

opinions

Speak up, stand up for your rights

On January 19, the Dalhousie Board of Governors will meet in the spanking new Board and Senate Room to vote on a proposed 10% tuition fee hike for the 1993/1994 year. To prime the Board members for this vote, a detailed presentation on the university's financial situation was made on December 15, including several very pretty graphs that some of you may remember from last year's tuition fee battle. Expressions like "good management," "competitiveness," and "a national leader

in post-secondary education" littered this discussion. Phrases like "accessibility" and "financial barriers," or even for that matter the word "students," were rarely used by anyone except the DSU Board members.

Anyone sitting in on that meeting, which would have meant passing through six (count 'em ... six) security guards just to get in the door, might have thought that the ultimate decision making body of this university is unaware of the hardships that its main constituency, stu-

dents, are facing. Because of this the Dal administration is continuing to transfer the burden of its own budgetary problems onto the backs of students.

What's up with that? You don't have to look very far to see that most students are struggling to pay for an education that doesn't meet all of its promises. Students are unable to meet

the costs of their education, the university isn't providing the academic quality that it should be, and the more tuition fees increase, the more students who should really be here but can't afford to will suffer. Losing these high-need, marginalized students will result in an impoverished academic climate that emphasizes the "bottom-line" over the need to

create an educated, skilled, and adaptable population. In terms the Board members would understand, it just isn't good management to focus on short-term solutions while ignoring their long-term effects.

Since it's obvious that most of

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Nurture nor nature

What is it that compels queer people to cling to the idea that sexual orientation is genetic? That is something I have been asking myself for some time now. I am still quite confused about the actual reasons for this but I think I have come up with a reasonable explanation.

Firstly, we need to realize that there are usually considered two diametrically opposed options when it comes to the characterization of sexual orientation: essentialism and social constructionism. Essentialism is based on the idea that orientation is essential, i.e., it is genetic and determined before birth. As a result the individual has no control over this part of their character. They cannot determine their own sexual orientation. It is determined or established before the person could possibly have any active role in their own orientation.

Social constructionism is quite the opposite. It relies on the belief that sexual orientation is socially constructed. That it is dependent on your surroundings, environment and society. The formation of sexual orientation begins at a very early age and is reinforced or discouraged as you grow. It is not that genetics plays a role but that those around you and your environment shape and control your sexual orientation. This does not mean that one will necessarily assume the predominant and prioritized orientation of heterosexual. One can also react against, not only for, their environment. If an environment is misogynist, hateful and violent it seems reacting against these sort of things would not be unreasonable.

There is also the possibility that social constructionism and essentialism can be combined to result in what is called interactionism. Interactionism assumes that both are important and play vital roles in sexual orientation. A predisposition to same or other sex partners seems important to this explanation of sexual orientation but your environment is equally important. Both have high priority when characterizing or explaining sexual orientation.

So, again why is it that queer people would chose essentialism over the others? Firstly, interactionism is

a new concept and one which has been given little concern. This has been the result of restricting the options, as is so often the case in our binary system that patriarchal capitalism, to two opposites. Social constructionism has been misinterpreted. It is somehow thought that a same sex orientation is less legitimate if socially constructed. It is assumed that since it is not "natural", but instead the result of our environment and socializing, that it is controllable. However, it is further assumed that the individual has some control over their sexual orientation. Sometimes absolute control. This is definitely a misinterpretation of social constructionism. Can any one person have absolute control over their environment? Do I choose who my parents are? Do I choose where I am born? Do I choose where I grow up? Do I choose to go to grade school? Another example of this is that we live in a capitalist society. I myself, if I had this absolute control, would develop a socialist state. It is obvious that my desire for this sort of state does not make it a reality. Also, why would anyone choose a queer lifestyle? A life of oppression. A life of ridicule. A life in which your physical safety is often threatened (queer bashing). One in which your opinion is minimized and not taken seriously. It makes little sense.

Regardless, it is easy to see why queer people assume an essentialist stand. If society sees this explanation as more legitimate and real, queer people can then try to use this to their advantage. Queer people would not be responsible for their orientation. It then becomes difficult to justify oppressing people of colour because they are not responsible for their colour; it is genetic. The same is true for queer people if it is not something they control.

Regardless, I think it is ridiculous to anticipate a day in which this will be ultimately determined. We must live in the present. Whether essential, socially constructed or interactionist it is not in our control. We must make people aware and instill insight. We must not allow ourselves to be manipulated and oppressed any longer.

Anthony Roberts, BGLAD!

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