

What is Lesbiophobia/Homophobia?

Homophobia involves harassing, prejudicial treatment of, or negative attitudes about or towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, two spirited, queer or questioning individuals (LGBTQQ) or those who are perceived as these sexual orientations or gender identities. Homophobia also includes the belief that heterosexuality is normal and LGBTQQ identities and sexualities are sinful, deviant and/or disgusting.

What is Heterosexism?
Heterosexism derives from social and structural norms and ideologies that assumes that everyone is or should be heterosexual. Society is structured and organized according to heterosexual norms such as washrooms and change rooms. Society privileges, intentionally or unintentionally heterosexuality and heterosexual persons and devalues, discriminates or renders invisible LGBTQQ persons. Heterosexual privilege refers to unlearned and unchallenged advantages and rewards given to heterosexual persons because of their sexual orientation which are not automatically granted to LGBTQQ persons.

What is it?
An increasing number of Canadian university campuses are implementing anti-homophobia campaigns in an attempt to challenge the marginalization and exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, queer and questioning students staff and faculty. The dissemination of posters, buttons, and stickers indicating Positive Space as well as accessible website information and workshops are done with the intention of raising visibility, support and to promote and celebrate sexual diversity and alternative identities.

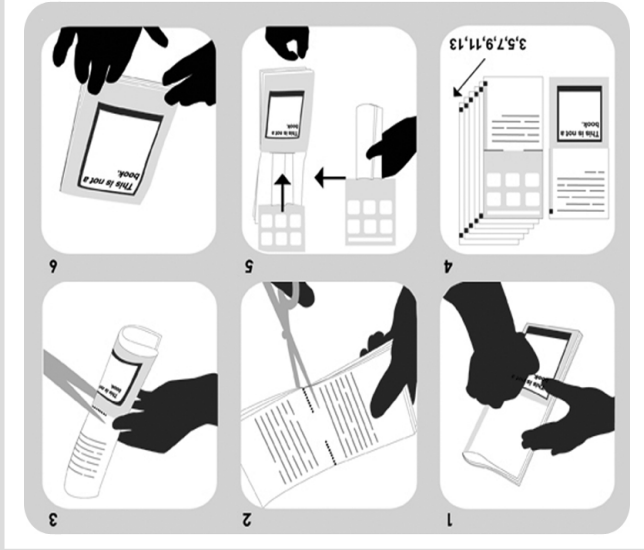
Positive Space Campaign Information Book

Catherine Telford-Keogh

There have been many public homophobic crimes that have occurred at the University of Waterloo that have occurred and have gotten little of no publicity. Generally nothing is done by the university to specifically stop these crimes or bring visibility to them and thus they are trivialized and given a sort of social acceptability. For example, there was an incident last term during Pride Week where a group of students ripped down the rainbow flag that was hanging in the SLC. This flag was hand made by a student member of GLOW. She personally had to take the flag down and fix it. Nothing was done by the university to rectify the situation. LGBTQ posters have been ripped down and defaced, name calling has occurred frequently among other things. Clearly, homophobia and the trivialization and acceptability of violence against LGBTQ people is a prevalent problem on this campus.

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Effects of Implementing the Positive Space Campaign

Challenging campus heteronormativity and promoting visibility for LGBTQ people is the main goal of the Positive Space Campaign. The University of Toronto Positive Space Website explains:

[t]here is still widespread reluctance to speak out about sexual and gender diversity, which stands in stark contrast to the routine talk of the sexual and emotional bonds of heterosexual people. LGBTQ people grow up in and work in environments rife with signs that same-sex attraction is repugnant. Stereotypical and rigid male and female gender roles limit the freedoms and rights of those whose gender identity is outside of these boundaries.

The silence surrounding LGBTQ issues must be broken in order to combat this type of homophobia on campus. This is accomplished through the visibility of LGBTQ positive posters.

Two-spirited beings has special and respected roles as teachers, leaders, artists, seers and spiritual guides and had special ceremonial duties.

References

University of Toronto Positive Space Campaign
http://www.positivespace.utoronto.ca/site5.aspx
University of British Columbia Positive Space
http://www.positivespace.ubc.ca/
LGBTQQ Positive Space Brock University
http://www.brocku.ca/positivespace/

What Not?

Multiple Canadian post secondary institutions, notably the University of Toronto, McGill University, Queen's University, University of Calgary, University of British Columbia, Wilfrid Laurier University, recently Brock University and many others currently have Positive Space initiatives. Waterloo is the only university that does not have a well developed program to widely promote sexual diversity and alternative identity acceptance.

The question is Why Not?

GLOW, University of Waterloos gay and lesbian center, has been attempting to implement this program for four or more years. The Feds have meet briefly regarding implementation and in 2006 made it known that they supported the Positive Space Initiative, however nothing was done after that. The university has refused to implement the program as it could create negative spaces on campus. University of Toronto addresses this problem stating that:

[i]f you do not see a rainbow triangle sticker in a room or office, don't assume that the occupants

who experience their sexuality as more fluid than the individual LGBTQTT labels imply.
Transitioning: A person who is in the process of becoming identified as the sex opposite to the one given to them at birth.
Transgendered, trans or trans-identified: A person who identifies with a gender identity other than the one that was ascribed to the biological sex of one's birth; or a person who views one's gender as more fluid than the strictly male or female gender category allows. Also used as an umbrella term for transsexual, transgendered, cross-dressing and inter-sexed people. Trans persons may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, two-spirited or heterosexual.
Two-spirited: The Two-spirited person is a native tradition that anthropologists have uncovered that existed prior to contact and colonization with European cultures. In some native traditions there believed to be the existence of three genders identities, masculine, feminine and feminine-masculine, which is now what is called the Two-spirited person. This identification was perceived as a special gift from the Creator, that is of having both gendered spirits in one body.

have negative views regarding sexual diversity. Some may not have heard of Positive Space, or may not have control over what goes on their door. Some may not be in the habit of putting up stickers
Students, faculty and staff must help GLOW implement this much needed campaign.
Implementing this campaign can only promote positive attitudes, visibility and information regarding sexual diversity and alternative identities combating silence, ignorance and systematic violence on campus. The question again is Why Not?

"lovers" to describe a same-sex relationship unless you are sure that is how the couple describes themselves. "Lover" has, for many people, a purely sexual connotation, which is offensive to someone whose relationship means more to them than sex. You can ask the person what term he/she prefers, or else using "partner" is generally acceptable.

Gay: A man who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with other men; also used as an umbrella term for everyone who has same-sex romantic/sexual attractions or relations.

Heterosexual: A person who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with members of the opposite sex.

Inter-sexed: A person who is born with both male and female sex characteristics.

Lesbian: A woman who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with other women.

Queer: A once derogatory term reclaimed by some LGBTQTT persons, often used as an umbrella term to encompass all of LGBTQTT, or to refer to political activism or academic inquiry on LGBTQTT issues, or as a self-identifying label for persons

Definitions and Terms
Cross-dressing: Wearing clothing most often associated with members of the opposite sex. Not a synonym for wearing drag. Cross-dressing is not related to sexual orientation (cross-dressers may be straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual).
Drag: Attire (usually flamboyant) normally worn by the opposite gender.
Drag Queen/Drag King: A man who dresses in female attire (Queen), or a woman who dresses in male attire (King) for show, often in order to perform.
Openly Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered: This expression is always preferred over self-avowed, self-admitted, self-confessed, practicing, etc., all of which imply some self-inculpatory aspect to being open about one's sexuality.
Partner: Partner is an excellent term to use for describing any intimate relationship (married heterosexual, cohabitating heterosexual, cohabitating homosexual, etc.) because it is completely inclusive and makes no assumptions about anyone's sexual orientation. Avoid using

Uniqueness Positive Space Campaign for University Campuses: Methodology of Distribution

Homophobic acts that occur on the University of Waterloo campus are of a diffused nature that is it occurs at the individual or group level through daily acts. There is no direct institution from which these acts derive. The context of violence and ignorance directed towards LGBTTTTQQ people is taken into account in the dissemination of the Positive Space posters, stickers and buttons. Instead of having a unified group that distributed these posters and stickers, students, staff and faculty personally put up the posters and buttons. Thus, when someone sees a poster they know that an individual put it up supporting LGBTTTTQQ people, not a group.

As ignorance and systematic violence occurs in a diffused nature on campus, so must the resistance. In disseminating postcards to students our postcard project also took this into account. After information was provided to students about the Positive Space Campaign they have the option of peeling of the sticker and placing it anywhere on campus which states I support Positive Space at the University of Waterloo. The sticker facilitates individual students tagging university

spaces. Tagging is normatively used as a method of graffiti by youth to gain visibility or fame. Individual options are asserted directly by the individual and are not restricted. This method is applied in the dissemination of Positive Space stickers to emphasize that many individuals, who dont particularly belong to any sort of LGBTTTTQQ groups on campus, support and want to bring campus visibility to sexual diversity and alternative identities and support the implementation of the Positive Space Campaign.

The University of Toronto Positive Space website also includes:

Biphobia Conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against bisexual men and women. Experienced in both the heterosexual and lesbian and gay communities, and often characterized by a lack of understanding and invisibility of bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation.

Transphobia Conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against cross-dressers, transsexuals, transgender people and other gender=benders. Experienced in both the heterosexual and lesbian/gay/bisexual communities. Typically demonstrated through disrespect, denial of rights and needs, and often harassment and violence.

According to the McGill Positive Space Website homophobia can manifest itself in four different ways:

1. Personal lesbophobia/homophobia (or internalized homophobia) consists of personal beliefs and prejudices.
2. Interpersonal lesbophobia/homophobia (harassment and individual discrimination) involves individual behaviours based on those personal beliefs.
3. Institutional lesbophobia/homophobia includes the ways that governments, organizations, some religions, businesses, and other institutions discriminate against people on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
4. Cultural lesbophobia/homophobia (heterosexism) refers to societal values and "norms" that privilege heterosexuality over all other forms of gender expression and sexual orientation.

Implementing the Positive Space Campaign: Helpful Information

Before students, staff and faculty can make educated decisions it is important to understand terms and concepts underlying the Positive Space Campaign.

Understanding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

Gender Identity: self-identification of ones gender that may follow from ones sex (female, male, intersexed) assigned at birth or it may be different. Feminine gender identity, for example, means becoming culturally and socially identifiable as a woman. Gender identity may also be more fluid and variable and may not fit into the gender categories set out by society

Sexual orientation: Ones sexual, affectionate and/or romantic interest in members of the same sex (homosexual), other gender (heterosexual), both genders (bisexual) or none at all (asexual). Ones sexual orientation may be unchanging and constant or more fluid that may change over time or in different situations. Ones sexual orientation may also exist outside of given categories by society, such as those given above.