

Div Lit Week 5: Sexualities and Sexual Orientation

Discussion: Who decides what we do with our bodies?

1. Objectives of class:

- Explore constructions of “acceptable” and “unacceptable” sexuality
- Explore how “different” bodies are regulated and marginalised by these constructions
- Explore how these constructions inform homophobia
- Explore how sexuality intersects with constructions of gender and disability

2. Material:

- **Sait, W., Lorenzo, T., Steyn, M. and Van Zyl, M. (2009) Nurturing the sexuality of disabled girls: The challenges of parenting for mothers. In M. Steyn & M. van Zyl (Eds) *The Prize and the Price. Shaping sexualities in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press (p. 192-219)**
- **Centred & Marginal Sexualities Diagram**

3. Method:

- **Brainstorm**

Start by brainstorming "acceptable" and "unacceptable" ways of being sexual being. Draw a circle. The middle represents the "centre" and the edge the "margin". Elicit from the class which bodies it is more (closer to the centre) or less (closer to the margin) acceptable to have sex in our society. See **Centred & Marginal Sexualities Diagram**

Note: In some places we get into some very hairy moral territory e.g. sex with children's bodies, but once again how power operates to police bodies (which is sometimes good!), but very often exclusionary. Always, who decides and to what effect? WHO draws the line between good policing and bad policing? The answer to that question is about power. In fact the point about children mirrors the point Sait is making in the reading.

- **Discuss**

Ask students to discuss the following questions (it is useful to create handouts with the questions on for them):

1. After reading “Nurturing the sexuality of disabled girls” – what do you make of the intersection of disability, gender and sexuality?
2. Why is there so much anxiety around sex and sexuality in our society?

3. What is the role of culture in the construction of sexuality?
4. What are some of the ways in which society polices what we do with our bodies?
5. What are some of the real life consequences of this policing of people's bodies – especially women? (Think about the violence towards black lesbians)

- **Debrief**

Close by reflecting on the following points, the first is the most important:

- **Sexuality is often perceived as a “private” matter, but the regulation of people's bodies tells us otherwise.**
- “Society tends to dismiss sexuality as a fundamentally important fact in the lives of disabled people”
- “Throughout their lives disabled children's sexuality is negated and suppressed. Disabled children have sexual curiosity and sexual feelings.”
- “We are taught to view disability as a defect; the woman with a disability is regarded as damaged goods”

Centered & Marginal Sexualities Diagram

