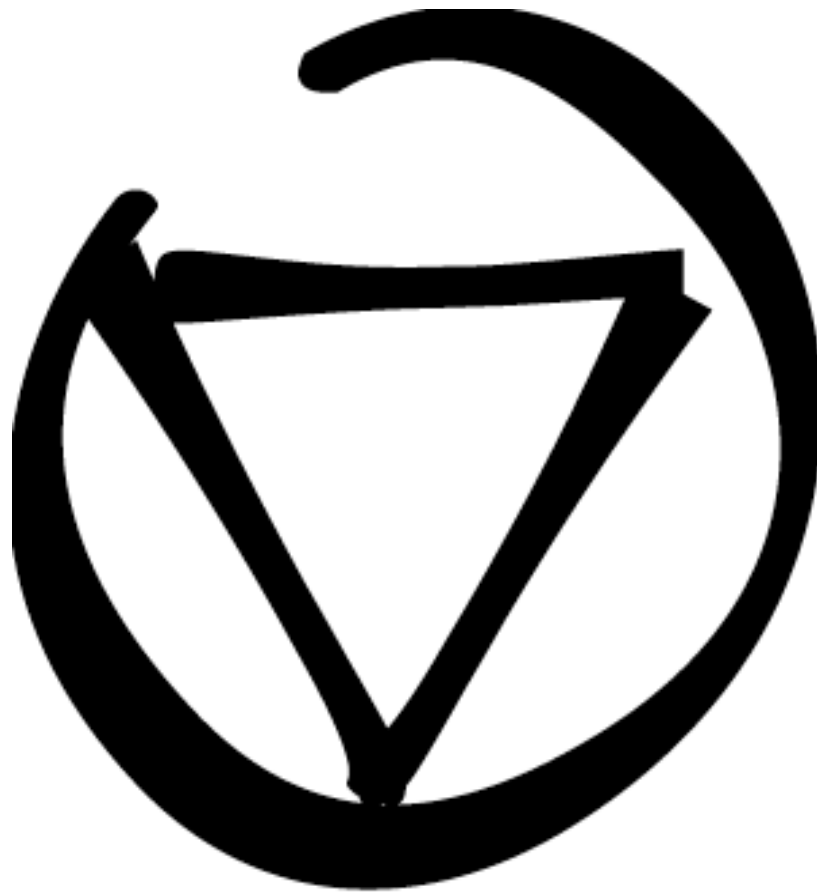


Safe Zone Packet



Articles contributed by:
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Prepared by Kaleidoscope, a program of
Brethren Mennonite Council
For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
And Transgender Interests

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Safe Zone Training Disclaimer

Safe Zone training is an experience that deals solely with real life, real people, and real event situations and ideals. The issues we discuss are personal, upfront, honest, and for many reasons uncomfortable. We only ask that you take the advice and information seriously, but also have fun with the training and activities. Due to the personal nature of all experiences and situations we discuss, we ask you to keep confidentiality. In other words, anything said in this room must stay in this room. Confidentiality is important to understand and take seriously due to the fact that many of us are going to share personal stories and events. Talking about these stories and events outside of this group could cause serious problems in our personal and professional lives.

Permission Slip

I, _____, hereby have permission to be imperfect with regards to homophobia and heterosexism. It is okay if I do not know all of 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 part of this homophobic/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:

- Trying to learn as much as I can
- Struggling to change my false/inaccurate beliefs or oppressive attitudes
- Learning what I can do to make a difference

Definitions

Definitions are sometimes elusive. The way in which people think about themselves effects how they define themselves. For example, in the 19th century, some women participated in what were called "Boston Marriages." The women considered themselves in a romantic relationship, but whether or not most of these relationships were sexual is hard to say. Besides, should one define sexual orientation exclusively in terms of sexual activity? In addition, we cannot accurately describe them in modern language (i.e., "lesbian") because these women were from a different time and the language of today has modern nuances that are not present in the language usage of yesterday. Regardless, over the course of history people we might today consider gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people have existed in all races, classes, political affiliations, ages, and degrees to which they identify with other GLBT people. Although human beings have not had a universal way of thinking about things gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender, some terms used in today's vocabulary are noted here.

Some definitions reprinted with permission from *Revolutionary Voices: A Multicultural Queer Youth Anthology* ed. by Amy Sonnie

Note: These definitions are not meant to be comprehensive ... they are meant to be expanded, challenged and redefined.

Ableism: The exclusion of people with physical and/or developmental impairments from social, economic, and political power. This is supported by the assumption of superiority by those who consider themselves able-bodied.

Ageism: Discrimination against a person/group based on actual or perceived age. Most often directed at youth or the elderly.

Ally: A non-lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person whose attitudes and behaviors are anti-heterosexist in perspective and works toward combating homophobia and heterosexism, both on a personal and institutional level.

Androgyny: Displaying characteristics of both or neither of the two culturally defined genders.

Binary: A system of likes and opposites. Binaries arrange people and things into opposing categories. This relates to the queer community in that a binary system separates men/women, gay/straight, masculine/feminine, and pits us against one another. It means we're assigned to one or the other and aren't supposed to be both or neither.

Biphobia: Hatred and/or discrimination against bisexuals. Like *transphobia*, this form of discrimination comes from both the straight and gay community. The straight community often collapses bisexuality into homosexuality and refers to bi people as "gay". Thus, bisexuals face the same forms of job, housing and medical discrimination, difficulty in adopting children, and emotional and physical violence. The gay/lesbian community, on the other hand, often discriminates against bisexuals for being able to "pass" as straight or for being "confused."

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, spiritually, physically and/or sexually attracted to those of any sex or gender.

Black triangle: Though the *pink triangle* is a widely recognized symbol of queer identity and rights, the pink triangle was originally used in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany to identify gay men (“sexual deviants”) and *not* lesbian women. Lesbian women were given a black triangle, the symbol of asexuals, because Hitler’s regime did not recognize the validity of lesbian sexuality. Today, both men and women wear the pink triangle to show support for queer causes or to identify themselves as queer, but it is important to know the history of the symbols so we do not collapse lesbianism into gay male sexuality.

Classism: The dominance of those with more money and/or power over those with less money and/or power. In capitalist societies this manifests itself in the false idea that the rich are somehow better than the poor and are entitled to exploit poor people’s land and labor. Many factors contribute to class oppression and status, including age, race, sex, gender, sexuality, ability, education level, and nationality.

Coming out: The process of realizing, understanding, and accepting one’s sexual or gender identity. This usually involves telling others. Because it’s a process, coming out isn’t a one-time deal. It happens each time you present yourself as nonstraight. Because we live in a *heterosexist* society, straight people don’t usually have to come out. Straight people can come out as allies to show solidarity with their lgbtq brothers and sisters.

Compulsory heterosexuality: A “man-made institution”, as poet and theorist Adrienne Rich calls it, that pervades our cultures, telling us women are innately attracted only to men and men are innately attracted only to women. This idea is upheld by the bombardment of heterosexual images in the media and cultural assumptions that everyone’s straight. It invalidates queer identities and makes many queer people invisible. This is why you seldom hear about someone coming out as straight.

Drag: Wearing the clothing of another gender, often exaggerating stereotypical characteristics of that gender. Used when referring to drag kings or drag queens.

Dyke: Historically, this term has been an insult used against women perceived to be lesbian or “masculine”, similar to butch, she-male, bulldyke, bulldagger, lezzie, etc. Some queers have reclaimed the word as a way to identify and empower themselves. Reclaiming words in this way is often a political act and a tool for empowerment. (See also *fag* and *queer*)

Fag or Faggot: Derived from the Latin word meaning “bundle of sticks.” Applied to gay men during the Spanish Inquisition when they were burned with witches. Traditionally applied to men in a derogatory fashion. Used to denote weakness and a lack of “masculinity.” Some gay men have reclaimed this term as a symbol of pride in diversity in a similar way to sissy, pussy, pansy, punk, fairy, queer etc. Reclaiming words in this way is often a political act and a tool for empowerment.

FTM: Female to Male. A term used in the queer community that refers to male-identified persons who were categorized as female at birth. (See also *MTF* and *transgender*)

Gay: A person who identifies as a man who is emotionally, spiritually, physically and/or sexually attracted primarily to other men. *Gay*, however is often used as an umbrella term for both same-gender loving men and women, and many women identify as gay rather than, or in addition to, lesbian.

Gender: Characteristics of masculinity and femininity that are learned or chosen. A person's assigned sex does not always match their gender identity and most people display traits of more than one gender. Gender is also different from *sexuality*.

Gender bending: Messing with stereotypical gender roles.

Gender identity: describes the gender with which a person identifies (i.e, whether one perceives oneself to be a man, a woman, or describes oneself in some less conventional way), but can also be used to refer to the gender that other people attribute to the individual on the basis of what they know from gender role indications (clothing, hair style, etc.). Gender identity may be affected by a variety of social structures, including the person's ethnic position, employment status, religion or irreligion, and family (Wikipedia definition).

Gender queer: This is a term for people who do not fit into the traditional two-gender or gender-binary system. As with any other groups that may be aligned with transgender identities, the reasons for identifying as genderqueer vary. This term refers primarily to gender identity rather than sexual orientation. see also *queer*. (Wikipedia definition)

Hegemony: Here's a word academics like to use a lot to sound smart, but it's actually a pretty useful term. Hegemony is invisible and/or unrecognizable forces of power that oppress, restrict or limit groups or individuals.

Heteropatriarchy: This describes the way in which heterosexuality and *patriarchy* (a structure in which men dominate) work together to shape and mandate oppressions. Working together, heterosexuality and patriarchy are made to seem like the "natural" order of things. The term is a good way to draw attention to the ways oppressions function together. As Suzanne Pharr states, "Homophobia is a weapon of sexism," and vice versa.

Heterosexism: The belief that heterosexuality is superior to other sexual orientations. Sort of like straight supremacy. It is one of the central ideas behind homo-, bi- and transphobia and is key to maintaining patriarchy. This often takes form as systemic or institutional heterosexism.

Heterosexual Privilege: The automatic benefits that a heterosexual person has that are denied to gay men and lesbians. Some of these include society's acceptance and rights associated with marriage.

Homophobia: Hatred and/or discrimination based on perceived or actual sexuality or gender identity. Homophobia manifests itself in a variety of ways, including verbal threats, jokes, physical/emotional violence, and discrimination in adoption, marriage, employment etc.

Institutionalized Heterosexism: Institutional arrangements of a society that uphold heterosexism, illustrated through the use of language, media, education, economics, religion, etc.

Internalized homophobia: A hatred or fear of your own existing or potential homosexuality. It is largely responsible for the staggering numbers of queer teen suicides, depression and substance abuse. It is also a contributing factor in violence against those perceived to be queer. Internalized ableism, biphobia, racism, sexism and transphobia, likewise, are responsible for shame, negative body image, and violence within our communities. Though the word *internalize* sounds negative, it is possible to internalize positive self-images and pride.

Intersexed: A set of medical conditions that features congenital anomaly of the reproductive system. That is, a person with an intersex condition is born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system not considered “standard” for either male or female. It is estimated that anywhere from 1 in 100 to 1 in 2,000 infants is born intersexed.

In the Closet: To be “in the closet” means to hide one’s sexual orientation or gender identity pretending to be heterosexual living a fragmented identity in order to keep a job, a housing situation, friends, or family. Many GLBT people are “out” in some situations and “closeted” in others.

Kinsey Scale: The model devised by Alfred Kinsey in 1948 that plotted sexuality on a scale from 0-6 –0 being exclusively heterosexual and 6 exclusively homosexual. According to a 1954 survey using the scale, 70 % of people fell between 1-5, making it the first linear scale to account for bisexuality. It’s been criticized, though, for being too linear and only accounting for behaviors, not for gender identity.

Lesbian: A person who identifies as a woman who is emotionally, spiritually, physically and/or sexually attracted primarily to other women.

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer. Also LGBTI to include Intersexed folks or GLBTQ or BGLT etc.

MTF: Male to Female: A term used in the queer community that refers to female identified persons who were categorized as male at birth.

Omnisexual (Pansexual): Broadly defined, someone who is emotionally, spiritually, physically and/or sexually attracted to those of all genders or sexes.

Outed: When one’s sexual orientation is discussed or revealed without one’s consent

Pink triangle: The pink triangle (worn point down) has become a symbol of gay rights and identity, like the rainbow flag, often worn by our allies as well by queers. The symbol was appropriated from Nazi Germany where perceived homosexuals were among the first forced into concentration camps and among millions murdered under Hitler's regime. The pink triangle was used to mark gay men the way the yellow triangle/star was used to denote Jewish men and women. Though it is a widely recognized symbol for gay and lesbian identity, the pink triangle was used to identify only gay *men*. A *black triangle*, the symbol of asexuals, was used to denote lesbian women.

Queer: Can be used as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexed folks. Also, someone who self-identifies as part of the LGBTI community and makes a political choice to align themselves outside of heteronorms. Historically, the term has been used as an insult against those perceived to be LGBTI. For this reason its use today is controversial. It was reclaimed in the '80s by a group called Queer Nation, and has since been embraced by many who are anti-assimilationist and recognize the sexual and gender diversity of our community.

Queer theory: An anti-essentialist theory about sex and gender within the larger field of Queer studies. It proposes that one's sexual identity and one's gender identity are partly or wholly socially constructed, and therefore individuals cannot really be described using broad terms like "homosexual," "heterosexual," "man," or "woman." It challenges the common practice of compartmentalizing the description of a person to fit into one particular category (Wikipedia definition).

Queer Theology: The exploration of the nature of God and human-kind's relationship with God through the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (although, as used, the term "Queer" extends beyond LGBT people). Many churches that have embraced Queer Theology (such as the Metropolitan Community Church) would ascribe a broad meaning to queer - including a broad range of those who choose to identify or ally themselves outside the constraints of the prevailing societal norms (Wikipedia definition).

Questioning: A term used to describe a person who is unsure about their sexual orientation and chooses to label themselves as "questioning."

Racism: Racial prejudice + power. Racism is an ideology that has been deeply ingrained into our cultures, our subconscious, and the institutions around us.

Safe Space/Zone: A safe space is a place where LGBT individuals feel comfortable and secure in being who they are. In this place they can talk about their gender identity or sexual orientation without fear of being criticized, judged, or ridiculed.

Sexism: A system of discrimination against and exploitation of women based on the ideology of male supremacy.

Sexual orientation: The orientation within human being which leads them to be emotionally, spiritually, physically and/or sexually attracted to persons of one gender, "opposite" gender, two genders or all genders. One's sexual orientation may be

homosexual (gay, lesbian), heterosexual (straight), bisexual, omnisexual (pansexual), asexual, or other etc. (*adapted from the University of Minnesota GLBT Programs Office 'Definitions' sheet*)

S/he: A pronoun used in place of she or he (terms used in a binary gender system) when you want to talk about someone whose gender doesn't neatly fit into a particular box. *Ze* is also sometimes used.

Stonewall: The year was 1969, and this night of combat between mostly Black and Puerto Rican working class drag queens and New York City cops opened the door to what is commonly known as the "Gay Rights Era." This night was the spark that revived a movement, and the participants went down in history as the revolutionaries responsible for securing the beginnings of gay civil rights. [Before this date queer activism was taking place, but was not widely known.] The event is often commemorated at Pride events such as parades.

Straight [or Non-Gay or Heterosexual]: Someone who is emotionally, spiritually, physically and/or sexually attracted primarily to members of the "opposite" sex.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex and gender role they were assigned at birth. Transgender people do not necessarily want to have sex-reassignment surgery (SRS), but often "play" with gender or question gender roles. Transgender people can be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and may not identify as queer. Sometimes called trans, *Two-Spirit*, or TG.

Transsexual: This is not in alphabetical order, but it is important to preface transphobia with definitions of *transsexual* and *transgender*. A transsexual is a person whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth, so they may take hormones or get sex reassignment surgery (SRS). There is an incredible range of reasons for taking this step. In many states after a period of time SRS recipients can legally change their name and other legal documents. Sometimes called TS.

Transphobia: Hatred and/or discrimination against people who break or blur gender roles and sex characteristics. Transphobia is mandated by a gender regime that says we are either man or woman, masculine or feminine. Like biphobia it is prevalent in both straight and gay/lesbian communities.

Two-Spirit: The term *Two-Spirit* Native American[Canadian] concept present in some, but not all, indigenous cultures across North America and parts of Central and South America. It is a term of reverence, traditionally referring to people who display both masculine and feminine sex or gender characteristics. Named *berdache* by European colonists, those who are Two-Spirited are highly respected, and are often healers and leaders thought to possess a higher spiritual development. For more on this, see Colleen Donovan's interview with Qwo-Li Driskill, "Beginning Revolutions."

White Supremacy: A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white people for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege

for whites. We live in a white-supremacist system in which white people are privileged at the expense of people of color.

Some GLBT symbols: Double male and female symbols, the rainbow flag, labrys, lambda, pink and black triangle, and more. <http://www.lambda.org/symbols.htm> is a site that shows some symbols and explains their significance.

Bisexuality

What is Bisexuality?

Bisexuality is the potential to feel sexually attracted to and to engage in sensual or sexual relationships with people of either sex. A bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes, and the degree of attraction may vary over time.

Self-perception is the key to a bisexual identity. Many people engage in sexual activity with people of both sexes, yet do not identify as bisexual. Likewise, other people engage in sexual relations only with people of one sex, or do not engage in sexual activity at all, yet consider themselves bisexual. There is no behavioral "test" to determine whether or not one is bisexual.

Bisexual Identity

Some people believe that a person is born heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual (for instance due to prenatal hormonal influences), and that their identity is inherent and unchangeable. Others believe that sexual orientation is due to socialization (for example either imitating or rejecting parental models) or conscious choice (for example, choosing lesbianism as part of a political feminist identity). Others believe that these factors interact. Because biological, social, and cultural factors are different for each person, everyone's sexuality is highly individual, whether they are bisexual, gay or lesbian, heterosexual, or asexual. The "value" placed on a sexual identity should not depend on its origin. Many people assume that bisexuality is just a phase people go through. In fact, any sexual orientation can be a phase. Humans are diverse, and individual sexual feelings and behavior change over time. The creation and consolidation of a sexual identity is an ongoing process. Since we are generally socialized as heterosexuals, bisexuality is a stage that many people experience as part of the process of acknowledging their homosexuality. Many others come to identify as bisexuals after a considerable period of identification as gay men or lesbians. A recent study by Ron Fox of more than 900 bisexual individuals found that 1/3 had previously identified as lesbian or gay. An orientation that may not be permanent is still valid for the period of time it is experienced. Bisexuality, like homosexuality and heterosexuality, may be either a transitional step in the process of sexual discovery, or a stable, long-term identity.

How Common Is Bisexuality?

It is not easy to say how common bisexuality is, since little research has been done on this subject; most studies on sexuality have focused on heterosexuals or homosexuals. Based on research done by Kinsey in the 1940s and 1950s, as many as 15-25% of women and 33-46% of men may be bisexual, based on their activities or attractions. Bisexuals are in many ways a hidden population. In our culture, it is generally assumed that a person is either heterosexual (the default assumption) or homosexual (based on

appearance or behavioral clues.) Because bisexuality does not fit into these standard categories, it is often denied or ignored. When it is recognized, bisexuality is often viewed as being "part heterosexual and part homosexual," rather than being a unique identity. Bisexuality threatens the accepted way of looking at the world by calling into question the validity of rigid binary sexual categories, and encourages acknowledgment of the existence of a diverse range of sexuality. Since there is not a stereotypical bisexual appearance or way of acting, bisexuals are usually assumed to be either heterosexual or homosexual. In order to increase awareness, bisexuals have begun to create their own visible communities.

Bisexual Relationships

Bisexuals, like all people, have a wide variety of relationship styles. Contrary to common myth, a bisexual person does not need to be sexually involved with both a man and a woman simultaneously. In fact, some people who identify as bisexual never engage in sexual activity with one or the other (or either) gender. As is the case for heterosexuals and gay men and lesbians, attraction does not involve acting on every desire. Like heterosexuals and gay people, many bisexuals choose to be sexually active with one partner only, and have long-term, monogamous relationships. Other bisexuals may have open marriages that allow for relationships with same-sex partners, three-way relationships, or a number of partners of the same or other gender (singly or simultaneously). It is important to have the freedom to choose the type of sexual and affectional relationships that are right for the people involved, whatever their sexual orientation.

Bisexuals and AIDS

AIDS has had a major effect on the bisexual community. Bisexual men are often scapegoated as the agents of transmission of AIDS from the gay to the heterosexual population, and bisexual women may be scapegoated as transmitters of AIDS to lesbians. However, it is behavior, rather than sexual orientation, that puts people at risk for acquiring the virus that causes AIDS. Activities that involve the exchange of bodily fluids, notably semen, blood, and vaginal fluid, are dangerous. Bisexuals, as well as homosexuals and heterosexuals, must educate themselves about safer sex practices, such as the use of condoms and dental dams. Safer sex guidelines can be obtained from health centers and AIDS education and action groups. Bisexuals are joining with gay people and other affected groups in an effort to fight AIDS by calling for an increase in research and education, better treatments, and an end to discrimination against people with AIDS and those perceived to be at risk for AIDS.

Bisexuality and Politics

Because bisexuals do not fall within the norms of traditional sexuality, they experience many of the same types of discrimination faced by gay men and lesbians. Bisexuals may face discrimination in employment and housing, and may be victims of anti-gay violence. Efforts are underway in many areas to pass gay and lesbian rights laws; bisexuals must be included under these laws as well. Bisexual parents, especially those with non-traditional living arrangements, are at risk of losing custody of their children,

and it is virtually impossible for open bisexuals to become foster or adoptive parents. Our society must realize that children need a loving and nurturing home environment, and that the ability to provide this is not determined by sexual orientation. Bisexuals are an increasingly visible presence within a variety of political movements. Bisexuals are working with gay men and lesbians on common issues such as foster care, domestic partnership, and AIDS, as well as fighting discrimination against bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community. Efforts are underway to promote education and to counter myths and biased portrayals of bisexuals. Many bisexual groups exist for the purposes of support, socializing, and activism, and the number is growing. Bisexuals have the potential to become an important part of the effort to ensure equal rights for all people and to promote an acceptance of sexual diversity.

Source: <http://www.biresource.org/pamphlets/bisexuality.html>

Answers to Your Questions About Gender Orientation, Transgender, Transsexuality, and Intersexuality

What is Gender Identity?

Gender identity is a complex concept to define. In our Western biomedical construction of the body, there are only two genders, masculine and feminine, just as there are only two genital/birth sexes, male and female. Many people confuse gender and sex. When we talk about sex, we are talking about birth sex. However gender is in the mind of a person and is more elusive. In many other cultures, and throughout history, there have been different constructions of gender in which there are three or more gender identities. For example, the Tewa Indians of New Mexico identify as women, men, and 'kwido', although their New Mexico birth records recognize only females and males. Contrast the 1984 definition of gender with the current dictionary definition from Webster, which states that gender is "any of two or more categories into which words are divided." Many individuals believe that gender is a culturally defined concept. Others do not. Many people confuse gender identity, one's inner perception of one's gender, with gender self-expression (how one externally chooses to present one's inner identity to the world).

What Causes a Person to Have a Particular Gender Identity?

The fact of the matter is that nobody really knows. There are many different theories ranging from genetic (nobody has found a gene for gender identity, transgender or transsexuality) to changes in brain structure (although there is no evidence yet) to hormonal effects in the uterus while the baby is developing, and finally to social and even evolutionary factors. Like most things, gender identity is probably defined through a collection of complex interactions between many variables. In the end, no particular cause/factor has been found to fully support any of these theories.

Is Gender Identity a Choice?

The answer is that we just don't know, although all of the research and clinical evidence seems to be leaning to no.

What Is Transgender, Transsexual, and the Gender Community?

The "gender community" consists of transsexuals, transgenders, cross-dressers, and others with gender self-perceptions other than the traditional (Western) dichotomous gender world-view (i.e., including only male and female), such as persons with "non-Western" gender identities. Transsexuals experience variance between genital/birth sex and psychological gender, and often seek medical sex reassignment services, including hormonal therapy and genital surgery. Transsexuals are often referred to as post-op (have had the operation and are on hormones), pre-op (plan to have the operation and are on hormones), non-op (do not plan to have the operation and are on hormones). In all cases, the individuals live the lifestyle of the self-perceived gender. Transgenders usually identify strongly with the "other" sex and often adopt a life-style and appearance that is consistent with their psychological gender self-perception. This may or may not be supported by the use of hormonal medications, but genital sex reassignment surgery is usually not desired. Cross dressers "cultivate the appearance" of the other sex, particularly with regard to clothing. Cross-dressing may be undertaken on a part-time or recreational basis, such as at clubs and social events, and may or may not have erotic

significance. Transvestites use the cross-dressing as a type of fetish (sexual arousal) but do not see themselves as the other gender or other sex.

Can Therapy Change Gender Identity?

Even though many people have tried, there are numerous research and clinical results showing that gender identity is fixed at a very young age. Some people claim that it could be as early as two years of age. Others state that it is closer to four years of age. Some transgendered individuals seek to change their gender identity through therapy. Frequently, family members or religious groups coerce these individuals to change or stay. The reality is that transgender is not an illness. It does not require treatment to change it. It is simply not changeable.

What About So-Called Conversion Therapies?

Just as has happened in the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual (GLB) communities, there are therapists catering to the transgender (T-community) who undertake so-called conversion therapies and report that they have been able to change their client's gender identity and remove the so-called disorder. Closer analysis of these therapists' methods shows several factors that cast doubt on their claims. For example, many of the claims come from organizations with an ideological perspective that is anti-GLBTI (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex). Furthermore, there is minimal to no documentation of their claims.

Is Gender Identity Dysphoria a Mental Illness or an Emotional Problem?

While Gender Identity Dysphoria (GID) is listed in the diagnostic manual of mental health, there are a number of organizations that are lobbying for its removal in the same fashion that homosexuality was removed from the manual many years ago. Many psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, nurses, and social workers all agree that transgender is not an illness, a mental disorder, or an emotional problem. More and more international, objective, scientific research is showing that transgender and transsexuality are not, in and of themselves, associated with mental disorders or emotional problems. For more details see the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association web page at <http://www.hbgda.org>

What is Intersex?

Even the ancient Greeks recognized that there was a "third sex." They called it hermaphrodite, which is now considered a pejorative term for an individual who displays both sexual organs at birth (actually, the anatomical presentation can be quite varied and does not necessarily require both complete organs to be displayed, hence an abstract "continuum" of sex). The preferred current terminology is "intersexed." The prevalence of intersexuality is estimated at 1 in 2000 births. Additionally, it is estimated that there are nearly 65,000 intersex births worldwide per year. Intersex individuals may or may not be transgendered. For more information on intersex, visit the Intersex Society of North America's web page at <http://www.isna.org>

Why Don't Transgender and Intersex Individuals Tell People About Their Gender Identification?

Unfortunately, the social stigma associated with being transsexual, transgender, intersex, or any other type of member from this community is so great, and the potential loss so severe, that very few individuals will tell anyone about their gender identity. Transgender is not protected under the hate crimes law. It is not protected under EEOC anti-discrimination law, and it is not protected in any other way legally. Many transpersons are murdered for being transgendered

and their murders are not seen as hate crimes. For more details, see the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force website documents at <http://www.nglftf.org>

Why is the Coming Out Process Difficult for Transgender and Intersex Individuals?

The fact of the matter is that violence, in all forms, is on the rise, and hate crimes are escalating as well. A recent World Health Organization report on violence worldwide placed the US in the top 10 most violent industrialized countries in the world. As with the GLB populations, transgender and intersex populations are at significant risk for violence and abuse. A recent study has shown that the violence and abuse experience of the gender community, as adults, appears to be similar to that of their lesbian, gay, and bisexual peers. Hate crimes against the transgender population are often multifaceted, with features consistent with gender-based violence, homophobic attacks and hatred of "gender role transgression." Multiple victimization, including repeated incidents of violence or abuse in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, is common. Given the social stigma associated with transgender and intersex, along with the lack of legal protection, many transgender and intersex individuals choose to remain quiet about themselves.

What Can Be Done To Overcome the Prejudice and Discrimination That Transgendered and Intersex Individuals Experience?

This is not an easy question to answer. And there is no simple answer either. Television shows constantly portray the transgender community as crazy, insane, or stupid when, in fact, just like any other population segment, there are many transgender, transsexual, and intersex persons with advanced degrees in all fields, carrying on their lives, raising their families, and trying to go on living. As with the GLB community, it is thought that negative stereotypes and jokes, along with anti-GLBTI religious and hate groups, continue to propagate the negative attitudes towards the transgender and intersex population. Protection against violence, as well as employment protection and non-discrimination laws are critical steps. Inclusion of attacks based on gender or gender presentation in hate crime statistics and the training of law enforcement and medical personnel are strongly needed.

Source: Safe Zone at Virginia Commonwealth University

Some Common Myths About Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT)

Gay men are flower arrangers or hair stylists. Gay and bisexual men are in the service industry, law enforcement, mechanical work, health care, science and technology, etc.

Lesbians want to be men, or at least look very masculine. Lesbians and bisexual women may challenge the roles that society thinks men and women should follow, but that doesn't mean that all lesbians want to be men. Lesbian and bisexual women run the gamut from very feminine to very masculine.

Bisexuals are just confused. Bisexual people are or can be attracted to both men and women, or are attracted to people based on other factors than gender.

Transgendered people are simply flamboyant homosexuals. Gender Identity is different from Sexual Orientation. Transgendered people have gender identities or expressions that differ from those society deems appropriate for their physical sex.

Lesbians must have been raped by a man to become lesbians. A traumatic incident does not change or create sexual orientation. Heterosexual men and women's sexual orientation does not change when they are sexually assaulted by men and/or women.

Gay men are all very effeminate in appearance and behavior. Gay and bisexual men run the gamut from very feminine to very masculine.

Transsexuals are just men who want to be women. Although the media has sensationalized "men becoming women" through "the operation," a large portion of the transgendered population are those born with female bodies who feel their gender identity or expression is more masculine, ranging from stone butch lesbians to transsexual men.

GLBT people are not religious. Some of this country's largest religious organizations are populated or organized by GLBT people. GLBT people all over the world practice a myriad of religious and spiritual activities.

Gays are the number one reason for HIV transmission. Risky behavior, not sexual orientation, is what transmits the HIV virus.

GLBT people don't have families. Many bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgendered people have chosen families comprised of blood relatives and close friends are born from heterosexual couples. Many GLBT people have adopted or biological children.

Chicago Metro Training Manual

Statistics

Population

Oct 07, 2004 - New York, NY – The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, or GLSEN, today announced results from a new national poll on students' attitudes on sexual orientation. Based on results from the poll, approximately 5% of America's high school students identify as lesbian or gay, 16% of America's students have a gay or lesbian family member, and 72% know someone who is gay or lesbian.

Key findings from the national poll include:

- Anti-gay language is rampant. 66% of students report using homophobic language, such as "that's so gay" to describe something that is wrong, bad or stupid; 81% report hearing homophobic language in their schools frequently or often.
- Nearly 3/4 of high school students know a gay or lesbian person. 48% of students know a lesbian or gay classmate; 30% have a close lesbian or gay friend; 11% know a lesbian or gay teacher.
- Parents, friends and family influence students' attitudes most. 65% of students identify their personal experiences with gay people as an important influence in their attitudes about gay people; 58% note the important role their parents play while 28% acknowledge the important role of television with gay characters.

Violence

15.5% of hate crimes reported to the FBI were committed against the lgb community which probably makes up 3-5% of the total population, an indication of the disproportionate violence faced by the lgbt community. All hate crimes are thought to be underreported to the FBI but especially crimes against the lgbt community. In addition, the FBI does not keep track of violence against the transgender community. (2004)

Mental Health/Self Image

2001 - A study published in the American Journal of Public Health shows teenagers with same-sex attractions, or those in gay and lesbian relationships, are twice as likely as their heterosexual counterparts to attempt suicide.

Among gay or lesbian adolescents in the United States, high suicide rates, alcohol and drug use are common, with the problem most acute in areas isolated from support services.

Substance Abuse

Substance use is very common among adolescents with as many as 50% reporting use of illicit substances and 80% reporting use of alcohol by their senior year of high school. Gay and lesbian teens are reported to be at greater risk for substance abuse. Stress mediates this increased risk due to the contradiction of needing to establish an integrated sense of self, while doing so runs the risk of peer and family rejection, fears for personal safety, and the ongoing experience of homophobic remarks and jokes that are common in today's high schools. Olson, E.D. (2000) *Gay Teens and Substance Use Disorders: Assessment and Treatment*. Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy: 3(4)

Homelessness

The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services has estimated that 20-40% of youths who become homeless each year are lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Youth in the Margins, 2001)

In Our Schools

Key findings of the 2003 National School Climate Survey by GLSEN include:

- Unchecked harassment correlates with poor performance and diminished aspirations: LGBT youth who report significant verbal harassment are twice as likely to report they do not intend to go to college and their GPAs are significantly lower (2.9 vs. 3.3).
- Supportive teachers can make a difference: 24.1% of LGBT students who cannot identify supportive faculty report they have no intention of going to college. That figure drops to just 10.1% when LGBT students can identify supportive staff at their school.
- Policymakers have an opportunity to improve school climates: LGBT students who did not have (or did not know of) a policy protecting them from violence and harassment were nearly 40% more likely to skip school because they were simply too afraid to go.
- Harassment continues at unacceptable levels and is too often ignored: 84% of LGBT students report being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation. 82.9% of students report that faculty never or rarely intervene when present. <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1413.html>

Key Findings from the 2005 From Teasing to Torment, a report by the GLSEN include:

- One-third (33%) of teens report that students are frequently harassed because they are or are perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- LGBT students are three times as likely as non-LGBT students to say that they do not feel safe at school (22% vs. 7%) and 90% of LGBT students (vs. 62% of non-LGBT teens) have been harassed or assaulted during the past year - <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/1859.html>

COMING OUT

The term “coming out” (short for “coming out of the closet”) refers to the life-long process of the development of a positive gay identity. For some GLBT people, it is a long and difficult struggle because they often have to confront many homophobic attitudes and discriminatory practices. Many GLBT people first need to struggle with their own negative stereotypes and feelings of homophobia, which they learned as they were growing up. Before these gays and lesbians can feel good about who they are, they need to challenge their own attitudes and change them from the lower end of the homophobia continuum (repulsion, pity, tolerance) to feelings of appreciation and admiration. But it often takes many years of painful work to develop a positive GLBT identity. Then, the process of telling others begins. Many gays are afraid to “come out” to their friends, co-workers, and families.

***What might they be afraid of?**

- Rejection/loss of relationships
- Gossip
- Harassment/abuse
- Being thrown out of the house
- Being forced to undergo psychotherapy
- Having their lover arrested
- Loss of financial support
- Loss of job
- Physical violence

***Why might GLBT individuals want to come out to friends, co-workers, or relatives?**

- End the “hiding game” and deception
- 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 okay”

***How might GLBT individuals feel when they come out to someone?**

Scared, relieved, vulnerable, wondering how the person will react, proud

***How might someone feel after a GLBT individual comes out to them?**

Scared, surprised, shocked, disbelieving, uncomfortable, not sure what to say or do, wonder “why,” supportive, flattered, honored, angry, disgusted

***What might GLBT individuals want from people they come out to?**

Acceptance, support, understanding, comfort, closer friendship, no negative effects on the friendship, a hug and a smile, an acknowledgement of their feelings.

From: The Role of an Ally; Kevin Jett, GLACURH, 1998

Consequences of Invisibility

1. A considerable underestimation of the number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people.
2. People tend to generalize/stereotype from the minority of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who are “out” or visible.
3. Those visible to the helping professions are not typical of the diversity of the population.
4. Few role models are visible for individuals and couples trying to develop effective coping strategies.
5. Young (newly “out”) gays, lesbians and bisexuals feel alone, isolated; likely they are the only one, fewer opportunities to develop friendships or relationships.
6. Each person must make difficult personal decisions about whether/when to come out.
7. Those who remain closeted are forced to lead a double life.
8. Heterosexuals may go through their whole lives thinking they do not know any gays.

From: A Fate I Don't Deserve; The Stonewall Center, Columbus, OH

HETEROSEXUALITY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you think has caused you to be heterosexual?
2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of people of the same sex?
4. If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer it?
5. Isn't it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
6. Isn't it possible that all you need is a good gay lover?
7. If heterosexuality is normal, why are a disproportionate number of mental patients heterosexual?
8. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
9. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex? Why are they so promiscuous?
10. Do heterosexuals hate and/or distrust others of their own sex? Is that what makes them heterosexual?
11. If you were to have children, would you want them to be heterosexual knowing the problems they'd face?
12. Your heterosexuality doesn't offend me as long as you don't try to force it on me. Why do you feel compelled to seduce others into your sexual orientation?
13. The great majority of child molesters are heterosexuals. Do you really consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexual teachers?
14. Why do you insist on being so obvious, and making a public spectacle of your heterosexuality? Can't you just be who you are and keep it quiet?
15. How can you ever hope to become a whole person if you limit yourself to a compulsive, exclusively heterosexual lifestyle, and remain unwilling to explore and develop your homosexual potential?
16. Heterosexuals are noted for assigning themselves and each other to narrowly restricted, stereotyped sex-roles. Why do you cling to such unhealthy role-playing?
17. Even with all the societal support marriage receives, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?
18. How could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual like you, considering the menace of overpopulation?
19. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that could help you change if you really wanted to. Have you considered trying psychotherapy or even aversion therapy?
21. Could you really trust a heterosexual therapist/counselor to be objective and unbiased? Don't you fear he/she might be inclined to influence you in the direction of his/her own preferences?
22. How can you enjoy a full, satisfying sexual experience or deep emotional rapport with a person of the opposite sex when the differences are so vast? How can a man understand what pleases a woman, or vice-versa?

What is an Ally Anyway?

Allies are those special individuals that are willing to step out of their comfort zone and reach for a greater understanding of someone that is different. These are some of the qualities of such individuals:

- ❖ Has worked to develop an understanding of homosexual, bisexual and transgender people, as well as the needs of the GLBT community
- ❖ Chooses to align with GLBT people and respond to their needs
- ❖ Believes that it is in their interest to be an ally
- ❖ Is committed to the personal growth required
- ❖ Is quick to take pride and appreciate successes
- ❖ Expects support from other allies
- ❖ Supports other allies
- ❖ Able to acknowledge and articulate how patterns of oppression have operated in their own lives
- ❖ Expects to make mistakes and does not use this as an excuse for non-action
- ❖ Knows that in most empowered ally relationships the person in the non-GLBT role helps to initiate the change toward personal, institutional and social justice and equality
- ❖ Promotes a sense of unification with the GLBT community and teaches others about the importance of outreach
- ❖ Has a good sense of humor
- ❖ Does not force his/her help on GLBT persons
- ❖ Is patient
- ❖ Is willing to challenge homophobia/heterosexism/biphobia/transphobia
- ❖ Uses appropriate language
- ❖ Asks questions
- ❖ Takes risks
- ❖ Educates themselves on pertinent issues
- ❖ Honestly and openly express their thoughts/feelings
- ❖ Acts as a 100% ally – no strings attached

What does it mean to be an ally?

Support?

Private
Personal change
Reactive Strategy
Passive
personal
Sanctuary
separate but equal
Straight people suspect
Paternalistic
Personal story
Low visibility
Micro/Individual
being part of status quo
Oppression through lack of action
calling for patience
recognizing privilege
polite
confronting overt oppression

“some of my best friends are....”

“flying below the radar”

“I’m personally supportive, but...”

“these things take time”

not being personally homophobic/heterosexist

being in the closet (as gay or ally)

not making derogatory
comments/gay jokes

being nice to people you know are gay

Solidarity?

Public
Social/systems/institutional change
Proactive strategy
Active
Political
advocacy
life integrated
Straight people welcome
Interactive
Community/Global story
High visibility
Macro/Institution
challenging status quo
challenging oppression
taking risks with marginalized
Mutual empowerment/ engaging privilege
radical/ pushing it
confronting covert oppression

being open and affirming - public
spreading risk, not asking only glbtq people
to risk vulnerability

work for change now
working to end homophobia and
heterosexism
coming out (as gay or ally)

not abiding derogatory comments/gay
jokes from others (friends, family)

taking risk to increase safety and support
for all gay people

Which of these words/phrases resonate with you? Which ones don't?

Do you disagree with any of them? What words/phrases would you add/change?

How do these relate racism, sexism, homophobia and other oppressions? How are these dynamics the same? How are they different?

What are the helpful parts of support/solidarity? What are unhelpful parts?

Where do they overlap/intersect?

What dynamics could there be that put individuals and institutions in the support/private model or the solidarity/public model?

What will help those individuals and institutions to change? Is it necessary?

Can an ally be neutral?

Resources for GLBT People

National Organizations

<p>Advocates for Youth 1025 Vermont Ave., N.W., Ste. 200 Washington, DC 20005 202/347-5700 info@advocatesforyouth.org www.advocatesforyouth.org/</p>
<p>BiNet USA 1800 Market St., Ste. 405 San Francisco, CA 94102 415/865-5628 BiNetUSA@aol.com www.binetusa.org/</p>
<p>Bisexual Resource Center P.O. Box 1026 Boston, MA 02117-1026 617/424-9595 brc@biresource.org www.biresource.org</p>
<p>Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere 3543 18th St., #1 San Francisco, CA 94110 415/861-KIDS colage@colage.org www.colage.org</p>
<p>Gay Asian Pacific Support Network P.O. Box 461104 Los Angeles, CA 90046 213/368-6488 www.gapsn.org/</p>
<p>Gay and Lesbian Medical Association 459 Fulton St., Ste. 107 San Francisco, CA 94102 415/255-4547 info@glma.org www.glma.org</p>
<p>Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network 121 W. 27th St., Ste. 804 New York, NY 10001-6207 212/727-0135 glsen@glsen.org www.glsen.org</p>

<p>Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer 1707 L St., N.W., Ste. 230 Washington, DC 20036 202/332-5536 mautner@mautnerproject.org www.mautnerproject.org</p>
<p>National Association of LGBT Community Centers 208 W. 13th St. New York, NY 10011 212/620-7310 info@gaycenter.org www.gaycenter.org</p>
<p>National Association of People With AIDS 1413 K St., N.W., 8th Floor Washington, DC 20005 202/898-0414 napwa@napwa.org www.napwa.org</p>
<p>National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum 1714 Franklin St., Ste. 100-140 Oakland, CA 94612 510/302-0930</p>
<p>National Center for Lesbian Rights 870 Market St., Ste. 570 San Francisco, CA 94102 415/392-6257 info@nclrights.org www.nclrights.org</p>
<p>National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 1700 Kalorama Road, N.W. Washington, DC 20009-2624 202/332-6483 TTY 202/332-6219 nglhf@nglhf.org www.nglhf.org</p>
<p>LLEGÓ - National Latina/o LGBT Organization 1420 K St., N.W., Ste. 400 Washington, DC 20005 202/408-5380 www.llego.org/</p>

<p>Gender Education and Advocacy P.O. Box 65 Kensington, MD 20895 301/949-3822 (#8) www.gender.org</p>
<p>GenderPAC 1743 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Washington, DC 20009-6446 202/462-6610 gpac@gpac.org www.gpac.org</p>
<p>Human Rights Campaign 919 18th St., N.W., Ste. 800 Washington, DC 20006 202/628-4160 TTY 202/216-1572 hrc@hrc.org www.hrc.org</p>
<p>International Foundation for Gender Education P.O. Box 540229 Waltham, MA 02454-0229 781/899-2212 info@ifge.org www.ifge.org</p>
<p>Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund 120 Wall St., Ste. 1500 New York, NY 10005-3904 212/809-8585 lambdalegal@lambdalegal.org www.lambdalegal.org</p>
<p>Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force 350 W. 31st St., Ste. 505 New York, NY 10001 212/714-2904 info@lgirtf.org www.lgirtf.org</p>

<p>National Minority AIDS Council 1931 13th St., N.W. Washington, DC 20009 202/483-6622 info@nmac.org www.nmac.org</p>
<p>National Youth Advocacy Coalition 1638 R St., N.W., Ste. 300 Washington, DC 20009 202/319-7596 nyac@nyacyouth.org www.nyacyouth.org</p>
<p>Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays 1726 M St., N.W., Ste. 400 Washington, DC 20036 202/467-8180 info@pflag.org www.pflag.org</p>
<p>Servicemembers Legal Defense Network P.O. Box 65301 Washington, DC 20035-5301 202/328-3244 sldn@sldn.org www.sldn.org</p>
<p>Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States 130 W. 42nd St., Ste. 350 New York, NY 10036-7802 212/819-9770 siecus@siecus.org www.siecus.org</p>

Religious Organizations

[Affirmation \(Mormon\)](#)
P.O. Box 33532
Washington, DC 20033
www.affirmation.org

[Affirmation \(United Methodist\)](#)
P.O. Box 1021
Evanston, IL 60204
847/733-9590
www.umaffirm.org

[Al-Fatiha Foundation \(Muslim\)](#)
405 Park Ave., Ste. 1500
New York, NY 10022
212/752-4242
www.al-fatiha.org

[Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists](#)
P.O. Box 2596
Attleboro Falls, MA 02763-0894
508/226-1945
www.wabaptists.org

[Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests](#)
P.O. Box 6300
Minneapolis, MN 55406
612/343-2060
www.bmclgbt.org

[Dignity/USA \(Catholic\)](#)
1500 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Ste. 11
Washington, DC 20005-1894
800/877-8797
www.dignityusa.org

[Emergence International \(Christian Scientist\)](#)
P.O. Box 26237
Phoenix, AZ 85068
800/280-6653
www.emergence-international.org

[Evangelicals Concerned with Reconciliation](#)
P.O. Box 19734
Seattle, WA 98109-6734
206/621-8960 www.ecwr.org

[Gay Buddhist Fellowship](#)
2215-R Market St., PMB456
San Francisco, CA 94114
415/974-9878
www.gaybuddhist.org

[Integrity \(Episcopalian\)](#)
1718 M St., N.W.
P.O. Box 148
Washington, DC 20036
800/462-9498
www.integrityusa.org

[Lutherans Concerned](#)
P.O. Box 1022
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1922
www.lcna.org

[More Light Presbyterians](#)
PMB 246
4737 County Rd. 101
Minnetonka, MN 55345-2634
www.mlp.org

[National Gay Pentecostal Alliance](#)
P.O. Box 20428
Ferndale, MI 48220

[Office of GLBT Concerns for Unitarian Universalists Association](#)
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108
617/948-6475
www.uaa.org/obgltc/

[SDA Kinship International \(Seventh-Day Adventist\)](#)
P.O. Box 7320
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607
949/248-1299
www.sdakinship.org

[United Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches](#)
8704 Santa Monica Blvd., 2nd Fl.
West Hollywood, CA 90069
310/360-8640
www.ufmcc.com

[World Congress of GLBT Jews](#)
P.O. Box 23379
Washington, DC 20026-3379
202/452-7424
www.glbtejews.org

[Unity Fellowship Church Movement \(African American\)](#)
5148 West Jefferson Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90016
323/938-8322
www.unityfellowshipchurch.org

Hotlines

The Trevor Hotline

1-800-850-8078

National Gay and Lesbian Youth Hotline

1-800-347-TEEN (8336)

Gay and Lesbian National Hotline

1-888-843-GLNH (4564)

National AIDS Hotline

1-800-342-AIDS (2437)

1-800-344-7432 (Spanish)

1-800-243-7889 (TTY)



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Minneapolis, MN 55406

612.343.2060
www.bmclgbt.org
bmc@bmclgbt.org