

Homosexuality: Pride and Prejudice

JOE HENSLEY
features editor

One out of every ten people in the United States is a lesbian, a gay male or a bisexual. Theoretically at NCSSM there should be close to sixty people who are not heterosexual.

Issues about homosexuality and bisexuality are often brushed over or completely ignored because heterosexuals are uncomfortable dealing with them. This discomfort often originates from misinformation. The purpose of this article is to educate and encourage our community to look closer at these topics which are so important to one-tenth of our population.

First is the issue of "coming out." This is when someone who thinks that they are homosexual or bisexual admits to themselves and to their friends and families that they are gay. This is very difficult because not everyone is ready to accept this part of them. Sometimes the person who is questioning their sexuality has trouble admitting to themselves that

they are gay because they have been told that it is wrong. This period of coming out, which can happen any time in a person's life, is frustrating because they are opening themselves up to some attacks by friends and families. People they thought they could trust turn away. If the person does not know anyone else who is gay, it can be a very lonely time.

Coming out, however, is also a very exciting time. A person is saying that they feel okay about this part of them. They are not ashamed. Their gayness is special to them.

An issue that is related to coming out is "outing." Outing is when a person comes out to someone, and that someone tells other people about it. People who are coming out treat it as a very personal matter and want it to remain a personal matter. Many people do not realize that when they "out" someone, they are betraying that trust. Because there are so many prejudiced people, someone who is gay may only want a few people to know they are gay. Employers, schools, and other institutions will often discriminate

against homosexuals. Therefore, it is important if someone comes out to let them do the coming out. It is their business.

A lot of people say that being a homosexual or bisexual is wrong. They have many reasons. Some straight people are turned off by the sexual part of it. But many homosexuals stress that sexuality is only as much a part of a gay person's life as it is a part of a straight person's life.

Other people have religious reservations about homosexuality. The Old Testament of the Bible says that "If a male lies with a male as with a woman, both of them shall have committed an abomination." (Leviticus 20:13). However, the New Testament of the Bible emphasizes love for everyone. Ironically, no where in the Bible does it mention that sex between women is wrong.

A lot of gay men and women feel that they lead similar lifestyles to those of straight people. The difference is in who they decide to be intimate with. A gay student here at NCSSM gave me some insight into her view of her sexuality. "Ideally it shouldn't matter. Recognize that it is a part of me. It's not like it makes me different. It's something that needs to be recognized, but it's not really that big of a deal." When I asked her about coming out and the prejudices that she faces, she said, "It makes it [coming out] hard because you have to tell somebody something they're not expecting. I can't take them [people who condemn homosexuals] seriously or else I'd hate myself. I don't want to hate myself."

The question of the origin of homosexuality is one that is constantly asked. Many psychologists believe that homosexuality is a product of environment, especially family environment. But there are also theories that homosexuals are born homosexual. In the homosexual community, many knew they were gay at a young age. Some did not discover this part of them until much later. There have even been people to come out in their sixties or seventies.

Recently, Dr. Simon LeVay Ph.D., a neurologist at the Salk Institute in California, discovered some evidence that suggests that the cause of male homosexuality could be genetic. He dissected the brains of several known homosexual males who had died of AIDS and of several straight AIDS victims and found that the hypothalamus in the brains of the homosexuals was much larger than in the

other brains. Although this is only one study and does not produce any evidence as to the origin of female homosexuality, it does open the door for further genetic research. Many heterosexuals feel threatened by this research, because if homosexuality is genetic, it would mean that being gay is just as natural as being straight. (To learn more, read the Feb. 24, 1992 issue of Newsweek)

So what if you are questioning your sexuality? Do you sometimes feel attracted to members of the same sex? Unfortunately, there is no test of homosexuality or bisexuality. As the student whom I talked to put it, "It's not something anyone else can tell you. It's something you have to work out for yourself."

You may not be all gay or all straight. There are people who are bisexual. There are some who are straight in practice, but do not mind thinking about having sex with someone of the same sex. Some homosexuals think about heterosexual sex. There is not a clear cut definition.

It is important to talk about these issues, especially if someone thinks that they might be gay or bisexual. It's not always easy to find someone willing to talk openly. However, NCSSM's guidance counselors are open and willing to talk with students about any questions or concerns they may have about homosexuality. A lot of R.A.'s have expressed their willingness to talk. There is also a local group for teenagers who are questioning their sexuality. It is called Outright. The meetings consist of a male and female facilitator, both gay, and any young people, straight or gay, who want to come and talk. It is a very open, accepting atmosphere and an opportunity to be with others who are questioning their sexuality. Information can be found in the guidance office.

Authors note: I took the risk of writing this article because I feel that the issues surrounding homosexuality are important and need to be talked about. I encourage all students to further educate themselves. I based this article upon what I have observed and read about these issues. This is my perspective. I may have stepped on a lot of toes, both gay and straight, it's a sensitive issue. However, I am open to your comments.

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