Sexuality And Social Acceptance

Sexuality is a persons sexual orientation or preference. Sexuality is a broad spectrum and is deeply personal. It is about understanding the sexual feelings and attractions people feel towards others. Everyone's sexuality is different, some people may only be attracted to one sex where as others may be attracted to a diversity of people – regardless of sex or gender with preferences in between. Sexuality is socially constructed, not biologically determined.

The film pride arguable shows a lack of social acceptance for sexuality in many areas, including their own family members sexuality. This was portrayed when Joe had to hide his sexuality from his parents, to such an extent he lied about where he was and who he was hanging out with in fear of their reaction and acceptance to him. Sexuality is not just about sexual practices but includes a social sexual identity, involving behavior, lifestyle and the community you are a part of. In the film, it is noticeable Joe's mum did not understand this, instead she emphasized the lack of opportunities he would face for his sexuality alongside discrimination, and expressed how she felt it was just a phase for him. As of his mother's reaction Joe then feels the need to keep his sexuality a secret, leading to him becoming socially isolated, which therefore actually strengthens his sexual identity as he distances himself from heterosexual experiences. A self identification as homosexual may be reinforced by isolation, feelings of guilt or shame surrounded by the negative image of homosexuality in the wider culture may contribute to this isolation. The individual may keep their feelings about their identity as a secret, similarly to what Joe did in the film, then becoming increasingly solitary, strengthening their sexual identity. However some people may keep their identity a secret for the rest of their life, passing as a heterosexual out of fear they would not be accepted by society.

Homosexual activities which have been labeled as deviant, have been seen as perfectly normal in many societies such as Ancient Greece and Japan. If an activity is treated as deviant or normal, is as of a response from society and is a matter of social definition. These definitions are carried through and adopted through socialization.

It is argues that sexual 'deviance', male homosexuality, is best understood if it is seen as a process of social learning (Ken Plummer 1975). Plummer argues that sexual socialization involves learning to define oneself as a sexual being, and then managing the definition as well as the consequences for the other aspects in ones life. People then gradually become committed to a particular sexual identity and the sexual practices associated with it.

By coming out, it allows the individual to openly confess their homosexuality, allowing greater, more open contact with others who are perceived to be similar. This is shown in pride by having the lesbian and gay activist group in which they all come together, forming friendships whilst fighting for their rights. By meeting those who share their identity, and who they feel at ease with, this then allows the individual to see alternative and more positive views of homosexuality, allowing them to reconstruct their identity in more positive terms. This is shown throughout the film, following Joe, like a coming of age story seeing how he becomes comfortable in himself and with his sexuality, finding a sense of belonging in the group he has became a part of. By coming out, the individual is able to fully enter the homosexual role and become committed to a 'gay' identity. Through being in contact with other homosexuals, the individual is drawn into a

subculture of homosexuality which provides opportunities to meet sexual partners amend meanings that legitimate their new sexual identity. This is shown where the characters in the film went to a gay bar, showing they were comfortable in their sexuality and were open to opportunities of meeting and interacting with other homosexual people, and by taking joe with them, this helped with the confidence for him being happy with his sexuality.

The fear of social acceptance can prevent individuals from coming out. The categories themselves, such as homosexual, heterosexual and bisexual etc, reflect a particular way of thinking about sex and sexuality. In the nineteenth century there became a means of classifying people, this was formed when a new language of sexuality came about, deriving from the two-sex model, depending on the notion of the two sexes and are inconceivable without it. This classification of people into categories implies that only certain types of people engage in particular sexual practices, for example ‘homosexuals’ implies that sexual acts between men occur only within a distinct group called homosexuals. Both men and women had engaged in sexual acts with people of the same gender before the nineteenth century, but had not been treated as a distinct kind of person, this suggests that society treats you as your sexuality rather than a person first.

The queer theory is a field of post- structuralist critical theory emerging in the early 1990s, mounted thoroughgoing intellectual challenge to the nineteenth century categories. This not only opposed the theory that heterosexuality was the only normal and natural sexuality, but it also rejected the notion of homosexuality as a distinct category of people and behavior. This theory rejected all binary divides that separated sexes and sexualities.

It’s theoretical basis for rejecting existing categories was argument that these did not reflect real differences, biological or otherwise, but a particular discourse (Stein and Plummer 1994).

The queer theory threw out the notion of distinct sexual identities it shared with post modern theorizing a much looser and more de-centered conception of identity, recognizing that there are many strands to one persons identity. Individuals could construct and reconstruct themselves through their choice of lifestyles, moving across categories and boundaries as they pleased (Epstein 1994).

This theory shows that the sexual categories that people customarily use are socially produced and not biologically in origin. These categories have powerfully constrained people’s beliefs, identities and behavior, but when they understand the categories are social in origin, they can then challenge them and liberate themselves from them, being able to then freely choose how they live. The queer theory is a political project, it’s whole argument that sexual categories have no real existence outside of a particular discourse is open to Sociological criticism, neglecting the power of the socialization process, the strength of gender roles, the creation of distinct identities as well as the solidarity of communities based upon them.