

Evaluation of a teaching kit on *Violence Against Homosexual Men and Women*

by the NSW Council of Churches, October 1992

“The NSW Council of Churches considers that on the whole the kit would do more harm than good; it should be immediately withdrawn from use. It is riddled with claims which are unsustainable and educationally unsound. It also seems extraordinarily evasive in failing to mention AIDS as an issue in view of its medical link with anal intercourse and promiscuity.”

This teaching module consists of six lessons for a unit of work on homophobia, defined as “the irrational fear or intolerance of homosexuality”, or (on an overhead sheet used for teaching purposes): “... fear or intolerance of homosexual men and women, usually linked with hostility towards them.” The material was first presented as a one-day crime prevention workshop by officers of the NSW Police Service and local community youth workers; it was then rewritten by Police and Department of School Education personnel so that “*in circumstances which warrant it, as approved by the Cluster Director, they can be used by other schools.*”

The kit was developed in the wake of some extremely serious attacks on homosexual people which in some cases were perpetrated by schoolboys. Up to ten men are believed to have been murdered in these attacks, and many others have been brutally bashed. On January 24, 1990 a gang of eight youths from Cleveland Street High School (Sydney) enticed a homosexual man to the Alexandria Park toilet block by phoning the number left there, and bashed him to death. In 1991, all received heavy sentences. Other murders remain unsolved; they include that of Mr Wayne Tonks, a known homosexual teacher at Cleveland Street High, found murdered in his Artarmon flat (but not necessarily, it should be said, for anti-gay motives).

The need is obviously urgent to combat appalling violence by some youths against those perceived as sexually different. The two main thrusts have been (1) for better and more obvious policing of areas frequented by both homosexuals and their attackers, and (2) for education within schools to change the sort of attitudes that could lead to such crimes.

The NSW Council of Churches does not question the need for education to deal with such attitudes. We do however seriously question whether a kit such as this is the way to do it. We believe that it merely replaces one set of lies, half-truths and socially damaging beliefs – the “poofter bashing” mentality – with another, supplied by the gay lobby. Instead, we suggest that a *general* anti-violence module would be far more appropriate, to counteract violence and cruelty against *any* group perceived to be different, or to live by values seen to be unacceptable.

The purpose of the unit is set out (page 2) as:

- to provide a means by which a school can address negative and prejudiced attitudes towards homosexuality (i.e. homophobia)
- to provide a forum in which teachers and students can identify questions they have about homosexuality and ask them of people who are gay or lesbian
- to provide information on discrimination and the law
- to provide a means by which a school can minimise discrimination against gay and lesbian people.

Teachers are warned of the sensitivity of the subject, and are referred to guidelines in the memorandum *Controversial Issues in Schools*. The comment is made:

Some of the issues raised may generate strong personal responses from both teachers and students. It is likely that anything between one in seven to one in ten teachers and students may have gay or lesbian feelings, or identify themselves as being gay or lesbian. Other participants may have very strong feelings towards the issues because of social or religious attitudes” (p. 3).

Rules and guidelines of confidentiality, respect, etc. are then set down for the discussions. The content of the sessions is as follows:

Session 1 is designed to draw out students’ attitudes, feelings and beliefs about homosexuality and homophobia, with sentences to be completed like “I’ve heard that gay men I’ve heard that lesbians Violence against gay men occurs because ...” In the final part of this session, some of these ideas are challenged. In Session 2 the participants reflect on what they have learnt and devise questions to ask the panel, which appears for Session 3. Session 4 involves discussing issues of homophobia and violence, encouraging more acceptable ways of relating to gays and lesbians. Session 5 deals with prejudice, discrimination, violence and the law, by presenting various scenarios for discussion, and in the final one students plan ways in which the school can minimise discrimination against gay and lesbian people.

The central session of the module involves a panel of suitably acceptable gay and lesbian people – well-educated, successful and articulate, yet “ordinary” – who answer questions from the students. Alternatively, an audiotape of a panel discussion is supplied. The questions asked on the tape were supplied to us, but not the tape itself with the answers, nor a transcript of it.

Among the questions are the following:

- You joined the Police Force. How difficult was that decision knowing you were gay?
- Are you a lesbian for life? Do you think you’ll change? Do you wish you weren’t gay?
- What kinds of relationships do lesbians/gay men have?

- How does it work in gay/lesbian relationships? Does one play the boy and one the girl?
- Why do gay people have to be so open about affection in public?
- Would you kiss your lover on the street?
- Why do gay men have to be so effeminate and talk funny?

One intractable problem with this subject is that it is so enormously difficult to separate fact from opinion. In seeking to “correct” what are seen as damaging beliefs and stereotypes about homosexual people, overheads and handouts supplied by the kit make some even more debatable claims painting the gay scene in unjustifiably rosy colours.

For example, in the first session a number of statements are presented to the students as follows, with options for answering “true,” “false” or “don’t know”:

1. Most gay and lesbian people would change if they could.
2. If you have a homosexual experience it means you are gay or lesbian.
3. Lesbians and gay men rarely force their sexuality on others.
4. Homosexuality is natural.
5. You usually can’t tell if someone is gay or lesbian from how they look or what they do.
6. There is no law against being homosexual.
7. Gay and lesbian people are often discriminated against in both working and social settings.
8. Nobody knows why some people have homosexual preferences and some have heterosexual preferences.
9. All gay men go to public toilets for sex.

Overhead sheets are supplied in response to these statements, giving the “correct” answers, i.e. correct according to the homosexual point of view. Some certainly need correction, like the obvious sweeping statement of no 9. But others are highly questionable.

For Statement 4, “Homosexuality is natural,” the overhead comment is:

As far as we know homosexuality has been practised in all societies and at all times in history. In any given population, about 10% of people will be homosexual just as about 10% of the population will be left-handed.

The first statement does not prove that homosexuality is natural, and in any case begs the question, “What is meant by natural?” In terms of the functional biology of the human race homosexual practices such as anal intercourse are most certainly not “natural,” and in most societies at most times they have been against the law. The orthodox Christian position based on the Bible is that they are

totally unnatural and sinful. But given that some in the community would disagree, the only honest response to such an enormously difficult and controversial statement would be to admit it is just that – difficult and controversial.

The claim that 10 per cent of any given population will be homosexual has been asserted especially by homosexuals themselves ever since the late Alfred Kinsey published his famous studies on human sexuality in the forties and fifties. These studies are now totally discredited, but the myths live on. A recent book, *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud, the Indoctrination of a People*, by Dr Judith Reisman and Edward W. Eichel, documents that the so-called scientific research of Kinsey and his associates was characterised by deliberate deceit, appallingly biased sampling and unscientific methodology, and unethical and abusive sexual experimentation upon children.

Kinsey's report, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (1948) purported to show, astonishingly for those comparatively non-permissive days, that 85 per cent of males had sexual intercourse before marriage; that nearly 70 per cent had sex with prostitutes; that up to 40 per cent had extra-marital sex; that 37 per cent of all mates had homosexual experience between adolescence and old age, and that up to 10 per cent were exclusively homosexual for at least three years of their life (quoted in Reisman & Eichel, p.2). This led many to agree with Kinsey's own view that bisexuality rather than heterosexuality was "normal" for humans. A second report, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, only slightly less controversial, followed in 1953.

Because the studies were "scientific" and based on impressively large samples of over 5,300 males and nearly 7,800 females, they won acceptance and became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Americans at least, and by extension the rest of the Western world, had supposedly been shown to behave sexually in a manner far removed from societal norms based on Judeo-Christian ideals, so increasingly those ideals of pre-marital chastity, heterosexuality and monogamy were rejected as out-moded and not merely unattainable but undesirable as well. The advent of the contraceptive pill speeded the sexual revolution which then gathered momentum for decades largely unchecked until the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. Much sex education continues to be based on Kinsey's work, and his statistics are still much quoted.

The validity of Kinsey's findings hinges on the extent to which his samples were representative at least of the American population. It is only recently that these samples have been scrutinised. Notably, 25 per cent of his male sample was made up of present or former prisoners in jail, many for sex offences, and virtually all, prisoners or free, were volunteers, people keen to take part in sex research. The sad exception were the children used for "research" by paedophiles – only seven small girls, but hundreds of boys aged from a few months to fifteen years (Reisman & Eichel, p. 19). Kinsey and his team thought children could enjoy a full sex life and believed "cross-generational" (i.e. adult-child) intercourse, including incest, was only harmful to children because of adverse reactions by other adults (ibid., p.59ff).

Famous psychologist Abraham Maslow, who died in 1970, had as early as 1942 warned his erstwhile colleague Kinsey of the volunteer error factor in sex research:

Any study in which data is obtained from volunteers will always have a preponderance of aggressive high dominance people and therefore will show a falsely high percentage of non-virginity, masturbation, promiscuity, homosexuality etc, in the population (ibid., p. 182).

Maslow later wrote to a colleague mentioning his early work with Kinsey, then adding:

But when I warned him about “volunteer error” he disagreed with me and was sure that his random selection would be okay. So what we did was to cook up a joint crucial test. I put the heat on all my five classes at Brooklyn College and made a real effort to get them all to sign up to be interviewed by Kinsey. We had my dominance test scores for all of them and then Kinsey gave me the names of the students who actually showed up for interviews. As I expected, the volunteer error was proven and the whole basis for Kinsey’s statistics was proven to be shaky. But then he refused to publish it and refused to mention it in his books, or to mention anything else that I had written. All my work was excluded from his bibliography. Whatever contacts I had with him in his last years were not cordial” (ibid., p.221).

Obviously the Kinsey surveys were unrepeatably and his results have never been replicated. A 1989 study done in England and Wales, headed by David Foreman, of 480 white males aged 15 to 49, without the prisoner bias and with no indication given beforehand that sexual history would be explored, found that only 1.7 per cent had had homosexual intercourse, and less than half of this number with more than one partner (ibid., p. 194). And recent estimates of the incidence of HIV infection in America based on the Kinsey figures for male homosexuality have been found, mercifully, to be far lower than predicted (pp. 178-9).

The book *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud* notes another problem in Kinsey’s work:

Quite apart from the deception in concealing the true composition of their sample, there is a second major deception in the presentation of the homosexuality statistics. An age category (between 16 and 55) was invented and two totally different types of homosexual experience were added together as if they were one and the same thing. Incidental homosexual experiences of heterosexuals (the most common type of same-sex experience recorded by Kinsey) were combined with the adult experiences of true homosexuals. This created the illusion that a significant percentage of mates were genuinely homosexual (p. 186).

The prevalence of transient homosexual feelings and possible behaviour in adolescents is a crucial factor to be noted by educationists, especially if the aim is to combat violence against homosexuals. It is thought that young males who bash homosexual men may do so because of fear at experiencing homosexual urges within themselves. These feelings also make them very vulnerable to homosexual propaganda and potential recruitment such as this kit contains.

As the kit itself points out, NSW law still recognises this risk with the 18 years age-limit for males. If they are reassured that “it’s O.K. to be gay” at a stage of adolescent confusion and sexual experimentation, they might well be recruited into that scene, with tragic results. Though this kit is aimed at school years 11 and 12, we consider students aged 16-18 are still at risk.

There is much more that could be said, but this is sufficient to show that the 10 per cent homosexual claim, with all its implications for society, is untenable and should never again be made in a responsible educational document.

The kit's comment on Statement 5, "There is no law against being homosexual," states:

Having a homosexual orientation is no more illegal than being left-handed or having brown eyes. Because people do not determine voluntarily whether they will be predominantly homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual, any laws making it illegal to be homosexual would be violating the most basic notions of human rights.

There are laws in NSW specifying the age at which males can consent to sexual relations with a person of the same sex 18. There are no laws relating to or regulating lesbian sexual behaviour.

The first part of this statement is very illogical and confusing. Orientation can obviously never be legislated for one way or another – only behaviour. Feelings which do not result in behaviour are irrelevant to the law. The comparison with handedness or eye-colour is spurious. Clearly sexuality is much, much more significant to a person's life than handedness or eye-colour, and there is no good evidence that homosexuality is due to genetic or hormonal factors.

This is partly recognised by the comment on Statement 2: "If you have a homosexual experience it means that you are gay or lesbian." What is more important is whether people have significant homosexual feelings, not just behaviour. Many people have same sex experience at some stage in their lives. The majority of these people would not feel or label themselves gay or lesbian.

This comment would be more helpful to young people if the second and third sentences read: "*Many people have same sex feelings and experience in adolescence, The majority of these people go on to develop heterosexual feelings, and would not feel or label themselves gay or lesbian.*" This sort of reassurance could help prevent gay-bashing by young males, since they may be fighting against their own confusion at experiencing same-sex attraction.

The comment given to Statement 8, "Nobody knows why some people have homosexual preferences and some have heterosexual preferences" is also questionable. The comment claims that "To date there is no convincing evidence for a "cause" of homosexuality – not in patterns of child-rearing, early experiences, hormone levels, or any other factor."

The thought occurs that if heterosexual preferences did not exist, there would be no human race! On the contrary there is good evidence that sexuality depends on family dynamics, especially the role of the father, and developmental experiences including those in adolescence. Commonly, behavioural choices made in adolescence, and persisted in, are reinforced into set sexual patterns and preferences.

The "scenarios" could be helpful in teaching against psychological and physical cruelty ranging from hurtful name-calling to actual physical violence towards homosexual people. We consider such behaviour to be totally abhorrent. Also some of the newspaper cuttings about the appalling gay bashings and murders, and the severe sentences given to perpetrators, could have a salutary effect when looked at and discussed in a school setting. Others are too one-sided to be honest.

But the NSW Council of Churches considers that on the whole the kit would do more harm than good; it should be immediately withdrawn from use. It is riddled with claims which are unsustainable and educationally unsound. It also seems extraordinarily evasive in failing to mention AIDS as an issue in view of its medical link with anal intercourse and promiscuity;

although this factor might contribute to “homophobia”, it gives a rational basis and survival value to some fear of, or at least an avoidance of, homosexual practices. But fear of AIDS could never justify gay bashing.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

As an ecumenical body of Christians, it could be helpful for us to set out briefly some of the biblical grounds on which homosexual practices are rejected by Christians who take the Bible’s moral teaching seriously. If this makes us, and young people from Christian (and Muslim and Jewish) families who take part in these classes “homophobic”, then there is an extra problem in discrimination to add to those which bedevil society already!

Essentially, common sense as well as the Bible’s teaching makes heterosexuality the norm. The book of Genesis teaches that God created male and female in His image, together to be fruitful and fill and rule the earth. Married love is often celebrated in both the Old and New Testament. The Bible records with honesty both ideal relationships and the grim failures when people ignore God’s good laws for human sexuality.

There are only a few passages specifically dealing with homosexuality in the Bible, but their overall teaching is quite clear, so that it is not possible to take a pro-homosexuality position without calling into question the Bible’s authority. The best known passage, the one which has given the language the word sodomy, is the story recorded in Genesis 19, an apparent judgment by God (Yahweh) upon the citizens of Sodom because of their lust for sex with the men staying with Lot, who were actually angelic visitors. There is a somewhat similar story in Judges Ch. 19, an ugly story of lawlessness and abuse of a woman as well as men. Neither story in itself would provide any strong basis for behavioural norms, but the New Testament books of Jude and 2 Peter reinforce the warning that the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah was due to sexual immorality and perversion.

There were also specific Old Testament laws forbidding men from “lying with a man as one would with a woman.” This is said to be detestable to God (Leviticus 18:22) and was a capital offence (Lev. 20:13).

In his New Testament letter to the Romans, chapter 1, the apostle Paul spells out in severe terms the effects of mankind’s rejection of the truth about God (verses 22-27):

22Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23**and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

24Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **25**They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

26Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. **27**In the same way the men also abandoned natural

relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

This, the only reference to lesbianism in the Bible, nevertheless makes it quite clear that it too is unnatural in God's sight and sinful.

In another passage, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Ch. 6, verses 9-11, Paul adds a note of hope to his breathless list of people whose sinful practices led to condemnation:

9Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders **10**nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **11**And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

That last passage leads to another vital consideration for us as Christians considering this appalling incidence of murderous gay bashing behaviour, and also the scourge of AIDS, the risk of which is minimised by obedience to biblical sexual ethics. Homosexuality in biblical terms is sinful, and sinful behaviour can be both forgiven and forsaken. The process may be agonisingly difficult, but healing is possible. There are specific Christian ministries, such as Exodus, seeking to help. Some of those involved have come out of homosexuality, making the ministry somewhat like Alcoholics Anonymous or Gamblers Anonymous.

But no mention is made of them in the handout for students, nor of any general, non-gay counselling service like Lifeline, nor even a school's own counsellor. The only point of view represented is the pro-homosexual one (unfortunately one would have to put the Family Planning Association in this bracket also) with people intent on reassuring confused young people that they may safely pursue a gay identity.

The Department of School Education shows an appalling irresponsibility in allowing such an overwhelming bias to stand in an officially endorsed teaching kit.

Finally, it should be remembered that although orthodox Christian teaching opposes homosexual practices as sinful, Christians will usually be found in the forefront of those caring compassionately for homosexual or drug addict sufferers from AIDS, and for other victims of destructive lifestyles. Along with clear-cut bans on perverse behaviour, Christian teaching stresses love for sinners – we are all sinners – and gentleness and non-violence.

So are Christians homophobic? Ideologically perhaps many are, from the point of view of attitudes espoused in this kit, but there are reasoned medical, psychological and social as well as religious motivations for rejecting homosexual lifestyles. But in both theory and practice, hatred of people, name-calling and violence are contrary to the Christian ethic.

SUMMARY

This teaching kit was developed in the wake of some murderous attacks on homosexual men by school-aged youths. It attempts to deal with violence against homosexual men and women by means of pro-homosexual propaganda, much of it with little factual basis.

This Council deplores such violence, and the attitudes underlying it. We do however seriously question whether a kit such as this is the way to deal with it. We believe that it merely replaces one set of lies, half-truths and socially damaging beliefs – the “poofster-bashing” mentality – with another, supplied by the gay lobby. Instead we suggest that a general anti-violence module would be far more appropriate, to counteract violence and cruelty against any group perceived to be different, or to live by values seen to be unacceptable.

Our critique of the kit sets out its content and analyses it in some detail. In particular we point out that the oft-quoted claim, based on the work of Dr Kinsey, that 10 per cent of the population is homosexual, is utterly discredited because of the fraudulent methods used in Kinsey’s surveys. These figures should never again be used in a responsible educational document.

It is of crucial educational importance to note that it is common in adolescence to experience transient same-sex attractions, which most grow out of. This makes young people particularly vulnerable to homosexual propaganda and recruitment. It is thought that youths who bash homosexual men may be lashing out because of fear at experiencing these urges. They need reassurance that such feelings are common and usually temporary, not efforts to convince them that “it is OK to be gay.” However, they also need to be taught that rejecting the lifestyle of another must not entail violence, hatred or name-calling.

A handout for students in the kit shows irresponsible bias in listing only pro-homosexual counselling services.

As an ecumenical Christian body, we have also set out something of the Bible’s teaching about sexuality and the passages showing its rejection of homosexuality. Christian people cannot lightly set these aside. Along with clear-cut bans on sexually perverse behaviour, Christian teaching stresses love for sinners – we are all sinners – and gentleness and non-violence. Christians are in the forefront of those caring compassionately for homosexual and other sufferers from AIDS. But there are sound reasons, medical, social and psychological as well as religious, for rejecting homosexual practices. These should not be denigrated as ‘homophobic’.

Our report shows that the kit is riddled with unsustainable and educationally unsound claims. We consider that it would do more harm than good. It should be immediately withdrawn from use.