The Gay and Lesbian Community: A Survey of the Support Programs provided to the community by the City of Long Beach

A field and media-research paper

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Introduction

On January 10, 2005, the Honors Cultural Anthropology Class was presented with a project that would measure the
quality of life of various aspects of the Long Beach community. After some deliberation, the class accepted.

The topic discussed in this particular paper is the Gay and Lesbian Community. Another focus will be on the amount and quality of the support programs in this community including such topics as: how many support groups there are, health care opportunities, etc. Before getting more in depth with this particular topic, however, there are some vocabulary terms that will be used quite often in this paper that need to be defined at the outset.

To begin with, **homosexuality** is defined as the physical and emotional attraction of one person to a member of the same sex. When someone is called a **gay**, it is in reference to a homosexual man. A **lesbian** then is a homosexual woman. When something is referred to as **gay-friendly**, it means that the point of reference is open and welcoming to the Gay and Lesbian community. More specialized jargon includes a **drag queen** - a gay man who dresses in women's clothing and is attracted to other gay men. A **dylce** is a particularly masculine lesbian whereas a **queen** is a particularly feminine gay man. (Interview A)

This project will only examine a small segment of the support programs of this particular community. Even though
the research team has tried to be all-inclusive with the scope of studies, it would be near impossible to study all of the areas of the quality of gay life. Additionally, the scope of this project has been limited to the Gay and Lesbian community. Even though in many media articles the community is referred to as GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender) the research team decided to focus on the Gay and Lesbian community for a number of reasons. There is a limitation of time (the research team only has one semester to complete this project), funding (we have no funding for this project), and team limitations (our team consists of only two people). Another problem that came up with this particular project is that there were no real sources available on the Gay and Lesbian community in the field of anthropology - there were no books or articles readily available without a subscription to a highly specialized database.

**Support Groups in Long Beach**

There exist a fair number of support groups for Gay and Lesbian individuals in the Long Beach Area. A vast majority of these groups, however, meet at one location -
the Gay and Lesbian Center of Long Beach. A few of the groups that meet at this location are the Young Adult

group (under twenty-five years of age), the Native American Two Spirit Group, the Long Beach Lambda Democratic Club, a Coming Out Support group, and the Alcoholics Anonymous Gay Men's Stag Night group. Because many of these groups deal with extremely sensitive matter or anonymity is involved, the research team was only able to attend the Young Adult support group meeting.

Before attending the Young Adult meeting clearance had to be gained. In order to get clearance, one of the facilitators had to be called to ensure that we were going to be at the meeting for academic purposes and that we would not exploit what would be going on at the meeting. After two weeks we were given clearance to attend the Young Adult group's meeting.

Upon entering the meeting room the extent of welcome that was extended to the research team was immense. We
were not treated like two researchers but as a part of the group. This enabled us as researchers to be able to be participants and engage in what conversation we could but also observe the workings of this particular group.

The Young Adult support group discussed an assortment of issues. Among these issues were relationships, friendships, work, sex, and social settings. Many of the topics discussed readily lent themselves to interpersonal support as opposed to support coming only from the facilitator. The participants offered each other advice through discussion of the aforementioned topics. The group also created the opportunity to meet in a social setting outside of the meeting.

Another support group that is available is on the Long Beach City College Liberal Arts Campus. The Rainbow Alliance is a support group that meets on Wednesday evenings to discuss issues and plan social events for the campus. While the research team was unable to attend one
of their meetings it was found by speaking to Subject A that the group does indeed deal with contemporary issues and offer support opportunities.

**Mental and Physical Health Care Support**

The biggest provider of health information and services to the Gay and lesbian community is the Gay and Lesbian Center of Long Beach. One of the services provided by the Center is psychological therapy that is available upon appointment. Someone seeking these services can contact the Center to set up an appointment and speak with a trained counselor experienced in dealing with issues that can be very sensitive.

The Center also offers free HIV and AIDS testing on a frequent and regular basis. Though most of the programs at the center are funded privately, this particular mode of support is funded by the government.

Those interested in getting information about different resources in the city can get it at the Center. Among these resources are the CARE program at St. Mary's Hospital and health services provided by the Health and
Human Services Department of Long Beach.

The CARE program at St. Mary's Hospital in Long Beach offers many different forms of mental and physical health care, including "benefits counseling, mental health services, nutritional counseling and supplements, and the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (or ADAP)." (Pamphlet 2005) One of the main focuses for the CARE program is to recognize those with HIV and connect them with health care services. They do this by doing seminars and presentations at various public places (i.e. churches, temples, schools) and educating the populace on HIV and AIDS. Another group that provides AIDS and HIV testing is the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services.

The Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services also provides HIV and AIDS testing but these services are not provided free of charge. For those without insurance or Medical the cost is forty dollars and that cost may be waived but only if the person being tested qualifies. For those with insurance there is an administrative fee of forty dollars. The Department also provides testing for other STDs for a cost. The program,
called Family P.A.C.T. (Provider Planning Access Care and Treatment), is the program that the HIV testing falls under. This particular program is run by the Department and is publicly funded.

While searching for programs offered through hospitals in the area, we found that Long Beach Memorial occasionally offers HIV testing. As far as programs tailored to the Gay and Lesbian Community of Long Beach, Long Beach Memorial Hospital and Pacific Hospital of Long Beach do not have anything at this time.

**Summary and Conclusion**

After having spent a semester working on this particular project, the research team can safely say that the next group to do this will perform markedly better than we did - partly due to the fact that schedules were not exactly compatible, but mostly due to the fact that it was the first time doing anything of this magnitude. Many barriers have been broken, and this will make it easier for future researchers in this particular field of study.
The research team spent the better part of a month weighing the different opportunities and how much support they really offer. After careful deliberation, it is the decision of the research team that with regards to the support services offered to the Gay and Lesbian community of Long Beach the grade received is a B+. Even though there are noticeably more opportunities in Long Beach for the Gay and Lesbian community for support, many of them only come from one place. This can cause some problems with regards to those who wish to attend but because of distance cannot.
Works Cited

Pamphlet "CARE: Program, Clinics and outreach". St Mary's Hospital of Long Beach. Long Beach. 2005.
This pamphlet describes all of the services provided by St. Mary's Hospital, more specifically the CARE Program at St. Mary's.

Interview.
Subject B. Long Beach. April 29, 2005.
This interview was mainly for vocabulary purposes. This person gave many of the terms used in this paper.

Frontiers
This magazine deals with issues pertinent to the Gay and Lesbian community, but more specifically the male Gay population.

LN

Blade
This magazine deals with issues pertinent to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Community. There is not a particular group of the aforementioned that this newsmagazine is tailored to.

Appendix A:
Media Treatment

When doing a research project with the capacity for a
high impact (such as this one), it cannot be complete unless there is some research time devoted to seeming how the media treats the particular area of the quality of life. This particular portion of the project is no less deserving of a small survey of media treatment.

At first when searching for research material, there was an obvious lack of articles written in recent times. With all of the mass media clamoring for coverage of the recent Same Sex Marriage topic, there has been a lack of coverage of anything else with regards to the Gay and Lesbian Community. There were one or two articles written within the last 5 months, such as "AIDS Walk Long Beach Walks Away" in which the split of the organization that usually runs the AIDS Walk from the Gay and Lesbian Center of Long Beach is discussed. The media bias here is almost inexistent, or at least to the untrained eye bias would be undetectable.

One of the only other things that we found in recent times was coverage of the Gay Pride Parade of 2004. But even still, this was not in the form of an article - only
pictures came up. On a higher note, there are a number of magazines specifically tailored to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) community of Long Beach and its neighboring areas. Some of these magazines include LN (Lesbian News), Frontiers, and Blade. Each of these magazines deal with pertinent issues to the GLBT community.

After having done research regarding mass media treatment of the issues of the local Gay and Lesbian community, the conclusion arrived at is this: With regards to usual everyday issues that would usually appear in a newspaper for the heterosexual community, the media does not typically cover the same things for the Gay and Lesbian Community. However, with the more specialized magazines that are specifically designed for them, the Gay and Lesbian community can read about issues that may appeal to them more. The only question is that if there are more pressing issues that Frontiers and LN and Blade cover with regards to the Gay and Lesbian community, why isn't the mass media covering it?