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Introduction to GLBT Communities

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Today's Agenda

- What is Sexual Identity?
- Issues for GLBT people:
 - Homophobia, Heterosexism & Discrimination
 - Mental health, A&OD, Suicide
 - HIV/AIDS
- Conflicts: Attitudes toward GLBT community, Human Rights, Same-Sex Marriage
- Support services GLBT individuals and common barriers to accessing them
- Questions & Activity

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What is Sexual Identity?

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Labels

- What are some of the labels you have heard used to describe someone's sexuality?

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Labels

- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Straight
- Hetero

Source: www.slapupsidethehead.com

Sexual Identity

- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** sexually or romantically orientated feelings, fantasies, thoughts and behaviours.
- **SEXUAL IDENTITY:** the way that we **understand** and **define** ourselves in relation to our romantic and sexual preferences, i.e. label/s (or group/s) that we might choose to identify with (e.g. gay, bisexual or heterosexual).

FBI Model

Fantasies (Feelings/Attraction)		
same sex	\longleftrightarrow	opposite sex
Behaviour		
same sex	\longleftrightarrow	opposite sex
Identity		
lesbian gay queer bisexual heterosexual other		

Aris, A. Gillette, M., Coates, P., & Brown, G. (1998). Clearing the Way: Trainers Manual. Western Australian AIDS Council and Gay and Lesbian Counselling Services WA, Inc. Perth, p. 58.

FBI Model

Feelings (Fantasies)
Same-sex attracted \longleftrightarrow Opposite-sex attracted

Behaviour
Same-sex attracted \longleftrightarrow Opposite-sex attracted

Identity
I.e. Gay, Lesbian \longleftrightarrow Heterosexual
Bisexual

FBI Model

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Coming Out or In

- In relation to same-sex attraction, coming out refers to a process by which their sexual identity may be disclosed to another/others.
- Largely a Western concept and may or may not be applicable to CALD SSAY.
- Some prefer "coming in"

Image source: PFLAG

Coming Out Issues

- Not everyone comes out when a teenager or early twenties
- Some people need more support than others
- Parents, families, children and friends may need support too
- Unique challenges coming out if older/married etc



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Adolescent Sexuality

- Not all same sex attracted young people are sexually active.
- Many same sex attracted young people are heterosexually active
- Many heterosexual young people are same sex active
- Many of the issues evoke considerable stress and anxiety for young people of all sexual orientations.
- For people generally, sexual identity in many cases is not fixed and may vary over time.



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Issues for GLBT people: Homophobia, Heterosexism & Discrimination

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homophobia

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What is homophobia?

"Homophobia is not a phobia or morbid fear in the usual sense because it is characterised more by anger and contempt than fear...but it is an attitude or set of beliefs that is widely accepted or tolerated".



Flood, M. & Hamilton, C. 2005, *Mapping Homophobia in Australia*, p. 3

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Homophobia in Schools

- In the "Writing Themselves In Again" study (2005) of same sex attracted young people in Australia, **four out of five** respondents had been **abused at school**
- Verbal and physical abuse has a serious reduction on their feelings of wellbeing and safety.



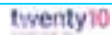
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Homophobic Violence

- Gay men and lesbians in NSW are between four and six times more likely to be assaulted than men and women in the general population and 85% have experienced some form of homophobic violence such as abuse, harassment, or assault.



Street Safety

- Vast majority of street based assaults and abuse are perpetrated by groups of young men
- Oxford St has seen an increase in violence in recent years
- Violence increases during events like Mardi Gras



Discrimination

- In NSW Lesbians and gay men are **protected** from workplace discrimination, harassment, vilification and unlawful termination by federal and state laws.
- Exceptions: a **religious organisation, private school or business with less than 5 people**

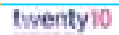


Discrimination



- Of course this hasn't stopped all harassment as it is more likely to come from **individuals** rather than institutions.

Source: www.slapsidethehead.com



That's so GAY!



Source: www.slapsidethehead.com



Internalising

Witnessing other people becoming targets of social outcasting or homophobic abuse can have a huge impact on someone's sense of safety and wellbeing.



Heterosexism

- The belief that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexual relationships are superior. It is the way in which society and its institutions are structured for the benefit and dominance of heterosexuals, and frequently exclude openly GLBT persons from social, religious and political power.



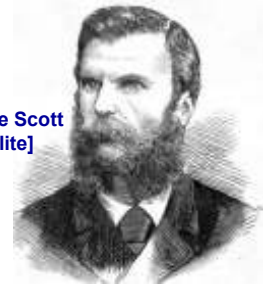
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Erasure

Andrew George Scott
[Captain Moonlite]
(1842 - 1880)



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Stereotypes

- There are many, many negative stereotypes
- Even so called 'positive' stereotypes such as 'gay men have great fashion sense' still create expectations which not all can meet



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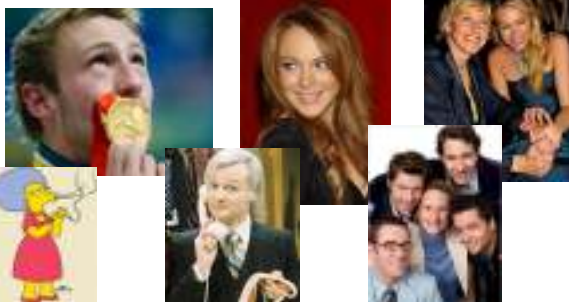


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the good the bad the ugly: queer role models



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GLBT Contribution to Society



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Issues for GLBT people: Mental health, A&OD, Suicide



Living in a Heterosexist World



- SSA YP often experience depression, anxiety, other mental health issues, are at a high risk of homelessness, and may have issues with alcohol and other drugs
- These issues are **not usually a direct result of their sexual identity** – more from the trauma of living in a predominantly heterosexist society



Internalising

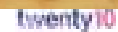


At some level, many GLBT individuals internalise being told that they are broken, sick, evil, immoral, disgusting, diseased...



- *“Few straight people have much of an idea of the impact on gay and lesbian kids of the constant social pressure to behave, think, and feel like heterosexuals.”*

Joe Kort, www.joekort.com



Suicide

- Depression and suicide rates (especially among young people) are continually increasing.
- Approximately **2000** people a year complete suicide in Australia.
- It is assumed that completed and attempted suicides are under-reported in statistics by about 50%.
- Some reports suggest that **SSA YP are 3-6 times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers.**



Source: Macquarie University, Howard & Nicolas et.al. Central Coast Health




Alcohol & Other Drugs

- **11%** of SSAY have injected drugs compared with **1%** of the general population
- **14 to 18 year old SSAY** drink alcohol more than those of comparable age.
- Those who have experienced rejection and abuse are more likely to report using marijuana and heroin.



Source: Lindsay, Smith & Rosenthal (1997) Secondary Students, HIV/AIDS & Sexual Health






Alcohol & Other Drugs

- **76% people aged (20-29)** in this GLBQ sample compared to **20%** in the National Household Survey had ever used amphetamines.
- Overall the alcohol and other drug use within the GLBQ communities is **two-to four-fold higher** than in the broader community.

Source: Ms Alison Murnane, Dr Anthony Smith, Ms Louise Crompton, Dr Pamela Snow and Mr Geoffrey Munro, (June 2000) *Beyond Perceptions: A report on A&OD use among GLBQ communities in Victoria.*




Issues for GLBT people: HIV / AIDS



What is HIV? What is AIDS?


- **HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus.** HIV is a virus that attacks the human immune system – the system in our bodies that fights off infections and keeps us strong and healthy.
- **AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.** AIDS is a collection of different symptoms and sicknesses caused by HIV attacking the immune system. Because HIV destroys the immune system, the body can not fight off common illnesses and infections as it normally would.



HIV in NSW


- **15,000 Diagnoses in NSW since 1981**
- In 2007
 - 85-90% Male
 - 20-25% under 30
 - 65-70% homosexual sex
 - 15%-20% heterosexual sex
 - Injecting drug use less than 5%

NSW HIV/AIDS Database, CDB, NSW Department of Health



The Consequences...

- A significant part of a generation of young gay men was gone
- Some feel that it put the gay rights movement back decades
- However, brought the community together to make it stronger and more supportive



Conflicts with GLBT communities

Societal attitudes toward
GLBT communities,
Human Rights, Same-Sex
Marriage



77 Nations:

♥ = Prison

7 Nations:

♥ = Death

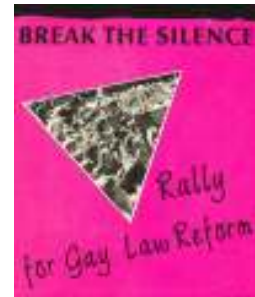
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Conflicts with GLBT Communities

- “Homosexuality” was decriminalised in NSW in 1984.



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Conflicts with GLBT Communities

- Following the Australian Human Rights Commission's report, the Australian Government introduced reforms in 2008 to remove discrimination against same-sex couples and their children in Commonwealth law.
- From July 2009 eg Centrelink, Tax, Medicare etc.



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Same Sex Marriage



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Human Rights not “Gay” Rights

- Some people perceive lobbying for equal rights as asking for “special” rights – but essentially people want equal human rights.
- Some people also think that human rights are a scarce commodity, and by giving rights to a group, they are losing or giving away their own rights. This of course is not true.




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Attitudes toward SSA

- 
- Champions of diversity (e.g. Activists, social workers etc)
 - Proactive (member of PFLAG)
 - Unconditional acceptance
 - Limited acceptance, still see SSA as inferior (e.g. not in front of me)
 - Neutral
 - Denial - it exists but not in my family/town/country
 - SSA is wrong / a sin / immoral
 - Actively homophobic – verbal abuse, physical, prejudice
 - Actively anti-gay – Fred Nile
 - Extremists - eg Fred Phelps

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Services Supporting GLBT Communities



- ACON
- Twenty10
- Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service
- Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby
- Bobby Goldsmith Foundation
- Gay and Lesbian Immigration Taskforce

Barriers to Accessing Services

- Isolation / lack of support for rural people as majority of services based in Sydney
- GLBT resources in schools often censored, stolen, banned etc
- Internet filters censored, can block helpful sites
- Legitimate GLBT services seen as "recruiting" or pornographic)
- Fear of being "outed", exposed, rejected



- Began as a community based response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in 1984
- Since 2000 has broadened scope to GLBT Health, including mental health and alcohol and other drugs while maintaining a strong focus on HIV/AIDS




GLBT Health

- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Counselling
- Anti-Violence Project

HIV Prevention

- Peer Education
- Social Marketing
- Community Development

HIV Support Services

Many of these services are integrate general GLBT health issues





A state-wide, community-based, non-profit organisation providing:

- Case Management & Counselling for young people (<25 years) & their families
- Drop-In
- Group Programs in Hornsby and Newtown
- Supported Accommodation
- Projects – eg Youth Festival
- Telephone Line providing support, information & referral
- Community Capacity Building







A state-wide, community-based, non-profit organisation providing:

- Telephone counselling: 7 nights a week
- Lesbian Line: Mon nights
- Coming out groups: men's & women's
- SMART Recovery group
- Community education






Helpful Websites

- www.glcsnsw.org.au
- www.twenty10.org.au
- www.acon.org.au
- www.pflag.org.au
- www.glhv.org.au





