

Gay and Lesbian Adolescents

Connections '95

March 9/95

Trish Stenson
Caroline Wilkin

Gay and Lesbian Adolescents

Presenters: Trish Stenson, A.M.Y.S.T. Counselling Associates
Caroline Wilkin

At the completion of this presentation we hope that you will be able to:

- 1) Identify that gay and lesbian adolescents exist.
- 2) Identify your own homophobic enculturalization and how this impacts on gay and lesbian adolescents.
- 3) Realize that sexual orientation has a bearing on how teenagers feel about themselves and the behaviors that they engage in.
- 4) Begin to generate appropriate questions to take back to your agency regarding the invisible population of gay and lesbian youth.

We would appreciate it if you would take the time to fill out the brief evaluation at the end of this presentation.

OUTLINE

1. Introduction of Presenters
2. Questionnaire
3. Heterosexism and Homophobia - How we are all impacted
4. Video - Gay and Lesbian Youth
5. Facts about Gay and Lesbian Youth
6. Open discussion about how we can improve our interaction with this population

1. How old were you when you discovered you were heterosexual?
2. When did you first notice your heterosexual tendency? If before the age of twenty, how could you be sure?
3. Have you ever had a same sex relationship? If not, how can you know you are not homosexual?
4. How many heterosexual relationships have you had? If you have had more than four, how stable is that life style anyway?
5. How do you know that the person you are attracted to is heterosexual?
6. Were you sexually abused as a child? Do you think that has had an impact on your becoming heterosexual?
7. How did your parents react when they discovered you heterosexuality?
8. How come all heterosexuals dress the same way?
9. Why do heterosexuals have to be so blatant and flaunt their heterosexuality.
10. Do you really believe that your value system and lifestyle is healthy for children?
11. With the statistics on divorce and family breakdown, do you really think that this is a good and stable environment to raise children?
12. With statistics on sexual abuse indicating that 95% of all sexual abuse is heterosexual male perpetrated, is the heterosexual family a safe place to raise children?
13. How do you recruit others into your lifestyle?

Homophobia is part of our consciousness whether or not we are straight, gay or lesbian.

At birth we are sponges with no conscious/no values/no sense of morality/no sense of norms.

0 - 5 - We experience acceptance through validation from family and we develop values, we understand norms and we learn morals - We are heavily influenced by church and by state. Let us not forget the impact of media on our lives.

5 - 10 - We experience our sexuality, begin to understand gender difference, begin to complete a picture of the external world. We learn through school, peers, family, church, media and state about the way the world is supposed to look. We begin to recognize our differences if we have any. We begin to realize the penalty for being different. We can, at this point, make a decision to suppress these differences.

10 - 15 - Peers are important, social acceptance is crucial. We belong to the cohesive collective known as teenagerhood. We are expected to conform to group norms. This period for the gay youth is probably the most devastating. It is here that we are accepted or our differences are amplified.

15 - 20 - The gay youth makes a decision to suppress the truth about their sexuality or to express the truth openly. Either way the penalty will be one of loss of self esteem, extraordinary soul searching and devastation that comes from prejudice. This time is a turning point for gay and lesbian youth.

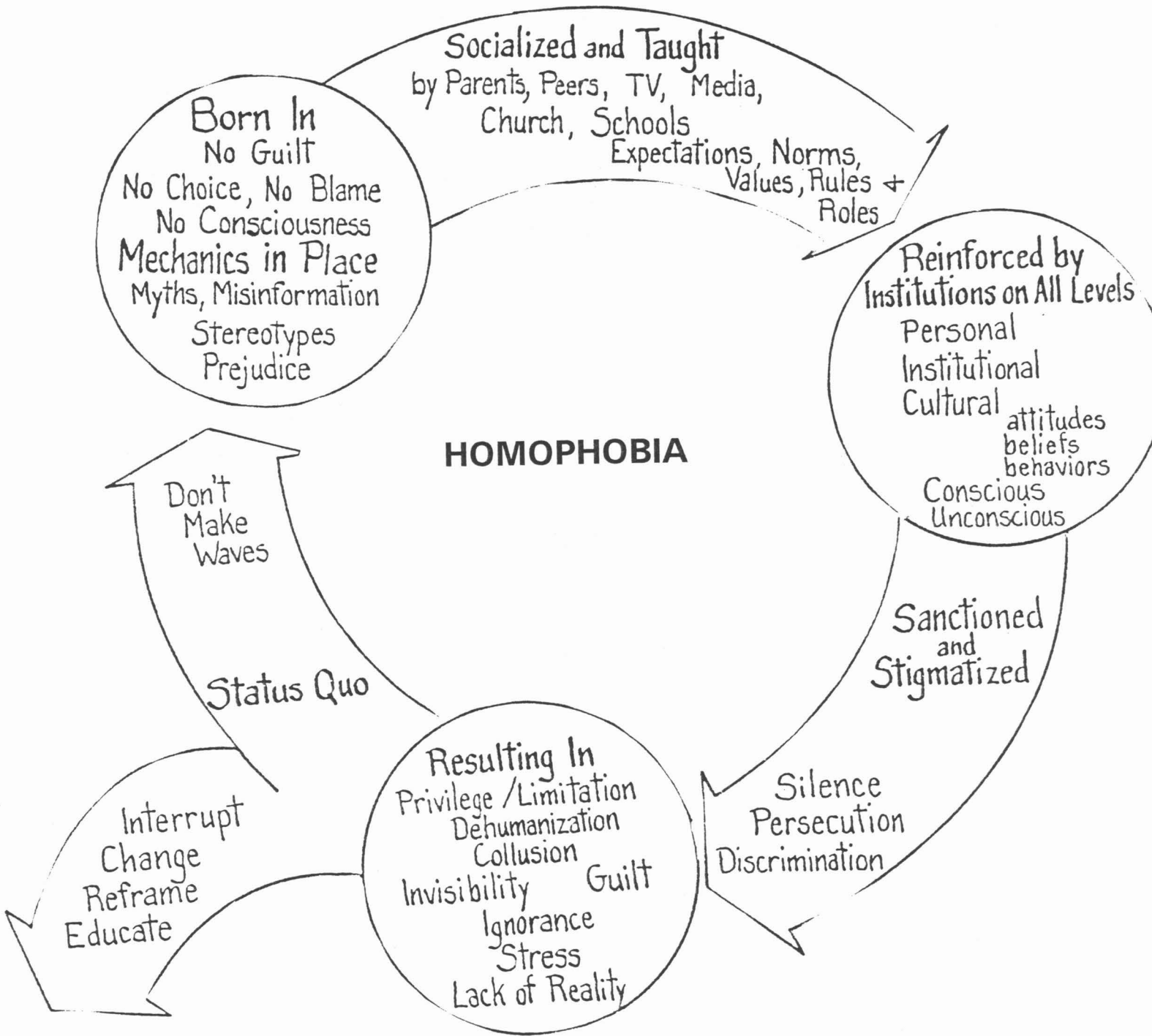
Remain closeted and become validated and accepted for the wrong reasons.

1. suicide - risk is high
2. drugs and alcohol abuse high

Come out and after become isolated stigmatized invalidated self validation

status quo

politicised/confront
prejudicisim/become self
accepting



Bobbi Harro
 Cold Springs

Educational Consultants

Did You Know...

- Gay and lesbian adolescents are an invisible, overlooked population.
- Gay and lesbian adolescents are a unique minority group.
- Although gay and lesbian youth are estimated to constitute only 10% of the population, they are said to account for 30% of all completed suicides among teens.
- Gay adolescent males are six times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers.
- Lesbian adolescents are twice as likely to attempt suicide as their heterosexual peers.
- The average age of actually being aware of a homosexual orientation is 13 years of age for males and 14 - 16 years of age for females.
- Homosexual adolescents are socially isolated.
- The homosexual community has a significantly higher rate of alcohol and drug abuse than comparable heterosexual groups.
- Studies indicate a positive correlation between substance use and unprotected sex.
- Young gay males have an average "gap" between initiating sexual practice and initiating condom use of 1.8 years.
- It has been estimated that approximately 20% - 40% of the youth who are homeless are gay, lesbian or bisexual youth.
- Homosexual adolescents experience cognitive isolation stemming from a lack of appropriate information regarding homosexuality.
- One of the effects of heterosexism is that all adolescents are considered to be heterosexual unless otherwise stated
- Sexual orientation has a bearing on how adolescents feel about themselves; it is also relevant to the behaviours they engage in.

SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT GAY AND LESBIAN ADOLESCENTS

Bibliography

- Bell, A.P. & Weinberg, M.S. (1981). Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women. Bloomington, Ill.: Indiana University Press.
- Bell, A.P., Weinberg, M.S., & Hammersmith, S.K. (1981). Sexual Preference; Its Development in Men and Women. New York, N.Y.: Simon and Shuster.
- Boyer, D. (1989). Male Prostitution and Homosexual Identity. Journal of Pediatrics, 47 (2) 26-63.
- Browning, C., (1987). Therapeutic Issues and Intervention Strategies with Young Adult Lesbian Clients: A Developmental Approach: Journal of Homosexuality, 14 (1), 45-52.
- Cranston, K., (1991). HIV Education for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth: Personal Risk, Personal Power, and the Community of Conscience: Journal of Homosexuality, 22 (3/4), 247-59.
- Davidson, L. & Linnoila, M. (1991). Risk Factors for Youth Suicide. New York, NY: Hemisphere Publishing.
- De Crescenzo, T.A. (1979). Group Work with Gay Adolescents: Social Work with Groups, 2 (1), 35-44.
- Feldman, D.A. (1989). Gay Youth and AIDS: Journal of Homosexuality, 17 (1-2), 185-93.
- Galst, L., (1992). Throwaway Kids: The Advocate. 45 (2), 55-57.
- Garbarino, J (Ed) (1992). Children and Families in the Social Environment, New York, N.Y.:Aldine De Gruyter.
- Gold, R. S., Skinner, M. J., & Ross, M. W., Unprotected Anal Intercourse in HIV- infected and Non-HIV-infected Gay Men: The Journal of Sex Research, 31 (1), 59-77.
- Hetrick, E. S., & Martin, A. D. (1987). Developmental Issues and Their Resolution for Gay and Lesbian Adolescents: Journal of Homosexuality, 14 (2), 25-41.

- Hunter, J. and R. Schaecher, (1987). Stresses on Lesbian and Gay Adolescents in Schools: Social Work in Education. 9 (3) 180-90.
- Jacobsen, E.E., (1988). Lesbian and Gay Adolescents; A Social Work Approach: The Social Worker, 56 (2) 65-67.
- Kahn, M. J., (1991). Factors Affecting the Coming Out Process for Lesbians: Journal of Homosexuality, 21 (2), 47-70.
- Kus, R. J. (1990). Coming Out: Its nature, stages and health concerns: Keys to Caring - Assisting Your Gay and Lesbian Clients. Boston, Mass.: Alyson Publications.
- Lefrancois, G. (1993). The Lifespan. (4 Ed.) Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Maylon, A.K., (1981). The Homosexual Adolescent: Developmental Issues and Social Bias: The Journal of Child Welfare, 60 (2), 321-329.
- McFarland, W.P., (1993). A developmental Approach to Gay and Lesbian Youth: The Journal of Humanistic Education and Development, 32 (1) 17-28.
- National Task Force. (1987). Suicide in Canada. Ottawa ON: Health and Welfare Canada.
- Newman, B.S. & P.G. Muzzonigro. (1993). The Effects of Traditional Family Values in the Coming-out Process of Gay Male Adolescents: Adolescence, 28 (109) 163-175.
- Procter, C. D., & Groze, V. K.. (1994). Risk Factors for Suicide among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youths: Journal of the National Association of Social Workers, 39(5), 505-511.
- Remafedi, G., (1987). Adolescent Homosexuality: Psychosocial and Medical Implications. Pediatrics 87 (4) 712-721.
- Robinson, K. E., (1991). Gay Youth Support Groups: An Opportunity for Social Work Intervention: Journal of the National Association of Social Workers, 36 (3), 458.
- Rosco, B & Kruger, T.L. (1990). AIDS: Late Adolescents' Knowledge and its Influence on Sexual Behaviour: Adolescence, 25 (97), 39-48.

- Rotheram-Borus, M. J., Rosario, M., Meyer-Bahlburg, H. F. L., Koopman, C., Dopkins, S. C., & Davies, Mark. (1994). Sexual and Substance Use Acts of Gay and Bisexual Male Adolescents in New York City: The Journal of Sex Research, 31 (1), 47-57.
- Savin-Williams, R., (1990). Gay and Lesbian Youth - Expressions in Identity. New York, NY: Hemisphere Publishing.
- Strommen, E.F. (1989). "You're a What?: Family Member Reactions to the Disclosure of Homosexuality: Journal of Homosexuality, 18 (1/2) 37-58.
- Sullivan, T. (1984). Adolescent Homosexuality: Social Constructions and Developmental Realities. Journal of Child Care, 1 (6), 11-27.
- Sullivan, T. & Schneider, M. (1987). Development and Identity Issues in Adolescent Homosexuality: Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 4 (1), 13-24.
- Telljohann, S. K., & Price, J. H., (1990). A Qualitative Examination of Adolescent Homosexuals' Life Experiences: Ramifications for Secondary School Personnel: Journal of Homosexuality, 19 (3), 41-56.
- Tremble, B., (1988). Reference Points: A Qualitative Examination of Gay and Lesbian Adolescence: The Social Worker, 56 (2) 68-70.
- Uribe, V. & Harbeck, K.M. (1991). Addressing the Needs of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth: The Origins of PROJECT 10 and School-Based Intervention: Journal of Homosexuality, 22 (3/4), 9-28.
- Van de Ven, P., (1994). Comparisons Among Homophobic Reactions of Undergraduates, High School Students, and Young Offenders: The Journal of Sex Research, 31 (2), 117-124.
- Zera, D. (1992). Coming of Age in a Heterosexist World: The Development of Gay and Lesbian Adolescents. Adolescence, 28 (108), 849-54.