

Is Homosexuality socially contagious?

Friday, 10 March 2006

Last Updated Sunday, 21 June 2009

Perhaps it is something of a generalisation but most gay men feel comfortable surrounding themselves with plenty of "girlfriends" or indeed other gay men but tend to avoid familiarity with straight men. It is true that there are plenty of straight men to whom a friendship with a gay man would feel threatening. What if the gay man was to make a pass at his straight friend, or perhaps by being friends with a gay man it means instantly that he is bound to be deeply sexually attracted to his straight male friend? However, I don't believe that gay men wish to avoid friendships with straight men, nor do I believe that these friendships should be neglected. There is something very special about a gay straight male bond, especially as it encourages acceptance and respect outside of the gay community. However, is it possible that in the eyes of a straight man, homosexuality is socially contagious?

'Any friendship between a gay and a straight man is at first going to suffer the initial "so, do you fancy me then?" From the perspective of a gay man a close friendship with a male regardless of his sexuality is desirable purely because there are some things that men and women just can't bond over. However, so valuable is a friendship with a straight man who sees no issue with sexuality and most of all doesn't feel threatened by the perception of others to his socialising with a gay man. Friendships these days are based on so much more than just one aspect of a person's life and especially amongst our generation of gay youth, friendships transcend all issues of race, ethnicity, religion and sexuality. Especially within the confines of modern society being associated with a homosexual should have little real bearing on others perception of who you are. It is an upsetting argument to deny a friendship purely because a person is gay. It is my understanding that to be honest with yourself means to accept your sexuality. Once you have accepted who it is you are attracted to and started to process how this will determine your life you can start to feel more liberated. There are many twists to defining your sexuality and for some that journey can be life long. However, once you have stood up and been open with both yourself and those around you there is nothing anybody can do to doubt you. Yes, there are those who will disagree with you or take issue with you purely because you are different to them, but these people are nothing to fear. The most important person to impress is yourself. Any friendship between a gay and a straight man is at first going to suffer the initial "so, do you fancy me then?" However, once this hurdle is behind you there is no real need for sexuality to infringe on the relationship. Certainly not the fear that by being friends with a gay man it is assumed that you yourself are gay. Essentially this stems from wider society's issue with homosexuality. However, it is down to those outside of the gay community to promote healthy attitudes towards homosexual individuals. Here is then perhaps the root as to why gay men avoid friendships with straight men. Essentially it is the gay man who has the most to lose. It is the gay man who can be easily labelled as the bad influence that encourages those outside of the friendship to assume that the straight man is also gay. It is far too easy for the straight friend to determine that to be seen as less gay he must "distance" himself from the friendship. Less of a criticism on the straight male, this situation simply highlights how despite large gestures of acceptance, at the core of society still sits a general unease with homosexuality. However, if the straight friend is comfortable with his sexuality and also in control of his own mind then there should be no real issue, should there? It is understandably hurtful that a close friend should wish to cool off a friendship on something that both friends had always seen as a non issue. After all most gay men can walk down the street or be seen out with straight friends and not be affected by being labelled straight as default. Sexuality should be a personal matter that of course filters into everyday life and becomes the business of others, but should remain closely regarded as a sensitive area in need of respect. There is of course sympathy for the straight friend should the general consensus be that he is gay; but surely as soon as this is "straightened" out and he confirms that he is not gay, there should be no need to change the friendship? As with any matter of encouraging acceptance of homosexuality we need to be sensitive to changing opinion without being aggressive. Luckily modern society is evolving; however there are still many miles to travel in order to achieve seamless integration into the fabric of society. Friendships should be defined by mutual appreciation and a desire to involve another person in your life. Should there ever be an issue with sexuality in the friendship then essentially being gay we are destined to lose out. However, do not be dismayed and definitely do not feel inferior or inadequate at securing and maintaining straight men as friends. If we are to encourage and promote healthy attitudes towards homosexuality then we must not fear being honest with others and taking a chance on friendships outside of the gay community, there is after all, power and excitement in diversity.