

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**

**Fakulta filozofická**

**Bakalářská práce**

**SHAPING THE DEBATE: THE GAY CIVIL RIGHTS  
MOVEMENT AND PORTRAYAL OF  
HOMOSEXUALITY IN AMERICAN NEWS AND  
ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA**

**Diana Burešová**

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Plzeň 2015

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

*Plzeň, duben 2015*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The society of our century is largely surrounded by the diversity of ethnic, national, linguistic and religious minorities. Various alternatives to sexual self-identity have joined the minorities. Except for the traditional heterosexuality there exist other sexual variations such as homosexuality, bisexuality and transsexuality. Any exact boundaries have not been established within these categories.

In our history, the homosexual behavior is pervasive, i.e. since the evolution of mankind. Essential and in this thesis undeniable developments underwent also the homosexuality in the "eyes" of the society, which at first was looking at it in a wide spectrum of acceptance, however, lately the society rejected it. Homosexuality, like every other diversity characterizing the minority, has become a part of life for most people in the world today. As 4% homosexually oriented population represent on average in the circle of your 50 friends 2 persons with homosexual behavior. However, even this fact did not prevent that homosexuality is still not tolerantly and immediately accepted by the society.

When I was looking for the subject of my bachelor thesis, the nature of mine dealing mainly with controversial socio-social questions set me clearly this topic.

To do my best while processing the present thesis it was split into five main chapters. The first chapter is focused on the term of homosexuality which is then specified in details. The following chapter is devoted to the portrayal of homosexuality in American news and entertainment media, where initially I describe in the introductory subchapter, in what kind of media was portrayed homosexuality during a time and if homosexuality through the media can influence the formation of our opinions, judgments and attitudes. Other subchapters are directly

linked to homosexuality presented in the media. The periods are structured always in decades starting from the 1950s to the present, focusing on what characterized the respective decade and what was mostly attracted by the media.

The third chapter is centered on the civil gay rights movement, and is devoted to the three major turning points in the fight for gay civil rights. These important historical turning points helped homosexuality always to move a significant step forward in the path for gaining recognition and equality. Therefore this chapter is wide enough and is to be understood as a considerable part.

In chapter four I already deeply concern with individual key events of homosexuality in the USA and how they were portrayed by the media. The events are arranged chronologically by the time sequence. Each key event is explained and then commented, in what sort of media it found its “response area”, what was the media image and its influence on the society. This chapter was given the largest space, as it combines two essential objectives of this thesis. Namely, these are the events on the imaginary battlefield for enforcing the gay civil rights and subsequently their portrayal by the media, which shaped the social debate.

The last fifth chapter presents the practical part. Its pillars are: the questionnaire and interview. Responses obtained from the questionnaire are analyzed and graphically compare two target groups of respondents. Below the graphs are always included brief comments with an evaluation of results. The overall summary of the research is places on the last page.

Writing the present bachelor thesis, I found a serious lack of written Czech specialized literature concerning homosexuality on the given topic. American printed books were in satisfactory quantities, but it was very

difficult to obtain them, because they are owned by foreign libraries. For this reason, the internet sources were used predominantly and are represented in a wide range and actually respond to my topic.



## 2 HOMOSEXUALITY

### 2.1 Definition of Homosexuality

The term “homosexuality” was coined for the first time in 1869 by a Hungarian journalist and human rights campaigner, *Károly Maria Benkert*. Although the term is relatively new, the same-sex orientation occurred from the very beginning of mankind. In some periods of time it was being got to homosexuality much more tolerance, in others it was tabooed. However, despite this the homosexuality is nowadays being given more attention.<sup>1</sup>

The homosexuality is in two following paragraphs defined from two different points of view, but in the way of the most accurately description.

*“Homosexualitou ... rozumíme trvalou citovou a erotickou preferenci osob stejného pohlaví. Je to celoživotní, neměnný a nezvolený stav, charakterizovaný tím, že jeho nositel je pohlavně přitahován a vrzušován převážně či výlučně osobami stejného pohlaví.”<sup>2</sup>*

*“Homosexualita je geneticky determinovaný celoživotný a nemenný stav libido, pri ktorom jedinec za podmienok možnosti slobodnej voľby preferuje za účelom sexuálneho a citového kontaktu object rovnakého pohlavia, pričom takto vzniknutý vzťah sa svojou kvalitou v plnej miere vyrovná vzťahu heterosexuálnemu.”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> STANDFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY, *Homosexuality*.

<sup>2</sup> JANOŠOVÁ, P., *Homosexualita v názorech súčasnej spoločnosti*, p. 13, origin source: BRZEK, A., PONDLIČKOVÁ, J., *Třetí pohlaví?* Translated by Diana Burešová: "To homosexuality [...] we understand permanent emotional and erotic preference of persons of the same sex. It is a lifelong, unchanging and not chosen state, characterized by the fact that its bearer is sexually attracted and aroused predominantly or exclusively by persons of the same sex."

<sup>3</sup> JANOŠOVÁ, P., *Homosexualita v názorech súčasnej spoločnosti*, p. 13, origin source: DUBAJ, Š., *O postoji bratislavskej verejnosti k problematike homosexuality*. Translated by

These definitions are semantically very close. The first formulation deals with homosexuality in terms of medical point of view at a time when homosexuality was moved into the lexicon of diseases. The following decades brought changes in the view of homosexuality. In 1867 the lawyer and the pioneer of modern gay rights movement *Carl Heinrich Ulrichs* defined homosexuality as “the third gender”. This term got into the awareness of the society like an intermediate stage between man and woman. Later, a German sexologist *Magnus Hirschfeld* announced his theory, that the homosexuality is innate. Since that time the situation in the society has been moved to the freedom of an individual. The last step regarding the perception of homosexuality as a mental illness was the removal of homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) of the *American Psychiatric Association* in 1973.

The second definition specifies the homosexuality in the field of sociology. This definition appeared about two years later, in a different situation in relation to the previous time period.<sup>4</sup>

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Diana Burešová: *"Homosexuality is genetically determined lifelong and unchangeable state of libido by which an individual prefers an object of the same-sex under the conditions of options included free choices for the purpose of sexual and emotional contact, whereas this created relationship is fully equal with its quality to the heterosexual relationship."*

<sup>4</sup> JANOŠOVÁ, P., *Homosexualita v názorech současné společnosti*.

### **3 PORTRAYAL OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN AMERICAN NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA**

#### **3.1 Introduction to the Portrayal of Homosexuality by Mass Media**

Mass media is written, spoken, or broadcast communication intended to reach, retain and attract the attention of the general public. The term mass media is related to television, radio, book, newspaper, comic, internet, advertising and to other media communications. At the present, mass media have a significant force in developed western countries, especially in the USA.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from information, mass media pass opinions and attitudes on to the audience. Their media influence caused an emergence and development of mediated culture, in which media try to reflect and form the contemporary culture. Only a fractional percentage of the population is aware that the media have manipulative effects on the consumers' thinking and behavior. Nevertheless, the question to what extent the mass media have the ability to influence the society remains open.<sup>6</sup>

Media depiction of homosexuality has substantially changed over the last 60 years and more than ever before homosexuality is not overlooked by the mass media. After a wave of media interest in homosexuality this media visibility led to the "normalization" of homosexuality in the view of the society. Today, greater media attention is also paid to the other sexual minorities in a largely positive way.<sup>7</sup>

The following subchapters are devoted to the portrayal of homosexuality in the American news and entertainment media from the

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<sup>5</sup> CLIFFSNOTES, *The Role and Influence of Mass Media*.

<sup>6</sup> CZECH, L., *Společenské důsledky medializace skutečnosti*.

<sup>7</sup> KOLÁŘOVÁ, M., *Sexualita v médiích: peer je stále divné?*

1950s to the present. Media depiction of homosexuality is described for each decade to show that homosexuality had different media presence during every decade.

### **3.1.1 The 1950s**

Homosexuality, like other sexual minorities, was not a subject of printed or broadcast media till the beginning of the 1950s. Before that, American newspapers and magazines barely reported about homosexuality at all. If there ever was a short unimportant written article printed on the topic, the article, mostly printed on the last page, only pointed out some type of crime and immoral behavior. Sexual attraction between persons of the same sex was not discussed in public before, and newspaper publishers did not tend to publish issues related to homosexuality. Therefore, the 1950s are often described as a decade during which homosexuality entered the news arena.

However, a speech given by a government official about certain connection between the homosexual employees of the U.S. government and communism sparked media attention. On the grounds of the mentioned political event 91 State Department employees were removed from their positions because they were members of “the shady category”. A lot of national daily newspapers like the *New York Times*, *Washington Times-Herald* or *Los Angeles Times* published reports with headlines such as “Nearly 100 government employees lost their positions because of being “emotionally unstable” and “morally corrupt””. Since that time, the portrayal of homosexuality in the American newspapers and magazines gained a considerably negative tone and was also depicted as something very immoral and a very dangerous for the American children because of homosexuals’ disability to control their sexual desire. Several metropolitan newspapers even used terms such as “perverts”, “deviates” or “degenerates” in their articles in connection with homosexuals. These

reports published by the largest American newspaper giants on the market served as guidance for what topics to report on for hundreds of small newspapers.

The following two headlines from the American daily newspaper *The New York Times* from 1950 depict homosexuals in a very negative light by using the term “perverts”.<sup>8</sup>

*Figure No. 1: “Perverts Called Government Peril”*

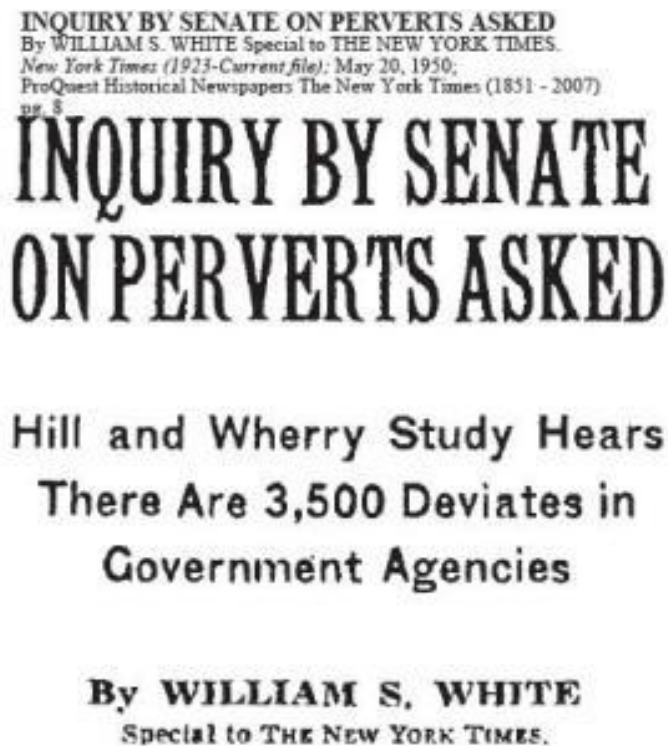


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<sup>8</sup> MAXMANN, *The 1950's – "Homosexuals enter news arena."*

<sup>9</sup> THE NEW YORK TIMES, *Perverts Called Government Peril.*

Figure No. 2: "Inquiry by Senate on Perverts Asked"



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### 3.1.2 The 1960s

The negative and vilifying media depiction of homosexuality from the 1950s continued further barely unchanged into the 1960s. In the late 1960s, on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1969 an important event took place at the Stonewall Inn that "cast a shadow" upon the LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgeders) community in media overall.\*<sup>11</sup> This event appeared on the first pages of every major newspaper in the country, such as the *New York Timers* or the *New York Daily News*. But the media coverage did not change as compared to the previous years. The news coverage was still reported not in an objective but in a sensational way. Therefore, the homosexuals were still being depicted in a negative stereotyped light that

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<sup>10</sup> WHITE S. W., *Inquiry by Senate on Perverts Asked*.

was telling the society that “homosexuals are violent, sick and dangerous for our children.”

Terms referring to homosexuals as “queers, faggots or queens” were on the rise in the newspapers. For instance *The Village Voice* newspaper depicted the Stonewall riots frequently using terms like “fag follies” or even “forces of faggotry.” After the Stonewall event, *The New York Daily News* published a report with the headline “*Homo Nest Raided, Queen Bees Are Stinging Mad.*”<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the Stonewall riots introduced reports to the news coverage concerning lesbians, drag queens as opposed to reports only mentioning gay men. Another change occurred in the portrayal of homosexuals. Due to the Stonewall riots the depiction became yet a little more damaged and one could say that homosexuals were being portrayed as the “terrorists” of the society.<sup>13</sup>

In the film industry homosexuals have become the subject of several movies depicting them as negative stereotypes and social pariahs. In the 1960s, homosexuality entered into popular culture. In that time, gay media portrayal was considered an immoral code by the majority of the public and the homosexual community became oppressed even in real life beyond the screens. However, the broadcast media were making efforts to create well-rounded homosexual characters but these attempts usually did not fare well. These characters were often portrayed as dangerous, violent and murderous, lacking masculinity.<sup>14</sup>

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\* Information about the Stonewall riots is provided in the subchapter 5.1 The Stonewall Riots, which deals with this topic in greater detail.

<sup>12</sup> MAXMANN, *The 1960s – The news coverage on the “Stonewall Rebellion”*.

<sup>13</sup> MAXMANN, *The 1960s – The news coverage on the “Stonewall Rebellion”*.

<sup>14</sup> ESSAYS, UK., *The Portrayal Of Homosexualas In Hollywood Films Studies Essay*.

### 3.1.3 The 1970s

In this decade media introduced a new view into the depiction of the LGBT community. Homosexuals were portrayed as rapists, pedophiles or murderers only on rare occasions in the telecommunication media.

In 1970 the American drama *The Boys in the Band* was filmed, which was originally based off of a stage-play.<sup>15</sup> Both renderings were very successful and were considered a breakthrough. The drama was the first feature motion picture depicting a group of homosexuals in the 1970s in New York City. In the past, movies that contained homosexual scenes had also been filmed. But *The Boys in the Band* focused solely on the issue of homosexuality. Till this time, the overwhelming majority of people thought that the homosexual community formed only a negligible part of the society. They knew only a little about it and their perceptions of homosexuals stemmed mostly from newspaper reports. Hence this drama had a great opportunity to shape the general attitude of the society towards homosexuality.<sup>16</sup>

The next significant movie depicting a gay character in a screenplay was *Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen. The main character was Jill, Isaac's lesbian ex-wife, who was writing her own tell-all book about their relationship. This movie achieved greater visibility of homosexuality by the audience.

The 1970s brought especially two important events which shaped the society's views of homosexuality. The first took place in 1973, when homosexuality was removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of*

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<sup>15</sup> MEDINA, J., *50 Years of Gays in the Media & in the Streets: The 1970's*.

<sup>16</sup> MAXMANN, "Homosexuality comes to the big screen".



*Mental Disorders* (DSM).<sup>\*</sup> In spite of this the society still viewed homosexuality as an illness or something unnatural and pathological. The second event, which was also covered by the majority of the news media, was the assassination of the gay man, Harvey Milk, who was elected to a public office, by Dan White in 1978.<sup>\*\*</sup> Harvey Milk left a substantial mark in history that made many people reflect on LGBT issues in the 1970s.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1.4 The 1980s

The media portrayal of homosexuality was reduced mainly to the sexual act in the early 1980s. Media dealt with intimate relationships among homosexuals. In this respect, media brought homosexuals into focus because homosexuals were depicted as having sex only for pleasure and not for reproduction. Mainly gay men were portrayed this way. Nevertheless, this depiction persisted only into the mid 1980s. In the following years, media industry was attracted to a hotter topic - the AIDS disease.<sup>18\*\*\*</sup>

The country's major newspapers covered their title pages with the "mysterious disease AIDS", which infected predominantly the LGBT community. Depicted in the news media as dangerous transmitters of the HIV virus were mostly homosexuals rather than people with any other sexual orientation. This portrayal cast a negative light upon homosexuals. The most influential news outlet, the *New York Times*, was one of the first American newspapers publishing reports about AIDS. Very shortly, these reports became a model for other national newspapers and magazines.

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\* Removal of homosexuality from the DSM is described in greater detail in the subchapter 4.1.3 Homosexuality Is No Longer a Mental Disorder.

\*\* The public figure of Harvey Milk is described in greater detail in the subchapter 5.2 Assassination of Harvey Milk.

<sup>17</sup> MEDINA, J., *50 Years of Gays in the Media & in the Streets: The 1970's*.

\*\*\* The AIDS disease is described in greater detail in the subchapter 5.4 AIDS Epidemic.

Figure No. 3: New York Times article

**Researchers are investigating outbreaks of pneumonia that have occurred among gay males in several cities. (Part I, Page 3.)**

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Figure No. 4: New York Times article (2)

**RARE CANCER SEEN  
IN 41 HOMOSEXUALS**

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**Outbreak Occurs Among Men  
in New York and California  
—8 Died Inside 2 Years**

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The society started to become really afraid of AIDS because not much was known about this “new” disease and mainly about the way the infection was spread. The only thing publicly known was the fact that the homosexual community was the most often diagnosed with the HIV virus. The news reports even linked homosexuality to the already ascertained number of homosexual victims of AIDS calling it a “gay plague”. This

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<sup>18</sup> KOLÁŘOVÁ, M., *Sexualita v médiích: peer je stále divné?*

<sup>19</sup> NEW YORK TIMES, *Canadian Said to Have Had Key Role in Spread of AIDS.*

<sup>20</sup> ALTMAN, L. K., *Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals.*

caused a strong feeling of homophobia and fear of homosexuals in the society. Considerable part of the American population was persuaded that it could become infected by being close to homosexuals. Gay men found themselves on the margin of society again.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.1.5 The 1990s

During that time, the American media depicted gay men as effeminate, lesbians as masculine and same-sex couples were divided into representatives of female and male role. The media coverage of homosexual issues increased but the mass media continued stereotyping the gay characters. On the screens, gay men were often seen as hairdressers, men in bars dressed in black leather and men ill with AIDS. Lesbians appeared in the roles of murderers, sadistic matrons or asexual spinsters. Broadcast media used in particular lesbian kissing scenes to attract large audience. In the early 1990s, lesbians became interesting for the mass media, even though they were being portrayed less often than gay men. This wave of media interest was reflected in the printed media, where lesbians could be seen on the first pages of popular magazines such as the *Vanity Fair*. The articles in this regard were written mainly about lesbian celebrities or privileged beautiful lesbians of the urban upper class.<sup>22</sup>

In 1992 the attention of the news media turned to the lifting of the ban associated with homosexuals serving in the U.S. military.\* This issue was discussed all over the national newspapers. The negative reports often claimed that “gay men are sexual predators, thereby it is unsafe for soldiers to be close to homosexuals” or that “the presence of gay men in the military is disruptive and makes it impossible for armed forces to function effectively.” These reports were a reflection of the 1950s, when

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<sup>21</sup> MAXMANN, "Aids Enters the News – Reporting on the 'Gay Plague'".

<sup>22</sup> KOLÁŘOVÁ, M., *Sexualita v médiích: peer je stále divné?*

homosexuals were portrayed as lacking the ability to control their sexual desires. More liberal newspapers such as the *New York Times* or the *Los Angeles Times* approached this issue in their coverage with positive reports such as “discrimination against gays is unacceptable” or “gay people can be exemplary soldiers.” These reports reflected the opinion that every homosexual should be able to join the U.S. army and should not be discriminated against for their sexual orientation.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1990s, the time of gay visibility, homosexual women became the subject for several newspapers and TV programs. One of the causes that brought homosexual women to the center of the media attention was the coming out of the American comedian and actress *Ellen DeGeneres* on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in 1997.<sup>24</sup> The term coming out refers to “*identifying yourself as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) and disclosing this to other people.*”<sup>25</sup> The coming out of *Ellen DeGeneres* was closely followed by the media. It made her the first lesbian main character on a primetime show on the U.S. television. With the announcement about her sexuality she broke the boundaries of the perception of homosexuals in society and emphasized that homosexuals are just “normal” people like every other person.<sup>26</sup>

The most significant role in the American history of fostering gay visibility was played by the TV show *Will & Grace*. It was a popular NBC sitcom produced in Los Angeles broadcasted already from 1998.<sup>27</sup> The plot of this sitcom is focused on two best friends Will and Grace. Will Truman is a gay lawyer and Grace Adler runs her own interior design firm. Both of them are desperate for love and in this respect they support each

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<sup>23</sup> MAXMANN, “*Gays in the Military – The Debate over Lifting the Ban*”.

<sup>24</sup> MAXMANN, “*Ellen – Coming Out, On Screen and Off...*”.

<sup>25</sup> AVERT, *Coming Out*.

<sup>26</sup> MAXMANN, “*Ellen – Coming Out, On Screen and Off...*”.

<sup>27</sup> MAXMANN, “*Will and Grace: The Biggest Gay Hit in TV History*”.

other in looking for the men of their dreams. Their lives are livened up and complicated by their eccentric friends Jack and Karen.<sup>28</sup> This show sent the message to the audience that homosexuals are not any different from other people even though they are attracted to persons of the same sex. Therefore they should deserve equal rights and should not be treated as inferior individuals by the society. This sitcom did not address these issues in a straightforward way, but did it with great comedy and a refined sense of humor.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.1.6 The 21<sup>st</sup> Century till the Present

By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the media industry started to produce a series of shows and movies with homosexual characters. One of the shows, where lesbians finally found a place in the spotlight was television drama *The L Word*. This show portrays the lives of groups of lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their relationships with families, friends and lovers in Los Angeles. *The L Word* is the first popular show, which is focused solely on the lives of lesbians depicting them in an unconventional light. They are portrayed as stunningly beautiful women obsessed with sex. This show played from the time of its first broadcasting an important role in forming audience's attitudes and ideas towards the lesbian lifestyle.<sup>30</sup>

The other significant television series, which received praise and attracted media attention for depicting homosexual characters, are the American musical comedy-drama *Glee* and television sitcom *Modern Family*.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> BEDNÁŘ, J., *Will a Grace*.

<sup>29</sup> MAXMANN, "Will and Grace: The Biggest Gay Hit in TV History".

<sup>30</sup> MAXMANN, *The L Word - "Lesbians Move into the Spotlight"*.

<sup>31</sup> TARASAPPER, *Stereotypes of Homosexuality in the Media*.

From the film production, is the worth mentioning an American epic romantic drama *Brokeback Mountain*. This film brought a same-sex love story to the big screen and attracted not only a gay audience. The film shows to the public that gay men face a great real possibility of becoming victims of anti-gay violence and it makes a significant plea for society to put an end to homophobia.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> MAXMANN, *Brokeback Mountain – A story previously untold*.

## 4 GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Gay rights movement (also called *homosexual rights movement* or *gay liberation movement*) is used for civil rights movement, which advocates equal rights for homosexuals, bisexuals and transsexuals. “*It seeks to eliminate sodomy laws barring homosexual acts between consenting adults and calls for an end to discrimination against gay men and lesbians in employment, credit lending, housing, public accommodations, and other areas of life.*”<sup>33</sup>

Although the homosexuality has been seen since the time of the Babylonian Empire to the present, the homosexual rights movement started to enforce laws for supporting gay equality after the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By this time the vast majority of lesbians and gay men was hiding sexual orientation from the public and regarding the homosexuality they were holding the general attitude of the society saying homosexuality is sick and sinful. The watershed moment occurred with the establishment of the LGBTQ organizations, which created for homosexuals an impulse to proclaim willingly and openly their demands for equality.<sup>34</sup>

### 4.1 Turning Points in the Fight for Gay Civil Rights

#### 4.1.1 Establishment of the LGBTQ Organizations

In the USA were established the first national LGBTQ organizations by gay and lesbian leaders in the 1950s. The acronym LGBTQ is used for the denotation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and their communities, movements and cultures. To the leading national

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<sup>33</sup> LEVY, M. *Gay rights movement*.

<sup>34</sup> THE FREE DICTIONARY, *Gay and Lesbian Rights*.

organizations for homosexuals belong the *Mattachine Society* and the *Daughters of Bilitis*. The *Mattachine Society* - the non-profit organization for gay rights - is focused on educating the public in all homosexuality issues with the aim to show homosexuality in a different perspective. It was founded in 1955 in New York City by gay communist *Harry Hay* and its members can be gays only. In the same year was for lesbians established the first lesbian civil and political rights organization the *Daughters of Bilitis*. This organization started at the beginning as a secret social club, but during the following years it underwent a radical development and achieved such greatness, that it could support lesbians and take measures against the social stigma of homosexuality. The *Daughters of Bilitis* was founded in San Francisco, in the center of homosexuality.<sup>35</sup>

#### **4.1.2 The LGBT Community in San Francisco**

The city and country of San Francisco is a metropolis of toleration and adaptability. Since the establishment in 29<sup>th</sup> June 1776 by *Presidio di San Francisco* it has been often ascribed the role of pioneer in the cultural and social area. San Francisco has become a symbol of ethnic and religious minorities. It is the friendliest city for homosexuals and for other sexual minorities on a global scale and rightfully is it called the “gay Mecca”.<sup>36</sup>

Since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the history of San Francisco has taken a much more intense support down for gay rights. At the turn of the '60s and '70s the homosexuality was being more visible during the “sexual revolution”.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> IOWA PRIDE NETWORK, *Birth of the Gay Rights Movement*.

<sup>36</sup> SINCLAIR, M., *San Francisco*.

<sup>37</sup> WHITE MEDIA, *Homosexualita a pedofilie – spojené nádoby (1.díl)*.



After the year 1969 (when the rebellion took place at the Stonewall Inn in the Greenwich Village by members of the gay community) gay activists were striving for their rights more actively and in the US states unleashed a series of demonstrations against an anti-homosexual legal system. In San Francisco a considerable majority of gay movements from the LGBT community were inspired by these Stonewall events. Out of the city chronicle is the most eccentric a demonstration which is called "The Night of the Purple Hand". This rebellion was realized as the response against the homophobic editorial policies of the San Francisco Examiner on Halloween 1969 by urban gay activists. Protesters found a barrel of printers' ink which was owned by that newspaper building and across the center San Francisco they left their purple palm prints.<sup>38</sup>

Nowadays, the homosexuality gets more to the light of attention. Recent demographic survey discovered that more than 15% of the population in San Francisco is homosexual.<sup>39</sup> Homosexuals due to this statistics built in San Francisco a solid background. It can be seen in a number of organization serving to homosexual community, in the *Castro district* – quarter inhabited by homosexuals or in their cultural life. Since 1972 is annually being held the *San Francisco's Gay Pride Parade*, which is the largest LGBT public event worldwide, or *The San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival*. This film festival was launched at first in 1977.<sup>40</sup>

### **4.1.3 Homosexuality Is No Longer a Mental Disorder**

As it was already mentioned in one of the previous subchapters dealing with the definition of homosexuality (chapter 2), the homosexuality

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<sup>38</sup>STRYKER, S., *San Francisco*.

<sup>39</sup>GAYTRAVEL.COM, *San Francisco*.

<sup>40</sup>GLBTQ: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUEER CULTURE, *San Francisco*.

has not been understood a mental disorder since 1973. A psychologist *Dr. Robert Spitzer* pointed in his research out that there is no connection between the homosexuality and mental disorder. Many influential mental health organizations were inclining to this proven fact about homosexuality. Officially, the homosexuality was removed from *The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* as mental illness after a review of the scientific literature and debate with experts specialized in that issues. Afterwards, as it was found out by team of expert, the homosexuality could not be classified as a mental disorder, because it did not meet the criteria of a mental illness.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> NBC NEWS, *Gay rights timeline: Key dates in the fights for equality*.

## 5 KEY EVENTS OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE USA AND HOW THEY WERE PORTRAYED BY MEDIA

### 5.1 The Stonewall Riots

The Stonewall Riots have a mythic place in an American history of gay rights. This event is often described and widely considered as the birthplace of *the modern gay rights movement*.<sup>42</sup>

The series of spontaneous demonstrations called The Stonewall Riots happened in 1969 in New York's Greenwich Village in a local gay club Stonewall Inn which was owned by Italian Mafia. On 28<sup>th</sup> June at 1:20 a.m. the police conducted a raid at Stonewall Inn with the aim to identify all transvestites and arrest them and especially take the Mafia members into custody and escort them. This original intention was not successful because of the superiority of over-excited visitors, Stonewall citizens and people from the neighborhood. During that morning people were chanting slogans such as "Gay power" or "Gay rights". The situation of that morning calmed down around four o'clock a.m. However, within another six days other demonstrations broke out. In Greenwich Village in the following day appeared protest graffiti throughout the city requiring the legalization of gay bars and gender equality.<sup>43</sup> The word "Stonewall" has entered the vocabulary of homosexuals, bisexuals, and transgendered people as a symbol of the LGBT integrity and fighting against oppression of gay rights.<sup>44</sup>

The Stonewall Riots inspired many of sexual minorities in the USA to form organizations supporting status of gays in a society across the

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<sup>42</sup> CRAWLEY, W., *Stonewall at 40*.

<sup>43</sup> GOLGO, F., *Gay hnutí 40 let poté*.

<sup>44</sup> WRIGHT, L., *The Stonewall Riots – 1969: A Turning Point in the Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Liberation*.

American nation.<sup>45</sup> This event stepped in legend and it is being told across the USA like a folk tale. The Stonewall Riots caused a greater media visibility of the LGBT community.<sup>46</sup> At the beginning many major newspapers, such as the *New York Times* or *New York Daily News*, portrayed gay men and women in a very negative light. In reports related to The Stonewall Riots were used terms like “fag follies” referred to the riot or “forces of faggotry” having in view the homosexuals involved. Nevertheless, it showed that this event was important enough to report for whichever U.S. metropolitan newspapers like the *New York Times*.<sup>47</sup>

## 5.2 Assassination of Harvey Milk

Very important events around the homosexual issues took place in 1977, when the first openly gay representative and politic *Harvey Milk* was elected to *San Francisco's Board of Supervisors*.<sup>48</sup> In the election he won 30% of votes. Among others, his most fundamental goal, related to the homosexual folk, was to support a civil rights bill which could lift the ban on sexual orientation discrimination.<sup>49</sup> He achieved the homosexual community could get to the political sphere.

Gay rights icon *Harvey Milk* during his political career became the first significant victim of gay-liberation movement.<sup>50</sup> It happened on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1978 when *Harvey Milk* with a city manager *George Moscone* was murdered at City Hall by a former city politician *Dan White*. In 1979 was pronounced a judgment and sentence of eight years. This mild punishment caused a wave of uprisings and riots. Among homosexuals it

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<sup>45</sup> THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, *Stonewall Riots: The Beginning of the LGBT Movement*.

<sup>46</sup> GARCIA, M., *Op-ed: What If Stonewall Happened Now?*

<sup>47</sup> WORDPRESS.COM, *The 1960s – The New coverage on the "Stonewall Rebellion"*.

<sup>48</sup> SINCLAIR, M., *San Francisco*.

<sup>49</sup> INFOPLEASE.COM, *The American Gay Rights Movement: A Timeline*.

<sup>50</sup> TIME INC. NETWORK, *Pride and Prejudice: An Interactive Timeline of the Fight for Gay Rights*.

was seen as an irrelevant punishment for a double murder and in May broke out the *White Night Riot* uprising headed by gay activists.<sup>51</sup>

The case of Milk's assassination received national media coverage, showing, which inequality have to face the LGBT community members from the state.<sup>52</sup> By this brutal murder a gay rights icon *Harvey Milk* has become the subject of many titles of newspapers, books or movies. In 1982 was written a biography of Milk, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, by a gay American journalist, concerning extensively his assassination, trial and the White Night Riots. Two years later was filmed a document *The Times of Harvey Milk*, which won the Academy Award.<sup>53</sup>

### 5.3 The White Night Riots

Thirty-six years ago an ex-cop *Dan White* was found guilty of manslaughter after the eleven-day long legal proceedings. He was sentenced for killing San Francisco Mayor *George Moscone* and *Harvey Milk* to eight years sentence behind bars.<sup>54</sup> The LGBT community was outraged by this court decision. It was expected that he should be accused of the first-degree murder. The disorderly gay community set off the violence riots in protest against the lenient sentence. Initially, these events took place in the evening hours on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1979 in San Francisco Castro district. In this part of the city began to gather the mob predominantly of the LGBT community. From the original number of 500 rebels the assembled folk grew to 1,500. The crowd headed by *Cleve Jones*, *Harry Britt* and Milk's widow *Scott Smith* was led towards City Hall. The official statistics state that the number of protestors, who took part in the march, was around 10,000 people. These thousands of outraged San

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<sup>51</sup> SINCLAIR, M., *San Francisco*.

<sup>52</sup> RECLAIMING DIGNITY, *The White Night Riots*.

<sup>53</sup> BOOKER, M., *Alternate Americas: Science Fiction Film and American Culture*.

<sup>54</sup> THE CASTRO, *The White Night Riot and Harvey Milk's Birthday Party*.

Franciscans were disrupting road traffic and setting fires during the march to City Hall. The San Francisco police units were sent to the center to intervene against the riots. Despite this fact rebels broke windows in the first floor of City Hall and caused high damages for their city.<sup>55</sup> Only the damage of City Hall climbed up to the amount of one million dollars.<sup>56</sup>

In the following day the LGBT leaders met to come to an agreement on further steps which they were going to do in relation to the riots of previous night. They decided that nobody was to apologize on behalf of the LGBT community, because for injustice conducted to the riots was responsible only the state.<sup>57</sup> The next day, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1979, the police forces were deployed again to prevent further possible riots. It was expected that in the day of Harvey Milk's 49<sup>th</sup> birthday will break out repeatedly protests against the murderer *Dan White*. However, in that night 20,000 people gathered in Castro district and in the peacefully way they celebrated Harvey Milk's life.<sup>58</sup>

On 14<sup>th</sup> January 1984 *Dan White* was released from prison. Nine thousands of San Francisco citizens marched to Castro district and in a sign of protest they burned White's effigy.<sup>59</sup> *Dan White* committed suicide a few months after by taking of poison in his garage in the Excelsior district.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> PALMER, W., May 21<sup>st</sup>: *The 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Castro's White Night Riots*.

<sup>56</sup> SINCLAIR, M., *San Francisco*.

<sup>57</sup> HOODLINE.COM, May 21<sup>st</sup>: *The 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Castro's White Night Riots*.

<sup>58</sup> SHILTS, R., *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*.

<sup>59</sup> TIME INC. NETWORK, *Uneasy Freedom*.

<sup>60</sup> SFGATE.COM, *Thomas Norman dies – prosecuted Dan White case*.

Figure No. 5: Harvey Milk, George Moscone, Dan White



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## 5.4 AIDS Epidemic

The first reported case of HIV infection in the USA occurred in June 1981 in Los Angeles. The immunologist *Michael Gottlieb* observed a rare form of pneumonia in four gays around 30 years of age. This disease was caused by a microorganism infection of *Pneumocystis Carinii*.<sup>62</sup> The most notable was the fact that this infection usually affected individuals with compromised immune systems. Nevertheless, the first victims of AIDS were young people and before the infection they had been in good health condition. The only connection between all the infected men was the fact that they were gay.<sup>63</sup>

At present, however, it has been proven that AIDS has originated in Africa. But even today, AIDS is often mistakenly portrayed as an

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<sup>61</sup> PALMER, W., *May 21<sup>st</sup>: The 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Castro's White Night Riots*.

<sup>62</sup> CONNOR S.; KINGMAN S., *AIDS: Ztracená imunita*.

<sup>63</sup> AVERT, *History of HIV & AIDS in the U.S.A.*

American disease. The USA was only one of the first countries where cases of AIDS occurred and it was the US government that first began to globally highlight the potential threat of AIDS spreading.<sup>64</sup>

Homosexuals had made a great progress in the fight for legal equality until 1981. Since that time, when AIDS had been brought to public attention and demonstrated as a rapidly spreading gay disease, it was quite impossible to keep up with the previous success. The society talked about AIDS as the “gay plague”, because the first infected people were gays. Human ignorance when it came to the causes and ways of transmission of the infection by AIDS had caused the bias against homosexuality to become more intense.

At the beginning, the AIDS epidemic was being presented as the consequence of gay sexual life style. In summer 1982, it was announced that there were more than 350 cases of AIDS in the USA. This event became a breakpoint for homosexuals because researches showed that other high-risk groups included injection drugs users and persons with haemophilia. (Haemophilia is a condition that affects the blood’s ability to clot.)

On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1984 the American team led by the biomedical researcher *Robert Gallo* discovered the virus that causes AIDS, the so-called HIV virus. This virus attacks organisms in many ways.<sup>65</sup> The transmission routes of HIV diagnoses are illustrated below in two circle graphs from the statistic of 2011.<sup>66</sup>

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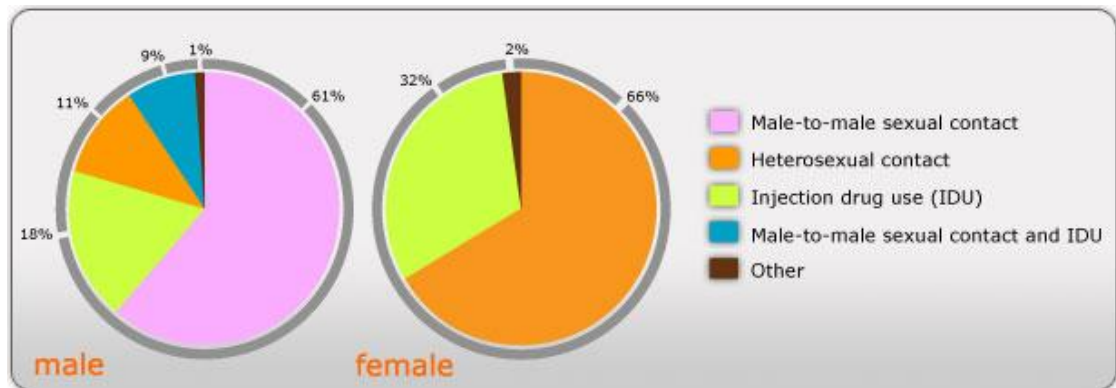
<sup>64</sup> AVERT, *History of HIV & AIDS in the U.S.A.*

<sup>65</sup> CONNOR S.; KINGMAN S., *AIDS: Ztracená imunita.*

<sup>66</sup> WIKISPACES.COM, *Hope is Vital as Infection Defeats Survival.*



Figure No. 6: The transmission routes of HIV diagnoses

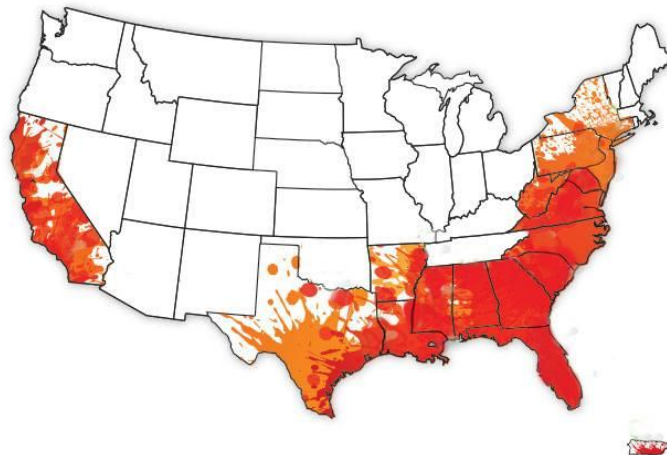


67

These graphs show how men and women get infected by HIV. The “Other” group covers haemophilia, blood transfusion and perinatal exposure.

Today, an estimated 1.2 million Americans are living with HIV.<sup>68</sup> The *Centers for Disease Control* released a collection of data about the rate of HIV infection in the USA. The following map depicts the U.S. areas with the highest rates of HIV infection per capita.<sup>69</sup>

Figure No. 7: Rate of HIV infection in the USA



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<sup>67</sup> NELSONCJ. [online] *Hope is Vital as Infection Defeats Survival*.

<sup>68</sup> HEALTHLINE, *HIV by the Numbers: Facts, Statistics, and You*.

<sup>69</sup> HIVPLUSMAG, *The 25 U.S. Cities with the Highest Rates of HIV Infection*.

<sup>70</sup> RAYNOLDS, D. *The 25 U.S. Cities with the Highest Rates of HIV Infection*.

The news media served, especially in the recent decades, as an important source of information about the AIDS epidemic for the public. The survey conducted by the non-profit *Kaiser Family Foundation* in October 2003 revealed that 72% of Americans got most of the information about AIDS from the mass media, primarily from television, newspapers and radio.

The dominant topic of news stories about AIDS was mainly the HIV prevention. Often it was accompanied by stories about HIV education and awareness efforts. In the 1980s, one in ten written stories overall involved topics of HIV transmission or social issues such as discrimination and housing for people living with the HIV. During the time period from 1981 to 2002, more than 41,000 news stories, which included over 39,000 printed stories and 2,000 broadcast stories, covered the topic of AIDS in the USA. It was the peak of AIDS coverage by the media. Reports dealing with the AIDS/HIV topic were being published in major U.S. national newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* or the *Washington Post*. Furthermore, they were being printed in regional papers like the *San Francisco Chronicle* or the *Los Angeles Times* and also published in network news such as the *ABC World News Tonight* or the *NBC Nightly News*. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the amount of reports related to AIDS has been on the decline but on the other hand, the global epidemic has been drawing increased attention.<sup>71</sup>

## **5.5 Military Ban – “Don't Ask, Don't Tell”**

The news media served, especially in recent decades, as an important source of information about the AIDS epidemic for the public. The survey conducted by the non-profit Kaiser Family Foundation in October 2003 revealed that 72% of Americans got most of the information

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<sup>71</sup> PSR, *AIDS at 21: Media Coverage of the HIV Epidemic 1981-2002*.

about AIDS from the mass media, primarily from television, newspapers and radio. The *Department of Defense* adopted a policy on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1994 prohibiting homosexuals from openly serving in the US military. The homosexual soldiers could be discharged from the army on the grounds of their sexual orientation. This law forced homosexuals to lie about their sexual orientation and the abolition of this policy has become the main goal of many existing gay organizations across the USA. The most well-known LGBT organization fighting for a law that would give gay and lesbian servicemen and women an equal opportunity to serve in the military is called *Human Rights Campaign*.<sup>72</sup>

Afterwards, when *William Jefferson "Bill" Clinton* took office in 1993 as the 42<sup>nd</sup> President of the USA, discussions about the discrimination of homosexuals in the US army started.<sup>73</sup> On 19<sup>th</sup> July 1993, President *Bill Clinton* announced in his speech a new policy, which allowed homosexuals to serve in the military but without being able to divulge their sexual orientation on pain of dishonorable discharge.<sup>74</sup> According to this policy the military applicants should not be asked about their sexual orientation. *Bill Clinton* also mentioned it in his speech that the new policy should come into force within six months. This policy was medially known as "*don't ask, don't tell*".<sup>75</sup>

On the other hand, when the democratic American politic *Bill Clinton* was elected to the presidency of the USA, homosexuals have gained more support in other gay rights matters. *Gregory King*, a spokesman of the *Fund for Human Rights* said: "*Bill Clinton je pro*

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<sup>72</sup> UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES, *Gays in the Military*.

<sup>73</sup> CLINTON FOUNDATION, *President Clinton*.

<sup>74</sup> TIME INC. NETWORK, *Pride and Prejudice: An Interactive Timeline of the Fight for Gay Rights*.

<sup>75</sup> THE WASHINGTON POST, *A history of "don't aks, don't tell"*.

*komunitu lesbiček a gayů něco jako Abraham Lincoln.*<sup>76</sup> During his presidency, many homosexuals got a job on significant political posts and thereby won recognition.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, the ban on military personnel being openly gay and lesbian known as don't ask don't tell was abolished on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011. It took 18 years for an estimated 65,000 American homosexual servicemen and women to be able to serve their country without being discriminated against due to their sexual orientation. That day is described as the new chapter of the nation's military.<sup>78</sup>

The matter gained media attention from the very beginning. The media coverage of "*Don't Ask, Don't Tell*" greatly intensified in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the current and also the first African American President of the United States, *Barack Hussein Obama II*, gave a speech at a fund-raising dinner for the *Human Rights Campaign* on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009 saying: "*I will end 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.'*"<sup>79</sup> This Obama's vow to allow gay men and lesbians to openly serve in the military made headlines in many newspapers and TV news.<sup>80</sup> With regard to Obama's announcement, the news website portal *The Boston Globe* reported that more studies need to be done and strong support from the Congress would be necessary for the repeal of "*Don't Ask, Don't Tell*". In this piece the terminology was not chosen well. The author preferred to use the term "gays" instead of the more appropriate "gay men and women" or "gay people". Nevertheless, the reporter did a good job keeping the report fair, accurate and included the voices and perspectives of LGBT.

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<sup>76</sup> SMITH, F. *Hnutí homosexuálů: boj za lidská práva, nebo propaganda?* p. 19, origin source: DART, B. *Aktivists see this decade as the gay 90's*. Translated by Diana Burešová: "*Bill Clinton is the Abraham Lincoln of the lesbian and gay community.*" origin source: DART, B. *Aktivists see this decade as the gay 90's*.

<sup>77</sup> SMITH, F. *Hnutí homosexuálů: boj za lidská práva, nebo propaganda?*

<sup>78</sup> McVEIGH K.; HARRIS P., *US military lifts ban on openly gay troops*.

<sup>79</sup> STOLBERG, S., *Obama Pledges Again to End "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"*.

<sup>80</sup> STOLBERG, S., *Obama Pledges Again to End "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"*.

The day after the publishing of the Boston Globe's report, the American online news aggregator *Huffington Post* opined that there is no need for further study related to the military ban, that the sexual orientation in the military force is irrelevant. What is relevant is how well gay men or lesbian women do their job.<sup>81</sup>

The entertainment industry became inspired by the happenings around the military ban. Episodes of television series like *Roseanne* or *Ugly Betty* titled "*Don't Ask, Don't Tell*" were produced.<sup>82</sup> In 2002, a successful parody film bearing the same name directed by *Doug Miles* and written by a famed gay screen writer *Tex Hauser* was filmed.<sup>83</sup>

## 5.6 Same-Sex Marriage

Same-sex marriage is defined as a ceremonial union of two people of the same sex. This kind of marriage is known as gay marriage.<sup>84</sup>

In the past two decades, laws were being changed concerning the definition of marriage; whether marriage is limited to relationships between male and female gender or extends to couples of the same sex. Before 2014, same-sex marriage was only recognized in the USA in 19 states and in the District of Columbia. An important turning point happened on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014, when the *U.S Supreme Court* chose not to hear appeals against lower court rulings that had lifted bans related to same-sex marriage in five states.<sup>85</sup> Since that time, marriage for same-sex couples is currently legally allowed in 37 U.S. states and the remaining 13

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<sup>81</sup> GLAAD, *Media Coverage of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Improves as Repeal Moves Toward Reality*.

<sup>82</sup> LOWRY, B., *ABC to air "Roseanne" segment with warning label*.

<sup>83</sup> ROTTEN TOMATOES, *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*.

<sup>84</sup> USLEGAL, *Same-Sex Marriage Law & Legal Definition*.

<sup>85</sup> NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES, *Same-Sex Marriage Laws*.

states have same-sex marriage bans. The states with same-sex marriage bans do not legally sanction gay marriage but their laws substantially differ in this respect. Some of these states have civil union laws providing nearly all of the rights and benefits of marriage to same-sex couples. Other U.S. states have put in place state constitutional amendments or bans prohibiting these civil unions. On the other hand, these bans on same-sex marriage allow gay couple marriages in other states. In recent months, bans on same-sex marriage in several states were lifted but gay marriage had to be realized in other states which legally accept same-sex marriage, because the bans were still in force during the appeals.<sup>86</sup>

The most significant moment in the U.S. history for bringing same-sex marriage in effect was on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1996, when the president of the USA, *Bill Clinton*, signed the *Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)* into law. This federal law defined the bond of marriage as a legal union between a man and a woman as husband and wife. Furthermore, it also defined a spouse as a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife. That law affected another 1,049 laws in the USA which determined eligibility for federal benefits, privileges or rights.<sup>87</sup>

At present, as was already mentioned, the ban on same-sex marriage has not been lifted in 13 states of the USA. A draft bill seeking the legalization of same-sex marriage was rejected in these states by the *Constitutional Amendment* and the *State Law* or only by the *Constitutional Amendment* in the case of Nebraska in 2000. The other states that have not yet passed this law include: Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee and Texas.<sup>88</sup>

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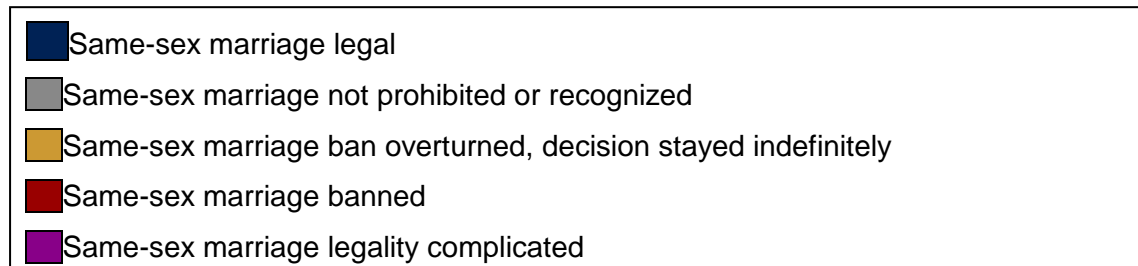
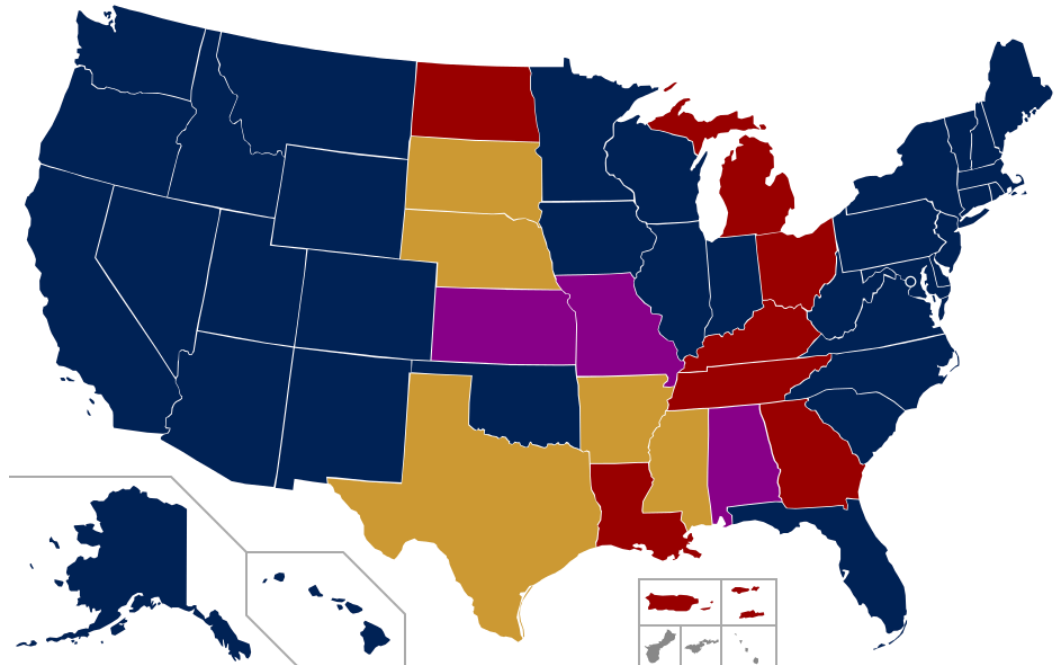
<sup>86</sup> BBC NEWS, *How legal tide turned on same-sex marriage in the US*.

<sup>87</sup> PROCON, *Gay Marriage Timeline*.

<sup>88</sup> PROCON, *37 States with Legal Gay Marriage and 13 States with Same-Sex Marriage Bans*.

The following map shows which U.S. states recognize marriage for same-sex couples and which do not. It is current as of 5<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

Figure No. 8: Same-sex marriage in the USA



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The portrayal of gay marriage in the media has taken a significant shift from the past century. From the 1980s till the 1990s, same-sex marriage had become more of a taboo.<sup>89</sup> Until the turn of the millennium, same-sex marriage has been a controversial subject for the media. But since the time this issue gained on popularity the media coverage has portrayed same-sex marriage as something usual. It was achieved by

<sup>89</sup> WIKIPEDIA, *Same-sex marriage*.

<sup>90</sup> PURCELL, M., *Portrayal of Gay People on Television*.

spreading awareness and by trying to remove the stigmas associated with homosexual couples.<sup>91</sup>

National polls have recently shown that the majority of Americans support same-sex marriage more intensively in comparison with the previous years. Recently, a survey conducted by the global independent market research company *Ipsos MediaCT* showed that regarding same-sex marriage 18% of television viewers have positively changed their opinion. Merely 10% of television viewers have been impacted in a negative way and less than 44% have been in favor of gay marriage and TV has not changed their opinion. The remaining viewers (28%) have not changed their dissent.<sup>92</sup>

## 5.7 Same-Sex Adoption

This term same-sex adoption refers to adoption of children by gay parents. It can be seen in various forms in the USA. The most common forms are a joint adoption by same-sex couples and step-child adoption, when one partner from the same-sex couple adopts a biological child of his/her partner. Currently, attention is also paid to an increasing number of adoptions by a single homosexual.<sup>93</sup>

For the past few years, same-sex adoption has become a subject frequently discussed by the media. Serious news portals such as the *New York Times*, *Daily News*, *Washington Post* or *New York Post* are more likely focused on topics related to permits and prohibitions in terms of gay adoption laws in the U.S. states.<sup>94</sup> For example, an article in the *New York*

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<sup>91</sup> McCAULEY, K., *How is Same-Sex Marriage Portrayed in Media?*

<sup>92</sup> SPERGEL, B., *Is TV Helping our Hurting Same-Sex Marriage?*

<sup>93</sup> SHALLY-JENSEN, M. *Gay Parent Adoption.*

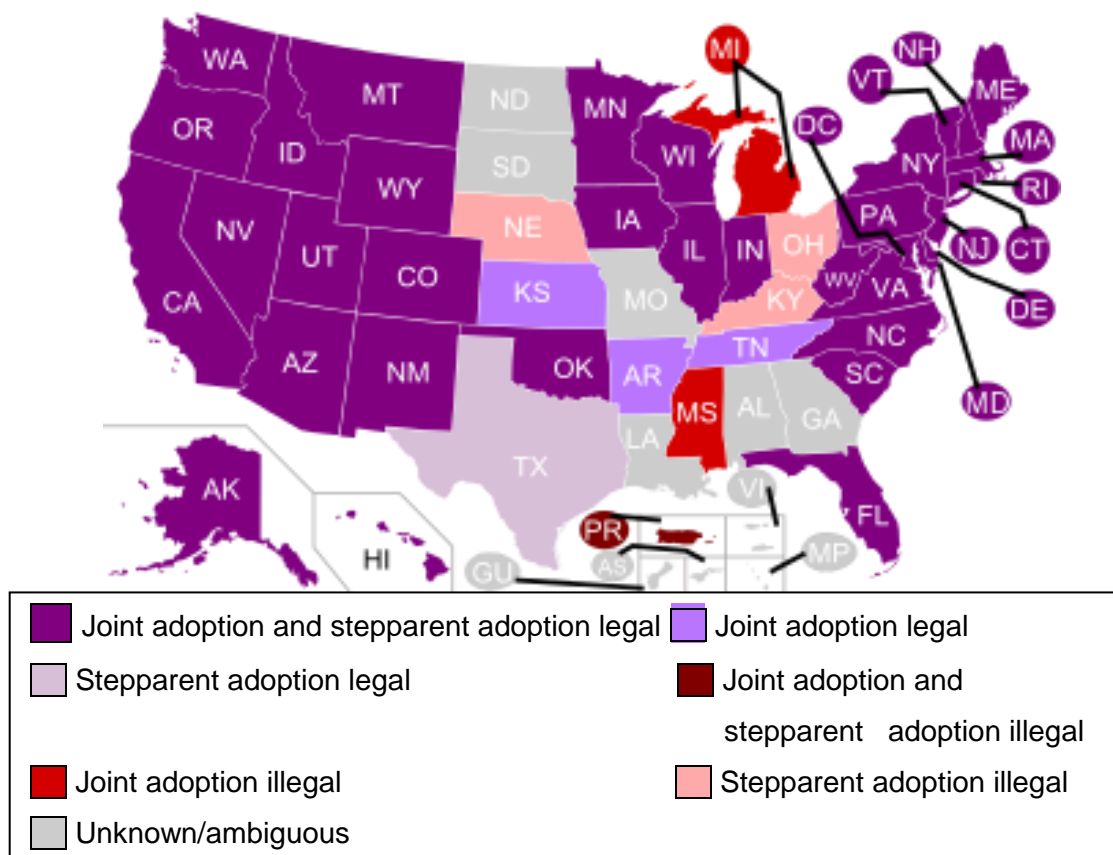
<sup>94</sup> ONLINENEWS PAPERS, *Top 50 United States Newspapers.*



*Times* of 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015 with a headline “Adoption by Same-Sex Parent Recognized by Alabama Appeals Court.”<sup>95</sup>

Today, one quarter of children who live with homosexual couples in the USA have been adopted. Despite this fact each state has its own laws specific to same-sex adoption. In most states adoption by same-sex couples is allowed or permitted for individual gay parents. In the remaining states the adoption is restricted or even prohibited for couples with homosexual orientation.<sup>96</sup> The currently legal status of same-sex adoption is shown for each U.S. state below on the map.

Figure No. 9: Same-sex adoption in the USA



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<sup>95</sup> KAMINSKY, J. *Adoption by Same-Sex Parent Recognized by Alabama Appeals Court.*

<sup>96</sup> LOVEANDPRIDE, *Gay Adoption.*

<sup>97</sup> WIKIPEDIA, *LGBT adoption in the United States.*

At present same-sex adoption is portrayed by the media as being a relatively good thing but with relatively detrimental side effects for the involved children. This type of adoption is often shown by media as if it could well be done but possibly it should not happen for the sake of children. The initiated battle over same-sex adoption between groups such as the religious right or fundamentalist Christian denominations and on the opposite side with the *American Civil Liberties Union* or the *Human Rights Campaign* is quite defined and deeply entrenched and holds long-standing debate. That battle began with the media portrayal of same-sex couples' adoptions as against the advocacy and agencies groups and their perspectives regarding placing of children to homosexual couples.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> SHALLY-JENSEN, M. *Gay Parent Adoption*.

## **6 PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY**

### **6.2 Goal of the Survey**

The main goal of the survey is to ascertain the respondents' opinions about the portrayal of homosexuality by the American media and on which scale media can affect respondents personally. The survey further focuses on respondents' views of gay civil rights and which stand they take on the current issues of same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption. The second part is an analysis of the collected data and a comparison of the achieved results between two target groups.

### **6.3 Survey Scenario**

#### **6.3.1 Target Groups**

Two target groups divided according to age participated in the survey. The first group represents young people between 18 and 30 years of age. The second group of participants consists of seniors from 51 years of age and older. Each target group is formed by exactly 50 respondents, 61% of them being women. Nevertheless, the gender is not taken into consideration in the research. In both target groups the survey was completed only by respondents of heterosexual orientation and of American nationality. The addressed people responded to 12 questions offering at least four possible responses.

The reason for the chosen target groups was the age difference. The intention was to find out if it confirms the general opinion which expects to obtain contradictory results from these two generations. Because the young generation is known to take an unbiased and open stand on global issues or controversial topics such as sexual minorities in society.

The older generation is viewed differently, being primarily influenced by the time, political system and circumstances in which it had to grow up. In those times the social minorities were repressed and on the fringe of society and homosexuality was considered a disease, deviation, symptom of developmental defect or an act against the Christian faith. Nowadays, having won greater social recognition, the seniors' opinions have undergone changes. And the results of the survey portray to what degree.

### **6.3.2 Method of Data Acquisition**

The final version of the questionnaire was sent to my family relatives living in the New York City (United States). They provided me with 50 anonymous filled-in questionnaires completed by respondents 50 years of age and older. Within two weeks they sent these questionnaires back to me via email.

The second half of the questionnaires was completed using the online social networking service Facebook, where I uploaded a link to the questionnaire I created in the Survio online survey software. The questionnaires completed this way brought 50 responses from young Americans at the age of 18 - 30.

Both questionnaire forms are attached in Chapter 10 Appendix.

### **6.3.3 Survey Results**

The obtained data was statistically processed into graphs. Each created graph always depicts the results as a percentage for a single selected question. Each of the eight graphs is followed by a brief and objective commentary including an evaluation of the results. Graphs number 2, 4, 5, 7 are supplemented by short answers from an interview with a Czech activist for the LGBT movement, Jiří Mareček Ing. He is a

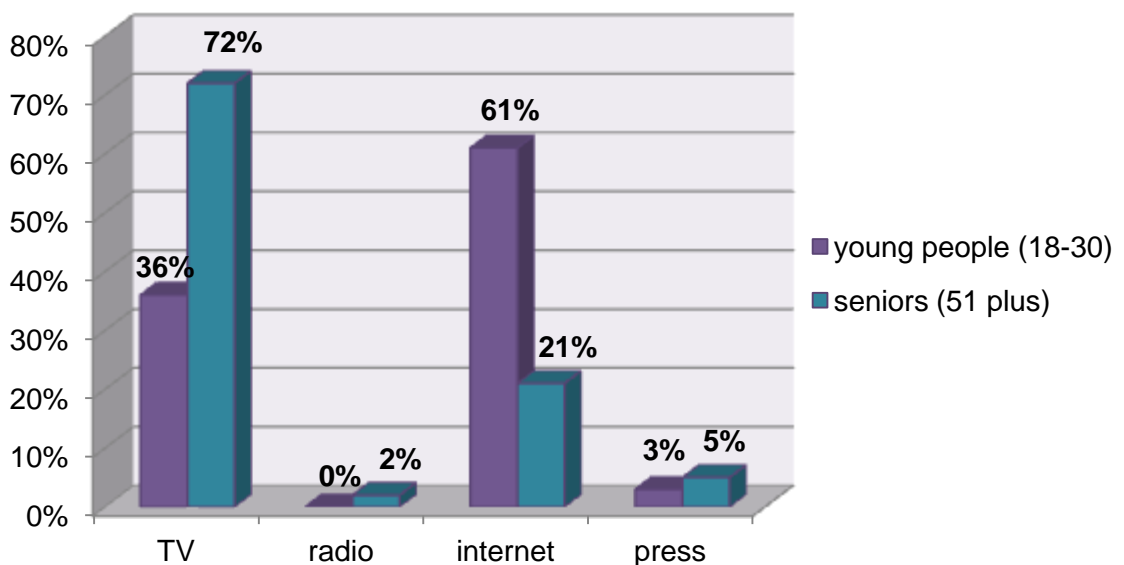
representative of the Management Board for the Lambda gay and lesbian association in České Budějovice.

The Lambda Association aims to help homosexuals and carry out enlightenment and preventive activities in the LGBT community to avoid discrimination of homosexually orientated persons on the labor market and social exclusion from families and the society.<sup>99</sup>

Jiří Mareček Ing. provided 7 answers referring to the members' collective opinion of the association operating in the Czech Republic for over 25 years.

The entire version of the interview can be found in Chapter 10 Appendix.

*Graph No. 1: In which media have you encountered homosexuality most frequently?*



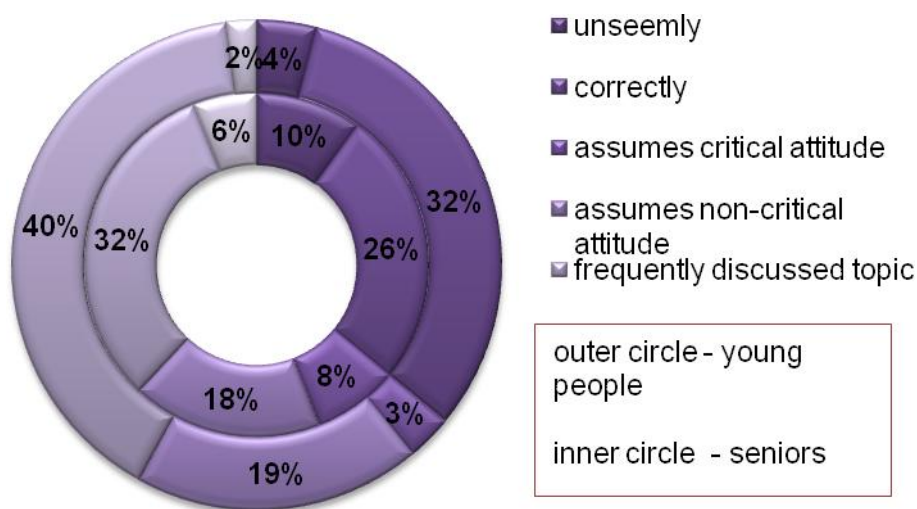
Commentary:

The research show that 95% of the survey participants come to know about homosexuality from the telecommunication medium (TV) and

<sup>99</sup> JIHOČESKÁ LAMBDA ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE, *Vítejte*.

social medium (internet). It is caused by the remaining media, which do not deal with homosexuality to a large extent and have lower media coverage and less consumers. Only 5 respondents in total regardless of generation answered that the main source media covering homosexuality are radio and press. These 10% are negligible in comparison with television and internet.

*Graph No. 2: How is homosexuality presented in the media at present?*



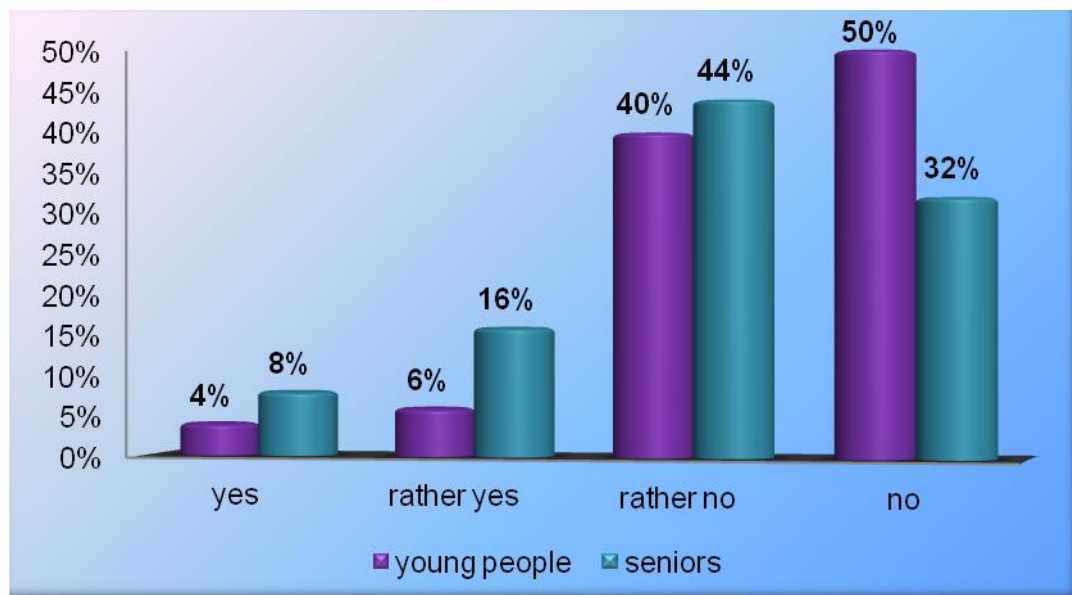
Commentary:

The results from both generations are almost identical. They created the same order of the offered options with imperceptible proportional differences. After the summarization of the results the graph shows that more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the respondents are of the opinion that the media present homosexuality in an unbiased way, correctly, giving it a relatively large media space in their broadcast time or in press reports.

Mr. Jiří Mareček provided a different viewpoint, which rather addresses the events media are most attracted to.

*“Most of the time the media only copy the so called big stories including information about the gay and lesbian movement (such as a homicide, a fight during a manifestation...). Our association views especially the television media as callers on counter-action representatives. That is why we are missing non-stop information about the lives of gay and lesbian persons without the need for sensations.”*

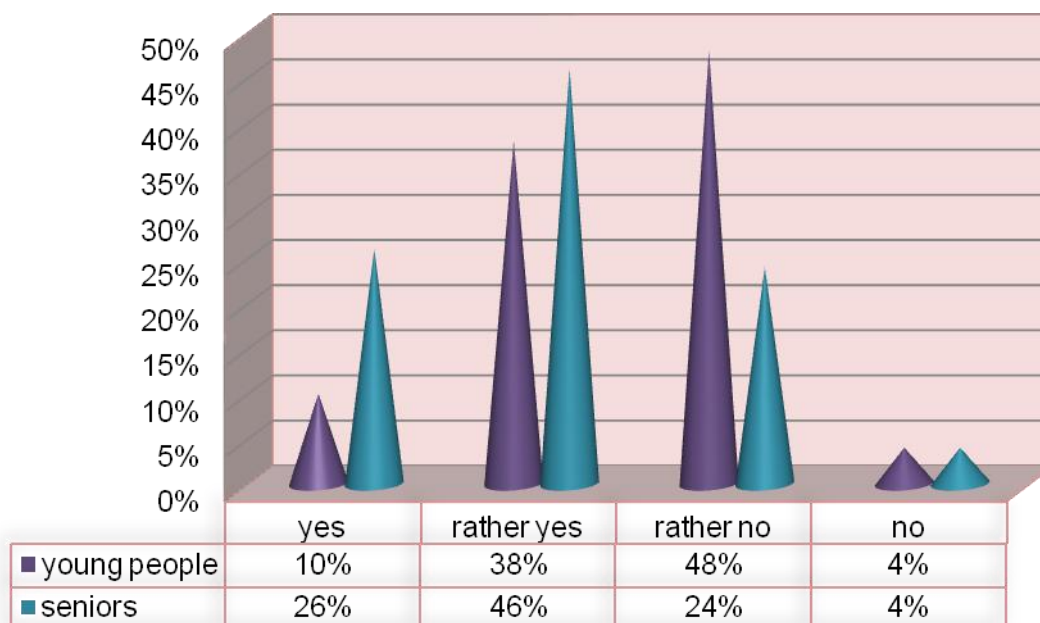
Graph No. 3: Have media ever changed your view of homosexuality?



Commentary:

At first glance, the predominance of the last two options saying: "media have never changed my view of homosexuality or I rather think no" is already evident. It is possible to deduce the conclusions of these results from the previous pie chart. It was found out that media do not hold critical attitude towards homosexuality and rather portray it in a neutral way. Intergenerational survey results bring the information that the American respondents over 51 years old chose more often that the media have influenced their views of homosexuality to a certain degree. This situation applies to exactly 12 of the 50 respondents aged over 51 years.

Graph No. 4: Do you think that media pay sufficient attention to homosexuality?



Commentary:

72% respondents from the older generation conclude on the basis of the research that media pay attention to homosexuality sufficiently. The younger generation with 26 respondents presents an opposing opinion thinking that homosexuality as a topic of discussion, article, etc. should appear in media more often. On the other hand, according to this bar conical chart the majority opinion is represented by the options: "rather yes, rather no", which points out that the respondents are not quite convinced with unequivocal answers.

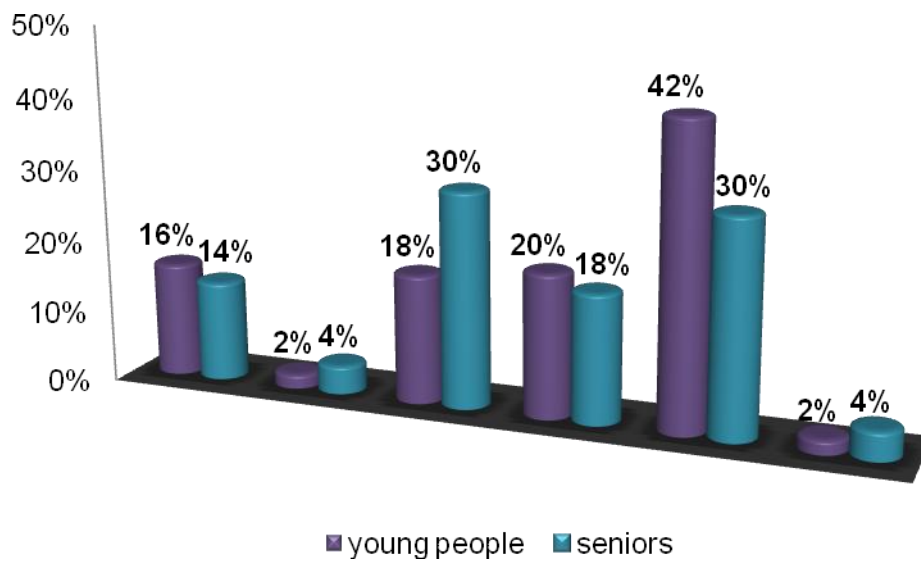
Mr. Jiří Mareček Ing. was asked this question and answered as follows:

*"It certainly is a peripheral problem that does not need to be blown out of proportion. The transition of the society from tolerance of*



*homosexuality to giving persons with this orientation such respect that would be of equal quality as that given to every other "ordinary" person is far from complete yet [...]. Positive topics are certainly difficult to process, and perhaps that is why there are only a few movies produced on the subject of a happy gay couple."*

**Graph No. 5: Who mainly affected your opinion of homosexuality and people concerned?**



- 1 family and relatives
- 2 church or religion association
- 3 media (TV, press, internet...)
- 4 friends and associates
- 5 personal meeting with a homosexual person
- 6 school and teachers

**Commentary:**

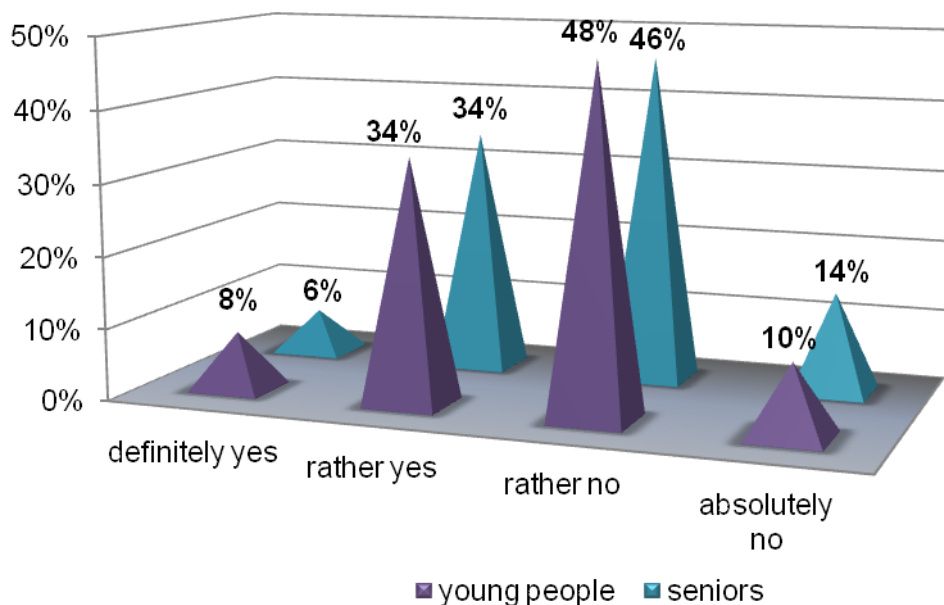
In the survey both generations most often chose these 3 options: media (TV, press, internet ...), friends and associates and personal meeting with a homosexual person. For both target groups media occupied the third highest position with 24 respondents. This survey

shows that media dispose of certain socialization influence, which can affect opinions of some individuals to some extent.

Mr. Jiří Mareček added to this issue:

*"With their point of view, media certainly have the ability to influence to a significant degree, and it is always [...] tempting to try to somehow influence or slow them down."*

*Graph No. 6: Have media ever formed your opinion of events associated with homosexuality?*

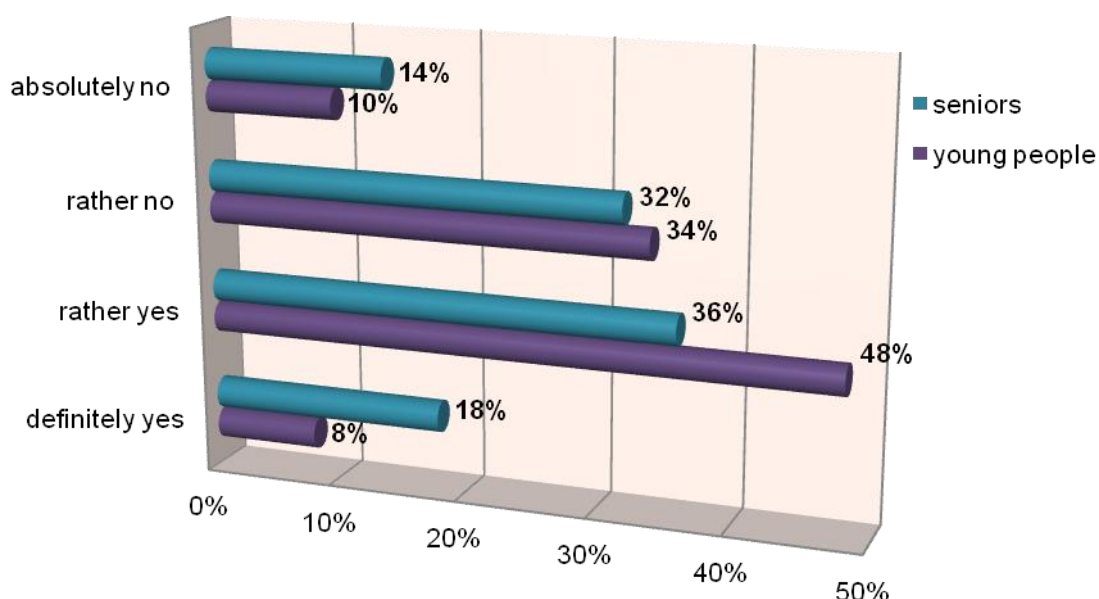


Commentary:

To this question the majority of respondents answered that media have rather not formed their opinions of events associated with homosexuality. Furthermore, only 19 respondents from the total of 100 respondents of both target groups were able to respond with certainty: "definitely yes" or "absolutely no" to this question. In general, an opinion prevails with 59 responses that media have not changed or rather not changed the respondents' view of past events relating to homosexuality.

The explanation is that media can convey distorted, incomplete and false information or vice versa accurate and true information. Therefore it is important to not form an attachment to media in this respect.

Graph No. 7: Are you satisfied with rights provided to homosexuals?



#### Commentary:

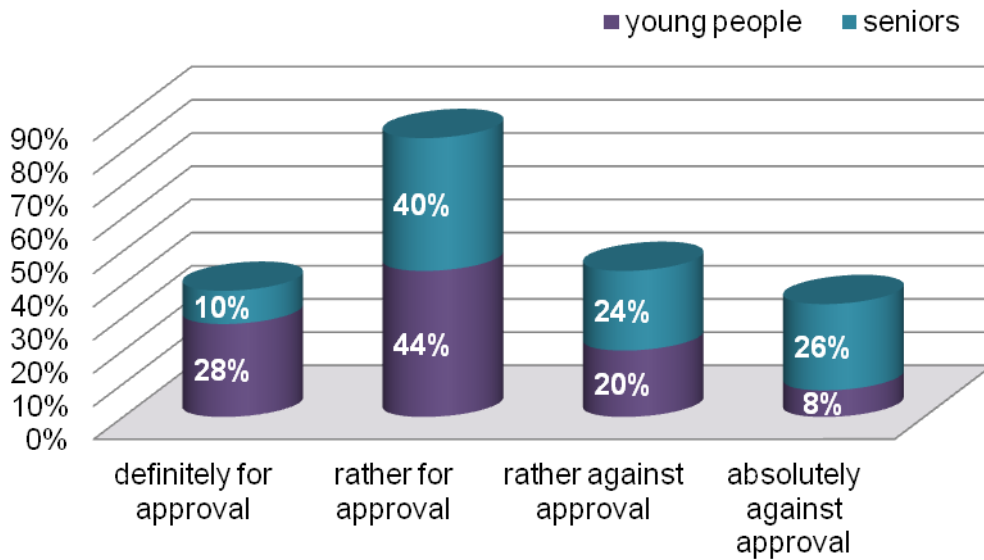
After taking a look at the graph we can say that less than half of both target groups takes critical stand on this issue. They think that they should receive such rights that would lead to greater equality. However, most respondents are satisfied with the current situation.

During the interview, Mr. Jiří Mareček Ing. answered this question with these words:

*"The rights written into laws form the fundamentals and we would say that they are sufficient. What bothers us is rather the excessive overemphasizing of the fact that particularly the homosexual person*

possesses such right, even though his heterosexual friend routinely employs that exact same right."

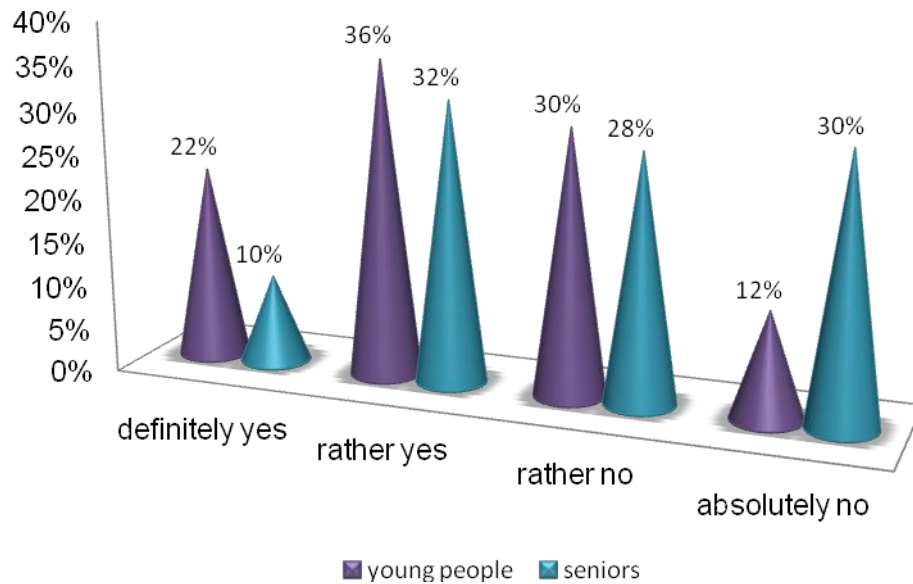
Graph No. 8: Legalization of adoption and adequate adoption of a baby by a pair of persons of the same sex?



Commentary:

This bar chart shows that the legalization of adoption by gay couples has the majority support from respondents. Even 72% of respondents from the target group at the age of 18 - 30 are for approval.

*Graph No. 9: Do you think it is right for a pair of people of the same-sex to bring up a baby?*



Commentary:

This question results in two opposing positions within both target groups. The younger generation with a preponderance of 58% is for an upbringing of a child by a gay couple. The older generation with the same number of percent expressed against upbringing of a child by same-sex couples. It is due to the fact that the older generation still retains the picture of a family as a heterosexual pair where the parents raising a child should be a father and a mother.

### 6.3.4 Short Summary

The view of homosexuality by the society is constantly in the process of changing, trying more intensively to break the boundaries of intolerance and the attitudes of disapproval from heterosexually oriented people. A lot of aspects influence this process including the media, which may affect or even shape everyone's opinion-forming of us.

The realized public opinion survey completed by 100 American respondents points to generational differences in the perception of homosexuality. The research found out that the younger generation is more tolerant and open to homosexuality. The older generation still rather perceives homosexuality as a disquieted moral and social phenomenon. Nevertheless, disapproval against the matters regarding homosexuality was observed not to be higher than 58% responses by the older generation in the survey.

A possible hypothesis may be that we live in a time that is more favorable to changes, new things and social minorities get more in the spotlight of attention. Today, sexual minorities are described rather as a departure from the average and they are much more widely accepted by the society, which does not have such negative attitude against them.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The present thesis is aimed to find out how is the homosexuality and the gay civil rights movement portrayed in the American news and entertainment media and how powerful tool have become media in shaping the social debate.

The homosexuality media image from the first publications, television and radio broadcasts, has been still developing. Nowadays, homosexuality is more represented and has become more visible in the media. However, an unbiased portrayal of homosexuality is often disturbed by the news media, informing about homosexuality only in connection with some "sensations" in the form of marches and demonstrations led by homosexuals, gay murderers or street skirmishes caused by gays. In particular, the most frequent events are associated with relying on the civil gay rights becoming the subject of news reports in sheets and television broadcasts. However, these negatively perceived events that have the ability to spark a community-wide discussion, contribute to the stigmatization of sexual minorities within the society. Nevertheless, this long-term trend has been pushed away by the entertainment media by including homosexuality in films, television programs, or theater show productions. In this way, homosexuality is getting into the wider awareness of people and undermines their prejudices about the abnormality against sexual minority.

Nowadays, the mass media have a great field of activity in this area and can easily influence and shape public opinion. As already said by the known American singer and founding member of a band The Doors, Jim Morrison: *"Whoever controls the media, controls the mind."* Although my own research in the practical part showed, that the absolute majority of

American respondents do not feel affected by the media about topics related to homosexuality, I would like to oppose this result with my opinion.

In my opinion, to a certain extent, the mass media affect the perceptions and attitudes of each of us. They have become an integral part of our lives and within our lives they form the essential, not the negligible part. If the media has not become convinced about the possibilities to influence public opininos, then they would not certainly appear in advertisings or election spots in a television broadcast, by which the media influence consumers in the media favor. Although the portrayal of homosexuality is presented by the media "correctly" for the time being, it is still only in the hands of media companies, i.e. what exactly and by which way will be broadcasted or published and what impact will the given information and thoughts leave on the society.



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### **8.3 Another Source**

Interview with Jiří Mareček Ing. A representative of the Management  
Board for the Lambda gay and lesbian association in České Budějovice.  
Provided on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2015 in České Budějovice.

## 9 RESUMÉ

Předložená práce se zabývá zobrazením homosexuality a občanských práv gayů americkými médii a jak prezentace homosexuality ovlivňuje smýšlení společnosti prostřednictvím masové komunikace.

Teoretická část se věnuje homosexualitě z hlediska jejího mediálního zobrazení od 50. let minulého století do současnosti. Značná část práce se zabývá klíčovými událostmi za dovoláváním se občanských práv gayů a jejich prezentací v médiích.

Praktická část zahrnuje výzkum založený na dotazníkovém šetření a rozhovoru s panem Jiřím Marečkem, Ing., členem správní rady Jihočeské Lambdy České Budějovice. Výzkum prokázal generační rozdílnost názorů v pohledu na homosexualitu a jejímu mediálnímu vlivu na společnost, čímž se potvrdila má hypotéza. Cílem práce bylo podání uceleného obrazu o zobrazení homosexuality médii, zvláště o občanských právech gayů a působení masmédií na utváření mínění společnosti.

**Klíčová slova:** homosexualita, LGBT komunita, gay, občanská práva, média, zobrazení

## 10 ABSTRACT

The presented thesis deals with the portrayal of homosexuality and gay civil rights by American media and how the presentation of homosexuality affects the society mentality by the mass communication means.

The theoretical part is focused on homosexuality in terms of its medial portrayal from the 50's of the last century to the present. The significant part of thesis occupies with the key events claiming the gay civil rights and their presentation in the media.

The practical part includes research based on a survey and interview with Mr. Jiří Mareček, Ing., who is a member of the Management Board of the association of Lambda České Budějovice. The research has shown a generational divergence of opinions in view of homosexuality and its medial influence on the society, which confirmed my hypothesis. The objective of the present thesis is to provide a comprehensive depiction of medial portrayal of homosexuality, particularly of the gay civil rights and the influence of mass media in the society opinion shaping.

**Key words:** homosexuality, the LGBT community, gay, civil rights, media, portrayal

## **11 LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix No. 1: print questionnaire

Appendix No. 2: online questionnaire

Appendix No. 3: transcription of interview with Jiří Mareček Ing. from  
8.4.2015



## 12 APPENDICES

*Appendix No. 1: print questionnaire*

### **Questionnaire: Shaping the debate: the gay civil rights movement and portrayal of homosexuality in American news and entertainment media**

Sex:	man	Woman
Age:	18 – 30	
	31 – 50	
	51 plus	

Always tick one option only.

- 1) In which media have you encountered homosexuality most frequently?
  - a) TV
  - b) radio
  - c) internet
  - d) press
  
- 2) How is homosexuality presented in media at the present time? (tick more variants)
  - unseemly
  - assumes critical attitude
  - frequently discussed topic
  - correctly
  - assumes non-critical attitude
  - non-discussed topic
  
- 3) Have media ever changed your view of homosexuality?
  - a) yes
  - b) rather yes
  - c) rather no
  - d) no
  
- 4) Do you think that media pay sufficient attention to homosexuality?
  - a) definitely yes
  - b) rather yes
  - c) rather no
  - d) absolutely no
  
- 5) Who mainly affected your opinion of homosexuality and people concerned?
  - a) family and relatives
  - b) church or religious association

- c) media (TV, press, internet...)
- d) friends and associates
- e) personal meeting with a homosexual person
- f) school and teachers

6) Have media ever formed your opinion on events connected with homosexuality?

- a) definitely yes
- b) rather yes
- c) rather no
- d) absolutely no

7) Are you satisfied with rights provided to homosexuals?

- a) definitely yes
- b) rather yes
- c) rather no
- d) absolutely no

8) Legalisation of adoption and adequate adoption of a baby by a pair of persons of the same sex?

- a) definitely for approval
- b) rather for approval
- c) rather against approval
- d) absolutely against approval

State your reasons:

9) Do you think it is right for a pair of people of the same sex to bring up a baby?

- a) definitely yes
- b) rather yes
- c) rather no
- d) absolutely no

## Shaping the debate: the gay civil rights movement and portrayal of homosexuality in American news and entertainment media

**Sex**

man

woman

**Age**

18 - 30

31 - 50

51 plus

**In which media have you encountered homosexuality most frequently?**

TV

radio

internet

press

**How is homosexuality presented in media at the present time? (tick more variants)**

unseemly

correctly

assumes critical attitude

assumes non-critical attitude

frequently discussed topic

non-discussed topic

<sup>100</sup> BUREŠOVÁ, D. Shaping the debate: the gay civil rights movement and portrayal of homosexuality in American news and entertainment media. In Survio [online]. 2. April 2015. [cit. 2015-04-19]. Accessible at WWW: < <http://www.survio.com/survey/d/D9Q4J2T4O1B1Q9I2R>>.

**Have media ever changed your view of homosexuality?**

- yes
- rather yes
- rather no
- no

**Do you think that media pay sufficient attention to homosexuality?**

- definitely yes
- rather yes
- rather no
- absolutely no

**Who mainly affected your opinion of homosexuality and people concerned?**

- family and relatives
- church or religious association
- média (TV, press, internet...)
- friends and associates
- personal meeting with a homosexual person
- school and teachers

**Have media ever formed your opinion on events connected with homosexuality?**

- definitely yes
- rather yes
- rather no
- absolutely no

**Are you satisfied with rights provided to homosexuals?**

- definitely yes
- rather yes
- rather no
- absolutely no

**Legalisation of adoption and adequate adoption of a baby by a pair of persons of the same sex?**

- Další možnost
- rather for approval
- rather against approval
- absolutely against approval

**Do you think it is right for a pair of people of the same sex to bring up a baby?**

- definitely yes
- rather yes
- rather no
- absolutely no

*Appendix No. 3: transcription of interview with Jiří Mareček Ing. from 8.4.2015*

*Pane Marečku, jak je homosexualita v současné době zobrazována v médiích? Informují média o homosexuálech korektně, nebo byste jim v tomto směru něco vytkl?*

Media většinová kopírují jen tzv. velká témata včetně informací o gay a lesbickém hnutí (vražda, bitka při manifestaci...). Z pohledu našeho spolku se zejména televizní media jeví jako svolavatelé zástupců proti akcím. Chybí nám proto průběžné informace o životě gayů a leseb, bez nutnosti řešit senzace. V běžných sdělovacích prostředcích není možné najít pozitivní příklady života v registrovaných párech. No ono ostatně to není ani o běžném životě heterosexuálů. V rozpravě o stále narůstajícím rozporu reality a omezujícího ustanovení o nemožnosti přijmout péči o děti například sourozence podle nyní platného zákona o RP, jsou předkládány přednostně názory vedoucích dětských domovů a také orgánu péče o rodinu. O jejich kompetenci se dá vážně pochybovat.

*Myslíte si, že se média dostatečně věnují homosexualitě?*

Určitě se jedná o okrajový problém, jenž je zbytečné výrazně nafukovat. Přejít od tolerance k homosexualitě ve společnosti k takovému respektu k osobám s touto orientací ve kvalitě jakou má každý jiný „běžný“ člověk bude ještě chvíli trvat. Jde o proces postupný a je třeba zdůraznit, že homosexualitu nechápeme jako bezbřehé užívání si sexu muže s muži, ale o stav pro jednotlivce jinak běžného, který nemusí (jako nyní) například pro svou kariéru a profesní růst zbytečně zakrývat, schovávat svého partnera nebo zájem o stejné pohlaví.

Jistě se těžko zpracovávají pozitivní témata, možná i proto je málo filmů vytvářených na téma šťastný homosexuální pár. Media mohou svým

pohledem skutečně hodně ovlivnit a svádí to vždy (jak to dělají naši politici) ke snaze je nějak ovlivnit či zbrzdit. Opět pěkné téma, myslím si, že by ale stát jako hlavní instituce měla mít své médium pro hlásání obecné platformy, kterou právě razí. To by nebránilo dalším názorům a dalším zdrojům publikovat či problém diskutovat z dalších rovin.

*Jste spokojen, jakých práv se dostává homosexuálům?*

Práva napsaná v zákonech jsou základy a řekly bychom, že jsou dostatečné. Spíše co nám vadí, je právě to přílišné zdůraznění, že takové právo má hlavně homosexuál, i když jeho heterosexuální kamarád stejné právo využívá běžně. Příklad informace o stavu rodinného příslušníka v nemocnici, nutnost péče o osobu blízkou atd. To, že zákon o RP nepřinesl vlastně žádné řešení problémů více palčivých pro samotné gaye a lesby a přesto je ze strany LGBTI komunity vnímán jako pozitivní a přínosný. To dokazuje, že za snahou LGBT hnutí byly spíše morální pohnutky zviditelnění stavu existence homosexualit v určitém procentu jako běžnou součástí společnosti a ne podsouvané hledání výhod. O RP je zájem i za těchto předpokladů, kdy se stalo jen náhradou tzv. růžových seznamů bývalé bezpečnosti.

*Jaký máte názor na stejnopohlavní manželství?*

Nikdy se gay hnutí netrápilo názvem vztahu a o svém svazku s jiným partnerem hovořilo vždy jen jako o partnerství. Manželství je pojem, který osobně ponecháváme této instituci. Více bych vyjádřil podivení nad tím, jak se samotní heterosexuálové ke své posvátné instituci chovají. Nám to mnohdy přijde jako zesměšnění naší snahy, najít v partnerství věrnost a vztah naplněný lidskostí a schopnosti pomoci nejen sobě, ale i dalším lidem kolem sebe. Nebo alespoň společnosti neubližovat. Manželství bez dětí není také zavrženíhodné a vlastně nic jiného nehledáme.

Nezavrhujme, co může jinému pomoci, zvláště když nám to neškodí. Očekávat, že tím takové vztahy nevzniknou a bude více šťastných manželství, není asi správná úvaha.

*Uzákonění adopce a plnohodnotného osvojení dítěte párem stejného pohlaví? Jaký na to máte názor?*

Vytváření podmínek tak, aby péči o dítě zvládli zejména samotní rodiče ať společně nebo sami, je důvodem, proč by se děti měli rodit i nadále a nemělo by nás ubývat na úkor jiných skupin (cizinců), zpravidla přinášející do naší kultury další zvraty a změny.

Velmi mi vadí výchovné ústavy, kde zůstaly děti, které by mohly mít někoho, kdo by se jim věnoval. Nadměrná úřednická péče přesto znemožní najít kohokoliv, kdo jim bude bližší než je "ředitel pionýrského tábora".

*Myslíte si, že je správné, když pár stejného pohlaví vychovává dítě?*

Myslíme si, že kdyby všechny neúplné rodiny a rodiče-vychovatelé, kteří nesplnili, co si zákon navymýšlel na obecné předpoklady péče o dítě, tak bychom opravdu moc dětí mimo ústavní péči neměli. Až odchodem socialismu jsme zjistili, že péče o vlastní je zpravidla lepší než o cizí nebo třeba jen o státní. Více než vysilování se diskusemi nad tím, zda dva gayové (90% gayů podle nás takovou potřebu vůbec neřeší a když dítě přijde do jejich společnosti, je to spíše důvodné zastoupení někoho v rodině) či dvě lesby pečující společně o dítě by měl stát spíše řešit, aby kdokoliv, kdo pečuje o dítě, měl skutečně možnost takovou službu naplnit.

*Děkuji Vám za rozhovor a za Váš čas.*