



SAFE ZONE @
UAHuntsville

Chapter 1: Understanding Homo/Biphobia and Heterosexism

What is Homophobia and Biphobia?

Homophobia – an intense, irrational fear of homosexuals and homosexuality, and the hatred, disgust, and prejudice fostered by that fear. In common usage, homophobia is widely used to describe any belief or behavior which indicated fear or hatred of homosexuals or homosexuality.

Homohatred – an alternative term used by some people to describe beliefs and behaviors which reveal hostility and prejudice toward homosexuals or homosexuality.

Homophobia can be experienced at several levels:

- 1) the fear or hatred of persons who are lesbian or gay
- 2) the fear of being perceived as lesbian or gay
- 3) the fear of one's own sexual or physical attraction toward members of the same sex (which is referred to as internalized homophobia)

The fear or hatred which comprises homophobia can be expressed outwardly through a variety of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions or behaviors, such as

- 1) expressing discomfort or disgust toward persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual
- 2) denying equal treatment to persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual
- 3) expressing hostility or violence toward persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual

Examples of Homophobia:

- Making negative assumptions about a person's sexual identity based on dress, behavior, or personality
- Feeling repulsed by displays of affection between same-sex couples, but accepting affectionate displays between heterosexual couples
- Thinking of persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual only in terms of their sexuality, rather than as whole, complex persons
- Being afraid of social situations or activities where you fear being perceived as lesbian, gay or bisexual
- Feeling that people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual should not discuss or display their sexual orientation openly while people who are heterosexual may do so freely
- Assuming that persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual will be attracted to everyone of the same sex

Biphobia – fear or hatred of bisexual men and women displayed by heterosexuals, gay men, and lesbians.

Examples of Biphobia

- Assuming that people who are bisexual are confused about their sexuality
- Assuming that people who are bisexual are promiscuous or cannot live monogomously
- Assuming that people who are bisexual are in denial about their homosexuality

· Believing that people who are bisexual spread AIDS

Understanding Homophobia

Heterosexism is so deeply ingrained in our society we often hardly notice it. The questions below are helpful for heterosexual audiences or to help lesbians/gay men look at internalized homophobia. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you laugh at jokes whose humor depends upon stereotypes (usually negatively) of homosexuals?
2. Do you use dehumanizing slang: for example, queers, homos fags, pansies, dykes, and lezzies?
3. Do you assume that, because someone speaks in support of homosexuality, that person is homosexual?
4. Do you identify yourself as heterosexual (or let yourself be assumed so) when homosexuality is a topic of discussion or when confronting people about derogatory remarks?
5. Do you still believe that all women need a man to be complete?
6. Do you assume that the person you are speaking to is heterosexual?
7. When looking at a gay/lesbian person, do you automatically think of their sexuality rather than seeing him/her as a whole, complex person?
8. Do you assume that a gay/lesbian relationship is just about sex, and not like a loving heterosexual relationship?
9. Do you use phrases like “gay lifestyle” or “sexual preference” to dismiss or marginalize gay/lesbian persons?
10. Do you treat gay/lesbian persons as if they made a choice to be gay/lesbian, rather than a choice to live honestly with their sexual orientation?
11. Do you think that if a gay/lesbian person touches you, he/she is making sexual advances?
12. Do you feel that gay people are too outspoken about gay rights?
13. Do you avoid mentioning to friends that you are involved with a gay rights organization because you are afraid that they will think that you are gay?

Heterosexism and Heterosexual Privilege

Heterosexual Privilege is predicated on the heterocentric notion that everyone is heterosexual or straight. From the pronouns we use, to the assumptions we make, and to the laws in our nation, we support heterosexual privilege. Heterocentrism is the ideology that begets Heterosexism, which is a system of oppression that is often manifested in homophobia, which is a fear or hatred of individuals who do not identify as heterosexual. To the left is a flow chart to showcase the overlapping relationship between Heterocentrism, Heterosexism, and Homophobia.

Heterosexism – system of oppression of persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual based on homophobia. Includes three components:

- 1) The assumption that all people are heterosexual
- 2) Prejudice and discrimination against persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the only “normal” sexual orientation and therefore preferable
- 3) Systemic display of homophobia in societal institutions, laws, and policies by excluding the needs, concerns, and life experiences of persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual

Heterosexual Privilege – actual or promised societal benefits accorded to individuals who identify as heterosexual

Examples of Heterosexual Privilege that are not shared by the LGBTQ community:

- The right to know your normalcy
- The right to talk openly about your intimate relationships
- The right to marry
- The right to bear children without question
- The right to adopt children without question
- The right to kiss or show affection in public
- The right to show pain when a relationship ends
- The right to be open about apartment hunting with a significant other
- The right to be validated by your religion
- The right to be socially accepted by neighbors and your neighborhood
- The right to feel comfortable in children’s schools
- The right to dress without worrying about what it represents
- The right to have in-laws
- The right not to hide friends, and social activities geared to the same sex
- The right not to resent the media for its heterosexual references
- The right not to be excluded by the media

- The right to share holidays with your lover and your family
- The right to openly discuss politics without fear of assumptions
- The right to have children be comfortable with their friends
- The right to family support
- The right to share insurance with your partner
- The right to visit your partner in the hospital
- The right to donate blood
- The right to be who you are all the time
- The right to not have to explain who you love to everyone
- The right to be secure in your job regardless of the fact that you are heterosexual
- The right to serve in the US military and openly represent your sexual orientation
- The right to go to a dance like a prom or homecoming with a partner of your choosing
- The right to be equally protected under the law

If you're "straight", ask yourself these questions...

1. What do you think caused your homosexuality?
2. When and how did you decide that you were heterosexual?
3. Is it possible your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
4. Is it possible your heterosexuality is a phase that you may grow out of?
5. If you never slept with a person of the same sex, is it possible that all you need is a good gay lover?
6. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
7. Why do you heterosexuals feel compelled to seduce others into your life style?
8. Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be who you are and keep it quiet?
9. Would you want your child to be heterosexual, knowing the problems he or she would face?
10. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexuals. Do you consider it safe to expose your child to heterosexual teachers?
11. With all the societal support marriage receives, why are there so few stable marriages among heterosexuals?
12. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
13. Considering the menace of overpopulation, how could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual like you?
14. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you fear he or she might be inclined to influence you in the direction of his or her own leanings?
15. How can you become a whole person if you limit yourself to compulsive, exclusive heterosexuality and fail to develop your natural, healthy homosexual potential?
16. Do heterosexuals hate and or distrust others of their own sex? Is that what makes them heterosexual?

Martin Rochlin, Ph. D., author

Riddle Homophobia Scale

Homophobic Levels of Attitude:

1. *Repulsion*: Homosexuality is seen as a “crime against nature.” Gay/lesbians are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc. Anything is justified to change them: prison, hospitalization, negative behavior therapy, electroshock therapy, etc.
2. *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”.
3. *Tolerance*: Homosexuality is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people “grow out of”. Thus lesbians/gays are less mature than “straights” and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child. Lesbians/gays should not be given positions of authority because they are still working through their adolescent behavior.
4. *Acceptance*: Still implies there is something to accept. Characterized by such statements as “You’re not a lesbian to me, you’re a person!” or “What you do in bed is your own business,” or “That’s fine with me as long as you don’t flaunt it!”

Positive Levels of Attitudes:

1. *Support*: The basic ACLU position. Work to safeguard the rights of lesbians and gays. People at this level may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of homophobic climate and the irrational unfairness.
2. *Admiration*: Acknowledges that being lesbian/gay in our society takes strength. People at this level are willing to truly examine their homophobic attitudes, values, and behaviors.
3. *Appreciation*: Value the diversity of people and see lesbian/gays as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and others.
4. *Nurturance*: Assumes that gay/lesbian people are indispensable in our society. They view lesbians/gays with genuine affection and delight, and are willing to be allies and advocates.

Chapter 2: Understanding the Coming Out Process

Coming Out

What is “Coming Out?”

The term “coming out” (of the closet) refers to the life-long process of the development of a positive gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender identity. It is a very long and difficult struggle for many people because they often have to confront many homophobic attitudes and discriminatory practices along the way. Many individuals first need to struggle with their own negative stereotypes and feelings of homophobia that they learned when they were growing up. It is the process of recognizing, accepting, and sharing with others one’s sexual identity.

Coming out is not a single event, but a life-long process. In our society, people generally assume that everyone is heterosexual, so persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual person goes through in recognizing and accepting their sexual orientation.

Stages in the Coming Out Process

There are many stages in the coming out process, and the process is not exactly the same for every person. Generally, the coming out process begins with coming out to oneself: the internal process a lesbian, gay, or bisexual person goes through in recognizing and accepting their sexual orientation. This can be frightening and depressing at first for many people, because they, like almost everyone in our society, have learned negative stereotypes and many myths about homosexuality as they were growing up; later stages of coming out involve choosing to disclose one’s sexual orientation to others.

Moving toward a recognition and acceptance of one’s own sexual orientation.

This part of the coming out process involves becoming consciously aware of one’s feelings for and attractions to people of the same sex, or to people of both sexes if one is bisexual. Accepting those feelings and attractions may involve “un-learning” myths, misinformation, and stereotypes that one has been taught by society about people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Acceptance may also involve grieving for the loss of one’s heterosexual identity (i.e. feeling that one will never get married or have children, realizing they may not have the perfect church wedding their parents dreamed of for them, etc.). Another aspect of this stage may be working through one’s fears about how others may react to their sexual orientation and fears about the possibility of rejection by family or friends. Developing a positive self-image is a crucial part of the coming out process.

Coming out to and gaining support from other lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

As individuals “un-learn” the myths and stereotypes that previously formed the basis for their knowledge about homosexuality or bisexuality, they may experience a need to replace that information with more accurate and positive information. They may do this, in part, by seeking out other lesbian, gay, and bisexual people who can share their experiences with them. Also, as an individual lets go of their heterosexual identity, they may experience a sense of isolation, of no longer fitting into the

heterosexual world around them. They may seek out people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual in order to develop a new sense of community or belonging. People who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual may be perceived as the safest people to initially come out to since they are not likely to react negatively or with prejudice. They may begin to develop a support network which helps them feel more comfortable with and established in their sexual orientation. This may include joining lesbian, gay, and bisexual organizations, visiting a gay or lesbian bar, participating in a counseling support group for people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or coming out to non-gay, lesbian, or bisexual people who are likely to be supportive.

Coming out to non-lesbian, gay, or bisexual people.

As individuals feel more comfortable with their sexual orientation, they may begin to come out to heterosexual friends, family, or co-workers. Prior to actually coming out, they may begin to drop hints to “test the waters” for possible reactions. Without explicitly stating their sexual orientation, they may indicate with whom they are spending time, or that they are not planning on marriage. They may discuss issues related to homosexuality in general in order to gauge others’ attitudes. Such preliminary steps can make the actual revelation of their sexual orientation less unexpected. As they experience positive reactions, they may feel more and more able to come out to others. If they experience negative reactions, they may go back into the closet for a period of time, they may use their support network to retain their self-confidence, or they may break off relationships with people who are not accepting of their identity.

Coming out can be a very long and difficult struggle because it involves not only confronting the constant assumption that one is heterosexual, but also confronting homophobic attitudes and discriminatory practices along the way.

Ultimately, coming out can be a very freeing experience for person who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual, because it allows them to live a more honest life and develop more genuine relationships with others. Coming out does not solve all of an individual’s problems; indeed, it may create new ones. Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of coming out is part of the process.

There are different levels of being out, ranging from completely closeted (not revealing one’s sexual orientation to anyone) to being publicly out in some situations, but closeted in others. For example, a person might be out to friends, but not their family. A person might be out at school, but not in their home town. Someone might be out in their church, but not in their professional life. The phrases below describe different degrees to which an individual might be in or out of the closet:

Closeted = “I don’t want you to know”

Passing = “I assume you don’t know”

Covering = “I don’t know what you know”

Implicitly Out = “I’m gay. See it if you can.”

Explicitly Out = “I’m telling you I am gay.”

Publicly Out = “See me as gay.”

Val Dumontier, 1993

Why Come Out? Risks & Benefits

Coming out is a constant internal and external process that can sometimes be met with pain, misunderstanding, and hardship. Members of the LGBTQ population “come out” in many different ways to many different groups. In addition the coming out process can look different for each individual and sometimes an individual can come out without even noticing. Not to mention the coming out process is continual, because the LGBTQ population is an “invisible minority,” meaning that you cannot recognize LGBTQ individuals by the way they look. Because of they are an “invisible minority” this population may find themselves coming out every time they make a new friend, start a new job, or take a class. In any situation it is important to know the risks and benefits to coming out to others. Below are just a few risks and benefits

commonly experienced by the LGBTQ population:

Some Risks of Coming Out

- Not everyone will be understanding or accepting.
- Some relationships with friends, family members, or co-workers may be permanently changed in negative ways, and you could end up losing some of this support system.
- Individuals under the age of 18 may be thrown out of their homes or lose financial support.
- Students may lose their financial support for school from their parent/guardian.
- An individual may experience harassment or discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. In many cases this harassment or discrimination has no legal protection, therefore an LGBTQ individual may be terminated from their job, denied housing, or denied insurance.

Some Benefits of Coming Out

- Individuals will have the ability to live their lives openly.
- Individuals may build up their self-esteem by being honest with themselves.
- Individuals may develop closer, more genuine relationships with new friends and family.
- Some relationships may be changed permanently in positive ways.
- Individuals may be able to connect more with individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ population and become a part of the community.
- Individuals may alleviate the stress associated with “hiding” their identity or living their life “in the closet”.
- After coming out an individual may be able to change the common misconceptions about the LGBTQ population simply by speaking out and being open with others. The best way to change an individual’s mind is through a personal relationship.

Coming Out Issues & Concerns

Before these people can feel good about who they are, they will need to challenge their own attitudes and take them from the lower end of that homophobic continuum (repulsion pity, tolerance) to feelings of appreciation and admiration. Unfortunately, it often takes years of painful work to develop a positive gay or gender identity. In their lifetime, many individuals begin to make decisions about who to tell that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Many of these people are afraid to “come out” to their friends and family.

What might people who are a member of the LGBTQ population be afraid of when coming out?

- Rejection – loss of relationships with friends and/or family
- Gossip – rumors spread about their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Loss of spiritual foundation- rejection from their church, mosque, temple, etc.
- Being thrown out of the house or of the family
- Loss of financial support
- Harassment or Abuse
- Threat of physical violence
- Discrimination
- Loss of employment or discrimination by their employer
- Questions surrounding their personal or professional integrity
- Questions surrounding their intimate relationships and their health (both mental and physical)
- Being seen by others as sick, immoral, perverted, anti-family, or sinful

How might people who are members of the LGBTQ population feel about coming out to someone?

- Scared
- Vulnerable
- Unsure of how others will react
- Relieved
- Proud

What might people who are members of the LGBTQ population want from others when they come out?

- Acceptance
- Support
- Understanding
- Comfort
- Reassurance that their relationships has not changed in a negative manner
- Closer relationships to friends and/or family
- Acknowledgement of their feelings
- Understanding and compassion for their coming out process
- Love

Why might gays, lesbians, bisexuals, or transgender individuals want to come out to friends/relatives?

- End the “hiding game”
- Feel Closer to those people
- Be able to be “whole” around them
- Stop wasting energy by hiding all the time
- Feel like they have integrity
- To make a statement that “gay is ok”

How might someone feel after a gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender person comes out to them?

- Scared
- Supportive
- Shocked
- Flattered
- Disbelieving
- Honored
- Uncomfortable
- Angry
- Not sure what to say
- Disgusted
- Not sure what to do next
- Wondering why the person “came out”

Adapted from works by Cheryl Hetherington, Jamie Washington, Vernon Wall, and *Lesbians; A Conscious Raising Kit*, by the Boston NOW Lesbian Task Force

Sexual Identity: The Cass Model Using Theory to Understand Gay and Lesbian Identity Development

There are several theories that describe the sexual orientation development of gay and lesbian individuals. Because people are unique and everyone has his or her own story, no one theory describes all people. Some of the factors that influence development, and which are not yet accounted for by theory include race, religion, culture, gender, and ability. So please be prepared for differences among students. Theory does however provide one explanation of students' identity development and helps us predict some of the development they have ahead of them.

In 1979 Vivienne Cass released her "Homosexual Identity Model" based on her empirical research of gays and lesbians in Australia. Her model has been used in higher education as the standard for discussing the identity development for gay and lesbian college students.

It is important to note that this is a stage model, meaning, according to Cass, the individual progresses along this path. An individual may take several years to get through a particular stage and may never make it to stage 6. Finally "foreclosure" (when an individual denies their identity or hides it from others) can occur in any stage and halt the process.

Stage 1: Identity Confusion: "Could I be gay?" This stage begins with the person's first awareness of gay or lesbian thoughts, feelings, and attractions. The person typically feels confused and experiences turmoil.

Task: Who am I? - Accept, Deny, Reject

Possible Responses: Will avoid information about lesbians and gays; inhibit behavior; deny homosexuality ("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: May explore internal positive and negative judgements. Will be permitted to be uncertain regarding sexual identity. May find support in knowing that sexual behavior occurs along a spectrum. May receive permission and encouragement to explore sexual identity as a normal experience (like career identity and social identity).

Stage 2: Identity Comparison: "Maybe this does apply to me." In this stage, the person accepts the possibility of being gay or lesbian and examines the wider implications of that tentative commitment. Self-alienation becomes isolation.

Task: Deal with social alienation.

Possible Responses: May begin to grieve for losses and the things she or he will give up by embracing their sexual orientation. May compartmentalize their own sexuality. Accepts lesbian, gay definition or behavior but maintains “heterosexuals” identity of self. Tells oneself, “It’s only temporary”: I’m just in love with this particular woman/man,” etc.

Possible Needs: Will be very important that the person develops own definitions. Will need information about sexual identity, lesbian, gay community resources, encouragement to talk about loss of heterosexual life expectations. May be permitted to keep some “heterosexual” identity (it is not an all or none issue)

Stage 3: Identity Tolerance: “I’m not the only one.” The person acknowledges that he or she is likely gay or lesbian and seeks out other gay and lesbian people to combat feelings of isolation. Increased commitment to being lesbian or gay.

Task: Decrease social alienation by seeking out lesbians and gays.

Possible Responses: Beginning to have language to talk and think about the issue. Recognition that being lesbian or gay does not preclude other options. Accentuates difference between self and heterosexuals. Seeks out lesbian and gay 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: Be supported in exploring own shame feelings derived from heterosexism, as well as external heterosexism. Receive support in finding positive lesbian, gay community connections. It is particularly important important for the person to know community resources.

Stage 4: Identity Acceptance: “I will be okay.” The person attaches a positive connotation to his or her gay or lesbian identity and accepts rather than tolerates it. This is a continuing and increased contact with the gay and lesbian culture.

Task: Deal with inner tension of no longer subscribing to society’s norm, attempt to bring congruence between private and public view of self.

Possible Responses: Accepts gay or 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 gay and lesbian community. Begins some selective disclosures of sexual identity. More social coming out; more comfortable being seen with groups of men or women that are identified as “gay.” More realistic evaluation of situation.

Possible Needs: Continue exploring grief and loss of heterosexual life expectation. Continue exploring internalized “homophobia” (learned shame for heterosexist society.) Find support in making decisions about where, when, and to whom he or she self discloses.

Stage 5: Identity Pride: “I’ve got to let people know who I am!” The person divides the world into heterosexuals and homosexuals, and is immersed in gay and lesbian culture while minimizing contact with heterosexuals. Us-them quantity to political/social viewpoint.

Task: Deal with incongruent views on heterosexuals.

Possible Responses: Splits world into “gay” (good) and “straight” (bad). Experiences disclosure crises with heterosexuals as he or she is less willing to “blend in.” Identifies gay culture as sole source of support; all gay friends, business connections, social connections.

Possible Needs: Receive support for exploring anger issues. Find support for exploring issues of heterosexism. Develop skills for coping with reactions and responses to disclosure to sexual identity. Resist being defensive!

Stage 6: Identity Synthesis: The person integrates his or her sexual identity with all other aspects of self, and sexual orientation becomes only one aspect of self rather than the entire identity.

Task: Integrate gay and lesbian identity so that instead of being the identity, it is an aspect of self.

Possible Responses: Continues to be angry at heterosexism, but with decreased intensity. Allows trust of others to increase and build. Gay and lesbian identity is integrated with all aspects of “self”. Feels all right to move into a community and not simply define space according to sexual orientation.

***Please note this model is based on research of predominantly white gay men and lesbian women of high to middle class status. This stage model is not necessarily reflective of the process a bisexual or transgender individual may go through. Ultimately, this stage model may not be applicable to everyone.*

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Cass, V.C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 4, 219-235.

Chapter 3: Becoming a Safe Zone Ally

Qualities of a UAH Safe Zone Ally

A UAH Safe Zone Ally:

1. Has worked to develop an understanding of homosexuality and the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.
2. Chooses to align with the GLBT people and responds to their needs.
3. Believes that it is in her or his self-interest to be an ally.
4. Is committed to the personal growth required to be an ally.
5. Is quick to take pride and appreciate success.
6. Expects support from other allies.
7. Is able to acknowledge and articulate how patterns of oppression have operated in their lives.
8. Expects to make some mistakes but does not use it as an excuse for non-action.
9. 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.
10. Knows that in the most empowered ally relationship, the persons in the non-homosexual role initiate the change toward personal, institutional and societal justice and equality.
11. Knows that he or she is responsible for humanizing or empowering their role in society, particularly as their role relates to responding to gays and lesbians.
12. Promote a sense of community with the gay community and teaches others about the importance of outreach.
13. Has a good sense of humor.

Strategies for Being a Safe Zone Ally

LISTEN

The most important strategy for an Ally is to listen without judgment and with compassion.

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Don't assume that the sexual orientation of a person is the most important aspect of that person, or the only topic they want to discuss. Remember that everyone is a multifaceted individual whose sexuality is only one aspect of their total life.

Don't assume that all unmarried people are single or have relationships or desire relationships with individuals of the "opposite" gender/sex.

Don't assume all mothers and fathers are heterosexuals or that children live in families consisting of a male-female couple.

BE AWARE OF THE LANGUAGE YOU USE

Using inclusive terms such as "partner" or "date" instead of "spouse," "wife," "husband," "boyfriend," or "girlfriend."

Using inclusive terms such as "committed relationship" instead of "marriage."

Using pronouns that are gender neutral and don't assume the sex/gender of someone's partner, such as "person," "someone," or "anyone."

BE AWARE OF PREJUDICE & HETEROSEXISM

Be an Ally 100% of the time, no deals, no strings attached.

Recognize that it will take some time to bridge communication gaps and develop an understanding of the experiences of people with different sexual orientations and gender identities from your own.

You don't have to try and convince individuals that you are "on their side," just be there for them.

Confront jokes and slurs: silence may communicate that you condone the prejudicial behavior.

Risks/Benefits to being a Safe Zone Ally

Some Risks of Being an Ally:

- Others may speculate about your own sexual orientation or gender identity. You may be labeled as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (“by association”). This may be uncomfortable for you.
- You may become the subject of gossip or rumors.
- You may be criticized or ridiculed by others who do not agree with you or who view the issue as unimportant or unpopular.
- You may experience alienation from friends or colleagues who are not comfortable with the topics of sexual orientation or gender identity. These people may distance themselves from you in order to avoid conflict or labels.
- Your values, your morality, and your personal character may be questioned by people who believe homosexuality is wrong, sinful, against family values, etc.
- You may become the target of overt or subtle discrimination, such as being excluded from certain activities or a negative reflection on an employee evaluation.
- People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender may not accept you right away.
- Due to some past negative experiences with heterosexuals, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender may not trust you and may question your motivation.

Some Benefits of Being an Ally:

- You learn more accurate information about the reality of being part of the LGBTQ population.
- You learn more about how values and beliefs about sexual orientation and gender identity impact your own and others' lives.
- You open yourself up to the possibility of closer relationships with a wider range of people.
- You become less locked into gender roles, gender expectations and stereotypes.
- You increase your ability to have close relationships with same-sex friends.
- You have opportunities to learn from, teach, and have impact on an often marginalized population, which you may not have otherwise interacted with.
- You empower yourself to take an active role in creating a more accepting world by countering prejudice and discrimination with understanding, support, and caring.
- You may be a role model for others. Your actions may influence others and help them find the inner resources to speak and act in support of this population.
- You may have opportunities to share with others what you have learned, and have a positive impact on the climate in your school or workplace or the attitudes of your family or friends.
- You may make a difference in the lives of young people who hear you confront derogatory language or speak supportively of this population. As a result of your action, they may feel they have a friend instead of turning to alcohol, drugs or other unhealthy coping mechanisms, including suicide.

Ally Development

Awareness: It is important to become more aware of who you are and how you are different from and similar to lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

Strategies for developing awareness:

1. Conversation with GLBT individuals
2. Attending awareness building workshops
3. Reading about GLBT lifestyles, issues, and
4. By self-examination.

Knowledge/Education: You must begin to acquire knowledge about sexual orientation and what the experience is for GLBT persons in society and your campus community.

Knowledge and education can be gained by:

1. Learning about laws, policies, and practices and how they affect GLBT persons.
2. Educating yourself about the gay and lesbian culture and norms of this community.
3. Contacting local and national GLBT organizations for information.

Skills: You must develop skills in communicating the knowledge that you have learned.

Your knowledge can be communicated by:

1. Attending workshops
2. Role playing situations with friends
3. Developing support connections
4. Practicing interventions or awareness raising.

Action: Action is, without a doubt, the only way that we can affect change in the society as a whole; for if we keep our awareness, knowledge, and skills to ourselves, we deprive the rest of the world of what we have learned, thus keeping them from having the fullest possible life.

Adapted from Evans, N. J. & Wall, V. A. (1991). *Beyond Tolerance: Gay, Lesbians, and Bisexuals on Campus*. USA. ACPA.

What Messages Are You Sending?

- What books are on your shelves?
- What posters are on your walls?
- Can someone assume from looking at those materials that this is the place where GLBT are welcome?
- When social activities are planned, are people invited in a way that allows gays, lesbians, and bisexuals to feel comfortable bringing a same-gender guest or partner?
- What buttons or t-shirts do you wear?
- What seminars do you present?
- On which committees do you serve?
- Which issues do you discuss/support in your daily conversations?
- How often do you include examples using gay, lesbians, and bisexuals in all of your seminars and classes?
- Do you often assume students and staff are heterosexual?
- What journals does your office order and have available in the waiting area?
- What comments do you confront? Which do you leave unchallenged?
- What articles or event information do you circulate?
- What educational activities do you encourage?
- Which campus programs do you attend, and whom do you invite to join you?
- What sort of policies would make a difference in your institution?
- What would a gay-positive institution look like?

What Can I Do? Ideas for Allies

- Do not assume that everyone you meet is heterosexual.
- Refuse to tolerate anti-LGBTQ comments, attitudes, remarks, or jokes.
- If you want to know something about a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, go to that person directly and ask in an appropriate manner and setting.
- Refuse to propagate rumors.
- Report all harassment or discriminatory behavior to the appropriate officials.
- Respect confidentiality at all times. It is imperative that you can be trusted.
- Display positive materials in support of the LGBTQ community (flyers for activities, posters, cards, Safe Zone Placard, etc.)
- Use inclusive, non-gender specific language that does not assume the heterosexuality of others.
- Educate yourself on issues and concerns of the LGBTQ community and take the initiative to obtain accurate information.
- Keep everything in balance. Don't assume that being LGBTQ doesn't matter or that it is the only thing that does matter. While it is true that being LGBTQ a large part of an individual's identity, it may not be the most important to them. In other words, being LGBTQ may not be that important to them. On the other hand, remember that being LGBTQ is not being "the same as everyone else" and that there are significant differences between LGBTQ individuals and heterosexual individuals.
- Know your own biases and fears. Know what you are comfortable talking about and be comfortable enough to refer individuals to others when necessary. In addition know your limits. Know when it is necessary to refer an individual to an "expert" who can assist them better.
- Remember that just because an individual is LGBTQ does not mean that is their sole identity or issue. In other words, "not everything is about being gay." There will be times when an individual is dealing with other areas of their identity: their socio-economic status, their religion/faith, their race, or their ethnicity. It is important to be culturally competent across the board to better serve this community.

Sexual Orientation and Communication: Suggestions for Creating an Inclusive Environment

Sexual orientation is one aspect of every person's identity, regardless of whether that person is heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Although most people don't realize it, the societal assumption that all people are heterosexual reveals itself in our communication and interpersonal interactions all the time. How sexual orientation is talked about – or not talked about – impacts the environment in which we interact. These guidelines provide some suggestions for creating a work or social environment that is more open, comfortable, respectful, and welcoming for people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

- Treat the topic of sexual orientation as you would any other human difference.
- Use inclusive, non-gender specific language that does not assume heterosexuality in coworkers, colleagues, or students. Modify your language by:
 - Using inclusive terms such as partner or date, instead of spouse, wife, husband, boyfriend, or girlfriend.
 - Using inclusive terms such as committed relationship instead of marriage.
 - Using pronouns that are neutral and don't assume the sex of someone's partner, such as person, someone, anyone.
- Avoid making assumptions about people's sexual orientation based on their appearance or behavior.
- Don't assume all unmarried people are single or have opposite sex relationships. Don't assume all mothers and fathers are heterosexuals, or that all children live in families consisting of male-female couple.
- Ask individuals what terminology do they prefer when you are referring to them or talking with them. Be sensitive about words to use and not to use based on individual preferences.
- Learn the definitions of words associated with lesbian, gay, bisexual community. Don't use slang in a pejorative or derogatory manner to describe someone's sexual orientation.

- Make efforts to be inclusive of lesbian, gay and bisexual co-workers, or colleagues' family lives, partners, social activities, and causal conversation.
- Discourage others from telling jokes about people that are GLBT and refrain from telling them yourself. Don't joke or tease someone for non-traditional gender behaviors.
- Refuse to tolerate derogatory or anti-gay, -lesbian, -bisexual marks, actions, jokes, or name-calling.
- Refrain from using judgmental language that will create barriers.
- When someone shares information with you about their sexual orientation, clarify with them whether or not it is information that they want you to keep confidential. Don't "out" someone (disclose their sexual orientation) to others; let them decide with whom they wish to share details about their life. If others ask you about someone's sexual orientation, ask them to speak to that person directly.
- Don't assume that the sexual orientation of a person who is lesbian, gay, or bisexual, is the most important aspect of that person, or the only topic they want to talk about. Remember that everyone is a multi-faceted individual whose sexuality is one aspect of their total life.

Coming Out as an Ally

Allies often find that they must go through a similar process as their LGBTQ friends, peers, students, etc. The process looks slightly different, but can be very similar in many ways. There is a process that Allies go through to fully realize their status as an ally for this population. Allies “come out” to themselves, to others, and can often be met with similar disdain, distrust, and disassociation from their friends, family, peers, coworkers, etc. Below are some basic information about this process:

Coming Out to Yourself:

It is extremely important for Allies to “come out” to themselves. This is simply a realization that you desire to help this population (LGBTQ). If you have already gone through the Safe Zone Ally training then you have already taken this first step.

Coming Out to Others:

After you realize that you want to be an Ally and possibly after you go through the Safe Zone training, now you may wish to “come out” to others. This process simply notifies those around you (your co-workers, peers, students, and supervisor) that you are a Safe Zone Ally. Here are some possible things you may do to “come out” to others:

- Post the Safe Zone Ally placard in your office/classroom
- Share information on how to become a Safe Zone Ally
- Interrupt jokes and derogatory comments about the LGBTQ population
- Working with and providing services to LGBTQ students
- Attending programs geared at educating the public on LGBTQ students

Safety Considerations:

Remember that not everyone at UAHuntsville or who visits UNC-Charlotte is fully supportive of the Safe Zone Program; therefore it is important to remember your own safety when becoming an Ally and then when “coming out” as an Ally.

Therefore there are some questions to be answered regarding your safety:

- Is your office/department accepting of the Safe Zone Program?
- Will you lose your job, a promotion, or incentives by becoming a Safe Zone Ally?
- Are the students you work with receptive to the Safe Zone Program?
- Are you comfortable with the risks associated with being a Safe Zone Ally?

Adapted from “Ways You Can Be Sensitive about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity to Enhance Workplace Communications,” from Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council or Minneapolis, and from materials from the NIU Counseling and Student Development Center

Chapter 4: Other Issues Regarding LGBTQ

Issues/Concerns for the LGBTQ Population

Mental Health Issues/Concerns:

Isolation- LGBTQ individuals may feel isolated from their peers. This can be magnified if individuals do not have a support system in place.

Low Self-Esteem- Because of the large amount of misinformation in society about LGBTQ individuals, sometimes LGBTQ individuals internalize negative myths and stereotypes. This internalization can lead to shame and a negative self-image.

Depression- Compacting the low self-esteem with the feelings of isolation make LGBTQ individuals more likely than heterosexual individuals to have issues with depression.

Anxiety- Because the LGBTQ population is an invisible minority, LGBTQ individuals may experience a lot of anxiety about who knows their sexual orientation or gender identity and who they can safely share that information with.

Suicidal Ideations- The combination of all these previously mentioned mental health issues in addition to the lack of a positive support system, can lead to suicidal ideation and ultimately suicide. It is well documented that individuals who identify as LGBTQ are often at higher risk for suicide.

Substance Abuse:

Tobacco Use- LGBTQ individuals have higher numbers of individuals that use tobacco products, like cigarettes, than their heterosexual peers. This may be tied to the stress associated with being LGBTQ.

Alcohol Use- Due to the increased depression and anxiety rates in LGBTQ individuals, it should be no surprise that they are often more “susceptible to alcohol abuse. LGBTQ individuals may use alcohol as a coping mechanism. In addition alcohol is very readily available in the LGBTQ community in bars and clubs.

Drug Use- Just as with alcohol, drug use, including prescription drug use, may be used by LGBTQ individuals as a coping mechanism. Just as with alcohol, drugs are also very readily available in the LGBTQ community in bars and clubs.

Discrimination:

Denial of Basic Civil Rights- GLBTQ individuals do not share the same protections as other minorities groups in the United States. While it is no longer legal to discriminate on the basis of race, skin color, ethnicity, disability, age, sex, or veteran's status, it is still legal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Please see the section on "Fighting Homophobia" for more information.

Relationships:

Friends- A GLBTQ's social network may ebb and flow drastically as they come out to individuals they consider "friends." In other words GLBTQ individuals may lose some friends and gain other friends as they come out, which could drastically change their social network.

Family Problems- GLBTQ individuals often face rejection from their family unit. Sometimes this can be manifested in a loss of financial assistance, being "kicked-out" of the home, or completely cutting off all communications and ties to an individual.

Intimate Relationships- The GLBTQ community has a very interesting dynamic in regards to intimate relationships. Because there is no legalized marriage of GLBTQ couples, there is also no prescribed relationship tract. That means individuals may engage in sexual relationships earlier, or may be less likely to commit to another individual. In addition intimate relationships for same-sex couples are complicated when your "ex-partner" could be the "ex-partner" of your "future partner". In other words the community is very small and relationships are affected by this intimacy.

Sexual Relationships- Because sexual education to GLBTQ individuals is almost non-existent GLBTQ individuals often experiment with sex without protection. This can lead to increased cases of sexually transmitted infections and diseases, including HIV/AIDS. In addition HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects the gay male community, while HPV (a leading case for cervical cancer) disproportionately affects the lesbian community.

Interpersonal Violence- Same-sex couples are just as prone to interpersonal violence as heterosexual couples. However, in same-sex couples the impact of the coming out process can greatly add to a perpetrator's control and power over a

victim. In other words a victim may be less likely to report violence from a same-sex partner, because they may be fearful of the response and may not wish to disclose their sexual orientation to others. In addition same-sex couples are often ignored by police and are often met with hostility from interpersonal violence support groups.

Harassment/Abuse:

Intimidation/Bullying- GLBTQ individuals may encounter more negative attitudes, jokes, verbal taunting or bullying because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition GLBTQ individuals may be intimidated by individuals who threaten to “out” them if they don’t do something.

Harassment- GLBTQ individuals may face harassment in many different forms. They may hear verbal threats, may have their property damaged, or may be sexually harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. GLBTQ individuals may also be less likely to report harassing behavior because they do not wish to disclose their own sexual orientation or gender identity to authorities.

Violence- GLBTQ individuals may be targets of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition they may be targeted because they are seen as “weaker” or less likely to either fight back or report the crime/incident.

When to refer a student to a Mental Health Professional

Most of the students you will encounter will be seeking support, advice, or information. Occasionally, you may advise a student who is experiencing a good deal of psychological distress. This may be evident in the following ways.

1. When a student states they are no longer able to function in their normal capacity within their classes. When they have seen a drop in grades or academic performance.
2. When a student can no longer cope with their day-to-day activities and responsibilities. A student may state they are no longer going to classes or they have been late for their job and may be fired soon if this continues.
3. A student expresses severe depression symptoms such as: sleep disturbance, sudden weight loss or weight gain, crying spells, fatigue, loss of interest or pleasure in previous enjoyable activities, and/or inability to concentrate or complete tasks.
4. A student expresses severe anxiety symptoms such as: feelings of panic, shortness of breath, headaches, sweaty palms, dry mouth, or racing thoughts.
5. A student expresses suicidal thoughts or feelings.
6. A good guideline to use if all else fails: If you are feeling overwhelmed or worried about a student, referring them to a mental health professional would probably be appropriate.

Trust Your Instinct. It's usually right!

Referring a student

Referring a student should be done in a constructive, positive way.

- It took a lot of courage for a student to come to you in the first place so support them.
- Encourage them to speak with a counselor. Tell them you don't have all the answers but you can help them find those who do.
- Communicate that you are not abandoning them, invite them to return any time.
- Help them make appointments if necessary.
- Be sure to convey that counseling is a tool for their use and that it doesn't indicate that something is wrong with them.

Chapter 5: Additional Documents and Resources

37 Fabulous Ways to Support Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Students on Your Campus

By: Troy Gilbert, Stanford University

This is a list of ways Universities can be supportive of LGBT students through the student affairs arena. Information is drawn from comprehensive studies of LGBT populations at the University of Michigan, Rutgers, University of Oregon, Chico State, and Stanford. It is from the presentation I did entitled “38 Fabulous Ways to Support Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Students on Your Campus” at the NASPA Western Regional Conference in January 1994 in San Jose, CA. Suffice it to say that there are multitudes more than 38, but this is a start.

1. Have a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation.
2. Value their perspectives and opinions in your residence halls, your classrooms, and your committees.
3. Don't tokenize them.
4. Assure their safety.
5. Acknowledge their presence on campus and in society publicly, at high levels, and often.
6. Attend their events once in awhile.
7. Don't agree with everything they say-challenge them too.
8. Help non-gay students to understand the LGB people are a presence on campus and society whether they like it or not. Non-gay students do not have to accept their lifestyle but they must learn to live peacefully with them.
9. Ensure sensitivity training programs for all student affairs staff. Compensate them for it, give staff members time to discuss how their particular service function can affect LGB students.

Support LGB faculty and Staff

10. Give equal benefits to their partners.
11. Assure their safety.
12. Value their perspectives and opinions on your staffs, and your committees.

At the Career Planning and Placement Center

13. Know which employers interviewing on your campus have non-discrimination and domestic partner policies for LGB people and offer that information to students.
14. “Employers should be required to affirm in writing that they do not discriminate against any classes, protected against discrimination by University policy...If legal interpretations tie the University's hands regarding federal government agency access to placement services, the

University should formally express its disagreement of employment discrimination against LGB students and call for a change in agency policy”.

At the Financial Aid Office

15.Ensure that the staff has the training on how the impact of a student’s “coming out” at home can affect parent’s financial support.

In the Residence Halls

16.When their assigned roommates refuse to live with them, give the LGB student the options and give them freedom to choose.

17.Ensure that handbooks and contracts have a statement regarding nondiscrimination as it relates to sexual orientation. Indicate where students should report if they feel harassed.

18.Orientation programs should address LGB issues and make new students understand that LGB issues and make new students are a welcomed part of campus life.

At the Health Center

19.Make sure your professional and paraprofessional are comfortable with concepts such as “continual condom usage” and “anal intercourse”.

20.Make sure your gynecological physicians understand that “sexually active” does not necessarily mean “need birth control”.

At the Counseling Center

21.Insist there be a “coming out” support or discussion group at least once per school year.

22.Identify a counselor who has some understanding of LGB issues who can serve as a confidential referral to students.

At the Activities Office

23.Make sure the LGB student organization has adequate professional staff support and an advisor. If there is no one on the staff or faculty to take on this role, assist the group in identifying a local alumni or local community member for the task. Compensate that advisor, even in a small way.

24.Insist that the Student Government all the LGB student organization some reasonable funding. If they refuse, assist the group in finding alternative sources of funding.

25.Insist that fraternal organizations have a discussion on how they would deal with on of their members’ “coming out”.

At the Athletic Department

26.Ask the director of Athletics to have a discussion with coaches about how homosexuality and homophobia affects athletes.

In all Student Affairs Departments (directly from University of Oregon Report)

27.Include LGB people in examples in classes, workshops, and presentations.

28.Ensure that publications are written in such a way that LGB students will feel included in the audiences; avoid heterosexist language and assumptions.

29.When possible, include openly LGB students as members of the student work force.

30.All student service departments should periodically participate in structured dialogues with LGB students. The purpose of this dialogue would be to raise awareness of the nature and the extent of homophobia and heterosexism within the university and the particular unit, and to explore avenues for the problems related to the access and quality of services for lesbian and gay students.

31.When LGB students complain, take them seriously. 32.When they are verbally assaulted, make loud, personal statements in public venues condemning such action. Empower others to do the same. 33.When their belongings are vandalized, make loud, personal statements in public venues condemning such action. Empower others to do the same. 34.When they are beaten up, make loud, official statements condemning such action. If you know who the aggressors are, punish them judicially. 35.Know their organization's name, acronym or letter in the proper order- even if they change it once in a while. 36.Take the time to examine your own personal feelings about LGB people. 37.Support LGB students because they add to the vibrancy of thought, activity, and life on your campus. Not because it's politically correct, or because you heard about it in a NASPA workshop.

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SAFE ZONE VOCABULARY:

Agendered - person is internally ungendered.

Ally- refers to individuals (often an individual who identifies as “heterosexual”) who are accepting and supportive of people who identify with a different sexual orientation or gender identity. Allies show their support in their personal beliefs, the language that they use, and the behaviors they exhibit. Allies also take action to combat homophobia, Heterocentrism, and heterosexism within themselves, others, and their surrounding community.

Androgynous- term used to describe an individual whose gender expression and/or identity may be neither distinctly “woman” nor “man,” usually based on appearance.

Asexual - having no evident sex or sex organs. In usage, may refer to a person who is not sexually attracted to other people.

BDSM (Bondage, Discipline/Domination, Submission/Sadism, and Masochism): The terms ‘submission/sadism’ and ‘masochism’ refer to deriving pleasure from inflicting or receiving pain, often in a sexual context. These practices are often misunderstood as abusive, but when practiced in a safe, sane, and consensual manner can be a part of a healthy sex life. (sometimes referred to as ‘leather.’)

Bare-Backing - practicing anal sex without using a condom.

Bear - The most common definition of a ‘bear’ is a man who has facial/body hair, and a cuddly body. However, the word ‘bear’ means many things to different people, even within the bear movement. Many men who do not have one or all these characteristics define themselves as bears, making the term a very loose one. “Bear’ is often defined as more of an attitude and a sense of comfort with natural masculinity and bodies.

Bias - prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgement.

Binding - The process of fattening one’s breasts to have a more masculine or flat appearing chest.

Biphobia - the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTI community, as well as in general society.

Bisexual- refers to persons who are physically, emotionally, sexually, and relationally attracted to either sex.

Bottom - a person who is said to take more a submissive role during sexual interactions. Sometimes referred to as 'pasivo' in Latin American cultures. Also know as 'Catcher'.

Bottom Surgery - surgery on he genitals designed to create a body in harmony with a persons preferred gender expression.

Butch - A person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally, or emotionally. 'Butch' is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

Calamus - a plant used by author Walt Whitman as a symbol of homoerotic love in his works. GLBT people in his day became known as calamites.

Closeted or "in the closet"- to hide one's sexual orientation from others.

Coming Out- a short version of the phrase "coming of the closet" which is a metaphor for disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to others or to one's self.

Cross-Dresser- a pop-culture term used to describe individuals (primarily men)who wear the clothing of the "opposite" gender/sex. Often this term is used to describe heterosexual men who derive sexual pleasure from wearing women's clothing. Please see "Transvestite" for more information.

D&D - an abbreviation for drug and disease free.

"Down Low"- pop-culture term used to describe men who identify as heterosexual but engage in sexual activity with other men. Often these men are in committed sexual relationships or marriages with a female partner. This term is almost exclusively used to describe men of color.

Drag- refers to individuals dressing in gendered clothing not assigned to their sex usually for performance purposes (e.g. Drag Queen or Drag King).

"Dyke"- a negative term predominantly associated with individuals who identify as Lesbian. The term often refers to an individual who is perceived to be hyper masculine (also referred to as a "Bull-Dyke"). Though the term is predominantly seen as pejorative some groups have co-opted the word as a source of empowerment (e.g. "Dykes on Bikes").

"Faggot"- a negative term predominantly associated with Gay men. The term often refers to an individual who is perceived to be hyper feminine, implying weakness. The term is originally derived from the Latin word meaning "bundle of sticks" which was used to burn witches at the stake. The word has grown in modern vernacular to also mean "stupid, silly, feminine, lame, weird, or different." It is not uncommon to hear individuals use this term and not specifically use it as a derogatory term for Gay men.

Fag Hag - a term primarily used to describe women who prefer the social company of gay men. While this term is claimed in an affirmative manner by some, it is largely regarded as derogatory.

Family - colloquial term used to identify other LGBTIQ community members. For example, an LGBTIQ person saying, "that person is family" often means that the person they are referring to is LGBTIQ as well.

Family of choice (chosen family) - persons or group of people an individual sees as significant in his or her life. It may include none, all, or some members of his or her family of origin. In addition, it may include individuals such as significant others, domestic partners, friends, and coworkers.

Femme - feminine identified person or any gender/sex.

FTM/F2M - female to male transgender or transsexual person.

Gay- used to refer specifically to homosexual men. The term "gay" refers to persons who are physically, emotionally, sexually, and relationally attracted to individuals of the same sex (men loving men). However the term has been used to collectively refer to individuals who identify as Lesbian, bisexual, Transgender, in addition to Gay. Similar to the term "Faggot" this term has taken on a negative connotation in modern vernacular to mean "stupid, silly, feminine, lame, weird, or different." It is not uncommon to hear individuals use this term and not specifically be referring to homosexuals. "That's so gay."

Gender- a societal construction based on a group of emotional, behavioral, and psychological characteristics that classify an individual as "man" or "woman" or "androgynous" or "other." Gender can be understood to have several components including gender identity, gender expression, and gender role.

Genderism - holding people to traditional expectations based on gender, or punishing or excluding those who don't conform to traditional gender expressions.

Gender Binary – the idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or. (See also 'Identity Sphere')

Gender Conformity – When your gender identity and sex "match (i.e. fit social norms). An example would be a male who is masculine and identifies as a man.

Gender Cues – what human beings use to attempt to tell the gender/sex of another person. Examples include hairstyle, gait, vocal inflection, body shape, facial hair, etc. Cues vary by culture.

Gender Expression- refers to how an individual expresses their socially constructed gender. This may refer to how an individual dresses, their general appearance, the way they speak, and the way they carry themselves. Gender expression is not always correlated to an individual's gender identity or gender role.

Gender Identity- since gender is a social construct, an individual may have a self-perception of their gender that is different or the same as their biological sex. Gender identity is an internalized realization of one's gender and may not be manifested in their outward appearance (gender expression) or their place in society (gender role). It is important to note that an individual's gender identity is completely separate from their sexual orientation or sexual preference.

Gender Identity Disorder – The term used for a condition defined in the DSM4 by the American Psychiatric Association.

Genderfuck – the idea of playing with 'gender cues' to purposely confuse "standard" or stereotypical gender expressions, usually through clothing.

Gender Queer – A gender variant person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. Often includes a political agenda to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system.

Genderism – Flowers worn by men in Oscar Wilde's generation to identify themselves as gay. The naming comes from a 1984 novel entitled The Green Carnation by Robert Hitchens, attacking Wilde's Sexuality

Gender Neutral- this term is used to describe facilities that any individual can use regardless of their gender (e.g. gender neutral bathrooms). This term can also be used to describe an individual who does not subscribe to any socially constructed gender (sometimes referred to as "Gender Queer").

Gender/Sexual Reassignment Surgery – refers to a surgical procedure to transition an individual from one biological sex to another. This is often paired with hormone treatment and psychological assistance. A "Transsexual" individual must go through several years of hormones and psychological evaluation and live as the "opposite" or "desired" gender prior to receiving the surgery.

Gender Role- a societal expectation of how an individual should act, think, and/or feel based upon an assigned gender based on the current binary biological sex system.

Hate Crime – Hate crime legislation often defines a hate crime as a crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.

Hermaphrodite – An out-of-date and offensive term for an intersexed person. (See 'Intersex.')

Heterosexuality – Sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to a sex other than your own. Commonly thought of as “attraction to the opposite sex” but since there are not only two sexes (see **intersex** and **transsexual**), this definition is inaccurate.

Heterosexism – Assuming every person to be heterosexual therefore marginalizing persons who do not identify as heterosexual. The belief that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and all other sexual orientations: policies and practices that serve to elevate heterosexuality and subordinate homosexuality.

Heterosexual Privilege – Benefits derived automatically by being (or being perceived as) heterosexual that are denied to homosexuals, bisexuals, and queers.

Homophobia – The irrational fear and intolerance of people who are homosexual or of homosexual feelings within one’s self. This assumes that heterosexuality is superior. Homophobia may be viewed as a fear of closeness and intimacy with others of your gender that manifests itself in hatred, revulsion, disgust, and culturally sanctioned prejudice and violence.

Homosexuality – Sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to the same sex.

Identity Sphere – The idea that gender identities and expressions do not fit on a linear scale, but rather on a sphere that allows room for all expression without weighting any one expression as better than another.

Institutional Oppression - arrangement of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media education, religion, economics, etc.

Internalized Oppression - The process by which an oppressed person comes to believe, accept, or live out the inaccurate stereotypes and misinformation about their group.

Intersex- refers to an individual born with the anatomy or physiology that differs from societal ideals of female or male. Intersexuals may be born with “ambiguous genitalia” and/or experience hormone production levels that vary from those of societal “ideal” for females and males. Though Intersex individuals fall under the umbrella of the Transgender Community, it is important to note that Intersex individuals do not all identify as “transgender.” Formerly referred to as a hermaphrodite.

Invisible minority - a group whose minority status is not always immediately visible, such as some disabled people and LGBTIQ people. This lack of visibility may make organizing for rights difficult.

Kinsey Scale- Alfred Kinsey, a renowned sociologist, described a spectrum on a scale of 0-6 to describe the amount of sexual desire within an individual. 0: Completely Heterosexual – 6: Completely

Homosexual in his 1948 work *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. The Kinsey Scale is often used to dissect the bisexual community and describe the differences between sexual orientation and sexual preference.

Ladslove – A plant used by English poets of the 19th and early 20th centuries as a symbol of homosexuality.

Lambda Symbol- the Greek lambda symbol, λ, has been used by the LGBTQ community as a symbol of pride.

Lavender - A color chosen to represent gays and lesbians because of its mixture of pink (for girls) and blue (for boys) into a gender – neutral color.

Lesbian- refers to women who are physically, emotionally, sexually, and relationally attracted to other women. The term Lesbian is derived from the name of the Greek Island of Lesbos, where the poet Sappho ran a school for women in 400 B.C. The Greek mythology surround the Isle of Lesbos states that its female inhabitants loved one another and did not have any male lovers.

Lesbian Baiting- The heterosexist notion that any woman who prefers the company of women, or those individuals who are “questioning” their gender or sexual identity.

Lipstick Lesbian – Usually refers to a Lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used to refer to a lesbian who is seen as automatically passing for heterosexual.

LGBTQIA- an acronym used to refer to all sexual minorities: “Lesbian, Gay/Gender Neutral/Gender Queer, Bisexual/Bigendered, Transgender/Transvestite/Transsexual, Questioning/Queer, Intersex, and Allies/Androgynous.”

Marginalized – Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.

“Men Who Have Sex with Men” (MSM) - the term “men who have sex with men” is used primarily in the health care field to classify men who identify as heterosexual, but engage in sexual activity with other men. The Center for Disease Control primarily uses this term when reporting the number of individuals with HIV/AIDS. Men described to be on the “Down Low” would be an example of this population.

MTF / M2F - Male to Female Transsexual

On T – When a FTM takes the hormone testosterone.

Outing- using the metaphor “coming out of the closet,” the term “outing” refers to disclosing someone else’s sexual orientation or gender identity, often without their permission and sometimes without their knowledge.

Pansexual - a person who is fluid in sexual orientation and / or gender or sex identity. One who exhibits many forms of sexual expression and may love men, women, transgendered people and gender fluid people.

Pink Triangle- the pink triangle symbol comes from World War II when thousands of gay men and men perceived to be gay were condemned to Nazi concentration camps and labeled with pink triangles, similar to the way in which Jews were forced to wear the yellow Star of David. Displayed with the point down, the pink triangle has been reclaimed as a symbol of pride and remembrance and can often be found in gay establishments and organizations.

Polyamory – The practice of having multiple open, honest, usually non-possessive relationships.

Queer- originally used as a pejorative term to refer to gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals. The term implied that these individuals were unnatural, unusual, or freakish. In more recent years the term “queer” has been reclaimed as a source of empowerment and pride. The term is also widely used by individuals who do not wish to use what they call “restrictive labels” such as “Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual.” Therefore the more recent use of the term “queer” is to describe someone who does not subscribe to social norms

Rainbow Flag- displayed with the red stripe at the tip, the rainbow flag was designed by Gilbert Baker in San Francisco in 1979 to celebrate the diversity of the lesbian and gay community. It is now recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers as a symbol of gay and lesbian pride. The rainbow colors have been marketed in many different ways and the rainbow “flag” may be seen in jewelry or other trinkets.

Same Gender Loving – a term sometimes used by members of the African-American/Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent. The term emerged in the early 1990’s with the intention of offering Black women who love women and Black men a voice, a way of identifying and being that resonated with the uniqueness of Black culture in life. (Sometimes abbreviated SGL)

Sex- a medical term referring to genetic, biological, hormonal, and/or physical characteristics (including genitalia) which are used to classify an individual as male, female, or intersex.

Sexual Behavior- refers to an individual’s sexual activities or actions (what a person does sexually). Though often an individual’s sexual orientation is in line with their sexual behavior, it is not always the case.

Sexual Minority – 1) refers to members of sexual orientations or who engage in sexual activities that are not part of the mainstream. 2) refers to members of sex groups that do not fall into the majority categories of male or female, such as intersexuals and transsexuals.

Sexual Orientation- this term refers to an innate direction of an individual's emotional, physical, sexual or relational attraction to others. Though some research suggests that sexual orientation is on a continuum (Kinsey Scale) there are three widely accepted sexual orientations: Heterosexual (opposite gender/sex attraction), Homosexual (same gender/sex attraction), and Bisexual (attracted to both genders/sexes). It is important to note that the term "sexual orientation" also has a connotation that an individual's attractions on the basis of gender/sex is innate or comes from birth/biology.

Sexual Minority- an all-inclusive, politically-oriented term referring to individuals who identify with a minority sexual orientation or gender expression/gender identity.

Sexual Preference- this term refers to an individual's choice in regards to attraction. Sexual preference can be based on gender/sex, physical appearance (height, weight, race, ethnicity), or emotional connection. It is important to note that sexual preference denotes a "choice" and has a negative connotation when used to describe the LGBTQ population.

Stealth - This term refers to when a person chooses to be secretive in the public sphere about their gender history, either after transitioning or while successfully passing. (also referred to as 'going stealth' or 'living in stealth mode')

"Straight"- pop-culture term used to refer to individuals who identify as a heterosexual, meaning having a sexual, emotional, physical and relational attraction to individuals of the "opposite" gender/sex. The term "straight" often has a negative connotation within the LGBTQ population, because it suggested that non-heterosexual individuals are "crooked" or "unnatural".

Top – a person that is said to take a more dominant role during sexual interactions. May also be known as a 'pitcher.'

Transgender- 1) an umbrella term which refers to people who do not identify with social norms regarding gender identity or gender expression. 2) refers to an individual whose biological sex (male/female) is different from their self-perception of their gender identity (man/woman). This term specifically refers to individuals who live full-time as the "opposite" gender, but have not undergone gender/sexual reassignment surgery.

Transsexual- refers to an individual who has chosen to undergo gender/sexual reassignment surgery; meaning that through surgery and hormones, they wish to change their biological sex to match their gender identity.

Transvestite- an umbrella term which refers to people who wear the clothing of the “opposite” gender. These individuals can be transgender, transsexual, cross-dressers, Drag performers, or individuals who express their gender in a unique way.

Transition – this is a complicated, multi-step process that can take years as transsexuals align their anatomy with their sexual identity; this process may ultimately include sex reassignment surgery (SRS).

Transphobia – fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment and discrimination.

Transsexual – Transsexual refers to a person who experiences a mismatch of the sex they were born as and the sex they identify as. A transsexual sometimes undergoes medical treatment to change his/her physical sex to match his/her sex identity through hormone treatments and/or surgically. Not all transsexuals can have or desire surgery.

Transvestite/Cross Dresser – individuals who regularly or occasionally wear the clothing socially assigned to a gender not their own, but are usually comfortable with their anatomy and do not wish to change it (i.e. they are not transsexuals). Cross-dresser is the preferred term for men who enjoy or prefer women’s clothing and social roles. Contrary to popular belief, the overwhelming majority of male cross-dressers identify themselves as straight and they are often married. Very few women call themselves cross-dressers.

Two – Spirited – native persons who have attributes of both genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals (shamans). Their dress is usually a mixture of male and female articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender.

Ze- Gender- neutral pronouns that can be used instead of he/she

Zie & Hir- the most common spelling for gender-neutral pronouns. Zie is subjective (replaces he or she) and Hir is possessive and objective (replaces his or her).

Much of the material in this section was adapted from the University of California, Berkeley Gender Equity Resource Center. You can visit them at <http://uga.berkeley.edu/sas/geneq/>

Adapted from: [Interracial Books for Children Bulletin](#), Volume 14, Number 3 & 4, 1983, page 30.

Material was also appropriated from <http://www.gayhistory.com> and <http://lesbianworlds.com>

Adapted from an article by Dave Hays in Rock River News, Vol. 4, Issue 4, April 1993



SAFE ZONE @
UAHuntsville

Safe Zone

Statement of Understanding

I _____ hereby give myself to permission to be imperfect with regards to homophobia and heterosexism. It is acceptable if I do not know all the answers or if at times my ignorance and misunderstandings become obvious.

I have permission to ask questions that appear stupid. I have permission to struggle with these issues and be upfront and honest about my feelings.

I am a product of this homophobic and heterosexist culture, and I am who I am.

I don't have to feel guilty about what I know or believe, but I do need to take responsibility for what I can do now. I will try to:

Learn as much as I can.

Work to change my false and inaccurate beliefs or oppressive attitudes.

Signature

Date