



Western Oregon University

SAFE ZONE
Resource Guide

www.wou.edu/safezone

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WOU Safe Zone Mission Statement

The Western Oregon University Safe Zone program seeks to form a network of students, faculty and staff committed and trained to provide safe, non-judgmental and supportive contacts for all WOU community members regarding gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer (GLBTQ) issues. It is symbolic of a willingness and a commitment to provide an atmosphere of unqualified acceptance and assistance.

What is an ally?

An ally is a member of a dominant group who rejects the dominant ideology and takes action against oppression out of a belief that eliminating oppression benefits everyone. But that is only a small part of the rich and diverse contribution that allies offer. An ally is a person who takes a stand against social injustice directed at target groups.

These include:

- men who speak out against sexism
- white people who speak out against racism
- heterosexual people who speak out against heterosexism and homophobia

An ally works to be an agent of social change rather than an agent of oppression. They are confident in their own social group membership, and comfortable and proud of their own identity. They take responsibility for learning how oppression works in everyday life, and listen to and respect the perspectives of those who are oppressed.

Allies acknowledge unearned privilege and status, and work to eliminate or change privileges into rights that all people enjoy. Allies recognize that unlearning oppressive beliefs and actions are a lifelong process, not a single event, and they welcome opportunities to learn.

Allies are willing to take risks and try new behaviors. Some allies may experience fears of their own as well as resistance from other people, but they are willing to take risks despite these obstacles. Allies act against social injustice because they believe in righting wrongs and in making the world a better place for all. They are comfortable making a connection between themselves and every other person, and they know that in other circumstances or spheres they might be (and perhaps are) among the oppressed or vilified themselves. They are willing to make mistakes and learn from them; when they are unsure of something, they are willing to ask questions and respect the answers of those whose rights they support. They are willing to be challenged and confronted about their own behavior and attitudes, and they are wholly committed to taking action against social injustice in their own personal spheres of influence, as well as in broader spheres -- social, political, or professional -- whenever the opportunity arises.

Allies understand the connections among all forms of social injustice, and believe they can make a difference by acting and speaking out against them in their daily lives. Allies also work to cultivate support from other potential allies, and take care of themselves to avoid burnout.

<http://www.ithaca.edu/sacl/lgbt/ally/>

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES OF BEING AN ALLY

Benefits:

- You can help make a difference in someone's life.
- You can develop healthy relationships with people from the LGBT community.
- With the addition of those new friends you learn more about the world around you.
- You create an *inclusive* community where everyone can live, learn, and play feeling safe and valued.
- You make visible an invisible population.
- You are able to support someone when her/his life seems difficult and isolating.
- You will be making a personal contribution to improving the campus climate and the lives of students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Staff, faculty, administrators, and students may be more at ease when sharing issues pertaining to your job.

Challenges:

- It may make you unpopular among some individuals.
- People may assume you are L/G/B/T because you support LGBT rights.
- You may be criticized for being involved in a cause which is thought to be unimportant by some people.
- Your friends or colleagues who are uncomfortable with the topic may become distant or disagree with your involvement.
- Sometimes, because of past negative interactions with heterosexuals, LGBT individuals may question your motivations for being an Ally.
- It can be very difficult to stay away from being a counselor to those who approach you for help.

Suggestions for Creating a Non-Homophobic Campus Environment (Adapted by Buhrke & Douce, 1991)

- Objects to and eliminate jokes and humor that put down or portray LGBT people in stereotypical ways.
- Counter statements about sexual orientation that are not relevant to decisions or evaluations being made about faculty, staff, or students.
- Invite "out" professionals to conduct seminars and provide guest lectures in your classes and offices. Invite them for both LGBT topics and other topics of their expertise.
- Do not force LGBT people out of the closet nor come out for them to others. The process of coming out is one of enlarging a series of concentric circles of those who know. Initially the process should be in control of the individual until (and if) they consider it public knowledge.
- Don't include sexual orientation information in letters of reference or answer specific or implied questions without first clarifying how "out" the person chooses to be in the specific process in question. Because your environment may be safe does not mean that all environments are safe.
- Recruit and hire "out" gay and lesbian staff and faculty. View sexual orientation as a positive form of diversity that is desired in a multicultural setting. Always question job applicants about their ability to work with LGBT faculty, staff, and students.
- Do not refer all LGBT issues to LGBT staff/faculty. Do not assume their only expertise is LGBT issues. Check with staff about their willingness to consult on LGBT issues with other staff members.
- Be sensitive to issues of oppression and appreciate the strength and struggle it takes to establish a positive LGBT identity. Provide nurturing support to colleagues and students in phases of that process.
- Be prepared. If you truly establish a safe and supportive environment, people that you never thought of will begin to share their personal lives and come out in varying degrees. Secretaries, maintenance personnel, former students, and professional colleagues will respond to the new atmosphere. Ten percent is a lot of people.
- View their creation of this environment as a departmental or agency responsibility, not the responsibility of individual persons who happen to be LGB or T. Always waiting for them to speak, challenge, or act, adds an extra level of responsibility to someone who is already dealing with oppression on many levels.

CREATING LGBTQ INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Part of what it means to be an Ally means creating a safe environment for LGBTQ clients. Here are some suggestions for how you can go about achieving this goal:

- Create an LGBT Advocacy Team – Find LGBT and heterosexual staff who are willing to provide PROACTIVE LGBT related programming and training at your school, university, organization, or agency.
- Avoid and confront anti-gay jokes and conversations – Such talk serves only to perpetuate heterosexism, even within the context of a counseling session. Be willing to confront your client if they make heterosexist comments/jokes. Violence starts with language. It also makes it more difficult for people to come to terms with their true identity.
- Create an atmosphere of acceptance – Display gay affirming pictures in your office, in the waiting area of the counseling center, hallways, cafeteria, etc.
- Confront homophobic remarks, statements, or stereotypical comments – Using words like “fag” or “dyke” should not be tolerated any more than racist or sexist language. The expression of an anti-gay/lesbian sentiment should not go unchallenged. Support acceptance and denounce homophobia, sexism, racism, and all forms of oppression. Homophobic language and jokes hurt people and can lead to oppression. Speak out...don't be silent.
- Safe Space emblem – Display a Safe Space emblem in your office, office area, and/or in your classroom if you are teaching a course.
- National Coming Out Day, October 11 – Publicly assist with creating and celebrating LGBTQ pride at your school or agency!
- LGBTQ Resources – Provide age appropriate LGBTQ books, magazines, and videos for clients and staff in your counseling centers.
- Professional Development – Provide periodic training on general sensitivity and how to incorporate diversity and social justice into the work environment.
- Provide Inclusive Counseling Services – Assess to ensure that your counseling center provides LGBTQ counseling services.
- LGBTQ Support Group – Create an LGBTQ support group at your agency or school.
- LGBT Staff – Hire “out” LGBT staff (counselors, teachers, administrators, etc.)
- Be Unpopular – Be willing to stand up against heterosexist status quo. Don't be silent.

Strategies for Educators and Staff Members

Teaching moments present themselves every day, take advantage of them.

1. Identify lesbian/gay contributions throughout the curriculum. (History, art, science, literature, religion, etc.).
2. Provide history of oppression. (Holocaust, origin of the word “faggot”).
3. Submit request to improve library holdings (both fiction and non-fiction) related to sexual diversity. Make an effort to keep such materials up-to-date.
4. Develop and/or advertise resources (i.e. support group) for lesbian/gay students and their families.
5. Bring openly lesbian and gay adults as resources in classes or programs.
6. Include lesbian and gay concerns in all prevention programs (suicide, dropout, pregnancy, etc.); and in training of peer leaders, student government, etc.
7. Support your lesbian and gay colleagues.
8. Policies: A. Schools are encouraged to develop policies protecting GLBT students from harassment, violence, and discrimination. B. Include “sexual and Gender Orientation as protected categories in your anti-discrimination policies. C. Extend “Domestic Partnership” benefits to GLBT employees on par with heterosexual employees.
9. Schools are encouraged to provide affirming counseling for GLBT youth and their families.
10. Schools are encouraged to recruit “open” GLBT faculty and staff to serve as supportive adult role models for all youth.
11. Educate yourself to the needs and experiences of GLBT youth and their families.
12. Support official university recognition and funding of GLBT organizations.

Guidelines for Responding to People when they Disclose Themselves to you:

1. Do not act surprised when someone comes to you, telling you that she/he may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, vegetarian, have a disability, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, Polish, Mulatto, transgender, schizophrenic, from the Midwest, HIV Positive, have a southern accent, in the military, left handed, member of the Green Party, etc. The person has tested you with a series of “trials” over a period of time and has decided that you can be trusted and helpful. Don’t let him/her down.
2. Deal with the feelings first. Most of these people feel alone, afraid, and/or guilty. You can help by listening, allowing them to unburden uncomfortable feelings and thoughts.
3. Be supportive. Let these great people know that they are okay. Explain that many people have struggles with these very same issues. Acknowledge that dealing with one’s identity is difficult keep the door open for further conversations and assistance.
4. Assess the person’s understanding of his or her identities. Replace misinformation with accurate information. We have all been exposed to the same myths and stereotypes, so it is helpful to provide clarification.
5. Use non-judgmental, all inclusive language in your discussion. Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues from others. Do not label or categorize.
6. Respect confidentiality. These people who share their identity with you have established a sacred trust that must be respected.
7. Examine your own biases. You need to remain a neutral source of information and support.
8. Be informed. Most of us are products of society that has been paralyzed by misinformation and fear. You cannot be free of it by just deciding to be free; read reliable resources and talk to qualified persons.
9. Know when and where to seek help, support, and assistance.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE COMING OUT

Are you sure about your sexual orientation?

Don’t raise the issue unless you’re able to respond with confidence to the question “Are you sure?” Confusion on your part will increase your parents’ confusion and decrease their confidence in your conclusions.

Are you comfortable with your gay sexuality?

If you’re wrestling with guilt and periods of depression, you’ll feel better off waiting to tell your parents. Coming out to them may require tremendous energy on your part; it will require a reserve of positive self image.

Do you have support?

In the event that your parents’ reaction devastates you, there should be someone or a group that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength. Maintaining your sense of self-worth is critical.

Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality?

Your parents will probably respond based on lifetime of information from a homophobic society. If you've done some serious reading on the subject, you'll be able to assist them by sharing reliable information and research.

What's the emotional climate at home?

If you have the choice of when to tell, consider the timing. Choose a time when they're not dealing with such matters as death of a close friend, pending surgery, or the loss of a job.

Can you be patient?

Your parents will require time to deal with this information if they haven't considered it prior to your sharing. The process may last from six months to two years.

What's your favorite motive for coming out now?

Hopefully, it is because you love them and are uncomfortable with the distance you feel. Never come out in anger or during an argument, using your sexuality as a weapon.

Do you have available resources?

Homosexuality is a subject most non-gay people know little about. Have available at least one of the following: a book addressed to parents, a contact for the local or national PFLAG, or the name of a non-gay counselor who can deal fairly with the issue.

Are you financially dependent on your parents?

If you suspect they are capable of withdrawing college finances or forcing you out of the house, you may choose to wait until they do not have this as a weapon.

What is your general relationship with your parents?

If you've gotten along well and have always known their love-and shared your love for them in return-chances are they'll be able to deal with the issues in a positive way.

What is their moral societal view?

If they tend to see social issues in clear terms of good/bad or holy/sinful, you may anticipate that they will have serious problems dealing with your sexuality. If, however they've evidenced a degree of flexibility then dealing with other changing societal matters, you may be able to anticipate a willingness to work this through with you.

CASS' GAY & LESBIAN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

What follows is a model for lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development. It can help you in understanding how an individual's perspective may be affected by that person's developmental stage. However, as with developmental models, this model cannot capture the variety of paths different individuals follow. It is important to keep in mind that not all LGBT individuals go through all the stages, that they may not do it in order, and that they may not clearly fit in any one state at a particular time.

Stage 1: Identity Confusion – Who Am I?

- **Theme:** Tolerates, denies, & rejects a gay identity. "Could I be gay?" Person is beginning to wonder if "homosexuality" is personally relevant. Denial and confusion is experienced.
- **Possible Responses:** Will avoid information about the LGBT community; inhibits behavior; denies one's sexual orientation ("experimenting," "an accident," "just drunk"). Males: May keep emotional involvement separate from sexual contact; Females: May have deep relationships that are non-sexual, though strongly emotional.
- **Possible Needs:** Explore internal positive and negative judgments with client. Give permission for client to be uncertain regarding sexual identity. May find support in knowing that sexual behavior occurs along a spectrum. May benefit from being permitted and encouraged to explore sexual identity as a normal experience (like career identity, and social identity).

Stage 2: Identity Comparison – "Maybe this does apply to me."

- **Theme:** Deals with social alienation; accepts the possibility that she or he may be gay. Self-alienation becomes isolation; Begins to compare one's sexual orientation with society.
- **Possible Responses:** Begins to grieve for losses and the things they will give up by embracing their sexual orientation; compartmentalizes one's sexuality. Accepts LGB definitions of behavior but maintains "heterosexual" identity of self. Tells oneself, "it's only temporary"; "I'm just in love with this particular woman/man," etc.
- **Possible Needs:** Important that the person develops own definitions and identity. Client will need information about sexual identity and LGBT community resources. Encourage client to talk about loss of heterosexual life expectations. May feel the need for "permission" to keep some "heterosexual" identity (it is not an all or nothing issue).

Stage 3: Identity Tolerance – "I'm not the only one."

- **Theme:** Decrease social alienation by seeking out others within the LGBT community.
- **Possible Responses:** Begins to develop the language to talk and think about the issue. Recognizes that being gay does not preclude other options; accentuates difference between self and heterosexuals. Seeks out LGBT culture (positive contact leads to more positive sense of self, negative contact leads to devaluation of the culture, stops growth). May try out variety of stereotypical roles.
- **Possible Needs:** Support client in exploring feelings of shame derived from heterosexism, as well as external heterosexism. Provide support in finding positive LGBT community connections. It is particularly important for a person at this stage to be aware of community resources.

Stage 4: Identity Acceptance – “I will be okay.”

- **Theme:** Accepts, rather than tolerates, gay self-image. There is continuing and increased contact with others in the LGBT community. Begins to deal with inner tension of no longer subscribing to society’s norms; attempts to bring congruence between private and public view of self.
- **Possible Response:** Accepts lesbian self-identification. May compartmentalize “gay life.” Maintains less and less contact with heterosexual community. Attempts to “fit in” and “not make waves” within the LGBT community. Begins some selective disclosures of sexual identity. More social coming out; more comfortable being seen with groups of men or women that identify as LGBT. More realistic evaluation of situation.
- **Possible Needs:** Continues to explore grief and loss of heterosexual life expectations. Continue exploring internalized homophobia. Find support in making decisions about where, when, and to whom s/he self discloses.

Stage 5: Identity Pride – “I’ve got to let people know who I am!”

- **Theme:** Deals with incongruent views of heterosexuals; Immerses self within the LGBT culture and has less and less involvement with the heterosexual community. Develops an “Us Vs. Them” mentality regarding political/social issues.
- **Possible Responses:** Splits world into “LGBT” (good) and “heterosexuals” (bad). Experiences disclosure crises with heterosexuals as s/he is willing to “blend in.” Identifies LGBT culture as sole source of support; only socializes with LGBT friends, business connections, and social connections.
- **Possible Needs:** Provide support for exploring issues of anger. Find support for exploring issues of heterosexism. Develop skills for coping with reactions and responses to disclosure of sexual identity. It is critical that counselors resist being defensive!

Stage 6: Identity Synthesis – “I’m okay, you’re okay too!”

- **Theme:** Integrates one’s gay identity so that instead of being the identity, it is one aspect of self. Develops holistic view of self. Defines self in a more complete fashion, not just in terms of sexual orientation.
- **Possible Responses:** Continues to be angry at heterosexism, but with decreased intensity. Allows trust of others to increase and build. Gay identity is integrated with all aspects of “self.” Feels all right to move into the community and to simply define space according to sexual orientation.
- **Possible Needs:** Continue to provide client support and affirmation. Assist client in developing skills to advocate for other LGBT persons and to advocate against other forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, etc.

HETEROSEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

STAGE 1 – NO SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

- Naiveté, or lack of a social perspective of one’s sexual orientation or status as a dominant group member.

STATE 2 – ACCEPTANCE:

- This stage represents the internalization (conscious or unconscious) of a heterosexist and homophobic ideology.
- Individuals in this stage have received and accepted the messages about heterosexual group membership and believe in the superiority, or “normalcy” of heterosexuality and the inferiority of the LGBT community.
- Heterosexuals in this stage are typically unaware that they have been programmed or socialized to accept their worldview. This is due to the subtle nature of the socialization process and the early age in which it begins.
- Heterosexuality is viewed upon as the way the world is and is not questioned.
- Two sub-stages:
 - A. Passive Acceptance: There is no conscious identification of being heterosexual or a heterosexual orientation. The notion of what it means to be heterosexual is taken for granted and is seen as “normal”. People in this stage are subtly heterosexist in their beliefs and actions, but do not view themselves as homophobic or prejudices.
 - B. Active Acceptance: Heterosexuals in this stage tend to be forthright in expressing their beliefs that their sexual orientation is superior (e.g. intentional discrimination or derogatory language). They may be conscious of their heterosexual orientation, and may even join anti-gay organizations or just think and act in overtly heterosexist and homophobic ways.

STAGE 3 – RESISTANCE:

- People in this stage are actively engaged in rejecting the definition of heterosexual superiority that they were socialized to accept. That is, they begin to reject heterosexist norms, rules, attitudes and values.
- They are in the process of formulating a new worldview, changing significant personal relationships, and acting on issues that previously were of no concern.
- Way of thinking changes from blaming the victims for their condition to an ideology that names the dominant group, their own group, as the source of heterosexism and homophobia.

STAGE 4 – REDEFINITION:

- Renewed interest in one’s sexual orientation. Energy is focused on redefining what it means to be heterosexual in non-homophobic terms. Focus moves away from trying to understand the LGBT community to understanding their own sexual orientation, that is, their heterosexual experience.
- Begins to look at the positive aspects of heterosexual culture that is separate from heterosexism. This results in an acceptance of, and pride in, group membership-but not a feeling of superiority.

STAGE 5 – INTERNALIZATION:

- The focus shifts from trying to understand what it means to be heterosexual to being an advocate for the LGBT community. This is a life-long process of learning.
- Individuals at this stage integrate their heterosexual orientation into all other facets of their life and identity. Their new heterosexual identity becomes internalized into one’s total identity where new behaviors and attitudes are a natural part of one’s personality, value system and life choices. These become spontaneous and unrehearsed.
- There is an awareness and understanding of how heterosexuals benefit as a result of unearned heterosexual privilege and power.

Source: Vong Ratts, Oregon State University, 2004, Concept adapted from Rita Handiman’s White Identity Development Model

D'Augelli's GLBT Student Development

Six Interactive Processes in Development

- Exiting Heterosexual identity (recognition of true feelings)
- Developing a personal LGBT status/identity (personal acceptance)
- Developing a social LGBT status/identity (support networks)
- Becoming an LGBT offspring (coming out to family)
- Developing an intimacy of LGBT status identity (intimate relationships)
- Entering the LGBT community (commitment to social and/or political action)

Variable 1: Personal Subjectivism and Actions

- Meanings
- Behaviors

Variables 2: Interactive Intimacies

- Parents
- Family
- Peers
- Friends

Variable 3: Socio-historic Connections

- Customs
- Rules
- Law
- Cultural aspects

All three variables affect the overall student development of a LGBT person. In different situations different variables play a role, some more than others. There is no rigid stage-process, but different environmental issues will affect the person in different situations.

HOW HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, & TRANSPHOBIA HURT EVERYONE

You do not have to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender to know someone who is, to be negatively affected by homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Though these phobias actively oppress gay men, lesbian, bisexuals, and transgendered person it also hurts heterosexuals.

Homophobia, Biphobia, & Transphobia:

- Inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own gender, for fear of being perceived as LGBT.
- Locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self-expression.
- Is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals; those perceived or labeled by others to be LGBT; children of LGBT parents; parents of LGBT children; and friends of LGBT's.
- Compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that are contrary to their basic humanity.
- Combined with sex-phobia, results in the invisibility or erasure of LGBT lives and sexuality in school-based sex education discussions, keeping vital information from students. Such erasures can kill people in the age of AIDS.
- In one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chances of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Young people, of all sexual orientations, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are "normal."
- Prevents some LGBT folks from developing an authentic self identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and often times trauma on themselves as well as their heterosexual spouses, and their children.
- Inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. We are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.

"By challenging homophobia [...biphobia, and transphobia...], people are not only fighting oppression or specific groups of people, but are striving for a society that accepts and celebrates the differences in all of us..." For more about this topic, see Warren J. Blumenfeld, *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

IDENTIFYING HETEROSEXISM: ACTIONS AND THOUGHTS THAT BELIEVE HETEROSEXIST ATTITUDES

Stereotypes and assumptions are the root of heterosexist attitudes, simplifying the diverse LGBT community and often disempowering them. The following actions and thoughts are manifestations of these attitudes.

Oversexualizations:

- Assuming the LGBT folks are only sexual beings rather than complex people who have, among other significant features, a different sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.
- Assuming that every same-sex attraction is sexual or potentially sexual for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered folks.
- Assuming that a lesbian, gay man, bisexual, or transgendered person is probably interested in you sexually, regardless of sexual orientation.
- Interpreting everything lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals do in terms of their sexuality.
- Avoiding touching LGBT folks or being too close, or being scared of LGBT folks in general.

Denying Significance, Personally:

- Commenting that “...it doesn’t matter to me that you are LGBT.” A basic part of someone’s identity and sense of self should matter; it just shouldn’t matter negatively.
- Expecting people to avoid talking about being LGBT. Expecting them not to talk about their partners or relationships in public when heterosexuals can and do.

Denying Significance, Politically:

- Criticizing LGBT individuals for “making an issue” of their sexuality. For example, commenting, “I don’t care what they do in the privacy of their bedrooms, but don’t tell me about it.”
- Not understanding that in our culture, which is alternatively oblivious to LGBT individuals, or dangerous for them, sexuality is already a political issue.
- Not seeing that heterosexuality is politically unsupported by giving legal, financial, and emotional privilege to heterosexual relationships while legally denying LGBT individuals involved in same-sex relationships housing, jobs, and child custody.

Labeling LGBT as a Problem:

- Diagnosing LGBT, talking about cures or causes, which assumes that it is not normal and fine. A bisexual, lesbian, gay man or transgendered individual may need support and/or counseling around issues related to one’s sexual orientation or gender identity/expression in this culture: however, the problem is heterosexism, not because one is LGBT.

Making Invisible:

- Assuming that everyone is heterosexual until proven otherwise.
- Always asking women about boyfriends, and men about girlfriends.

- Assuming that marriage is everyone's goal
- Keeping bisexuality/homosexuality/gender expression invisible by not making it safe for people to be "out" or by excluding people who are "out" from visible positions where they might provide positive role models for younger LGBT individuals.
- Denying the bisexuality exists.
- Assuming that heterosexism doesn't exist because you can't see it.
- Considering heterosexism less significant than other oppressions. All oppressions are equally harmful. It is not good to create hierarchy of oppression.

Generalizing:

- Assuming that one LGBT individual represents or speaks for their entire community.
- Conversely, completely separating one LGBT individual you know personally by saying, "You're OK: you're not like the rest of them."

Over asserting Your Heterosexuality/Gender:

- Rushing to talk about your relationship when you meet an LGBT individual to make sure s/he knows you are heterosexual.
- Avoiding behaviors or dress that might cause suspicion that you are not a "real man" or a "real woman."
- Avoiding touching or close friendships with people of the same sex.
- Excusing other heterosexual people's heterosexist jokes or comments.

Expecting to Be Taught:

- Putting the burden of responsibility for educating and working for change on the LGBT individual.
- Forcing LGBT individuals to always take all of the initiative in "coming out."
- Not making openings for people to "come out" by acknowledging in conversations the possibility of non-heterosexual relations.
- Becoming upset if every LGBT individual is not always patient about educating you.

Mis-defining Bisexuality/Homosexuality:

- Confusing bisexuality with non-monogamy.
- Assuming that bisexuals are fickle or promiscuous.
- Assuming that lesbians hate men.
- Assuming that LGBT folks want to "convert" heterosexuals
- Trying to help someone "be straight."
- Thinking of bisexuality/homosexuality as a phase.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF HOMOPHOBIA & HETEROSEXISM

Heterosexism: which has its roots in sexism, is the *individual, cultural, and institutionalization* of a heterosexual norm standard, which establishes and perpetuates the notion that all people are or should be heterosexual, thereby, privileging heterosexual and heterosexuality and excluding the needs of LGBT folks. Heterosexism involves having *prejudices* and the *power* to act upon one's prejudices by heterosexuals. Heterosexism is based on homophobia.

Homophobia: is the irrational fear of homosexuality, and the hatred, disgust, and prejudice that fear brings. Heterosexism awards power and rewards to heterosexual people and denies privileges to LGBT folks. Heterosexism extends beyond individual homophobia. People without any homophobic attitudes can still be heterosexist by not working to challenge and change those policies and practices that have heterosexual results within their institution.

- Have you ever laughed at a homophobic joke?
- Do you stop yourself from doing or saying certain things because someone might think you're lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered? If yes, what things?
- Do you ever intentionally do or say things that people will think you're not gay?
- Do you believe that LGBT folks can influence others to become homosexual?
- Do you think someone could influence you to change your sexual orientation?
- If you are a parent, how would you (or do you) feel about having a child who identifies as LGBT?
- How do you think you would feel if you discovered that one of your parents or parent figure, or a brother or sister, were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered?
- Are there any jobs, positions, or professions that you think LGBT individuals should be barred from holding or entering? If yes, what and why?
- Would you go to a physician whom you knew or believed to be LGBT if that person were of a different gender from you? If that person were of the same gender as you? If not, why not?
- If someone you care about were to say to you, "I think I'm L/G/B/T," would you suggest that the person see a therapist?
- Have you ever been to a LGBT bar, social club, or march? If not, why not?
- Would you wear a button that says, "How dare you presume I'm heterosexual?" If not, why not?
- Can you think of three positive aspects of being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered? Can you think of three negative aspects of a heterosexual?

Suggestions for Combating Heterosexism

- Assume that whenever you go to work there are lesbians or gay men who are wondering how safe the environment is for them. Don't assume that everyone you meet is heterosexual. Provide safety by making clear your support of gay and lesbian identity.
- Realize that oppression of gays and lesbians is perpetuated in social situations where physical affection is exclusively heterosexual. In consideration of this, where is it appropriate and mutually consensual, feel free to be physically affectionate with someone of the same sex. Also, consider refraining from public displays of physical affection, especially in situations where it is not safe for gays and lesbians.
- Challenge heterosexism whether or not lesbians and gay men are present. Don't always leave it to gays and lesbians to do it.
- Remembering that silence is complicity, challenge/confront anti-gay and lesbian statements and structures as well as assumptions behind them. Do not promote the institutionalized invisibility of lesbians and gays.
- When speaking of your heterosexual lover, point out that s/he is of the opposite sex, implying that s/he may not have to be.
- Confront your fear, memories, and bad feelings about gay men and lesbians. Recall and release those feelings, thereby diminishing their hold on you.
- Do not assume that a gay or lesbian of the same gender is automatically attracted to you. Do you assume that all straight people of the opposite gender are interested in you? If a gay or lesbian is attracted to you, try to be flattered, not offended. If it still bothers you, talk about it.
- Change your use of language from "Do you have a boy/girlfriend?" to "Are you seeing anyone?" Heterosexism is promoted and maintained powerfully through language. Respect the profound delicacy of the "coming out" process.

And the big challenge...

If people jump to the conclusion that you are lesbian or gay because of your friendship with gay or lesbian people or because you are reading a gay or lesbian publication or because you are being affectionate with someone of the same gender, resist your impulse to deny it. Challenge yourself to experience gay/lesbian oppression rather than taking advantage of heterosexual privilege

Some Ways that Heterosexism and Homophobia Hurt the LGBT Community

For those in the closet:

- The necessity to lie and pretend constantly.
- Can't be affectionate with a loved one except when alone.
- Having to pretend the person you're with is not your lover whenever someone else is around.
- Having people try to "fix you up" with members of the opposite sex.

- Unsolicited advice such as “you’ll never catch a man/woman if you act/dress like that.”
- Assumptions that you and everyone else are heterosexual.
- Being around people who are “flaunting” their heterosexuality while having to hide your sexuality.
- Having a hard time finding/meeting lesbian, gay, or bisexual people. Thinking you are the only one.
- Thinking something is wrong with you.
- Never feeling that you fit in: constantly feeling uncomfortable.
- Never feeling safe/close to another person because of this secret.
- Feeling panic about being found out, and feeling like a coward or a dishonest person.

For those coming out:

- Not just the fear expressed above (which is bad enough) but also the reality- the things you were afraid would happen actually do happen.
- Rejection from friends, roommate, hallmates, family and/or teachers.
- Rejection from friends or your lover.
- Rejection of other things that are important to you, your work, interests, etc.
- People refusing to accept your sexual orientation, seeing it as a phase, trying to convince you to change- “see a psychiatrist” or “you’ll grow out of it.”
- Having to deal with fear and anger toward you from nearly everyone, including those who have been your best supporters on everything else.
- Losing your job, your living space and financial support.
- Getting lower grades than you think you deserve and wondering why if this is why.
- Subtly rejection or distance from many people and having to wonder if it’s real or not. Feeling crazy and all alone. Not having any reality checks.

For those who are already out of the closet:

- The things you feared would happen don’t happen just once, which is hard enough, but they happen regularly.
- Dealing constantly with homophobia and heterosexism.
- Not getting jobs no into groups and organizations.
- Not getting accepted into graduate school.
- Being made into a special case- “good” or “different” gay, lesbian or bisexual person.
- Any affection you show toward a same-gender person is seen as a sexual “come on.”
- Encountering verbal or physical abuse, violence against you by total strangers because of who you are.
- Subtle rejection and avoidance by friends and acquaintances who move slightly further apart or cross the street when you walk by, then deny they are doing this.
- Not having guaranteed civil rights protection to grieve discrimination.
- Outright legalized mistreatment such as having children taken away, being denied access to your lover, and not getting employment benefits that are given to opposite sex partners.
- Mistreatment by police officers, who blame the victim; law courts; and the prison system.
- Dealing with people’s misinformation and AIDS fears.
- Getting psychiatric/psychological abuse when seeking help.
- Lack of role models and services that meet the needs of a gay man, lesbian, or bisexual man or woman. (IE, the library or bookstore may not stock newspapers, books, or journals that cover the lesbian, gay and bisexual community).
- Being in the position of having to educate heterosexuals about their own homophobia.

- Finding that programs and educational activities about heterosexism and homophobia are not a routine part of what's happening-having to organize them yourself if they are to happen at all.

Information taken from Virginia Commonwealth University Website www.wcu.edu

How Homophobia Hurts Everyone: A Theoretical Foundation

Compiled by Warren J. Blumenfeld

Within the numerous forms of oppression, members of the target group (sometimes called "minority") are oppressed, while on some level members of the dominant group are hurt. Although the effects of the oppression differ qualitatively for specific target and dominant groups, in the end everyone loses.

1. Homophobia locks all people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self expression.
2. Homophobic conditioning compromises the integrity of heterosexual people by pressuring them to treat others badly, actions contrary to their basic humanity.
3. Homophobia inhibits one's ability to form close, intimate relationships with members of one's own sex.
4. Homophobia generally restricts communication with a significant portion of the population and, more specifically, limits family relationships.
5. Societal homophobia prevents some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from developing an authentic self-identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress an oftentimes trauma on themselves as well as their heterosexual spouses and their children.
6. Homophobia is one cause of the premature sexual involvement, which increases the chances of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Young people, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are "normal."
7. Homophobia combined with sexphobia (fear and repulsion of sex) results in the elimination of any discussion of the lifestyles and sexuality of sexual minorities as part of school-based sex education, keeping vital information from all students. Such a lack of information can kill people in the age AIDS.
8. Homophobia can be used to stigmatize, silence and, on occasion, target people who are perceived or defined by others as gay, lesbian or bisexual but who are in actuality heterosexual.
9. Homophobia prevents heterosexuals from accepting the benefits and gifts offered by sexual minorities: theoretical insights, social and spiritual visions and options, contributions to the arts and culture, to religion, to family life, indeed to all facets of society.
10. Homophobia (along with racism, sexism, classism, sexphobia, etc.) inhibits a unified and effective governmental and societal response too AIDS.
11. Homophobia diverts energy from more constructive endeavors.

12. Homophobia inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. Therefore, we are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.

From Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price, ed. Warren J. Blumenfeld (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992)

MARRIAGE VS. CIVIL UNIONS

Why aren't civil unions enough?

Comparing marriage to civil unions is a bit like comparing diamonds to rhinestones. One is, quite simply, the real deal; the other is not. Consider:

- Couples eligible to marry may have their marriage performed in any state and have it recognized in every other state in the nation and every country in the world.
- Couples who are joined in a civil union in Vermont (the only state that offers civil unions) have no guarantee that its protections will even travel with them to neighboring New York or New Hampshire—let alone California or any other state.

Moreover, even couples who have a civil union and remain in Vermont receive only second-class protections in comparison to their married friends and neighbors. While they receive state-level protections, they do not receive any of the more than 1,000 federal benefits and protections of marriage.

In short, civil unions are not separate but equal – they are separate and unequal. And our society has tried separate before. It just doesn't work.

<p>Marriage:</p> <p>State grants marriage licenses to couples</p> <p>Couples receive legal protections and rights under state and federal law.</p> <p>Couples are recognized as being married by the federal government and all state governments</p> <p>Religious institutions are not required to recognize marriages or perform marriage ceremonies.</p>	<p>Civil Unions:</p> <p>State would grant civil union licenses to couples.</p> <p>Couples receive legal protections and rights under state law only.</p> <p>Civil unions are not recognized by other states or federal government.</p> <p>Religious institutions are not required to recognize civil unions or perform civil union ceremonies.</p>
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FACTS ABOUT BISEXUALITY

- ❖ Bisexuality is the physical, emotional, and sexual attraction to people of either sex.

- ❖ A bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes and the degree of attraction may vary over time. Some bisexuals say they are attracted to men and women in different ways, others say gender just isn't relevant to who they are interested in.

- ❖ Since we are generally socialized as heterosexuals, bisexuality can be a stage that many people experience as part of the process of acknowledging their homosexuality. Many others come to identify as bisexuals after a considerable period of identification as gay men or lesbians.

- ❖ Bisexuality, like homosexuality or heterosexuality, may either be a transitional step in the process of sexual discovery or a stable, long-term identity. An orientation that may not be permanent is still valid for the period of time that is experienced.

- ❖ In our culture, it is generally assumed that a person is either heterosexual (the default assumption) or homosexual (based on appearance or behavioral clues). Because bisexuality does not fit into either of these standard categories it is often denied or ignored. When it is recognized, bisexuality is often viewed as being "part heterosexual and part homosexual" rather than being a unique identity.

- ❖ Bisexuals, like all people, have a wide variety of relationship styles. Contrary to common myth, a bisexual person does not need to be sexually involved with a man and a woman simultaneously. In fact, some people who identify as bisexual never engage in sexual activity with one or the other gender. It is the case for heterosexuals and gay men and lesbians; attraction does not involve acting on every desire. Many bisexuals choose to be sexually active with only one partner and have long-term monogamous relationships.

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF BISEXUALITY

Myth #1: Bisexuality doesn't really exist. People who consider themselves bisexuals are going through a phase/confused/undecided/fence sitting. Ultimately they'll settle down and realize they're actually homosexual or heterosexual.

Reality #1: Some people go through a transitional period of bisexuality on their way to adopting a lesbian/gay or heterosexual identity. For many others bisexuality remains a long-term orientation. For some bisexuals, homosexuality was a transitional phase in their coming out as bisexuals. Many bisexuals may well be confused, living in a society where their sexuality is denied by homosexuals and heterosexuals alike, but that confusion is a function of oppression. Fence-sitting is a misnomer; there is no "fence" between homosexuality and heterosexuality except in the minds of people who rigidly divide the two.

Myth #2: Bisexuality doesn't really exist. People who consider themselves bisexual are really heterosexual, but are experimenting/playing around/trying to be cool/trendy.

Reality #2: Whether people are an "experimenting heterosexual" or bisexual depends on how they define themselves, rather than on some external standard. While there certainly are people for whom bisexual behavior is trendy, this does not negate the people who come to a bisexual identity amidst pain and confusion and claim it with pride.

Myth #3: Bisexuality doesn't really exist. People who consider themselves bisexuals are actually lesbian/gay, but haven't fully accepted themselves and finished coming out of the closet (acknowledging their attraction to people of the same gender).

Reality #3: Bisexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation. Many bisexuals are completely out of the closet, but not on the lesbian/gay community's team. (It is worth noting that many lesbians and gay men are not completely out of the closet and their process is generally respected; it is also worth noting that the lesbian/gay community whose "terms" are in question here has tended to be quite different for working class lesbians, gays of color, etc.) Bisexuals in this country share with lesbians and gays the debilitating experience of heterosexism (the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and thereby rendering other sexual identities invisible) and homophobia (the hatred, fear, and discrimination against homosexuals.)

Myth #4: Bisexuals are shallow, narcissistic, untrustworthy, hedonistic and immoral.

Reality #4: This myth reflects our culture's ambivalence over sex and pleasure. The "sex" in bisexuality gets overemphasized, and our culture projects onto bisexuals its fascination with the condemnation of sex and pleasure.

Myth #5: Bisexuality means having concurrent lovers of both sexes.

Reality #5: Bisexuals are people who can have intimate relationships with people of either sex, not people who must have intimate relationships with both sexes. Some bisexual people may have concurrent lovers, but bisexuals do not need to be with both sexes in order to feel fulfilled.

Myth #6: Bisexuals are promiscuous hypersexual swingers who are attracted to every woman and man they meet. Bisexuals cannot be monogamous, nor can they live in traditional committed relationships. They could never be celibate.

Reality #6: Bisexual people have a range of sexual behaviors. Like lesbians, gays or heterosexuals, some have multiple partners, some have one partner, some go through periods without any partners. Promiscuity is no more prevalent in the bisexual population than in other groups of people.

Myth #7: Bisexuals get the best of both worlds and a doubled chance for a date.

Reality #7: Combine our society's extreme heterosexism and homophobia with lesbian and gay hesitance to accept bisexuals into their community, and it might be more accurate to say that bisexuals get the worst of both worlds. As to the doubled chance for a date theory, that depends more upon the individual's personality than it does upon her/his bisexuality. Bisexuals don't radiate raw sex any more than lesbians, gays, or heterosexuals. If a bisexual woman has a hard time meeting people, her bisexuality won't help much.

Myth #8: Bisexuals are desperately unhappy, endlessly seeking some kind of peace which they cannot ever find.

Reality #8: Like lesbians and gays who have been told that they will live awful lives, bisexuals can respond that much of the pain comes from oppression, so people concerned about the "awful lives" of bisexuals should join the fight against homophobia.

FREQUENT QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANSGENDERISM

What does “transgender” mean?

The term “transgender” is broad, and covers many aspects of the gender experience. In general, people who identify as transgender have come to the conclusion that the bodies in which they find themselves are of the wrong gender. They may decide to redefine themselves by changing their gender roles, and perhaps their bodies, to the opposite gender. Some people will make use of injected sex hormones, electrolysis, plastic surgery or sex reassignment surgery to achieve this transition. At the most general level, there are some primary categories of transgenderism that are useful to know:

- FTM (female to male): Individuals who were born female but see themselves as predominantly male.
- MTF (male to female): People who were born male but see themselves as predominantly female.
- Intersexed: Individuals born with some combination of male and female sexual characteristics, which they may accept as their natural form, or either gender.

Are transgender people gay?

The sexual orientation of transgender people covers the entire spectrum. At some level, it can also be largely irrelevant, but if labels are to be applied, all of them can. Some FTM (female to male transgender) men are attracted to woman, others to men. In the first instance, they would likely identify as a heterosexual man, in the latter, as a gay man.

What is an intersexed person?

Intersexuality is a set of medical conditions that features “congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system.” That is, a person with an intersex condition is born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that is not considered “standard” for either male or female. Some have surgery in infancy, and their gender is assigned by their parents or doctor. Sometimes the assignment turns out to be “wrong” in that it doesn’t match that individual’s later self image of their “true” gender.

How prevalent is the phenomenon of transgenderism?

More common than you might expect! First, one needs to ask themselves what really does it mean to be transgender. The answer to that varies across societies, across time, and individual interpretations. Up until the 20th century, many governments prohibited women from the wearing of male clothing – to do so was felt to assume the privileges accorded only to men. By today’s standards, we most likely would describe many of the women who made such clothing choices as transgender, just as we include “drag queens” and “drag kings” in this category today. By this definition, there are millions of individuals around the world who could be classified as “transgender.” The number of people who find themselves to have the wrong gender, and those who are intersexed, are certainly fewer. But that’s largely irrelevant, the important fact is transgender people exist and are a part of our society. This question often comes up with regards to whether or not a minority group should be accorded “special rights,” but the fact of the matter is, every individual regardless of sexual orientation, and regardless of gender identity, deserves the same fundamental rights and freedoms.

What is sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation refers to the gender which a person finds themselves emotionally and sexually attracted. The common terms for the variety of sexual orientations are *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual* and *heterosexual*. Some individuals may identify themselves as *asexual*, and others as *other*.

What is sexual identity?

Sexual identity is the self image that someone has, regardless of the genitals with which they were born. That is to say, an individual with male, sexual characteristics (a male gender) may feel themselves to be female, some would describe themselves as a “woman in a man’s body.” This individual would have a female gender identity.

What is gender identity?

Gender identity refers to how an individual sees themselves socially, as a woman, man, neither or both. It has no relation to their physical characteristics, but rather to how they choose to live their lives. This categorization may be fluid, over time or social situations.

What is gender expression?

Gender expression is the manner in which an individual chooses to express their gender. Regardless of their body characteristics or what they claim as a gender identity, an individual choosing to dress and act in a manner that conforms to society’s view of what a woman is would be expressing themselves as the female gender.

Do transgender people face discrimination?

Sadly, almost all the time. For those undergoing transitions, the very “before-after” affect makes their status far more evident than, for example, a gay man or lesbian who can “pass” as heterosexual. The suicide rate among transgender individuals is higher than for the rest of society, they are also more likely to be the target of physical violence, to lose their jobs, and to receive discrimination in a variety of forms. Transgender people find themselves the target of attacks more frequently, partly because it is around the question of gender that the majority of anti-gay bias arises. It’s because their gender challenges the “norm” that transgender people encounter such discrimination, to emotional trauma, and even physical abuse such as conversion “therapy” and imprisonment, essentially nothing short of torture. And it has only been recently that the broader queer community has accepted transgender individuals as part of their family, and today most queer organizations will identify themselves as “gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender.”

How do I deal with a transgender person?

You should always refer to a transgender person by their chosen gender. Sometimes you might not be sure which this is, so it’s fine to ask. For those in transition, you may sometimes meet them as a male, sometimes as a female. Some individuals prefer to be addressed with reference to the gender by which they are expressed at that time, others may have other preferences. Again, it’s fine to ask.

Transgender 101

Adapted from "TRANSGENDERISM: Transgressing Gender Norms" by Nancy R. Nangeroni, International Foundation for Gender Education, 1996 (Ninja Design).

Sex, Gender, & Bipolarity

In order to understand the difference between someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and someone who is transgender, you need to know the difference between sex and gender. Simply put, sex is polarity of anatomy. Gender is polarity of appearance and behavior. As one gains familiarity with transgenderism, these definitions quickly break down, but they serve as a good starting point.

Most people think there are just two sexes, male and female. Such is not the case. People who are intersexed and people who are transsexuals constitute sexes which are neither exactly male nor exactly female.

Likewise, gender is not a simple case of "either/or." Gender is exhibited by countless signals, from articles of clothing to cosmetics, hairstyles, conversational styles, body language and much more.

Notice, however, that our gender "norms" are not symmetric. Women have won for themselves the right to a wide range of gender expression. Men have not made a corresponding effort. Most men live within a much narrower range of "acceptable" gender.

Though our culture tends to group characteristics into "masculine" and "feminine," many people find some amount of gender transgression exciting, so there is some crossover between the two categories. Ultimately, gender is a "mix and match" mode of self-expression, and people within our culture are ever finding new ways to express their gender, with exciting subtleties and intriguing implications.

In general, it works best to think of all effects—sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual identity, and any others – as varying along a continuous spectrum of self-expression, rather than in just one of two or three ways.

Sexual Orientation vs. Gender Identity vs. Sexual Identity

Sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual identity are independent of each other. A person may express any variation of each of these in any combination. To discourage the free expression of identity and orientation by an individual is to impose a damaging burden to conformity.

Sexual Orientation is which sex you find romantically/erotically attractive: opposite (hetero), same (homo), or both (bi).

Gender Identity is how you see yourself socially: man, woman, or a combination of both. One may have a penis but prefer to relate socially as a woman, or one may have a vagina but prefer to relate as a man. One might prefer to be fluid, relating sometimes as a man and sometimes as a woman. Or one might not identify as either one, relating androgynously.

Sexual Identity is how you see yourself physically: male, female, or in between. If someone is born female, but wishes to see their body as male in all respects, their sexual identity is male. It is generally rude to speak of such a person as female, since it denies their right to inhabit the social and physical role of their choosing. We call such a person a transsexual, whether or not they had any surgery.

Many **FTM** transsexuals do not undergo genital surgery, often because of disappointing results or extreme costs. As surgical technique improves, this may change. Since it is healthier for those people to live in accord with their wishes and heartfelt need, we call them, though they may have a vagina where one would expect to find a penis.

The situation of **MTF** transsexuals is equivalent, except that the surgery produces a much more satisfying result, both cosmetically and functionally. Nonetheless, many MTF transsexuals elect to not have the surgery, most often because of risk, pain, or cost. Those who retain male sexual functioning may refer to themselves as transgenderists, since it is only

their gender which is changed. Those that disown all male sexual function (surgery or no) tend to identify as transsexuals, since they change their sexual function, and therefore their sexual identity.

Definitions/Terms

People tend to categorize themselves. This identification can be helpful in finding like-minded others with whom to make friends, but it can be hurtful if imposed on an individual by others, well-intentioned or not. In relating to transgender folk, it is best to avoid pushing and individual to choose a category for themselves. Some folks prefer to explore the fringes of category, and such push for identification works against personal exploration and fulfillment.

Transgender folk have self-identified as:

Drag Queen: Female-emulating male, usually campy, often (not always) gay.

Butch: Masculine-appearing person.

Femme: Feminine-appearing person.

Drag King: Male-emulating woman.

Intersex: Person born with mixed sexual physiology. Often “assigned” at birth, such practice is coming under well-founded attack as a hurtful violation of a person’s well-being.

Transvestite: Person who enjoys wearing clothes identified with the opposite gender, often but not always straight.

Crossdresser: Polite term for transvestite.

Transgenderist: Person who lives as gender opposite to anatomical sex, i.e. person with penis living as a woman. Sexual orientation varies.

Transsexual: Person whose sexual identity is opposite to their assignment at birth. Not all TS folk undergo ‘sex reassignment surgery’ (SRS), for various reasons, including personal preference. Sexual orientation varies.

FTM (female to male): born female but see themselves as partly to fully masculine.

MTF (male to female): born male but see themselves as partly to fully feminine.

Transgender Community: A loose association of people who transgress gender norms in a wide variety of ways. Celebrating a recently born self-awareness, this community is growing fast across all lines, including social, economic, political, and philosophical divisions. The central ethic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedom including gender and sexual, identity and orientation.

Society and Coming Out Issues for Asian Pacific Americans

I remember how it was for me feeling there was no one out there who was a role model of any sort. When I decided to be out in public, I was really thinking of that version of me in Sri Lanka who would read my book and feel relieved to not be alone. If I decided not to be out, I would be sending a message to that young person that I was still afraid and ashamed.

-Shyam Selvadura, author of *Funny Boy and Cinnamon*

While many GLBT people are familiar with the intolerance of society at large, Asian Pacific Americans must also deal with cultural differences. Coming out experiences are often intensified by a lack of visibility, racism and language barriers.

“Coming out when I did was tremendously difficult because I had no knowledge of lesbian or gay people at all,” says Doreena Wong of the San Francisco-based [API Wellness Center](#). Through awareness campaigns, the visibility of GLBT Asian Pacific Americans organizations and more people living out and open lives, Wong has seen great progress over the past few decades. For example, she recently participated in a forum on API lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, hosted by the California Commission on Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs, which advises the governor and legislature on issues affecting the state’s API community.

The lack of Asian Pacific-American visibility within the GLBT community can also create challenges.

“When I open a gay magazine or watch news shows, all I see depicted are gay white men.” Says Edward Kai Chiu of [Gay Asian Pacific Support Network \(GAPSN\)](#). “If I wasn’t living in the West Hollywood and exposed to other gay Asians, I would question if gay Asians even existed!”

An absence of positive images of GLBT Asian Pacific Americans in entertainment and media can also make acknowledging one’s orientation or gender identity more difficult.

“Coming out took a bit longer for me because of being a child of television,” says Loren Javiers, GAPA board member. “I was glued to the TV in the ‘70s and ‘80s and rarely saw Asian characters or gay ones, let alone Asian characters who were GLBT. It was such a revelation when the sit-com ‘Soap’ featured Billy Crystal as Jody Dallas, an openly gay man. But even then, part of me related to Jody, but part of me didn’t because he was white. Because the most visible gays and lesbians tend to be white, society in general falsely perceives that all GLBT people must be white.”

Today, the number of Asian Pacific Islanders in the entertainment world has slowly increased. However, there are still a few characters of color on television and in movies, let alone those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. But some of the more prominent ones include the recurring role of Yosh Takta as a gay nurse on the hit NBC series “ER,” B.D. Wong, an openly gay day who has starred in “Law & Order: SVU” and provides the voice of Captain Li Shang in Disney’s “Mulan” and “Mulan II,” and Korean-American comic Margaret Cho.

Another challenge that many Asian Pacific Americans who are GLBT must face is racism, in society at large and within the GLBT community. Sometimes this is from overt discrimination, other times it is the lack of Asian Pacific Islander representation.

“I was coming out when self-help rap groups were big, and some of them just naturally evolved into coming-out rap groups.” Says Wong of the A&PI Wellness Center. “I went to one group at eh San Francisco Women’s Center and that helped to an extent, but I was the only lesbian of color there and I felt uncomfortable.” It often helps to seek support groups made up of people from similar cultures. See the resources section for a listing of local and national groups.

Society and Coming Out Issues for Latinas and Latinos

Gay kids, like any others, need to see images of themselves in literature—positive images and affirming stories to help guide them through the often painful and confusing terrain of adolescence.

--Alex Sanchez, gay author of *Rainbow Boys*, Simon & Schuster, 2001.

While there have been an increasing number of positive images of GLBT people in the media, very few of them are people of color. For example Latinas/os, seeing images of GLBT people, but none like themselves, only adds to the confusion and uncertainty that occurs during the coming out process.

“Having role models that are like you is a powerful tonic-but sometimes the images of GLBT Latina and Latinos are more like poison,” says Tony Alvarado-Rivera of ALAS.

Ricardo Rivera, of *La Casa*, agrees.

“Images of gay Latinos have historically not been positive ones. For example, while the majority of *novelas* [Latino Soap operas] have gay male character, he is usually portrayed with the most extreme stereotypes- ‘flaming’ or overly effeminate.”

Thanks to the success of openly gay actors, such as Wilson Cruz of TV’s *My So-Called Life* and *Part of Five*, and to the popularity of Latin American films, such as *Y Tu Mama Tambien*, the portrayal of GLBT Latinas/os on film and television has been improving. Radio has seen waves of progress as well, with Latina/o GLBT programs like “*Sin Fronteras*” on Dallas’ KNON 89.3 FM and “*Homofrecuencia*” on Chicago’s WRTE 90.5 FM.

Another Source of positive images is found in the political world. Out and open elected officials include Massachusetts Sen. Jarret Barrios, the first openly gay or lesbian Latino in the country to be elected to a state senate; openly lesbian New York City Councilwoman Margarita Lopez; and Louis Escobar, openly lesbian at-large member of the Toledo, Ohio, City Council.

Latina/o GLBT pride celebrations also are held annually in some cities, including San Diego, Long Beach and Los Angeles. Noemi Perez, policy and public affairs director at LLEGO, the Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Organization, believes that these events are extremely important for the community.

“They provide the opportunity to celebrate our queer like in a cultural setting,” says Perez.

Society and Coming Out Issues for African Americans

“To the people that we love, I think the greatest gift we can give is to be who we are, as we find out who we are, right or wrong. That is the greatest gift.” -Alice Walker, author

Coming out to a family is often one of the most difficult experiences for a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender person. And for African Americans, it may be particularly challenging, says Sean Carmago, adviser for Diversity and Communities of Color in the staff of Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays.

“The black family unit is a very strong one,” says Carmago. “In a world where racism is still far too prevalent, the family is a haven, a stronghold of support.

For many there is no place in this fortress of strength for a “weakness,” as homosexuality is often viewed. Parents sometime think that having a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender child is detrimental and damaging the black family and will negatively affect the whole African-American community.

As the late African-American lesbian author Andre Lorde described it: “Within Black communities where racism is a living reality, differences among us often seem dangerous and suspect. The need for unity is often misnamed as a need for homogeneity.” (Sister Outsider: Essays and Poems. Crossing Press, 1984)

Despite the challenges that coming out in the black family present, many GLBT African Americans choose to share their orientation or identity with their relatives. Being honest with your family is an important step in getting all parts of your life to fit together. One of the most important things is to give them time to process the information.

“My mom thought at first that I could no longer be the torch bearer and political leader in the community that she had expected me to be,” recalls Donna Payne, constituency organizer for the Human Rights Campaign. “But as she came to accept and understand who I was, she was able to see that my role as torch bearer was still just as important.”

Just as you may have needed information and support in coming out, know that your family may also need more information and support. “For Those We Love” is a program founded specifically to support African-American families of GLBT people. William Beale of Washington, D.C., the father of a gay son and founder of For Those We Love, was involved in the PFLAG but felt that others would feel more comfortable in an African American-only support group.

“I’d see one other black person at the local PFLAG meeting, but they’d never return. My guess was that they didn’t feel comfortable ‘airing their dirty laundry’ in that setting, says Beale. “Homosexuality is such a private issue that some feel it should only be shared or discussed with others like themselves.”

To date, For Those We Love and similar programs can be found in Washington D.C., Washington State, Michigan and Ohio. PFLAG has also formed a Families of Color Network, which strives to keep good, strong, healthy families united by love, addresses issues of institutionalized racism and works to break down barriers of sexual orientation and gender identity within communities of color.

GLBT history Quiz

When it comes to GLBT history, are you fabulous, fine, fair, or failing? Answer the following questions, then use the answers and ratings to determine how much you know.

1. The word "homosexual" was coined in which year?
 - a) 545 B.C.E
 - b) 300 C.E.
 - c) 1745 C.E.
 - d) 1869 C.E.
 - e) 1938 C.E.
 - f) 1959 C.E.
2. Which of the following empires was ruled for over two centuries by openly gay or bisexual emperors?
 - a) China
 - b) Rome
 - c) Greece
 - d) All of the above
 - e) None of the above
 - f) a and b only
3. True or False: Often regarded as the greatest of the early Greek lyric poets, Sappho wrote many of her poems about her relationships with other women.
4. In what century did homosexual acts become illegal in Western Europe?
 - a) First century B.C.E.
 - b) First century C.E.
 - c) Thirteenth Century
 - d) Nineteenth century
5. In what nation did the first large-scale gay rights movement begin?
 - a) England
 - b) France
 - c) Germany
 - d) United States
 - e) None of the above
6. In what year was the first public speech asking for gay rights made? _____ By whom? _____
7. True or False: Gay concentration camp survivors were often re-imprisoned by German authorities after being "liberated" by Allied forces after World War II.
8. True or False: American Indians discriminated against people whom they perceived to be gay.
9. In what year was the first person executed for being gay in North America?
 - a) 1492
 - b) 1566
 - c) 1778
 - d) 1869
10. In what year was the first American soldier dismissed from the armed forces for being gay?
 - a) 1621
 - b) 1778
 - c) 1865
 - d) 1969
11. When was America's first gay rights group founded?
 - a) 1869
 - b) 1924
 - c) 1951
 - d) 1969
12. Which president made it illegal for the American government to employ homosexuals?
 - a) Washington
 - b) Lincoln
 - c) Eisenhower
 - d) Reagan
 - e) Clinton
13. Name America's first lesbian rights organization. _____
14. Name the gay African-American man who organized the 1963 March on Washington where Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous, "I Have a Dream" speech.
15. When was the first gay rights protest in Washington, D.C.?
 - a) 1924
 - b) 1953
 - c) 1965
 - d) 1979

16. Who was the first openly gay or lesbian American elected to political office in the United States?
a) Roberta Achtenberg b) Barney c) Harvey Milk d) Elaine Noble
17. What state was the first to outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation? _____
In what year? _____
18. Name the 1986 Supreme Court decision which upheld the right of the government to invade the homes of gay people and arrest them for engaging in consensual adult homosexual sexual relations. _____
19. Name the direct-action group whose civil disobedience demonstrations are credited with pressuring the U.S. government to take action on the AIDS epidemic. _____
20. In which of the following countries is it legal for same-sex couples to marry?
a) Australia b) Denmark c) Israel
d) United States e) None of the above

Source: Out for Equity webpage http://outforequity.spps.org/Resources/lesson_historyquiz.htm

GLBT History Quiz -Answers

Give yourself one point for each correct answer, or one-half point for each part of a two-point question.

1. d) 1869. A Hungarian psychologist name Benkert invented this term. Prior to this date, people may have committed homosexual “acts,” but they were not labeled “homosexuals” (or members of a particular group whose identity derives from those acts) until the nineteenth century.
2. f) a and b only (China and Rome). In China during the Han dynasty (second century B.C.E. until the third century C.E.), many emperors were gay or bisexual. The Chinese term for homosexuality, “duanxiu,” means “cut sleeve,” referring to a famous story in which an emperor cut off his sleeve rather than awaken his lover, who had fallen asleep on his arm. Rome was ruled in the first two centuries C.E. by fourteen openly-gay or bisexual emperors, including Nero and Hadrian.
3. True. Sappho, writing in the early sixth century B.C. composed poems primarily concerned with her relationships with other women.
4. c) The thirteenth century. Only in the late Middle Ages were homosexual acts made illegal in Western Europe. Some historians believe this was a reaction to the “black” or bubonic plague, which killed one-third of Europeans at that time. Terrified, people began looking for “scapegoats,” and persecuted many minority groups- including Jews, “witches,” and homosexuals-who were “different” and thus blamed for the disease.
5. c) Germany. German activists began organizing in the 1860s, and formed a gay rights organization with over 100,000 members by the early twentieth century. Its petition drives for legal reform were signed by several prominent figures, including scientist Albert Einstein and writers Thomas Manna and Hermann Hesse.
6. In 1867, by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. Ulrichs delivered a speech before the Congress of German Jurists in Munich in 1867, calling for the repeal of “Paragraph 175,” which made same-sex sexual activities illegal. He also founded the first gay magazine and lobbied for legalization of gay marriage before his death in 1890.
7. a) True. As violators of “Paragraph 175,” homosexuals were judged to be criminals; since concentration camps were not considered “jails,” the liberated gays were often sent to civil jails after the war to serve their sentences. None ever received financial payments which the German government made to other Holocaust victims.
8. b) False. Native American societies had an institution called “berdache, “ by which individuals could take on the social role of the opposite sex and then take a same-sex spouse without fear of ridicule. some tribes actually revered berdaches for their special “calling.”
9. b) 1566, when the Spanish executed a French priest for living with a berdache.
10. b) 1778. Gotthold Enslin, a lieutenant, was dismissed at Valley Forge for having been caught in same-sex sexual activity. From 1945-1993, over 100,000 Americans were dismissed from the armed forces for being gay.
11. b) 1924. The Chicago Society for Human Rights was America’s first gay rights group, although it existed for less than a year due to police and media harassment.

12. c) Eisenhower. With President Executive Order 10450 in 1953, President Eisenhower bowed to the pressure of Senator McCarthy's "witch hunts," which claimed that not only communists, but also gays, were betraying American secrets to the Russians. These laws were not repealed until 1975.
13. Daughters of Bilitis. Founded in 1955 in San Francisco, this organization also published America's first lesbian magazine, *The Ladder*.
14. Bayard Rustin. Rustin also taught King the nonviolence civil disobedience techniques which made him famous. Rustin was driven from the civil rights movement because of his homosexuality, which the FBI used to blackmail King.
15. c) 1965. Organized by Frank Kameny and the Mattachine Society, this picket of slightly more than a dozen people aimed to repeal McCarthy-era restrictions on the employment of gays by the federal government.
16. d) Elaine Noble. An open lesbian, Noble was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1975.
17. Wisconsin, in 1982. Since then, the following states have passed similar legislation: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Vermont.
18. *Hardwick v. Bowers*. In 1986, the Supreme Court, in a 5-4 vote, upheld the conviction of Michael Hardwick, an Atlanta man who was arrested in the privacy of his home by Georgia police for violating the state's sodomy laws: Sodomy laws still exist in 24 states.
19. ACT-UP. The "AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power" was founded in New York in 1987, six years into the epidemic. At that point, President Reagan had yet to say the word "AIDS" in public. During the first four years of the epidemic, Reagan budgeted less money to fight AIDS (which killed 20,000 Americans during that time) than he did for the "Tylenol scare" when two people died from poisoned Tylenol tablets.
20. e) None of the above. There is yet, no country in the world which permits full civil marriage between two people of the same sex. Countries which have fairly comprehensive legal recognition of same-sex partnerships include Canada, Netherlands, Denmark, France, South Africa, Sweden, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, and Spain. Currently in the United States, only the state of Vermont recognizes same-sex couples.

Ratings:

15-20 points: Fabulous. You really know your stuff, and deserve an immediate tenure-track position as a professor of GLBT Studies.

10-14 points: Fine. You know a lot, but could brush up a bit. Hit the library!

6-9 points: Fair. You really need to buy *Becoming Visible* and read it...tonight!

0-5 points: Failing. Do not pass go, do not collect \$200-go straight to the bookstore and stock up on gay history texts!

WOU Organizations and Resources

ASWOU Gender and Sexual Diversity Advocate: 503-838-8535, asgender@wou.edu, WUC Room 203D

ASWOU Stonewall Center: WUC Room 108

Triangle Alliance (WOU Student Organization): triangle.alliance@gmail.com

Abby's House (WOU Organization): 503-838-8219, abbyshouse@wou.edu, WUC 108A

Student Health & Counseling Center: 503-838-8313, Student Health Center Building

For a complete list of local organizations and resources, visit WOU Safe Zone web site at:

www.wou.edu/safezone

Resource Guide Courtesy of: WOU Safe Zone, 503-838-8064, safezone@wou.edu

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