

The history of gay and lesbian identity

WEEK 3

► Information Taken from Clarke *et al.*

- With gender(s) has come sexuality, which has from the beginning aroused unease, ambiguity and resistance.
- To understand some of this we need to look at the history and how that has impacted on the concept of identity.

3 regulatory institutions

- ▶ The Church
- ▶ The State
- ▶ The Medical

Sexology

- ▶ Is the systematic study of sex, sexuality and gender identity.
- ▶ 19th century sex, sexuality and gender treated formally in the west as medical subjects

Segal: Late 19th century – emergence of sexologists

- ▶ Scrutinised and classified physical, sexual and psychological differences between men and women.
- ▶ Set the pattern for Western modernity.
- ▶ Consolidated the notion of separateness between men and women.
- ▶ Bourgeois model
- ▶ Men – independent, toil and leadership outside the home setting his authority inside the home
- ▶ Wife – gentle, nurturing, spiritual

Richard Freiherr Von Krafft-Ebing

- ▶ 'founding father' of sexology.
- ▶ *Psychopathia sexualis* (Germany 1886)
- ▶ Challenged sexual perversion as a sin or a crime and medicalised it as a 'disease'
- ▶ 12th ed. – 300 case studies.
- ▶ 'however, for the most part, his work reflected rather than challenged the prevailing orthodoxy that homosexuality was pathological, and did much to link non-reproductive sex with disease.' (Clarke et al., p8)

Magnus Hirschfeld/ Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs

- ▶ The first social movement to advance the rights of homosexual and trans people was established in Germany in 1897.
- ▶ The Scientific Humanitarian Committee founded by medical doctor Magnus Hirschfeld (1825-95) and an openly gay lawyer Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-95) – justice through science.
- ▶ Produced research and promoted awareness

Variations/'aberrations'

- ▶ Not fitting neatly into classification boxes.
- ▶ 1904 Havelock Ellis did a lot of work
- ▶ But no differential notion of sex and gender didn't get far
- ▶ Karl Ulrichs in Germany and Edward Carpenter in Britain - Began to recognise the existence of sexual variation – other than for procreation purposes
- ▶ Began to speak about the 'third' or 'intermediate sex' – so is that sex or gender?

problem

- ▶ Observing and quantifying possible variations in sex related activities produced 'biological mayhem' (p.322)
- ▶ German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, suggested that there were almost infinite forms of 'sexual intermediaries', as everybody was to some degree biologically transgendered or bisexual.

- ▶ 1919 The Institute for Sexual Science, Berlin – destroyed by the Nazis in 1933
- ▶ Early research on sex change – 20's and 30's.
- ▶ Developed the theory of 'intermediate' sex – between men and women.
- ▶ Work reflected the idea at the time that each individual contained elements of both sexes – see Carl Jung – contra-sexual archetypes.

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- ▶ Therefore – he concluded that there were no pure forms of masculinity and femininity
- ▶ 'but that counting up all the possible variations in sexual organs, physical characteristics, sex drive and emotional characteristics – ranging from 'womanly woman' to 'manly man' –produced over 43 million specific variations in sexual proclivities (Hirschfeld in Bland and Doan, 1998 p.103)

- ▶ These emerging understandings and theoretical perspectives would only fully re-emerge at the end of the 20th century in contemporary discourses and practices of transgender politics.

Henry Havelock Ellis

- ▶ British doctor
- ▶ Six volumes – '*Studies in the psychology of sex*' 1897 – 1910.
- ▶ 'sexual inversion' – homosexuality – as biological anomaly (and they're still trying to find the 'gay gene') – but it did challenge the church and law.
- ▶ Included cross-gender and cross dressing
- ▶ Some people argue – but not universally accepted that his research challenged the moral values that blocked public and scientific discussion on sexuality.
- ▶ Gay male scholars – good
- ▶ Lesbians have found his work limited and unhelpful -stereotyping
- ▶ But no differential notion of sex and gender

Edward Carpenter (1844 -1929)

- ▶ Openly gay and socialist reformer founded
- ▶ The British Society for the Scientific Study of Sex Psychology in 1914 – a scholarly scientific organisation also devoted to social change – public lectures, pamphlets, raising awareness.

Darwin

- ▶ Supported the divergent evolution of the sexes –
- ▶ Geddes and Thompson influential British biologists argued in 1899 that males are more 'active, passionate, and variable'; females 'more passive, conservative, sluggish and stable' (1998, p.16)

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At the same time this was being questioned

- ▶ From the second half of the 19th century 'the rise of the first wave of feminism was seen as putting manhood in danger, wherever it arose: 'the masculine woman' (those seeking education and the right to vote) undermined the 'natural' demarcations of sexed difference.

Conclusion: Clarke p.11

- ▶ Influence of early sexologists:
- ▶ 1. they established sexuality and gender identity as legitimate foci of scientific investigation.
- ▶ They developed many of the concepts and language that we use today
- ▶ They challenged the prevailing orthodoxy regarding sexuality and gender diversity

- ▶ They established sexuality and gender identity as central to individuals and to human existence
- ▶ They enabled the voices of sexual and gender 'deviants' to be heard
- ▶ They viewed scientific research and social activism as compatible endeavours.

Desire

- ▶ That human desire can be directed to an almost infinite number of things
