

Straight young men kiss homophobia goodbye

29 October 2010

Researchers at the University of Bath have found that heterosexual male students are more comfortable kissing their friends than ever before.

Their research shows that university students now see nothing wrong with showing friendship to another man through a kiss on the lips.

Dr Eric Anderson, from the University's Department of Education, found that 89 per cent of white undergraduate [men](#) at two UK universities and one sixth form college, said they were happy to kiss another man on the lips through friendship. Men of other ethnicities were not studied.

He found that 36 per cent of these men have also engaged in sustained [kissing](#), initially for shock value, but now they occur just for "a laugh".

Dr Anderson said: "Heterosexual men kissing each other in friendship is an offshoot of what happens when homophobia is reduced. At these universities, overt homophobia has reduced to near extinction, permitting those men to engage in behaviour that was once taboo.

"Men are kissing each other in university clubs and pubs, in front of their peers, and for many it serves as an occasional, exuberant greeting or banter when partying. The kiss is a sign of affection in student social spaces, a sign of victory on the pitch, or celebration at a nightclub but it does not have a sexual connotation in any of these spaces.

"It seems generally younger people are becoming more and more open minded with each generation."

Adi Adams, who is studying a PhD in Sociology at Bath, helped Dr Anderson with the research.

He said: "We noticed that more and more men were kissing each other in clubs or after scoring a goal as a form of celebration, and many would put

pictures of themselves kissing their friends on Facebook. We then began our research and realised that the way men tell each other that one has made it into their circle of close friends is to kiss. In this respect men are catching up with women who regularly use a kiss as a sign of affection to a female friend."

Adi, who is heterosexual, added: "My first experience of kissing a man was at uni and I was bit taken aback, but now it feels like a normal act of friendship. It doesn't feel that it threatens my masculinity or heterosexuality - instead it is becoming part of acceptable masculinity and heterosexuality."

University of Bath undergraduate Daniel Eagles said he didn't have a problem with kissing his male friends.

He said: "I am comfortable to kiss my friends in situations such as their birthday or when someone scored a goal or just if we are having a laugh. Physical contact with your friends helps to bring you closer. I have been in a relationship with my girlfriend for more than a year and she doesn't think anything of it when I kiss my guy friends."

Dr Anderson's research is published online in the prestigious journal, *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*. He is now expanding his research to see how these attitudes are affected by race and social class.

Provided by University of Bath

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