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**Homophobic Encounters of the Third Kind: “Young Queer Workers”
Witnessing and Refuting Homophobia in Australian Workplaces**

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Homophobia has many faces in workplaces as a social space. Yet scant attention has been given to younger non-heterosexual employees as new entrants to the labour market. Likewise, little consideration has been given to recognising the impact of witnessing homophobic violence in organisational spaces. This paper addresses both fields by examining young lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer workers (LGBQ) experiences of silently witnessing sexualised humour and homophobic abuse in the workplace. Findings will be presented from a qualitative investigation of how thirty-four young women and men (aged 18-26) negotiate diverse sexual identities in Australian workplaces. Data was generated through online interviewing, focused interviews and web-based surveys and analysed by applying the constructivist grounded theory method. Participants were silent witnesses to symbolically violent acts such as the exchange of homonegative comments or the group-reception of sexualised humour. Witnessing symbolic violence diminished young people’s sense of safety in their employment. However, young people were equally adept at rejecting and refuting homonegative expressions without compromising their personal safety. Implications will be discussed for unpacking how sexually exclusive workplaces can act as both mobilising spaces against homophobic expressions as well as immobilising spaces through the impact of witnessing symbolic violence.

Paul Willis is a lecturer in social care law in the School of Human Sciences, Swansea University. Paul’s practice background includes community development and education with sexual minority groups and his research interests encompass health and wellbeing of queer youth, social work and sexuality, equality law, and young people and secondary school participation.