an Eroticism of Difference to an Intimacy of Equals: A Radical Feminist Lesbian Separatist Perspective on Sexuality*.
- 2 See: Bachmann, 1995; Dennerstein et al., 1999; Hallstrom, 1979; Leiblum et al., 1983; Sarrel, 1982; Semmens & Wagner, 1982.
- 3 Although Pfizer is no longer attempting to manufacture a female equivalent to Viagra, I suggest that in the near future other pharmaceutical companies will see this as a new business opportunity and will attempt to create a female version of this drug.
- 4 Menarche is the onset of the first menstruation.
- 5 Estradiol is a natural estrogenic hormone secreted chiefly by the ovaries, and is the most potent of the naturally occurring estrogens; it is used especially to treat menopausal symptoms.
- 6 The Jean Hailes Foundation is a leading provider of women's health services in Australia. Although located in Victoria, it is now providing women's health services nationally. Its primary focus is the health and wellbeing of the 3.3 million Australian women aged between 35 and 65.
- 7 GLBT refers to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered.



- 8 Sexpo is a four-day annual event held in four major Australian cities. It is promoted by the organisers as a 'health, sexuality and lifestyle exhibition'. In Melbourne, Sexpo is sponsored by Club X – a large chain of sex shops. Over 60000 adults (40% women) visited Sexpo in Melbourne in 2002.

#### *Chapter 4*

- 1 In this book I use the Australian-English spelling of 'oestrogen' unless originally cited as 'estrogen'.
- 2 Progesterone is the name given to the female hormone that is responsible for the changes in the endometrium in the second half of the menstrual cycle preparatory for implantation, development of maternal placenta, and the development of mammary glands. In its synthetic, or human-made, form it is known as progestin or progestogen.
- 3 Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19–22 June 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 states (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.
- 4 Alzheimer's disease is a serious disorder of the brain manifesting in premature senility.
- 5 Complementary therapists are highly critical of the disease model of menopause. See the resource section of this book for further references.
- 6 I acknowledge that some women who experience insomnia and troublesome hot flushes will request HRT in an attempt to relieve these 'symptoms'. It is not my intention to make women feel guilty for seeking out medical interventions at this time. I do, however, encourage all women to take greater control over their health and engage in open communication with their doctor about the advantages, disadvantages and suitability of such treatment. I also realise that for many lesbians, such communication may not always be easy.
- 7 In these studies, no experimental drug is given, however, the person's symptoms, laboratory test results, and response to treatment are observed during the course of normal medical management.
- 8 Since the release of the WHI findings in July 2002, the Jean Hailes Foundation has updated its information on 'Hormone Therapy Benefits and Risks'. See [www.jeanhailes.org.au/issues/hrt\\_benefits.htm](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au/issues/hrt_benefits.htm)
- 9 BreastScreen Victoria is part of BreastScreen Australia and is jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments. It offers free screening mammography to women over 40 years of age every two years, through a nationally-accredited service. The target group is



- women aged 50–69 years, however, women over 40 years are eligible to participate.
- 10 If women have made a decision to take HRT and they have regular mammograms, they might want to discuss with their doctor the benefits of discontinuing HRT for two weeks prior to their mammogram.
  - 11 Whilst these increases have been described as very small, they are, however, still increases. Women should be fully informed of the risks and benefits. I encourage women to discuss these issues openly and fully with their doctor.
  - 12 The TGA is Australia's regulatory body for medical drugs and devices. It is a unit of the Federal Department of Health and Ageing. It carries out a range of assessment and monitoring activities to ensure therapeutic goods available in Australia are of an acceptable standard. The TGA aims to ensure that the Australian community has access, within a reasonable time, to therapeutic advances.
  - 13 The role of the ADEC is to provide an important system of review for the evaluation work and to guide decision-making of the TGA in regard to prescription medicines.
  - 14 This is not the first time such action has been taken.
  - 15 Further information on the Women's Health Initiative can be obtained from the NIH website ([www.nih.gov/PHTindex.htm](http://www.nih.gov/PHTindex.htm)). This website contains an enormous amount of background information and findings from these studies.
  - 16 Medical practitioners and scientists point out that this increase is small, especially when applied to women over 65 years of age. I point out that the increases although small, are in fact increases.
  - 17 Further attention is presently directed at what some have described as the over-prescribing of antidepressants in women. See, for example, Woodlock (2003) and McLellan (1995).
  - 18 I am not suggesting that these healthy interventions will halt or reverse declining bone density. I am suggesting, however, that more emphasis could be placed on lifestyle factors at an earlier stage in an attempt to decrease the risk of developing such conditions.
  - 19 Although this quote refers to ERT, I believe it is comparable to HRT. In a society such as ours that tells people their health is their own responsibility and as a result places pressure on them to adopt healthy behaviours and seek appropriate treatments, women are often pressured into taking such drugs, and they often feel it is the 'right thing' to do.
  - 20 In this study, women were deluded by the drug companies and medical profession into thinking that hormones were the only way to prevent chronic conditions such as heart disease and Alzheimer's. As a result of



- the WHI findings, such thinking amongst these groups should no longer prevail.
- 21 This is an erroneous view, as breast cancer can also occur outside of the breast tissue.
  - 22 It could be argued that few lesbians would disclose their lesbian identity to an unknown interviewer over the telephone. With high levels of homophobia in the general community, many lesbians might not perceive this as a 'safe' action to take. I do not find it surprising, given the study methods, that the number of lesbians participating was extremely small.

### *Chapter 5*

- 1 In order to protect anonymity, the name of the town has been omitted.
- 2 The options appeared in this order on the questionnaire.
- 3 These figures do not add up to 324. The authors do not provide any explanation for this irregularity.
- 4 I facilitated this group on behalf of the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) for the Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2001. This strategy will provide a policy framework for planning, funding and delivery of services related to the health and wellbeing of Victorian women.
- 5 Due to the lack of an accepted definition of 'lesbian' and the effects of homophobia, which 'force' many lesbians to remain closeted, it is difficult to estimate with any degree of accuracy the number of lesbians. Ten per cent is the most widely-accepted figure (Zeidestein, 1990).
- 6 It must be pointed out that alternative/complementary health care providers are not always non-discriminating in their approach.
- 7 It is not known why lesbians in this study are more likely to have Pap tests than mammograms.
- 8 The high number of GPs in the study is acknowledged. Ruth McNair is a Melbourne-based GP and is heavily involved in lesbian health provision, education and research, with consumers, medical students, GPs and other health professionals.
- 9 This includes six nurses, one medical student, a pharmacist, a laboratory technician, a psychologist and four administrative workers.
- 10 See Hawthorne, 1998, for further discussion.
- 11 World Health Organisation.
- 12 United Nations Children's Fund (formerly United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund).
- 13 I wish to point out that this is the view of an individual lactation consultant (LC) and it is not representative of all LCs. When I have



- shared this experience with other LCs they have been horrified to learn that one of their colleagues expresses these views.
- 14 Lesbians are not considered to be a high-risk group for AIDS. Surveys have found much lower rates of STIs among lesbians than among their heterosexual counterparts. Evidence that HIV may be transmitted between women remains inconclusive (Wilton, 1997b).
  - 15 Rose does not use the terms 'lesbian' or 'heterosexual'. He uses only 'gay' and 'non-gay'. No explanation is given for using these terms.
  - 16 Despite sending questionnaires and information about my study to a range of health services – including women's health services – for staff to display and/or offer to lesbian clients, I did not receive any completed questionnaires from these sources.
  - 17 The Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria changed its name to the Cancer Council of Victoria in February 2002, to bring it in line with the names of cancer councils in other Australian states and territories.
  - 18 Other authors and researchers disagree with these views.
  - 19 DSM III was superseded in 1994 with the publication of DSM IV.
  - 20 GLBTI: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and intersex.
  - 21 Women were given five categories and asked which best described their current sexual identity. The categories are: 'exclusively heterosexual', 'mainly heterosexual', 'bisexual', 'mainly homosexual' (lesbian) or 'exclusively homosexual' (lesbian).

## Chapter 6

- 1 *Lesbians on the Loose (LOTL)* is a monthly lesbian magazine published in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. It publishes 20000 copies monthly and has a readership of 54000.
- 2 CASA House is a centrally located centre against sexual assault in Melbourne. It provides services to victim/survivors of sexual assault, support and consultation for friends, non-offending family members and other professionals.

## Chapter 7

- 1 This refers to the male-centred worldview, where male characteristics are regarded as central and anything else is marginal. Lesbians, therefore, are not included in this scheme.
- 2 *Australian Story* is a television documentary series screened weekly on the ABC. It highlights the lives of extraordinary Australians. Dr Kerry Phelps is a high-profile Australian lesbian, especially given her position as President of the Australian Medical Association from 2000 to 2003.





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