Issues in Sexual Orientation

Sociology 230
Dr. Babcock
Unit 4
Chapter 11
Promoting Tolerance

- At the Homewood-Flossmoor high school in the suburbs of Chicago, Myka Held was part of a campaign to promote tolerance by selling "gay? fine by me" t-shirts and having students and teachers wear them on the same day at school.
Sexual Orientation

- The classification of individuals as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual, based on their emotional and sexual attraction, relationships, self-identity, and lifestyle
Sexual Orientation Terms

- **Heterosexuality**
  - Predominance of emotional and sexual attraction to persons of the other sex

- **Homosexuality**
  - Emotional and sexual attraction to members of the same sex

- **Bisexuality**
  - Emotional and sexual attraction to members of both sexes

- **Lesbigay population**
  - Term referring to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals

- **Transgendered individuals**
  - Persons who do not fit neatly into either the male or female category

- **LGBT**
  - Term that refers collectively to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals
What Do You Think?

- How is the experience of being a sexual orientation minority similar to the experience of being a racial or ethnic minority?
- How is it different?

Why do you think that in many countries male homosexuality is illegal, but female homosexuality is not?
A Global View of Laws and Social Attitudes

- At least 85 member states of the United Nations criminalize consensual same-sex behavior among adults
- In the majority of these countries, both male and female homosexuality are illegal
- In 9 countries individuals found guilty of engaging in same-sex sexual behavior may receive the death penalty

Countries in Which Homosexual Acts Are Subject to the Death Penalty

- Afghanistan
- Iran
- Mauritania
- Pakistan
- Saudi Arabia
- Sudan
- Some parts of Nigeria, Somalia, and Chechen Republic in Russia
- United Arab Emirates
- Yemen
Domestic Partnership & Civil Union

- Dark red states above constitutionally deny any recognition of same sex relationships
- Domestic partnership is a city-, county-, state-, or employer-recognized status in the US
- Provides many of the rights, benefits and responsibilities enjoyed by married couples
- Usually available to heterosexual couples as well
- Civil unions/civil partnerships are recognized in most of the Western industrialized countries; in most countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East they are not recognized and in fact are illegal
Gert Kasteel, left, and Dolf Pasker were among the world’s first same-sex couples to marry legally after the Netherlands became the first country to allow same-sex marriages.

11 countries recognize same-sex marriage.

A majority of Americans support same-sex marriage.

Obama is the first sitting president to support same-sex marriage.

Studies show that higher education and support for same-sex marriage are correlated. The young and those who know a gay person are likely to support same-sex marriage.
On May 17, 2007, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered groups in 50 countries commemorated the International Day Against Homophobia, honoring the day in 1990 when the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from its roster of disorders.
National Survey in Sexual Behavior

Findings:
- 4% of women and 6% of men said they are sexually attracted to individuals of the same sex
- 4% of women and 5% of men reported having sexual relations with a same sex partner after age 18
- Less than 3% of men and less than 2% of women identified themselves as homosexual or bisexual

A recent survey of over 4,000 men in New York City found:
- Among sexually active men who reported a sexual identity, 4% reported a gay identity but 12% reported same-sex sexual behavior in the past year
- 10% of straight-identified men had at least 1 male sexual encounter in the previous year
- 70% of straight-identified men who have sex with men reported being married,
Non-heterosexual Adults in the United States

- Research indicates there are more than 10 million gay and lesbian adults in the U.S., which represents between 4% and 5% of the adult population.
- A 2004 poll found that 5% of U.S. high school students identify as lesbian or gay.
- An estimated 1 to 3 million Americans older than age 65 are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.
# Sexual Identity of U.S. College Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/lesbian</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 2000 census found that about 1 in 9 unmarried-partner households in the United States involve partners of the same sex.

22.3% of gay male couples and 34.3% of lesbian couples have children.

Census 2000 data revealed that 99.3% of U.S. counties reported same-sex cohabiting partners, compared to 52% of counties in 1990.
Is Homosexuality an Acceptable Alternative Lifestyle? (based on views about origin of homosexuality)

- % Yes, acceptable
- % No, not acceptable

- Born with
  - % Yes: 78
  - % No: 19

- Upbringing/Environment
  - % Yes: 30
  - % No: 68
Reparative Therapy

- Individuals who believe homosexuals choose their sexual orientation tend to think that homosexuals can change their sexual orientation.
- Forms of reparative therapy are dedicated to changing homosexuals’ sexual orientation.
- Most reparative therapy programs achieve “conversion” through embracing of evangelical Christianity and being “born again” and have not been found to be effective.
- “If you’re involved in the gay and lesbian lifestyle, it’s bondage. It is personal bondage, personal despair and personal enslavement.” — Senator Michele Bachmann, speaking at EdWatch National Education Conference, November 6, 2004.
Many same-sex couples rear their biological children in a stable, nurturing environment, which negates the argument that homosexual relations do not fulfill the family institution’s main function of producing and rearing children.

In many cases, “unadoptable” children are made available to same sex couples while some states and countries do not allow same sex couples to adopt.
Structural-Functionalist Perspective

- Homosexual relations and non-marital heterosexual relations, are “deviant”
- They do not fulfill the family institution's function of producing and rearing children
- Conflict between heterosexuals and homosexuals may lead to social change
Conflicts about sexuality represent division between those with power and those without power.

Trends toward acceptance of homosexuality may reflect the corporate world's competition over employees and the gay and lesbian consumer dollar, which in the travel industry alone represents more than USD142 billion per annum.
Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

- Meanings of heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality are socially constructed.
- Once individuals are labeled as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, the label may become their master status.
- **Internalized homophobia** is a sense of personal failure and self-hatred among lesbians and gay men resulting from social rejection.
  - It is linked to depression, substance abuse, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.
Antigay Movements

- Fred Phelps, pastor of Westboro Baptist Church, and his followers are picketing the funeral of a soldier killed in Iraq.
- Phelps says that God has punished America with improvised explosive devices for being nice to gays and lesbians.
Religion and Homosexuality

- New Hampshire, 2003, saw the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church
- In July 2012, the Episcopal Church overwhelmingly voted to allow the ordination of transgender people
- Reform Judaism does not prohibit ordination of gays and lesbians as rabbis and cantors
- The Roman Catholic Church continues its stand against fornication, sodomy, contraception, pornography and masturbation
Church Views on Homosexuality…

note that policies vary over time and place

- LDS Church states that any sexual relations outside of opposite-sex marriage is prohibited
- Baptist churches vary but generally condemn homosexual behavior
- Eastern Orthodox tends to condemn non-heterosexual behaviors
- Islamic law varies but countries governed by Muslims tend to view homosexual relations as a serious crime. Punishment in some Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia or Islamic Republics such as Iran is death. In Afghanistan under the Taliban, it was a capital offense but is punished with fines and a prison sentence today
- Unitarian Universalists, and MCC are supportive of same sex marriage
What Do You Think?

- According to research on the topic, nonmonogamy generally is more accepted in the gay male subculture than in the heterosexual society or in the lesbian subculture.
- Why do you think this is so?
- Do you think the higher acceptance of nonmonogamy among gay males is explained by their sexual orientation? Or their sex and gender?
# Changes in Attitudes Toward Homosexuality and Gay Rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of US adults who agree that</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality should be considered an acceptable lifestyle</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuals should have equal rights in job opportunities</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages between same-sex couples should be recognized as valid</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
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## Homosexuality as an Acceptable Lifestyle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–34 years</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–54 years</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+ years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Homosexuality as an Acceptable Lifestyle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Gays and Lesbians in the Media

• After former professional basketball player John Amaechi told the world he was gay, he said 95% of the correspondence he received was “overwhelmingly supportive and positive.”

• He described the remaining 5% as “unbelievably, viscerally, frighteningly negative.”
Gays and Lesbians on Television

- In the past decade, television viewers have had exposure to more gay and lesbian characters in television shows as well as seeing more gay and lesbian actors “come out”
Discrimination in the Workplace

- The percentage of Americans saying that homosexuals should have equal job opportunities grew from 56% in 1977 to 88% in 2003.
- As of 2007, it was still legal in 30 states to fire, decline to hire or promote, or otherwise discriminate against an employee because of his or her sexual orientation.
What Do You Think?

- The Faith-Based Initiative provides federal funds to religious organizations that provide social services.
- In 2005, the US passed an amendment that allows organizations that provide preschool programs to fire gay or lesbian teachers.
- Do you think organizations that receive federal funds under the Faith-Based Initiative should be allowed to discriminate in hiring?
“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Repealed

- A policy instituted in 1993 by President Clinton in which recruiting officers can’t ask about sexual orientation and homosexuals are encouraged not to volunteer the information.
- A Government Accounting Office report found that the policy has cost nearly $200 million for the replacement of discharged personnel and that 800 specialists with critical skills have been discharged, including 54 linguists who specialize in Arabic.
Discrimination in Marriage

- In 1996 Congress passed and President Clinton signed the *Defense of Marriage Act*, which states that marriage is a “legal union between one man and one woman” and which denies federal recognition of same-sex marriage.
- This law allows states to recognize or not recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states.
What Do You Think?

- In 2001, Guadalupe Benitez, a lesbian, sued two doctors who refused to artificially inseminate her for religious reasons.
- Although some states allow doctors to refuse to provide certain services, doctors do not have the right to refuse services only to certain populations.
- Do you think doctors should be able to use religious freedom as grounds to choose who they will provide that service to?
Hate Crimes Against Sexual Orientation Minorities

- This man continues to march in Jerusalem’s Gay Pride event after he was stabbed by an antigay protester
Hate Crimes

• A report released by the Williams Institute at UCLA showed the following rates of hate crime victimization:
  ◦ 8 in 100,000 African Americans
  ◦ 12 in 100,000 Muslims
  ◦ 13 in 100,000 gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals
• The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (2007) reported that there were 1,834 victims of antigay hate crimes in 2005
• This dropped to 1,672 in 2006
Antigay Harassment in Schools

- A survey of 1,732 LGBT students 13–20 found that because of their sexual orientation:
  - 64% reported feeling unsafe at school and had been verbally harassed in school in the past year
  - 38% experienced physical harassment at school
  - 18% had been physically assaulted at school
  - Brandon (pictured here) committed suicide after anti-gay bullying
Children Who Committed Suicide After Anti-Gay Bullying

- Billy Lucas (15) September 9, 2010. Indiana
- Cody J. Barker (17) September 13, 2010. Wisconsin
- Seth Walsh (13) September 19, 2010. California
- Tyler Clementi (18) September 22, 2010. New Jersey
- Asher Brown (13) September 23, 2010. Texas
- Raymond Chase (19) September 29, 2010. Rhode Island
- Felix Sacco (17) September 29, 2010. Massachusetts
- Caleb Nolt (14) September 30, 2010. Indiana
- Brandon Bitner (14) November 2, 2010. Pennsylvania
- Jacob Roberts (17) 2011, Tennessee
- Lance Lundsten (18) 2011, Minnesota
- Justin Aaburg (15) 2010
- Phillip Parker (14) 2012, Tennessee
- Jaheem Herrera (11) 2009, Georgia
- Carl Walker-Hoover (11) 2009, Massachusetts
- Eric Mohat (17) 2007, Ohio
- Billy Lucas (15) Indiana

.....the list goes on
Effects of Antigay Bias and Discrimination on Heterosexuals

1. Restriction of male gender expression
   ◦ Heterosexuals, especially males, are hindered in their own self-expression and intimacy in same-sex relationships

2. Dysfunctional sexual behavior
   ◦ Some cases of rape and sexual assault are related to homophobia and heterosexuality
   ◦ Adolescent male virgins are often teased by their male peers

3) Loss of rights for individuals in unmarried relationships

4) Heterosexual victims of hate crimes and harassment

5) Fear and grief
   ◦ Family and friends of homosexuals live with the fear that their lesbian or gay friend or family member could be victimized by antigay prejudice and discrimination

6) School shootings
   ◦ Antigay harassment has been a factor in many of the school shootings in recent years
Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA)

- A bill that would make it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation
- It has been introduced every year since 1994 but has not passed the Senate.
- George Bush threatened to veto the bill
- Barack Obama supports the bill
- 16 states and DC have policies related to sexual orientation and employment
- Many cities and counties have policies related to sexual orientation, gender identity and employment
States That Prohibit Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation
What Do You Think?

- Do you think that social acceptance of homosexuality leads to the creation of laws that protect lesbians and gays?
- Or does the enactment of laws that protect lesbians and gays help to create more social acceptance of gays?
- In Massachusetts, of the more than 5,000 same-sex couples who got married in the first year after a court order legalizing such marriages went into effect, 63% were lesbian couples and 36% were gay couples.
- Why do you think there was a significantly higher percentage of lesbian marriages than gay male marriages?
Policies and Programs in the Public Schools

- Schools must address the needs and promote acceptance of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth
- Strategies:
  - Include sexual orientation diversity in sex education programs
  - Implement policies against antigay harassment
  - Establish gay-straight alliances in schools
Politics and the Federal Marriage Amendment

- Hillary Rodham Clinton suggests that politicians who support the Federal Marriage Amendment are driving a wedge between Americans and diverting the public’s attention away from social problems  (interestingly, it was her husband who signed the DOMA legislation into law)

- Quote overheard at a pro-marriage rally: “I didn’t ask my girlfriend to civil union me!”