

Messages from Silenced Youth



**HOMOPHOBIA & TRANSPHOBIA IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOLS**

**PUBLIC TALK
NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE**

FEBRUARY 27, 2009

Dr. Brian Burtch
Associate member, Department of Women's Studies
& Professor, School of Criminology
Simon Fraser University – Burnaby Campus
burtch@sfu.ca

*With thanks to
Rebecca Haskell, M.A.
rhaskell@sfu.ca*

Simon Fraser University (Burnaby campus)



“Credit, where credit’s due ...”



- Thanks to Jeff Lawrence and Susan Auchterlonie and the Department of Humanities at NIC for their support and hard work
- Thanks to the Department of Women’s Studies, SFU
- Thanks to the audience, including representatives of the Gay-Straight Alliance, Highland Secondary School, Courtenay BC
 - See information from the Safe Schools Coalition,
<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-gaystraightalliances.html>

Word of the day



- **Chiasmus**
- “word order is reversed for hilarious or poignant effect”
 - “it’s not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog.”
 - “never kiss a fool, or be fooled by a kiss”

more chiasmus!!



- "Your manuscript is both good and original; but the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good" (Dr. Samuel Johnson, to a novice writer)

What does “Bif” stand for?



- “bisexual female”

Word of the day



- “stonewall”
- Person, place, thing
- Nickname of Confederate General Thomas Jackson (U.S. Civil War)
- 1969 riot in Greenwich Village gay bar – “The Stonewall” - following police raid
- “hinder or prevent a person or thing” e.g., to obstruct or stall legislation

The Stonewall Inn



- The Stonewall Inn



Also, Stonewall Community
Foundation
New York City

Stonewall U.K.



- Formed in 1989
- **Recent nationwide survey:**
 - Almost 9 in 10 Britons (85%) support new legal protections
 - 73% would not mind if their child's teacher was gay
 - 80% would not mind if a relative was gay
 - 88% would not mind if member of royal family was gay
- “... vast majority believe that further steps should be taken to tackle homophobia by government, workplaces, schools and the media.”

(from www.stonewall.org)

2007 Sexual Orientation Act (U.K.)



- outlaws discrimination in hospitals & schools (public sector) and B&Bs to banking (private sector)
- All organisations in public sector are covered by the legislation
- Private sector: “illegal for businesses including banks, estate agents, hotels and bars to turn away gay customers or discriminate against them when providing goods or services”
 - Religious services like weddings or baptisms won't be covered by the laws.

Concerns over high school bullying



- Recent injuries to students, including self-inflicted harm
- <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/bullying/>
 - 2000 – Dawn-Marie Wesley, 14, Mission BC
 - 2000 – Hamed Nastoh, 14, Pattullo Bridge
 - 2005 – Gary Hansen, 16, Roblin MB
- Students seeking alternatives to mainstream schools
 - Home schooling
 - Alternative schools
 - Another mainstream school in different catchment area
 - Dropping out

2009 case-in-point



- **Ontario teen bullied in Mississauga**
- Lyndsey Hyde
<http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2009/02/26/8538826-sun.html>
- **“Teen blames her school for not acting quickly enough to stop her torment”**

Research on Bullying



- Dr. Brenda Morrison, Barry Cartwright, Becky Haskell (researchers in SFU Criminology)
- Brenda Morrison, *Restoring Safe School Communities: A Whole School Response to Bullying, Violence, and Alienation* (2007 book)
 - “shame and humiliation”
 - Is bullying just one of life’s lessons?

... Brenda Morrison



- Zero-tolerance policies (toughness, accountability)
- Restorative approach
 - “repair the harm”
 - Intensive interventions e.g., Circle of care
 - Need for more thoroughgoing evaluations as opposed to anecdotal accounts



Effects of Cyberbullying

15

- Can be more harmful than traditional bullying
 - No escape
- Can take place anywhere there is a communication tool
- Hurtful material posted is irretrievable
- May not know identity of cyberbully
 - Depression, withdrawal, school phobias, somatic symptoms (headache abdominal pain) aggressive behaviour
 - Won't tell parents (fear of losing technical equipment)

With thanks to Lori Baker, RN, for sharing her materials

Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use

“wear pink” initiative



- Yesterday was the 2nd annual wear pink initiative
- Schools, colleges, universities, other sites
- From PINKSHIRTDAY.CA
“Comox Valley Record, Canada
The school leadership club got the school to join hundreds of other schools and communities around the world in wearing pink to combat bullying. In September of 2007 two Grade 12 students in Nova Scotia started the tide of ‘think pink’ ...”

Roots of Empathy



- “ ‘Roots of Empathy’ is an award winning, evidence-based classroom program that has shown dramatic effect in reducing levels of aggression among schoolchildren by raising social/emotional competence and increasing empathy
- The program reaches elementary schoolchildren from Kindergarten to Grade 8. In Canada, the program is delivered in English and French and reaches rural, urban, and remote communities including Aboriginal communities
- ‘Roots of Empathy’ is also delivered in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the Isle of Man”

Past and Present



- **WITS program**
 - “walk away, ignore it, talk it out, seek help”
- **Jordan Smith and friend allegedly attacked in west end of Vancouver, sept 27/09, while holding hands**
 - See XTRA! West, Feb 12, 2009, p. 5
- **William Wright’s book, *Harvard’s Secret Court: The Savage 1920 Purge of Campus Homosexuals* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2005)**
 - Inquiry led to several suicides and damaged reputations

Messages from Silenced Youth



HOMOPHOBIA & TRANSPHOBIA IN BRITISH COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOLS

Dr. Brian Burtch
burtch@sfu.ca

*With thanks to
Rebecca Haskell, M.A.
rhaskell@sfu.ca*

Becky Haskell



Interview with Rebecca Haskell on GLBT Bullying



- By Ellen Friedrichs, About.com

<http://gayteens.about.com/od/sexuality/a/bully-study.htm>

... Becky Haskell



- R.H. – “As a high school student I often heard the words ‘gay’, ‘queer’, and ‘homo’ used as insults towards others or objects. These comments made it very difficult for me to openly explore and come to terms with my sexuality, and I knew there were others who must have been affected in the same way. I became disappointed in classmates when I was the lone voice of dissent in classes where others framed homosexuality as a sin or deviant lifestyle.”

High Schools & Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying: Overview

- Terminology
- Existing Knowledge
- Research Methods
- Findings
- Implications
- Conclusion

Terminology



Homophobia (Forde, 2006, 277)

- “...the fear or hatred of homosexuality...”
- “...based upon the assumption that homosexuality is unnatural or inferior to heterosexuality”

Transphobia (Trans Accessibility Project..., n.d., n.p)

- “...a reaction of fear, loathing and discriminatory treatment of people whose gender identity or gender presentation... does not match in the socially accepted way, the sex they were assigned at birth”

HTP

- Homophobia and transphobia

LGBTQQ/Queer

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two spirit, queer

Existing Literature



- **Little attention to trans youth** (Shelley, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2007)

- **Experiences of homophobia**
 - **Most experience direct & indirect verbal harassment, & graffiti** (Cochrane & Morrison, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2008; (Saewyc et al., 2007; Smith, 1998; Samis, 1995)

 - **About 1/4 experience physical violence** (Saewyc et al., 2007; Kosciw et al., 2008; Smith, 1998)

- **Effects**
 - **School truancy & drop out** (Shelley, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2007; Sausa, 2005)

 - **anxiety; & depression** (Saewyc et al., 2007; Wyss, 2004; Bochenek & Widney, 2001)

 - **substance abuse** (Buston & Hart, 2001; Henning-Stout et al., 2000)

 - **unsafe sexual practices** (Healthy People, 2001; Bochenek & Widney, 2001)

 - **Suicide** (Saewyc et al., 2007; Massachusetts Dept of Education, 2006; Kitts, 2005; Wyss, 2004; Buston & Hart, 2001; D'Augelli et al., 2001). See book DEAD BOYS DON'T DANCE

Research Questions



1. Context

- Where? When? What happened? Frequency? Who was involved?

2. Effects

- Long- and short- term? Positive?

3. Why does HTP harassment happen?

4. How to Prevent/Address HTP?

Sampling



- **Gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, two spirit, queer (GLBTTQ) person who felt they were bullied in high school based on their sexual orientation or gender identity**
- **19 years of age or older**
- **Left or graduated a high school in Canada in 2002 or later (past 5 years)**
 - **Did not have to be 'out' in high school**

The Sample

Participant #	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation
1	Queer	Queer/Gay
2	Male	Gay
3	Gay	Gay
4	Male	Queer/Gay
5	*	Queer/Gay
6	Female	Lesbian/Queer
7	Androgynous	Queer
8	Male	Gay
9	Female	*
10	Male	Gay/Homosexual
11	Male	Bisexual
12	Male	Gay
13	Female	Pansexual
14	Male	Gay
15	*	*
16	Male	Gay

Limitations



- **Exploratory/in-depth vs generalizability**
- **Intersectionality not analyzed**
- **Lack of trans/two spirit volunteers**
- **Only one participant from outside of B.C.**

Findings



- Subtle forms of HTP are most prominent
- Participants' thoughts on why HTP persists
- Effects of subtle forms of HTP on young queer people

Subtle forms of HTP violence



- **Physical violence often portrayed in the media, but more subtle forms of bullying were most common**
 - homophobic and transphobic name-calling
 - Exclusion
 - Avoidance
 - Heterosexist & gender-limiting environments
- **Emphasis on subtle forms of bullying may however lead youth (and others) to downplay experiences with HTP**
- **Main point – LGBTTQ youth ARE experiencing homophobia and transphobia even if it is not the most visible forms**

Forms: Subtle HTP Persistent



I think the whole, 'that's gay' was still common and still went on in the classroom and the teachers still didn't do anything about it. (P3, gay, gay)

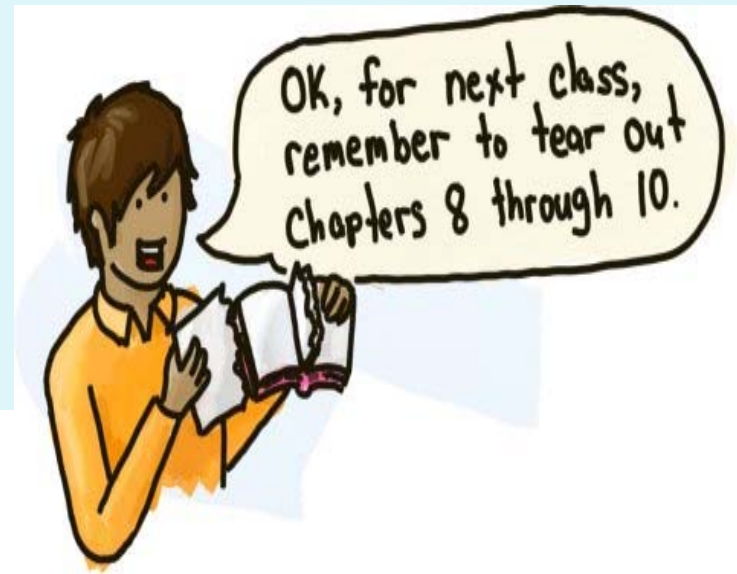
... something about gay men came up and one student was like 'I hate all gay people. I wish they would all die'. And the teacher... basically just ignored it.... She said...with a smile on her face... 'well we shouldn't really say things like that in class.' But she was smiling the whole time. So, she really didn't help at all. (P2, gay, male)



Why does HTP Persist?

Absence of Queer People and Issues in Curriculum

...there's a complete absence of queer people in social studies. ...That would be a start. Like even saying that you guys are a part of history too, right? (P4, gay, male)



Why does HTP Persist? Silence in the Curriculum



Participants' Recommendations:

- Changes to the curriculum (i.e. Corren agreement, which brought about the Social Justice 12 Course)
- Include LGBTTQ people/issues affecting them in a natural way, as you would any other subject
- Should be well integrated, not just one class/presentation on diversity

Why does HTP Persist?

Lack of Intervention & Support for Queer Youth



And that was I think the clearest and easiest way to get at someone was to call someone a fag or something like that. Teachers wouldn't do anything about it. It was the bullying that was acceptable ... that you could get away with. (P2, gay male)

The administration and teachers would rarely admonish people for calling others fag or whatever, and if they did they would react the same way as if one was calling someone an asshole the implication was that these were bad words. Fag, gay, homo, lesbian, transsexual, etc... do not have to be bad words. It would be nice if teachers and students, when intervening in homophobic and/or transphobic bullying, could essentially get across “your comments were obviously mean-spirited and when your words have harmful motives they are unacceptable” instead of “don't say fag. It is a bad word.” (P1, queer/gay, queer)

Why does HTP Persist? Lack of Intervention cont'd



Why are staff not intervening?

- Staff are unaware of how harmful HTP is
- There is a lack of training/resources to help teachers effectively deal with HTP
- Teachers/instructors may not feel administration supports them in talking about/addressing HTP
- Teachers are over-worked enough – counselors, school safety officials, and students should intervene

Why does HTP Persist? Lack of Intervention cont'd



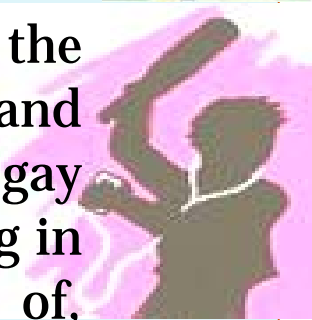
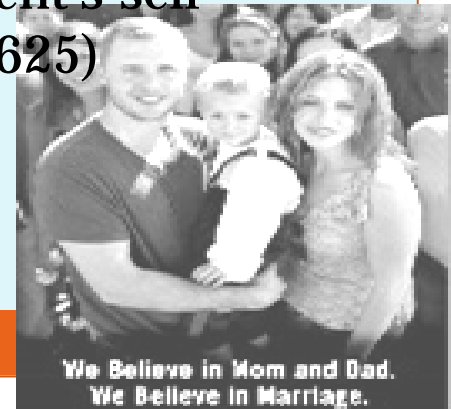
Participants' Recommendations

- Teachers need to recognize HTP as harmful and intervene when it happens
- Rather than saying “gay” or “fag” is a bad word, teachers need to address why those phrases are harmful
- Participants appreciated teachers who discussed HTP from the outset, took a firm stance, and had anti-homophobia posters in their classroom

Why does HTP Persist?

Mirror of HTP in Larger Society

A young person “does not need to be directly victimized to be affected by discrimination against gays. Matthew Shephard, a University of Wyoming student, was brutally murdered in 1998 because he was gay. What impact did this devastating event have on young individuals who were beginning to realize that they too were gay and living in the same society in which the murder was praised? What messages are protestors and politicians, including our President, who are against gay marriage sending to gay adolescents? How does living in a society where people can be rejected, disapproved of, or hated for their sexuality affect a gay adolescent’s self-esteem or identity development?” (Kitts, 2006, 625)



Why does HTP persist? Schools as Microcosms of Larger Society cont'd



Participants' Recommendations/Thoughts

- Some questioned whether HTP CAN be addressed in schools given the HTP in larger society
- Others called on the Canadian government, religious leaders, and media representatives to be more responsible and lead by example by voicing their support for LGBTTTQ people and disapproval of HTP

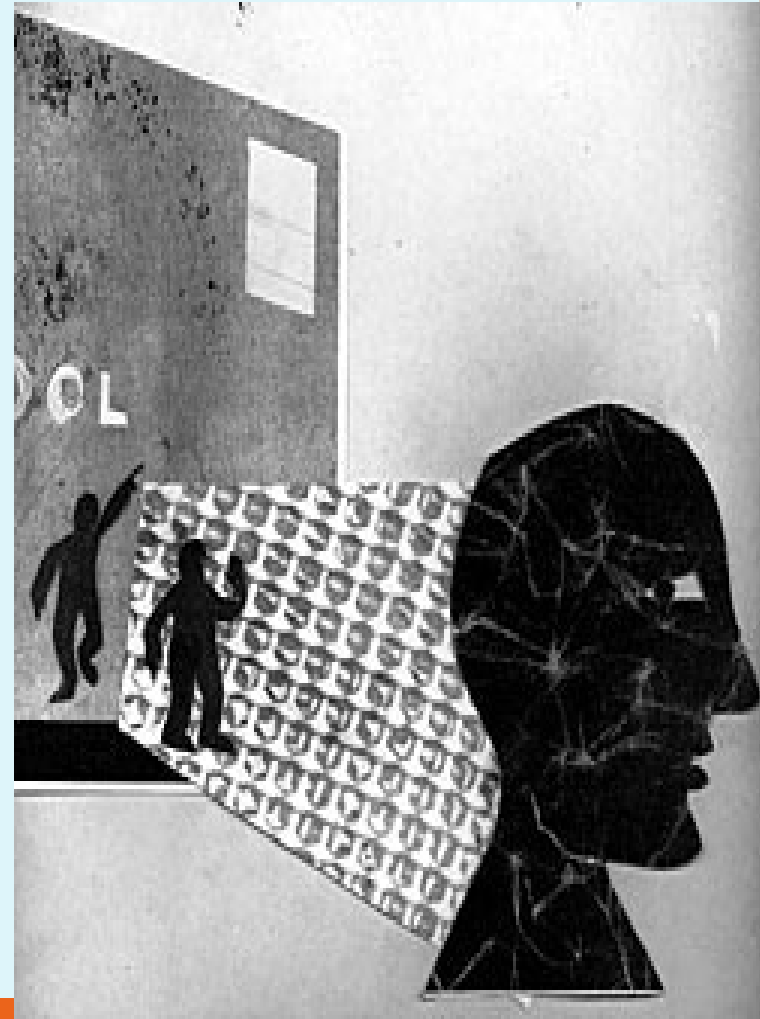
Effects of HTP on Queer Youth



Stifling/Self-Censorship

Though I really wanted to sign up for the rugby team in high school I didn't because I thought that people would think that was too masculine and call me a lesbian. The paranoia about how I thought people would react to my appearance and activities with which I occupied my time I believe caused me to neglect my body, and to gain a lot of weight... (P1, queer/gay, queer)

... overcoming that was tough because it's almost like it was silencing 'cause I didn't want to say anything. 'Cause people would try and identify [his sexuality] just the way I spoke. So ... it's taken me a long time, even public speaking or anything like that just from that, from those incidents, so... That sucked. (P2, gay, male)



Effects of Subtle Forms of HTP on Youth



- Because the HTP they experienced was often precipitated by gender non-conformity, participants often stifled expression and did not participate in activities associated with the “other” gender
- Other effects:
 - Closeting
 - Withdrawing socially or “hiding” to avoid harassment
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - body dysphoria (unhappiness with body)
 - one participant’s partner committed suicide

Implications



Call for reflexivity in our everyday lives and in Criminological research

“... to a degree knowledge can be emancipatory. The better we understand the external constraints on our thoughts and action, the more we will see through them and the less effective they will become”
(Hoy, 1999, 18)

Vignette #1 – Kingston, Ont.



- An acquaintance’s “Coming-out” experience while in University, circa 1970
- Few resources (clubs, social movements, community agencies, literature, media, legal cases in support of GLBTQ rights)
- Enduring stereotypes of homosexuality
 - Mental illness
 - Crime
 - Sin

Vignette #2 - Vancouver



- 1972 – B.B. moved to Vancouver
- Impact of 1969 federal legislation
- Larger cities could be a “safe harbour” for gays & lesbians
- bars, dance clubs (night life)
- theory & practice – toleration & beyond toleration

The Big Picture



- Gays, lesbians & equality rights
- How to define what The Problem is
 - Simplistic views of sexuality
 - “beyond the binary” (Rebecca Haskell’s work)
 - Rescuing, saving, denouncing, appreciating, tolerating?
 - Censorship e.g Little Sister’s Bookstore and Art Emporium, Vancouver BC

Snapshot of legal events in Canada



- 1969: Omnibus bill, popularly known for liberalizing/decriminalizing homosexuality
- Feb 5, 1981: 286 men arrested in raids of Toronto bathhouses
- 1992 - lifted ban on LGB people in the military

... key legal events (Canada)

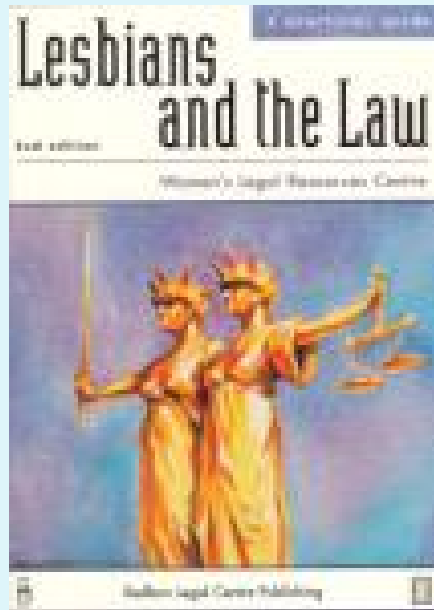


- 1995 - Egan case - sexual orientation should be "read in" to S. 15 of the Charter
- 1996 - Sexual orientation is included in the Canadian Human Rights Act
- April 2000 - the federal Equalization Act; Gay and Lesbian couples should have the same rights as heterosexual common law couples
- 2004 - *Sexual orientation* added to the hate propaganda legislation of the Criminal Code
- July 2005- federal Civil Marriages Act; Same sex marriage is legalized

N.B. "Currently, the NWT is the only region in Canada to have "gender identity" as a protected category in their Human Rights legislation. (Although, it is sometimes covered under gender in some interpretations in other jurisdictions)"

above info provided by Rebecca Haskell – BB

Gays, Lesbians & Equality Rights



Jack Nesbit & Jim Egan



**PFLAG:
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians & Gays**

Law & Difference



- Celebration + Denunciation



**Antigay
demonstration**



**Pride Parade
(Florida)**

IMRU?



Feature Films



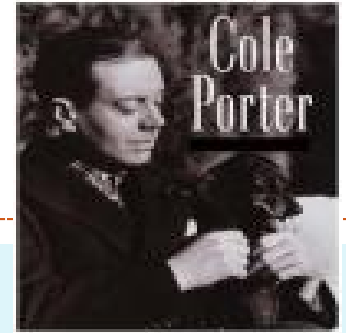
- Flawless (1999) – Philip S. Hoffman, R. De Niro (homophobic stroke victim + pre-op transgendered person)
- Far from Heaven (2002) – J. Moore, D. Quaid, D. Haysbert (sexual orientation, adultery, interracial romance)
- Transamerica (2005) – Felicity Huffman (transgender woman)

Documentary Films

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/GayVid.html>

- Came Out, It Rained, Went Back in Again (1991), dir. B.M. Evans II
 - Jane Horrocks as an “L-plated lesbian” i.e. a young learner
- Out: Stories of Gay and Lesbian Youth (1994), dir. D. Adkin
- Jim Loves Jack (1996), dir. D. Adkin (Jim Egan & Jack Nesbit)
- Little Sister’s vs. Big Brother (2002), dir. Aerlyn Weissman (1983 founding of L.S.)
- Dangerous Living: Coming Out in the Developing World (2003) dir. John Scagliotti

Background

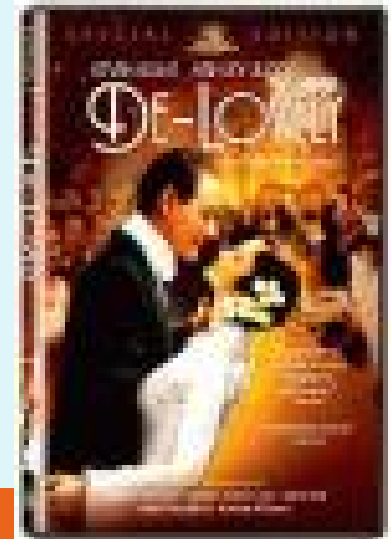


- 1948 – publication of *The Kinsey Report* & prevalence of homosexuality
- “According to the Kinsey Report
Ev’ry average man you know,
Much prefers to play his favourite sport
When the temperature is low.

But when the thermometer goes way up
and the weather is sizzling hot,
Mister Adam
For his Madam
Is not.

[‘Cause it’s too darn hot].”

Cole Porter, “*Too Darn Hot*” (1948)



Ideologies



- Tension between ideologies of what is “normal” and abnormal
- How presumed differences can lead to different policies – e.g. same-sex marriage and civil unions
- Conflict between individual expression and being regarded as a “full human being”

Harvey Fierstein



- Robin Williams' brother in Mrs. Doubtfire
- narrated the documentary **THE TIMES OF HARVEY MILK**
 - won a News & Documentary Emmy award
- voiced the role of Yao in Walt Disney's *Mulan* (1998)
- Fierstein was the voice of Karl, Homer's assistant, in "The Simpsons"

“Torch song trilogy”



- Multiple award-winning play (1982)
- Made into feature film (1988)
- Starring Anne Bancroft & H. Fierstein
- (from screenplay):
“Queers don’t matter!
Queers don’t love!
And those who do deserve what they get!”



James Baldwin – *Giovanni's Room* (1956)



- “*Giovanni's Room* is about the tragedy of one man's tortured heart, and the poison it spreads to all those with the misfortune of becoming close to him. The narrator, David, discovers early in his life the joy that is to be had in other man's arms. But nothing in his life terrifies him as much as this discovery, from which he runs far and hard. When he finds joy again in Giovanni's room, it quickly becomes clear that it cannot last, that love ... actually stands no chance against fear and self-delusion.” (anonymous)

Gary Kinsman

The Regulation of Desire (1996)



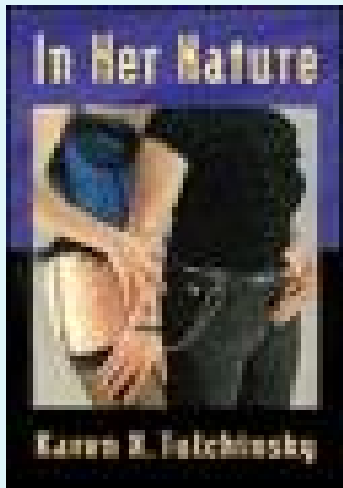
“In this second edition of *The Regulation of Desire*, Kinsman traces the historical and social roots of these contemporary conflicts, offers insights into the social forces that have organized and maintained lesbian and gay oppression, and pinpoints allies for building coalitions that could allow us to gain more control over our bodies and sexualities, and to build a world free of sexual violence and danger.

He suggests moving towards very different criteria for organizing and regulating sexuality, desire and pleasure, and concludes with suggestions on how sexual politics can transform socialist politics.”

<http://www.web.ca/blackrosebooks/desire.htm>

... Imagery

- Stereotypes & counter-images



Author Karen X. Tulchinsky
In Her Nature (short stories)



George Hislop
& Ronnie Shearer



Liberace



Two Moms



“effeminate”

George Hislop



- George Hislop (1927-2005)
- GH & other gay activists started class action suit against federal government
- CPP benefits extended to “surviving same-sex partners of deceased pensioners as of 1998”
- Legislation not applicable retroactive to pre-1998 deaths
- Lawsuit was successful; GH received 1st cheque in 2005

Brian Mossop case



- Mossop, federal civil servant
- 1985, M's partner's father died
- Mossop sought bereavement leave, which was denied
- CUPTE (union) supported M's grievance
- Expert witness Margaret Eichler
 - No single definition of "family"
 - Thus, "familial relationships" (plurality)

... Mossop (cont'd)



- Can. Human Rights Tribunal adjudicator upheld claim of discrimination
- Ordered compensation and redress
- Federal Ct of Appeal reversed this decision (1990)
- SCC heard appeal
 - Bare majority “held that the Court must defer to Parliament” (Didi Herman, *Rights of Passage*, 1996, p. 26)

Background to Vriend case



- Delwin Vriend, employed for 4 years by King's College in Edmonton
- Fired after admitting to employer that he was homosexual
- complaint to Alberta Human Rights Commission rejected
- Provincial statute “did not include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination”
- SCC held in 1996 that DV lacked formal and real equality
- “Homosexuals were treated differently and such discrimination was not acceptable in a free and democratic society”

Delwin Vriend case

S.C.C. 1988



- Dismissed after 4 years' employment with King's College, Edmonton
- “A legislative omission regarding sexual orientation in the Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act violates section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and cannot be saved under section 1 of the Charter” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vriend_v._Alberta
- Justice Peter Cory wrote [1998 SCC] majority decision:
“The exclusion [of gays and lesbians] sends a message to all Albertans that it is permissible and perhaps even acceptable, to discriminate against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation...Perhaps most important is the psychological harm ...Fear of discrimination will logically lead to concealment of true identity, and this must be harmful to personal confidence and self-esteem”
http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_0063.htm

Thank you Questions?



Dr. Brian Burtch

burtch@sfu.ca

Rebecca Haskell, M.A.

rhaskell@sfu.ca