

Bridging the Rainbow: Bringing LGBTQ+ and Disability Communities Together

A Webinar from AUCD's Multicultural Council.

October 29, 2014



- Introductions
- Presentation
- Q & A
 - You can ask a question by pressing the * then # key to request the floor. Questions will be answered in the order they are received.
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Tia Nelis is a Self-Advocacy Specialist at the Institute on Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is the newly elected President of Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered. She has been honored with numerous awards for her contributions to the self-advocacy movement, including the Burton Blatt Award by the Illinois TASH, the Elizabeth Boggs award from AAIDD, and the Participatory Action Research award from The Arc of the United States. Ms. Nelis has drawn on experiences relating to her own disability in promoting and demonstrating the benefits of empowerment for people with disabilities. She has wide experience in conducting training and advocating for progressive policies with legislators and public officials.



Lex Owen, MSW is a graduate student pursuing a PhD in Disability Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago and is a research assistant for the Institute on Disability and Human Development at UIC. Her research interests include sexuality and disability, and her dissertation will focus on how knowledge about disability is produced within prenatal testing contexts.



Stephan Elizander Przybylowicz is a former Sonoran UCEDD Trainee and former Co-Director of UA Pride Alliance who graduated with their Master's degree in Information Resources & Library Science from the University of Arizona in 2012. Since then, Stephan has worked with adults on the autism spectrum in learning farming and independent living skills and currently lives in a large egalitarian feminist income-sharing community in rural Virginia. Stephan also enjoys rock climbing, hammocks, and potato products.

Queer-Ability: History, Culture, and the Future of the Intersection of LGBTQ and Disability Studies



Stephan Elizander Przybylowicz, University of Arizona

School of Information Resources & Library Science

Co-Director, Pride Alliance

Sonoran UCEDD Trainee, Fall 2011

Modeling Parallel Histories

- Medical Model of deaf/disability and homosexuality/transsexuality
- Sociocultural Model
- Minority Model

Medical Model

- Focus on impairments that limit
- Identifiable and fixed “norms” for human beings and “Abnormality” is viewed negatively
- All complications related to difference reside within the individual
- Cures and rehabilitations are viewed as the best response to correct these “abnormalities”

Cures/Eugenics and Reparative Therapy

**Early Trepanning to “Cure”
Deafness**



**Electroshock Aversion to “Cure”
Homosexuality**



Sociocultural Model

- Meaning and experience of normalcy are neither fixed nor strictly biological; difference is strongly shaped by culture and society.
- Rejects idea that people with differences are inherently “defective” and that cures are the only valid response to bodily or mental difference.
- Values understanding difference as fundamental to human existence.

Minority Model

- Difference is valued as a beneficial part of one's core identity
- Groups of people with shared differences can be organized for social and political change

Education and Activism

Deaf/Disability Pride & Politics



LGBTQ Pride & Politics



Other Similarities Between Communities

- Both LGBTQ people and people with disabilities are often the only ones in their family and may face loss of loved ones due to their difference
- Transgender individuals face similar issues to people with disabilities in trying to obtain health information and doctors that are willing to work with them
- Both communities face higher incidences of unemployment and other discrimination that make a large number low-income households

Creating Inclusive Communities

- People with disabilities are often de-sexualized
- LGBTQ people are often hyper-sexualized
- Queer people with disabilities stand at the intersection and face unique issues
- Online communities help people across time and space, but the digital divide may still limit access to low-income individuals
- Local communities are necessary for support and services, but may not be able to meet often

Common Issues for Activism

- Both communities would benefit from the dissolution of certain benefits from the institution of marriage, for instance:
 - universal health care, instead of relying on medicare and domestic partner benefits
 - inheritance laws that easily allow a chosen beneficiary (perhaps a caretaker or close friend) instead of the spouse automatically
- Both communities have the need for single-stall restrooms, especially transgender people who are in early physical transition

Additional Questions?

Feel free to contact me!

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Building Bridges: Creating Spaces for Inclusion within Self-Advocacy and LGBTQ Communities

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Institute on Disability and Human Development, IL UCEDD, University of Illinois at Chicago

Introduction

The intersecting marginal identities of self-advocates with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) and individuals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and/or Queer (LGBTQ) provides an opportunity for increased social support and social inclusion.

There has been very little research done on this area, and the authors suggest that through the creation of inclusive spaces, these two communities can mutually benefit from each other's perspective.

At the self-advocacy summits that were held in 2011, a young adult with IDD came out as a lesbian in front of other self-advocates and allies. Although people were supportive, this young woman was looking for a support group that would allow her to have role models who had had similar experiences to her. Self-advocates and allies must continue to support GLBTQ self-advocates, but the GLBTQ community can and should provide unique insight from their experiences.

Why is this an issue?

•Self-advocates have only recently been seen as being able to have a sexual identity (Hingsburger & Tough, 2002; Servais, 2006; World Health Organization, 2005).

•Löfgren-Mårtenson (2009) suggested that young adults with ID were socialized to be heterosexual, and that young adults with ID might benefit from role models who are not heterosexual.

•Additionally, the practice of normalization (Wolfensberger, 1972) has impacted people with IDD's pathway to social empowerment. Culham and Nind (2003) identify an assimilationist impulse of normalization that has not made room for the celebration of differences, contrary to other groups such as the LGBTQ movements. People with IDD who may not identify as heterosexual are left out even from inclusive communities such as LGBTQ groups. This is in addition to pervasive, cross-cultural negative views of people with IDD (Allison & Strydom, 2009).

•Though a few support groups have emerged that particularly serve people with IDD that identify as LGBTQ (Noonan & Taylor Gomez, 2011, Allen, 2003), more sustained supportive interaction is needed between the self-advocacy movement and the GLBTQ movement. Thompson (2008) uses queer theory to claim that true inclusionary practices (particularly in school settings) require that just as ableism is interrogated, heterosexism should also be questioned alongside it.

•Green Mountain Self-Advocates (2009) have identified "Being free about your sexuality, like if you are gay, straight or lesbian," as a component of sexual self-advocacy.

What could inclusive spaces that include self-advocates and GLBTQ advocates look like?

1. **Showing up.** The concrete connections that come through in-person meetings and conversations are important for building trust and getting to know who the other group members are. Within this, there should be space to identify any way you want to. Including members from both movements in each group's is essential for true inclusivity, as Thompson (2008) has demonstrated. Also, by examining each other's goals and things that they are working on, both groups can see where they can partner for those issues that are important to both groups.
2. **Respectful honesty.** Speak from your own experience and be open to the experiences of others. Language matters. Asking the question of how a person would like to be addressed is always a good idea. Being honest with yourself is the first step. From there you can be honest with others.
3. **Understand supports** that people may or may not need. Some people like to ask for support, where others may benefit from "support check-ins." This is similar to the idea of "gender pronoun checks," during which group members can offer specifics in terms of how they'd like to be addressed. Supports can appear in a variety of modes. Checking in as a group gives individuals an opportunity to explain what works best for them without being singled out.

Some Questions to Ask:

- How do people in your movement/community refer to us?
- How do they think about us?
- What can we learn from each other?
- What is the history of your movement?

We've used these two movements as an example of how inclusive space can be created and anticipated. We want to acknowledge, however, that the self-advocacy movement (particularly around intellectual disability) and the GLBTQ movement are but two facets of social identity. There are other movements that have been initiated on the basis of specific oppressions, such as racism. It is important to explore multiple facets of diverse identity.



Tia Nelis (UIC) and David Frye (Green Mountain Self-Advocates) present at the "Creating Change" conference held in Atlanta in Spring of 2013.

Thanks to Peri Radevic for the allowing us to use this photo, and for inspiring this poster.

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Today

- People with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) → some identify as self-advocates
- People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, or ally (LGBTQIA)
- Common experience of oppression



Tia's Experiences

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered Now (SABE)

-Self-advocacy Summits

-lack of support leads to higher rates of suicide

National LGBTQ

Task Force Conference

-inclusion

Bullying

-Facebook



Why Support Gap?

Normalization

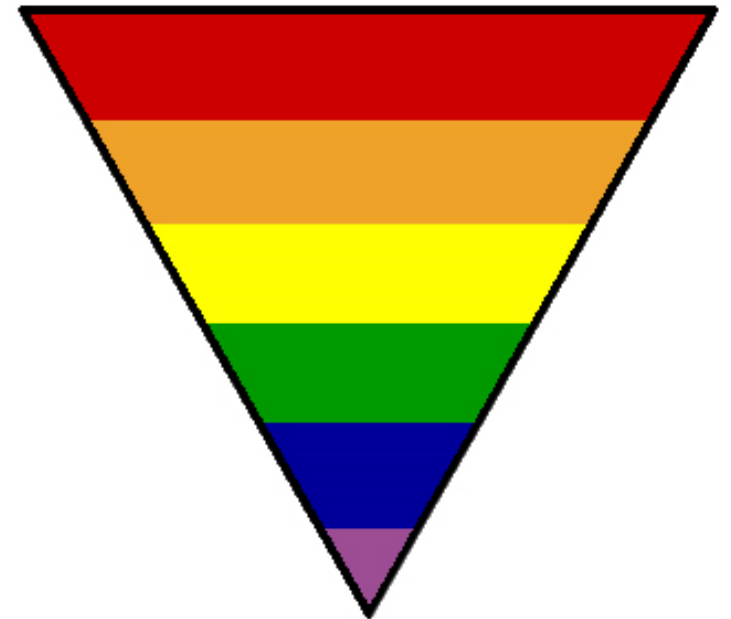
- Heterosexuality as the “norm”

People with IDD as having sexuality

- recent recognition

Stigma of IDD

- disability hierarchy



Supports

Rainbow Support Group in New Haven, CT

Started by John Allen

Has expanded to other states:



sprOUT

sprOUT Evaluation
a griffin centre project

Key Messages

Be clear about collaboration. WHAT IS THE **AIM?**

Be transparent about **POWER** and **PRIVILEGE**

ANTICIPATE CHALLENGES
Sex positivity and collaboration takes active resistance

WORK TOGETHER
not in isolation

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

- are key
- juggling multiple roles necessary
- personal engagement to project **CRUCIAL**

sprOUT context

developmental services sector **SEX** LGBTQ sector

TABOO

- Histories of INSTITUTIONALIZATION, CRIMINALIZATION, MEDICALIZATION
- Homophobia + transphobia

OUR COMPASS DOCUMENTARY

co written by LGBTQ Youth with intellectual disabilities

THEMES

- power
- sexy
- creativity
- confusing
- hope
- pride
- freedom
- love

★ ↑ MAJOR AWARDS

★ ↑ national screenings

★ || international screenings

what did you learn?

PARTICIPANTS
self advocacy
Healthy **SEXUALITY**
Self awareness
workshop co-facilitation
event planning
admin and outreach skills

SERVICE PROVIDERS
challenge ableism about "How Long it should take"
deeper understanding
invisible disabilities are barriers to services

PEER WORKERS & CONSULTANTS
ethical approach to collaboration

STAFF & STUDENTS
"patience"

1729 service providers trained at **80** workshops

3 HUBS
gr. Toronto SW Ontario CE Ontario

3395 people at **48** events

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

- 8 conference presentations
- 5 academic posters
- 2 book chapters
- 4 journal articles
- 3 community reports

823 people with intellectual disabilities attended sprOUT activities

COMMUNITY BUILDING

TRAINING and SUPPORT for SERVICE PROVIDERS

DOCUMENT BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLABORATION

reduce isolation

increase visibility
Website
documentary film

CONNECTING LGBTQ People with Intellectual Disabilities across Ontario

2008 to 2012

sprOUT's approach

- anti-racism
- social determinants of health
- community engagement
- critical disability framework
- self-determination
- anti-oppression

Service Providers said sprOUT is:

disability sexuality gender wellness

INNOVATIVE FUN

INSPIRING INFORMATIVE

IDEAS FOR GROWTH: More partnerships, more trainings

Participants said it's

inclusive and non-judgmental

- Working with facilitators from disability community made a real difference
- Outings a highlight
- culturally + gender-diverse peer workers + consultants

better understanding myself better self-esteem

challenges mentioned

- communication between events
- stronger staff involvement OK
- travel distance
- food budget "group home food"
- less participants + colour over time at weekly Compass drop in group

123456

Data Collection methods

- online survey
- interviews
- workshop evaluations

ABOUT

- ✓ Only Canadian example
- ✓ Ontario-wide project
- CONTACT: Jess Vo
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- griffin-centre.org/reachout

Illustration: Sam Bradd.com



Image by Sam Bradd

Sexual Self-Advocacy

- knowing and respecting themselves
- respect for others
- choices
- speaking up
- having their rights respected
- getting information
- healthy relationships
- interdependence



Sexual Self-Advocacy

“I’m just wondering what about the different kinds of relationships. There is heterosexual, which is men and women, and there are other relationships of the same sex, there are different kinds of relationships...we need to have information about what is out there so that we can make informed decisions.”



Ways to Be Inclusive

Be Honest

- Power
- Privilege
- Assumptions



Be Together

- Building trust takes time and work
- intentionality



Group Check-Ins

- Support
- Gender pronoun



Questions to Ask

Ways to start a conversation:

- How do people in your movement/community refer to us?
- How do they think about us?
- What can we learn from each other?
- What is the history of your movement?

Both groups and communities can be asked the same questions



Thank you!

- Questions?
- Comments?

- How to Ask a Question
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Visit the Websites

AUCD Website:

<http://www.aucd.org>

Multicultural Council Website

<https://www.aucd.org/template/page.cfm?id=85>

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