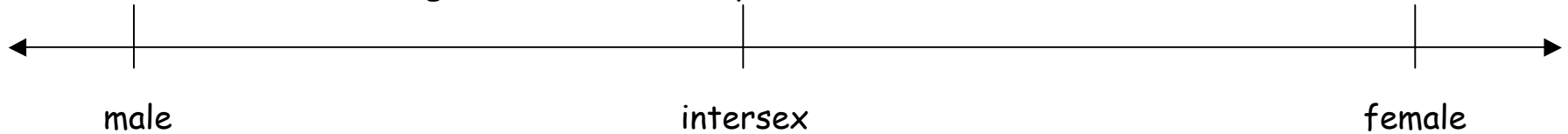


Diagram of Sex, Gender, & Sexuality

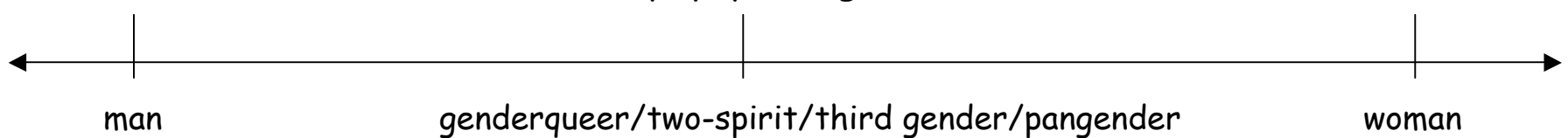
"Normative Man"

"Normative Woman"

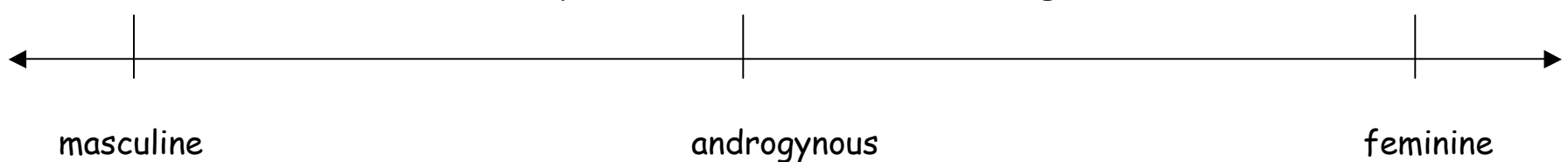
Biological Sex (anatomy, chromosomes, hormones)



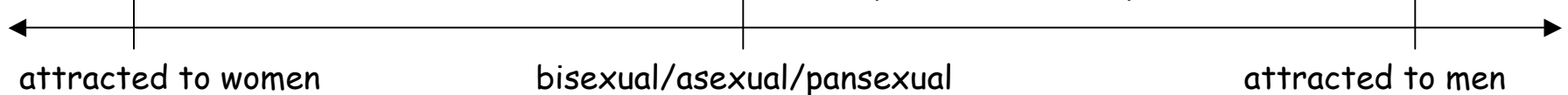
Gender Identity (psychological sense of self)



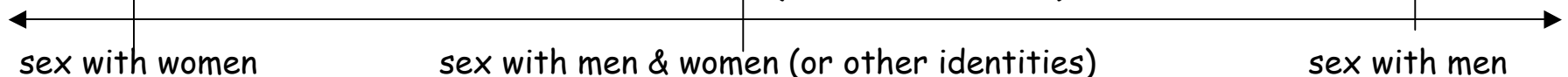
Gender Expression (communication of gender)



Sexual Orientation (identity of erotic response)



Sexual Behavior (sexual behavior)



Adapted from "Diagram of Sex & Gender," Center for Gender Sanity, <http://www.gendersanity.com/diagram.shtml>

The Kinsey Scale

There have been a number of reputed studies on homosexuality in recent decades. The most widely discussed material, however, came from the work of Dr. Alfred Kinsey and his associates in the late 1940's and early 1950's. His results have more recently been supported by further research by Masters and Johnson, as well as by several other researchers.

The most revealing point from these studies is that there is a broad spectrum of sexual orientation, not just two lifestyles: heterosexual and homosexual. Instead of picturing sexual orientation as an either/or issue, Kinsey developed a seven-point continuum based on the degree of sexual responsiveness people have for members of the same and opposite sex. The continuum is as follows:

0	Exclusively heterosexual
1	Predominately heterosexual, incidentally homosexual
2	Predominately heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
3	Equally heterosexual and homosexual
4	Predominately homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
5	Predominately homosexual, incidentally heterosexual
6	Exclusively homosexual

Dr. Alfred Kinsey suggested that it is necessary to consider a variety of activities in assessing an individual's ranking on the continuum:

- Fantasies
- Thoughts
- Emotional Feelings
- Dreams
- Frequency of Sexual Activity

Therefore, many "heterosexuals," in fact, would fall somewhere between numbers 0-3 because they occasionally think/dream/fantasize about sexual activities with members of the same sex and/or occasionally act on these feelings.

Stages in Coming Out

There are stage development theories that attempt to describe the process of coming out. Dr. Vivienne Cass published her six-stage model of homosexuality identity formation in 1979. Her model is the most widely known and used. The stages are not necessarily mutually exclusive and offer for fluid movement between stages. The model is stated below:

I.	Identity Confusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See self as member of mainstream group • Denial of inner feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who am I? • Am I different?
II.	Identity Comparison <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to come out of the “fog” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe I am gay. • I’m alone. • What are gay people like?
III.	Identity Tolerance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encounter someone or something that breaks through the denial system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I accept the possibility that I may be gay. • (Begins to look for gay contacts).
IV.	Identity Acceptance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring subculture activities, readings, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am gay. Am I okay? • Come out to some people with care.
V.	Identity Pride <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel arrogance/pride in new identity and deep rage toward majority culture • May adopt/heighten stereotypical behaviors/characteristics (i.e. “I’m different and proud of it!”) • May isolate self from mainstream values and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am proud to be gay. • I don’t (and won’t) pass for straight.
VI.	Internalization/Identity Synthesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance and integration of new identity • May go through five stages of grief to let go of old identity and all advantages of heterosexual privilege • Internalize pride/positive feelings about identity • Typically is “out” (with friends, family, at work) • More at peace with self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am an okay person who happens to be gay.

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Stages in Coming Out

What is coming out?

Coming out is a process that happens again and again; it is not just a one-time deal and it does not follow a linear course. It occurs initially when one acknowledges to oneself (most important and difficult aspect of coming out) and to others that one is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. One claims that orientation as his/her own and begins to be more or less public with it.

Coming out to themselves is one of the hardest steps in developing a positive lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity. It involves much soul searching and introspection and a good healthy sense of self-appreciation and acceptance. Coming out to others involves other risks and difficulties depending on who that person is coming out to, how engaged they are with them, how much power they have in the relationship, and how accepting they are.

Why come out?

For some LGBT people, coming out is a way to honestly express who they are and can end the stress of keeping a secret and living a double life. It can reduce isolation and alienation and can allow for increased support from other LGBT people. Not all LGBT people feel the need to come out to everyone they know. Coming out is not necessarily the goal for all LGBT people all the time.

What are people afraid of?

Rejection and loss of relationship, especially family and friends who do not understand or approve, are real fears. There is a real possibility of harassment and abuse from others, ranging from verbal insults to physical violence against them or their possessions. In addition, institutionalized discrimination and prejudice can also occur. Examples include losing a job, not being hired for a career, being denied housing and other equal opportunity rights.

What is internalized homophobia?

This occurs when an LGBT individual engages in self-rejecting or self-limiting beliefs and feeling about same-sex intimacy and relationships. This term generally applies to queer people who struggle to accept themselves or aspects of themselves. The homophobia perpetuated in greater society is internalized and becomes reality for the LGBT person.

Are there theories to explain the coming out process?

There are multiple theories regarding coming out and they follow similar patterns; the initial stage involves some awareness that another way of being (besides being heterosexual) exists and that it somehow fits the individual. This is followed by attempts to explore that way of being, the LGBT community and culture. This leads to attempts to explore how it fits and how one might feel when acting on one's curiosity. The next phase is coming to terms with what seems to be one's identity and orientation, including rationalizing it away and denying it, until some resolution and piece of mind is reached that ends in self acceptance and grows into self-appreciation. And the last stage is a synthesis of one's sexual orientation with the rest of the person.

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Making a Coming Out Plan

When you're ready to tell that first person – or even those first few people – give yourself time to prepare. Think through your options and make a deliberate plan of whom to approach, when and how.

You may want to ask yourself the following questions:

What kind of signals are you getting?

You can get a sense of how accepting people will be by the things they say – or don't say – when LGBT-related issues come up. Try to bring them up yourself by talking about an LGBT-themed movie, TV character or news event. If a person's reactions are positive, chances are he or she will be more accepting of what you have to tell them.

Are you well informed about LGBT issues?

The reactions of others will most likely be based on a lifetime of misinformation, and in some cases even negative portrayals of LGBT people. If you've done some reading on the subject, you'll be prepared to answer their concerns and questions with reliable and accurate information.

Do you know what it is you want to say?

Particularly at the beginning of the coming out process, many people are still answering tough questions for themselves and are not ready to identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. That's OK. Maybe you just want to tell someone that you're attracted to someone of the same sex, or that you feel uncomfortable with the expectations of cultural "gender norms." Maybe you just want to tell someone about a new same-sex attraction, or that you're feeling your true gender does not align with cultural "gender norms." Labels aren't important; your feelings are. Also, you may want to try writing out what you want to say to help organize and express your thoughts clearly.

Do you have support?

You don't have to do this alone. A support system is an invaluable place to turn to for reassurance. Sources of support can be other LGBT people who are living openly, LGBT hotlines, school guidance counselors, a supportive member of the clergy or, if you are coming out for the second or third time, perhaps the first person you opened up to initially. A supportive mental health professional can often help people become more comfortable. In fact, these are the first people some of us come out to.

Is this a good time?

Timing can be very important. Be aware of the mood, priorities, stresses and problems of those to whom you would like to come out. Be aware that if they're dealing with their own major life concerns, they may not be able to respond constructively to yours.

Can you be patient?

Some people will need time to deal with this new information, just as it took time for many of us to come to terms with being LGBT. When you come out to others, be prepared to give them the time they need to adjust to what you've said. Rather than expect immediate understanding, try to establish an ongoing, caring dialogue.

Retrieved from Human Rights Campaign, www.hrc.org, 8/6/07

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Qualities of an Ally

An Ally...

- generally has more power than the group they are standing up for,
- has worked to develop an understanding of people who are different,
- chooses to align with people who are different and responds to their needs,
- believes that it is in his/her self-interest to be an ally,
- is committed to personal growth required,
- is quick to take pride and appreciate success,
- expects support from other allies
- is able to acknowledge and articulate how patterns of oppression have operated in their lives,
- expects to make some mistakes but does not use mistakes as an excuse for non-action,
- knows that both sides of an ally relationship have clear responsibility for their own change whether or not persons on the other side choose to respond,
- knows that in most empowered ally relationships, it is the ally who initiates the change toward personal, institutional, and societal justice and equality,
- knows that s/he is responsible for humanizing or empowering their role in society, particularly as their role relates to responding to people who are different,
- promotes a sense of campus community and teaches others about the importance of outreach,
- does not make sexual orientation or gender expression the only aspect of the ally relationship, and
- has a good sense of humor.



Adapted from Shawn-Eric Brooks and Vernon Wall, 1990

Homophobia: The Riddle Scale

In the clinical sense, homophobia is defined as an intense, irrational fear of same sex relationships that become overwhelming to the person. In common usage, homophobia is the fear of intimate relationships with persons of the same sex.

Below are listed 4 negative homophobic and 4 positive levels of attitudes toward Gay, Lesbian Bisexual, and Transgender people/relationships. They levels were developed by Dr. Dorothy Riddle, a psychologist from Tucson, Arizona.

Negative Homophobic Levels of Attitudes	Repulsion	Homosexuality is seen as a "crime against nature." Transgender, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people (in same-sex relationships) are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc., and anything is justified to change them (e.g. prison, hospitalization, negative behavior therapy including electroshock).
	Pity	Heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is more mature and certainly to be preferred. Any possibility of becoming straight should be reinforced and those who seem to be born "that way" should be pitied, "the poor dears."
	Tolerance	Homosexuality / exploring non-heterosexual behavior is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people "grow out of." Thus, GLBTQ people are less mature than straights and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child. GLBTQ people should not be given positions of authority (because they are still working through adolescent behaviors.)
	Acceptance	Still implies that there is something to accept, characterized by such statements as "You're not gay to me, you're a person." "What you do in bed is your business." "That's fine as long as you don't flaunt it." Denies social and legal realities. 84% of people believe being gay is obscene and vulgar and 70% still believe it is wrong even between consenting adults. Ignores the pain of invisibility and stress of closet behavior. "Flaunt" usually means say or do anything that makes people aware.
Positive Levels of Attitudes	Support	Basic ACLU approach. Work to safeguard the rights of GLBTQ people. Such people may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of the climate and irrational unfairness.
	Admiration	Acknowledges that being GLBTQ in our society takes strength. Such people are willing to truly look at themselves and work on their own homophobic attitudes.
	Appreciation	Value the diversity of people and sees GLBTQ people as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to combat homophobia in them and in others.
	Nurturance	Assume that GLBTQ people are indispensable in our society. They view GLBTQ people with genuine affection and delight and are willing to be GLBTQ advocates.

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Homophobia & You

How Homophobia Hurts Us All

You do not have to be lesbian, gay or bisexual, or know someone who is, to be negatively affected by homophobia. Though homophobia actively oppresses lesbians, gay men and people who are bisexual, it also hurts heterosexuals.

- ❖ Homophobia inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own sex, for fear of being perceived as gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- ❖ Homophobia locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self-expression.
- ❖ Homophobia is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals: those perceived or labeled by others to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual; children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents; parents of gay, lesbian or bisexual children; and friends of gay men, lesbians, and bisexual persons.
- ❖ Homophobia compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that are contrary to their basic humanity.
- ❖ Homophobia, combined with sex-phobia, results in the invisibility or erasure of gay, lesbian or bisexual lives and sexuality in school-based sex education discussions, keeping vital information from students. Such erasures can kill people in the age of HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Homophobia is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chance of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Young people of all sexual identities are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are “normal.”
- ❖ Homophobia prevents some gay, lesbian and bisexual people from developing an authentic self-identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which places undue stress and often times, trauma on themselves, as well as their heterosexual spouses and their children.
- ❖ Homophobia inhibits appreciation of the 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, people are not only fighting oppression for specific groups of people, but also striving for a society that accepts and celebrates the differences in all of us.

Blumfeld, W.J. (1992). Homophobia: How we all pay the price. Boston: Beacon Press.

Cycle of Oppression

One way to explain how oppression is perpetuated in our society is by defining the following terms and showing the link between them, and the momentum that keeps the cycle going.

1. **Stereotype:** A preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. While often negative, stereotypes may also be complimentary. Even positive stereotypes can have negative impact however, simply because they are broad generalizations.



The stereotypes we hold for the basis of our prejudices.

2. **Prejudice:** A conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members.



When the person holding the prejudice also has and uses the power to deny opportunities, resources or access to a person because of their group membership, there is discrimination.

3. **Discrimination:** is prejudice plus the power. Discrimination can take many forms including racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, etc.



Many acts of discrimination build up over time; perpetuated against one relatively less powerful group by a more powerful social group, lead to a group of people being in a state of oppression.

4. **Oppression:** The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group of people with access to social power. The result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.



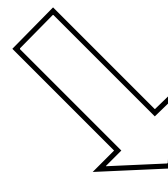
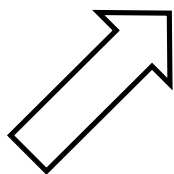
Because oppression is institutionalized in our society, target group members often believe the messages, and internalize the oppression.

5. **Internalized Oppression:** The “buying into” the elements of oppression by the target group.



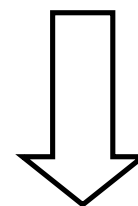
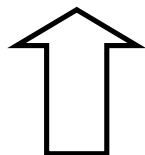
When target group members believe the stereotypes they are taught about themselves, they tend to act them out and thus perpetuate the stereotypes, which reinforces the prejudice and keeps the cycle going.

Stereotypes



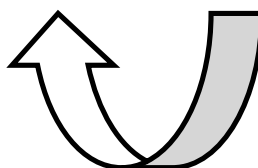
Internalized
Oppression

Prejudice



Oppression

Discrimination



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Heterosexual Privilege

Heterosexual Privilege

By Bill Geller

This title and concept is taken directly from a piece titled "White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible Knapsack" written by Peggy McIntosh of Wellesley College Center on Research for Women, Wellesley, MA 02181 (617-431-1453). The article appeared in *Peace and Freedom*, July/August 1989.

The intent in writing the following is to simply stimulate thinking, which may travel in any number of directions depending on the individual. For example, what are the similarities and differences between racism and homophobia? A second example is to explore one's sense of what lesbian, gay, and bisexual people face and to consider what you might do about that. Since these two columns barely introduce the topic, I recommend reading Peggy's article and two other, Phillip Brian Harper's, "Racism and Homophobia as Reflections of their Perpetrators," and Ann Pellegrini's "S (h)ifting the Terms of Hetero/Sexism: Gender, Power, Homophobias," both appear in Warren Blumfield's edited book, *Homophobia: How We All Pay The Price*.

To be other than a heterosexual is to be at a disadvantage; thus, as a heterosexual I have privileges and advantages that gays, bisexuals, and lesbians do not have. These are privileges that no one ever bothered to point out to me or teach me about or ask me to consider. I never thought about this until I read the article by Peggy. Here privileges, conditions that she could count on but her Black colleagues could not, guided me in my initial list of heterosexual privileges. My list grows as I think of those opportunities that I have come to take for granted, but are denied to my gay, lesbian and bisexual colleagues. What I have come to realize is that I did not earn or work to have these privileges afforded me. I was automatically given them and was able to use them, because I'm heterosexual.

Once having recognized the "privileges," or as Peggy would, upon reflection, refer to as positive advantage and negative advantage, what will I do? Some, like kissing in public, should be an advantage for all individuals and I want to work to that end. Others, like remaining oblivious to others, I want to put an end to, because all they do is encourage a hierarchical structure among people; they disadvantage people. Before I can put an end to anything, I have to be sure that I am no longer using that advantage myself. The starting point is with my own introspection. The more involved I have become as an ally, the more privileges I see. With that as a brief introduction, consider the following:

1. I can arrange to be in the company of people of my sexual orientation if I want, any time I want.
2. If I have to move I can be reasonably assured of financing based on the household's two incomes.
3. I can be reasonably sure my neighbors will be pleasant towards me.
4. I can walk the streets with my significant other and feel safe when holding hands or kissing or hugging.
5. I can see or read about issues on the news media that are important to me. (...and not just about me as a topic of discussion.)
6. Curriculum materials of my children will address my sexual orientation.

7. When I go into a bookstore or record shop, I will readily find things that pertain to my sexual orientation.
8. While traveling on public transportation, I can read materials pertaining to my sexual orientation.
9. The police will respond to my calls for help.
10. I can speak out in public and have it looked at positively.
11. When I am in the hospital, no one questions who is in my immediate family.
12. When there is a death in the family, I am not questioned when I wish to attend the funeral.
13. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my sexual orientation.
14. I can be oblivious to other people's issues.
15. When I want to talk to the boss, I can be pretty sure the boss is of my sexual orientation.
16. I can rent a motel room and not fear of being arrested.
17. I can display pictures and objects that are most important to me.
18. I can use the pronouns I wish without drawing unusual attention to myself.
19. I can socialize with my partner just about any place.
20. The sex of my partner will not exclude me from the child adoption process.
21. I can be true to who I am.
22. When I turn on the TV, I can readily see shows that pertain to my sexual orientation.
23. My sexual orientation is not a threat in the work place.
24. I can get married.

In 1997, the General Accounting Office of the Federal Government compiled a list of 1,049 rights benefits, which were related to civil marriage. In 2004, they did an update and found there were 1138 rights. The lists includes thirteen categories of rights and benefits, including:

- Social Security and Related Programs, Housing and Food Stamps
- Veterans' Benefits
- Taxation
- Federal Civilian and Military Service Benefits
- Employment Benefits and Related Laws
- Immigration and Naturalization
- Trade, Commerce, and Intellectual Property
- Financial Disclosure and Conflict of Interest

<http://www.gao.gov>

Heterosexuality in Perspective

A “Simple” Questionnaire for Heterosexuals

1. What do you think **caused** your heterosexuality?
2. When and how did you **decide** you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible that your heterosexuality is **just a phase** that you may grow out of?
4. Is it possible that heterosexuality stems from a **neurotic fear** of others of the same sex?
5. Do your parents know you are straight? Do your friends, co-workers and/or your roommates know?
6. Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? **Can't you be who you are and be quiet?**
7. Why do heterosexuals put **so much** emphasis on **sex**?
8. Why do heterosexuals feel **compelled** to introduce others to their lifestyle?
9. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexual (97%). **Do you consider it wise to expose children to heterosexual teachers?**
10. Just what do men and women **do** in bed together?
11. Bearing in mind the current divorce rate, why are there **so few stable relationships** between heterosexuals?
12. Considering the menace of overpopulation, how could the human race survive if everyone was heterosexual?
13. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that might enable you to change if you really want to. **Have you considered aversion therapy?**
14. Would you want your child to be heterosexual, **knowing the problems they would face?**

If we turn around questions commonly asked of LGB people, we can see a whole different perspective on sexual orientation.

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Rates of Suicide & Substance Abuse amongst LGBTs

- 30% of adolescent suicides are committed by LGBT youth.
- Transgender people, in particular, show high rates of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and thoughts of suicide (35% of the respondents to a D.C. survey reported that they had seriously considered suicide).
- Rates of suicide for adult lesbians and gay men are three times greater than for their straight counterparts.
- Statistics indicate that lesbians and gay men are at a much greater risk than the general population for substance abuse. Frequently cited reasons include attempts to cope with loss and depression through alcohol and drugs, resorting to abuse as a result of societal oppression, and the role of bars and social meeting places for lesbians and gay men.
- Lesbians and gay men smoke at higher rates than the general population, and it is estimated that half of LGB youth smoke. LGBT people have also been specifically targeted by tobacco marketing efforts.
- LGB women are almost twice as likely to battle major depression than straight women. LGB men are three and a half times more likely to struggle with major depression. It is important to note that researchers do not believe these increased prevalence rates are related to inherent psychopathology in LGB people. Instead, they are widely recognized as a clear consequence of living in a society where bias against LGB individuals is commonplace.
- Taboos surrounding the free and open discussion of LGBT identities impede people in the school environment from facing a major factor that is often involved. As a consequence, major school suicide prevention programs are not effective because the youngsters feel constrained in revealing their true feelings.

Sources: Project 10, Los Angeles Public Schools
Ellen Haller, MD; Genevieve Preer, MS III; Shane Snowden
The Ohio State's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Student Services.

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What Does the Christian Bible Say?

Taken from "What Does the Christian Bible Say?" by Frank Jernigan, GLBSB Newsletter, 3-4 (1992).

On the Defense

Here is a brief description of key verses used to condemn [LGB people], and different interpretations:

Leviticus 18:22 - "Thou shall not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination." There is a similar reference repeated in Lev. 20:13.) Both references probably pertain to temple prostitution and idolatry. They are no longer under the law. If this law were still in effect, all the other laws described in Leviticus would also be in effect (the requirement for circumcision, prohibitions against eating pork and shellfish, etc.) Ask [yourself] how many people follow those rules. Leviticus is the only apparently explicit reference to homosexuality in the Old Testament.

Genesis 19:4-9 - The story of Sodom leading up to the city's destruction became the basis of the belief that the sin of Sodom was homosexuality (hence the term "sodomite"). The offense described in this passage is not homosexual behavior, but rather the mistreatment of strangers and rape.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 (NIV) says "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and the needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me."

What Jesus had to say about homosexuality - Nothing!

What Paul had to say about homosexuals - The word translated as "homosexual" in modern verses of the Bible ("effeminate" in the King James version) is much disputed and probably means male temple prostitute. It would be difficult to deny that Paul was your basic homophobe, as most explicitly revealed in Romans 1:26-27 ("Because of this [practice of idolatry], God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.")

He goes on to describe these same people as being "filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful..." In fact, every person is included here in one category or another, including all born-again Christians. This is merely the beginning of Paul's premise that "There is no one righteous, not even one," which he follows with the explanation that salvation cannot come by our own efforts, but only through the grace of God.

On the Offense

There are many biblical passages that suggest God loves LGB people as much as he loves any

human being, including our behavior:

Old Testament - A prominently recurring theme is that God is on the side of the oppressed (Psalm 103:6 - "The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed." Psalm 82:3 - "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.") There are many others.

"Do not mistreat an alien [stranger, misfit, or queer] or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt." This is one of the most repeated commandments in the Old Testament. Exodus 22:21,23:9, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 24:17, and over thirty similar verses in the rest of the Old Testament. Compare the number of verses proscribing homosexual acts (two, if any) and the number of verses proscribing mistreatment of queers (over thirty). Which do you think God is more concerned about?

New Testament - Which of the following is closer to a statement of the "gospel," the "good news" that Christ commissioned his followers to tell the world:

A. God, the unrelenting avenger of sin, is coming to seek out all people unworthy of eternal life to throw them in the fires of Hell for eternal torment. Therefore, you better try to understand every requirement of God (both do's and don'ts) and try as hard as you can to live according to them, in the almost impossible hope that you won't be among the condemned.

B. God, who is love, unbounded and unconditional, has completed in Christ whatever was necessary (for whatever reason it was necessary) to reunite all people with God. By experiencing, i.e., receiving, trusting in, contemplating the reality of this divine acceptance, we can grow in our ability to feel and express this kind of love for other people.

A prominently recurring theme, God's unconditional love, is found in the following passages:

Romans 8:38 - "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I John 3:1 - "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"

I John 4:7-12 - "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. [My, how inclusive!] Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." [Is it even remotely conceivable that such love would exclude people on the basis of their sexual orientation???].

And finally,

Romans 8:31 - "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

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Edited August 2007 by Jami R. Grosser, Asst. Director