

Child & Adolescent Sexual Development: Sexual Orientation and the Individual

Grades 11 and 12, Lesson #4

Time Needed

One class period

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to...

1. Define at least six relevant terms (sexual orientation, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, gay, and lesbian).
2. Distinguish among facts and common fallacies (myths/stereotypes) regarding homosexuality and bisexuality.

Agenda

1. Explain the lesson's relevance and purpose.
2. Review the importance of ground rules.
3. Define/distinguish among key terms and introduce the Kinsey scale, using *Sexual Orientation Transparencies 1-7*.
4. Use the *Sexual Orientation Quiz* and *Reference Sheet* (or *Quiz* and *Transparency 8*, if time is short) to address common questions and to dispel myths/ stereotypes.
5. Assign Homework.

Materials Needed

Classroom Materials, equipment:

- *Sexual Orientation Transparencies 1-8* (1 set) *

Student Materials:

- *Sexual Orientation Quiz* (1 per student)
- *Sexual Orientation Reference Sheet* (1 class set may suffice, even if you teach six sections of Health; not every student will want his or her own to keep)
- *Family/Friend Homework Exercises A-E* (6 of each per class Exercise will allow each student to choose at least one)

* Alternately, beginning in late 2006, all FLASH transparencies will be available as PowerPoint files on the FLASH web site: www.metrokc.gov/health/famplan/flash

Rationale

We don't have any choice but to teach about sexual orientation. Schools are already places children learn about it. They simply learn inaccurate, destructive messages.

"In schools across the country, even very young children learn the codes, passed on in jokes and whispers: don't wear certain colors to school on a particular day, or you're queer. Lessons are learned each time a child discovers that one of the surest ways to deliver an insult is to accuse another of being a lezzy, a faggot, a sissy. Children may not always know what these words mean, but they know the pejorative power of this language ... Lessons are learned each time adults speak and act as if everyone in the world is heterosexual, or should be ... Adult acquiescence in homophobia places lesbian and gay youth at great emotional and sometimes physical risk."

Whitlock, *Bridges of Respect*

All students, regardless of their sexual orientation, learn this mythology and hatred in school. We can educate actively, replacing mythology with knowledge, hatred with respect, or we can educate passively as we always have. Those are the only two alternatives. Either way we teach. But why should our teaching about sexual orientation be open and intentional?

- (a) Because it is an issue of **personal importance to a great numbers of children** especially those who are gay or lesbian or bisexual or who have a loved one who is. Together, these children comprise the largest minority group in many school districts.
- (b) Because schools have an obligation to support and enhance all **students' self-esteem** ... including that of students who are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Some would ask, "But how can we express support for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth without condoning their engaging in homosexual behavior?" That's like asking how to affirm heterosexual youth without condoning their engaging in heterosexual behavior. We tell them: You are good people and we believe in you. Supporting the child is not the same as promoting a particular behavior. In fact, the lack of visible support for these youth is undoubtedly one of the reasons they are at disproportionate risk of experiencing sexual risk-taking, serious depression, suicide, violent crime, school failure, substance abuse and homelessness.¹
- (c) Because schools have a responsibility to support and enhance **relationships within all families** ... including those with a gay, lesbian or bisexual child or parent. Encouraging family communication is an essential part of any "family life education" program.
- (d) Because schools are obliged to counteract **stereotyping and prejudice** against any group, and to provide an emotionally and physically **safe learning environment for every child**. Schools must not only stop tolerating stereotypes and ridicule and other forms of sexual harassment, but also actively teach that these behaviors are wrong.

¹ Perrin, E. et al. (2004) Gay and Lesbian Issues in Pediatric Health Care. *Current Problems in Pediatric Adolescent Health Care*, 34(10), 355-398.

- (e) Because schools are the most logical place to provide **accurate information**. (Only accurate information can overcome mythology and stereotyping.) Accurate information, respectfully integrated throughout the curriculum, has lessened the sense of invisibility many other minorities experience in schools. All children deserve to know about their histories and cultures.
- (f) Because **students are asking**, and to avoid answering sincere questions communicates values as clearly as answering does.

Recommended background reading for teachers and curriculum committees

Blake, S.M. et al. (2001) **Preventing sexual risk behaviors among gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents: The benefits of gay-sensitive HIV instruction in schools.** *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(6), 940-946. Single issues cost \$17. Go to: <http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/91/6/940>

Griffin, P. & Ouellett, M. (2002, March) **Going beyond gay-straight alliances to make schools safe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students.** *Angles*, the policy journal of the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies, 6(1). retrieved from http://www.iglss.org/media/files/Angles_61.pdf

Just the facts about sexual orientation & youth (n.d.) Developed and endorsed by American Academy of Pediatrics, American Counseling Association, American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, American Psychological Association, American School Health Association, Interfaith Alliance Foundation, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Social Workers, National Education Association. Retrieved October 27, 2006 from <http://www.apa.org/pi/lqbc/facts.pdf>

Perrotti, J. & Westheimer, K. (2001) **When the drama club is not enough: Lessons from the safe schools program for gay and lesbian students.** Boston: Beacon Press.

Reis, E. (2004) **Learning about sexual diversity at school: What is age appropriate?** (n.d.) retrieved October 27, 2006 from <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/whatisageappropriate.pdf>

Wessler, S. & Preble, W. (2003) **The respectful school: How educators and students can conquer hate and harassment.** Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Activities

1. Explain the lesson's relevance and purpose:

For the next couple of lessons, we'll be talking about liking and loving, and especially about heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality. There's a lot of confusion and misinformation around these issues; so today, we'll begin with understanding the facts.

Tomorrow, we'll move on to consider the problems of sexual stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. For homework, you'll examine other ethical issues regarding sexual orientation.

2. Review the importance of ground rules:

As with other issues we'll address in this unit, this one has personal meaning to many members of this class. There are probably some people here who are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Some have a close family member or friend who is gay, lesbian or bisexual. Some may have had same-sex sexual experiences, even if they are basically heterosexual. There may be people here—including some heterosexual folks—who have been victimized by anti-gay harassment, based not on whether they're really gay (which other people may not have any way of knowing), but on their gender expression (how traditionally masculine or feminine they act) ... even if that has nothing to do with whether the person is really gay. So let's all keep in mind the importance of trying to protect one another's feelings.

There are also probably differences in values among us. Some people here may believe that homosexual behavior is wrong. Others may consider it as acceptable/right as heterosexual behavior. Respecting one another's differing opinions will be important.

Also, I want to remind everybody about confidentiality: anything private that we share about another person will be done without names attached (the "someone I know ... rule") ... and even when you are sharing something personal, you can protect your own privacy by continuing to say "someone I know ...". Don't forget, too, that each person has an absolute right to "pass"; no one should feel obligated to share any personal information.

3. Show *Sexual Orientation Transparency 1*. Ask the class for help defining terms, in order to identify and clarify their misunderstandings. Below are the simplest, most objective definitions we can suggest.

"Sexual Orientation" = the part of us that feels attraction, infatuation, liking, and love. It has to do with the gender of the people we feel romantically attracted toward.

NOTE: Sexual orientation is not the same as **gender** (which sex one is, physically), or **gender identity** (which sex one believes one's self to be, spiritually and emotionally), or **gender expression** (how one acts or believes one should act or feels comfortable acting ... in a traditionally feminine or masculine way, or more androgynously).

"Heterosexual Person" = someone who is most often attracted (romantically, physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually) to people of another gender (the "opposite sex") ... a

guy who mostly gets crushes on, or who most often falls in love with girls, or a girl who mostly gets crushes on or falls in love with guys.

“Homosexual Person” = someone who is most often attracted (romantically, physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually) to people of the same gender ... a guy who mostly gets crushes on, or who most often falls in love with other guys, or a girl who mostly gets crushes on or falls in love with other girls.

“Bisexual Person” = someone who feels romantically attracted about as often to a man as to a woman, or who could fall in love with someone of either gender. Some people prefer to call themselves “bi” rather than “bisexual”, since the latter can imply that the person is nothing more than his or her sexual self.

“Gay” = homosexual ... a term many gay people prefer to “homosexual” because it sounds less formal or clinical, sounds less as if it is only about sex (instead of liking, loving, making a home together), and because it is a term of pride (like “African-American” or “Black” instead of “Negro”).

“Lesbian” = gay woman ... a term many lesbians prefer because it is more specific. The word “gay” refers to both men and women, but when people hear the word “gay” they often think only of men, making women invisible.

“Transgender” = someone whose gender identity is not the same as his/her biological sex at birth or someone whose most comfortable gender expression doesn’t conform to his/her culture’s expectations for people of his/her birth sex. That is, a very masculine girl or woman, a very feminine boy or man.

NOTE: A person’s gender identity (being transgender or not) may have no relationship to their sexual orientation. A transgender person can be gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

Other terms about which students may have questions or concerns include:

“Straight” = heterosexual ... a term many straight people prefer because it sounds less awkward and formal ... some dislike it, however, because it gets confused with not using drugs or with being a rigid person. Some gay people also object to the term, because if heterosexuals are “straight”, maybe the implication is that gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are “crooked.”

“Coming out” = a person realizing that he or she is gay, lesbian or bisexual (or transgender); telling trusted people, not pretending to be heterosexual, being open about his or her sexual orientation ... it is generally a gradual, and in some ways life-long, process.

“Fag,” “Faggot,” “Sissy,” “Queer,” “Lezzy,” “Dyke” = derogatory, prejudiced terms, as unacceptable as racial and religious slurs. (Sometimes used quasi-affectionately or, ironically, as terms of pride among gay and lesbian people; never appropriate, however, from heterosexual people)

Point out that all of the above are described as adjectives followed by the word “person,” “people,” “man,” or “woman.” Just as “Jewish people” is generally more respectful than “Jews” ... and “Black men” is more respectful than “Blacks” or “Black males” and “people with disabilities” or “differently-abled people” is more respectful than “the disabled” ... it is always preferable to consider people first as persons, men or women, and second in terms of their differences.

Point out, too, that the adjectives are not followed by the word “lifestyle.” Gay and lesbian people are as diverse as any other group. There is no more a single “gay lifestyle” than there is an “Asian American” lifestyle or a “blind lifestyle” or a “heterosexual lifestyle.” There is gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (GLBT) **culture** with its own performing and visual arts and body of literature; there are GLBT-identified bookstores, newspapers, etc. But the degree to which people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender take part in this culture varies from not-at-all to almost-exclusively.

Explain that pioneer sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, after interviewing thousands of American adults, concluded that sexual orientation falls along a continuum. He described it, sort of arbitrarily, as a six point continuum, where “0” represents people who are exclusively heterosexual (only ever attracted to people of the other gender), and “6” represents people who are exclusively homosexual. Show Transparency 2.²

Describe each point on the continuum:

0 = **completely heterosexual**: only ever attracted to, dream about, have sexual touch with, or fall in love with people of the other gender

1 = **mostly heterosexual**: usually romantically attracted to people of the other gender, but have occasionally fantasized about, or had sexual feelings for, someone of own gender, perhaps with incidental same-sex experience

2 = **more heterosexual than homosexual**: have crushes, loves, possibly relationships with people of both genders, but somewhat more often with people of the other gender

3 = **bisexual**: romantically, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, sexually attracted just as often to a man as to a woman, or able to fall just as much in love with a person of either gender

4 = **more homosexual than heterosexual**: have crushes, loves, possibly relationships with people of both genders, but somewhat more often with people of own gender

5 = **mostly homosexual**: usually romantically attracted to people of own gender, but have

² Alfred Kinsey’s research was flawed in many ways by the standards of today. Among other things, his subjects were not randomly selected; doing so would not have been possible in the 1940’s. They were, instead, what’s called a “convenience sample.” Hence, many of his conclusions are no longer considered valid. Nevertheless, based on a phenomenon he observed in thousands of in-depth interviews, he concluded that human beings’ sexual and romantic attractions fall more on a continuum than into discrete categories. Research in recent decades has *not* disproved that ground-breaking conclusion.

occasionally fantasized about, or had sexual feelings for, someone of the other gender, perhaps with incidental other-sex experience

6 = **completely homosexual**: only ever attracted to, dream about, have sexual touch with, or fall in love with people of own gender

People are temporarily (or, in rare cases, permanently) off this scale (not off one end, just not on the scale), if they are feeling **“asexual”**. That means that they aren’t noticing any sexual feelings at all. Most people have some times in their lives when they feel fairly asexual.

Ask students to listen to each of the following case studies and identify where each person would probably put him or herself, at this point in his or her life, on the Kinsey scale. Read aloud each of these case studies (changing the names if anyone in your class has these names), putting each transparency on the screen as you read the corresponding case study:

“Sexual Orientation Transparency 3: Janie”

Janie is 17, a senior in high school and a singer and song writer. She has always felt sort of “different” from other kids, but not in any way she could put her finger on until now. She is beginning to think about the facts that: (1) she’s never gotten excited about a guy the way her girlfriends have, even though one of her closest friends is male, and (2) she has had some serious, can’t-think-about-anything-else crushes on one female teacher and two close female friends within the last year. She wants to read more about the issue and wishes there were someone she could talk to. She thinks she is probably a lesbian.

Where on the continuum might Janie describe herself as belonging, at this point in her life? (Answer: 6. Circle this on the transparency.)

“Sexual Orientation Transparency 4: Mark”

Mark is 20 years old. He’s a junior in college, the oldest of three children in his family. He was born with a spinal problem and has always used a wheel chair. Mark went out with girls a few times in high school, but never got serious about any one person. Since he’s been away at school, he’s relaxed and been more social. He’s had a crush or two, and a couple of sexual experiences with girls, but he is just now falling in love for the first time ... with a guy. They haven’t had sex, but Mark is coming to the realization that he mostly, although not exclusively, loves men.

Where on the continuum might Mark describe himself as belonging, at this point in his life? (Answer: 4 or 5. Circle this on the transparency.)

“Sexual Orientation Transparency 5: Antonio”

Antonio is 19. He graduated from high school last June and is working for his brother, installing computers, saving to get his own apartment. He has always been kind of a loner. He’s had a couple of friends, but nobody really close, and no girlfriends. He has had some dreams, though, some romantic ones and some sexual ones, about one of the young women he works with. She’s the first person he has ever really thought of in that way. He’s

trying to get up the courage to ask her out.

Where on the continuum might Antonio describe himself as belonging, at this point in his life? (Answer: 0. Circle this on the transparency.)

“Sexual Orientation Transparency 6: Hahn”

Hahn is 21. She is a flight attendant for a major airline. She first had sex at the age of 13, with a 14-year-old neighbor boy. She’d heard everybody did it, and she wanted to be like everybody, but it was sort of disappointing ... so she didn’t have sex again for 4 years. Then she fell in love with a guy she met at school. They went together for a year and had a sexual relationship most of that time, a much happier experience than the one in middle school. After high school, she had a brief sexual relationship with a girlfriend, also nice, but then Hahn got this airline job and moved away. For a few years now, she’s dated, but not gone with any one person. Now she is going with a very sweet man, thinking of marriage.

Where on the continuum might Hahn describe herself as belonging, at this point in her life? (Answer: probably 1. Circle this on the transparency.)

“Sexual Orientation Transparency 7: Theo”

Theo is 18. He wants to go into the navy as soon as he graduates. He likes to watch music videos and he loves to draw (cartoons, portraits, anything). He has had two serious relationships in his life, although he’s never had intercourse ... he is too concerned about AIDS to risk his own life or anyone else’s. One relationship, with his friend David, lasted on and off from sixth grade through ninth grade. The other, with his friend Regina, lasted almost a year. Now, Theo isn’t involved with anyone in particular, but he has fun fantasizing about a couple of people. One is a girl named Sally who used to live next door; the other is Regina’s brother, Reggie.

Where on the continuum might Theo describe himself as belonging, at this point in his life? (Answer: probably 3. Circle this on the transparency.)

Point out four key concepts:

- A. Stress that there is a **difference between sexual behavior and orientation**. Janie, Antonio, and Theo have never had sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal), but they recognize their sexual orientations by noticing who they mostly find attractive. Mark has only ever had sex with girls, but he considers himself primarily gay, whereas Hahn has had sex with people of both genders and considers herself mostly heterosexual. Sexual orientation is a matter of feelings more than of sexual behavior. That’s important because it means **one doesn’t have to have sex to prove one’s sexual orientation**, or even to find out how one feels about it. **Teens, especially, of any sexual orientation can choose to abstain**, and many do.
- B. Point out, too, that in each case you asked **where**, on the continuum, **the individual would put him or herself**, rather than where others would put him or her. No one can know what another person feels.
- C. This exercise may inadvertently imply that **teens generally know** their sexual orientations. **Many do. But others don’t** figure it out until later. Explain that some

gay, lesbian and bisexual people say that they didn't realize when they were teens that they weren't heterosexual. They may have felt "different" from their friends, but not had a name for the difference. They may even have fallen in love with, or had a relationship with, someone of their own sex without using the label "homosexual" (or any other label) for their feelings.

- D. Finally, emphasize that you asked where each person fell on the continuum **at this point is his or her life**. People probably never go from 0 to 6, but they do report moving up and down the continuum a couple of points, at different times in their lives.
4. Hand out the **Sexual Orientation Quiz**. Give students three minutes to complete it, stressing that it's OK to guess ... that they will have an opportunity to correct and complete their quizzes without penalty.

If time is short, put **Sexual Orientation Transparency 8** (the answer key) on the screen and give people a couple of minutes to correct their papers. They should turn in the corrected quizzes, so you can give them credit for having completed the exercise.

If time allows, it is far preferable to hand out the **Sexual Orientation Reference Sheet** and have volunteers read the first twelve answers (which correspond to the twelve questions on the quiz) aloud. Again, make sure every student completes and corrects his or her quiz, and turns it in for credit.

If you have only one class set of **Reference Sheets**, and more than one class period of **F.L.A.S.H.**, ask people to turn them in, and assure those who want one to keep, that they may pick it up tomorrow after all your classes have had a chance to use it. Probably only your strongest readers will want their own copies, so they can see the documentation (it's footnoted), and finish reading the last ten questions and answers on their own.

5. **Assign homework.** There are five different **Sexual Orientation Family/Friend Exercises**. You can hand them out randomly, or give each student all five and have them choose the one they would like to do.

Sexual Orientation Transparency 1

TERMS:

Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual

Homosexual

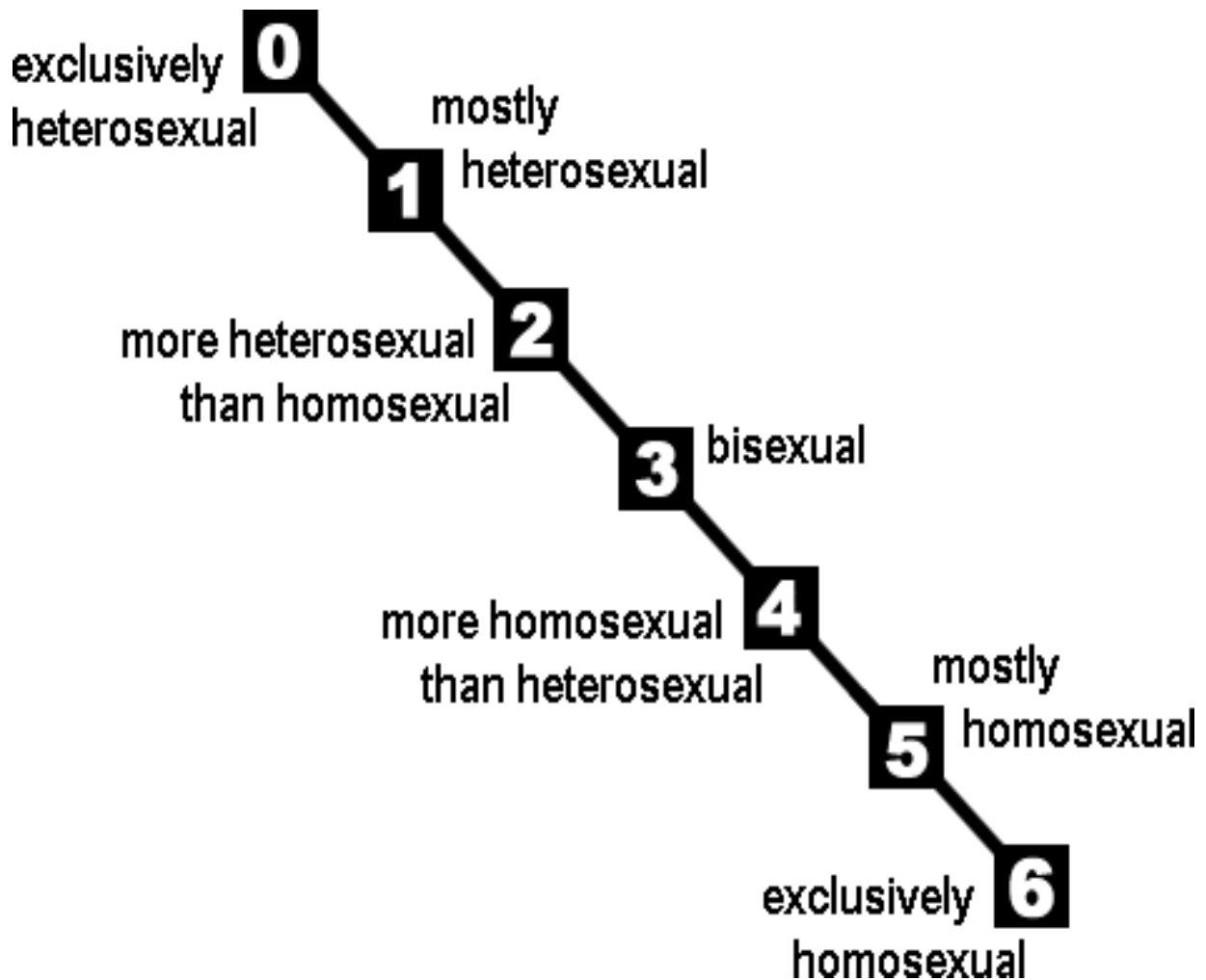
Bisexual

Gay

Lesbian

Sexual Orientation Transparency 2

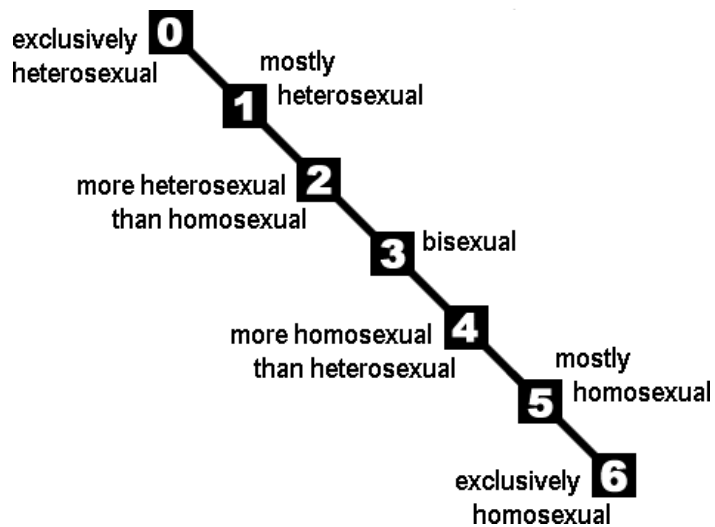
THE KINSEY SCALE



NOTE: Kinsey used this scale to describe “physical contacts” (behavior) and “erotic interests” (feelings). That was in the **1940’s** and **1950’s**. Today, sexual orientation is considered a matter of feelings and identity. A person’s behavior may have little or nothing to do with whether he or she considers him or herself gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual.

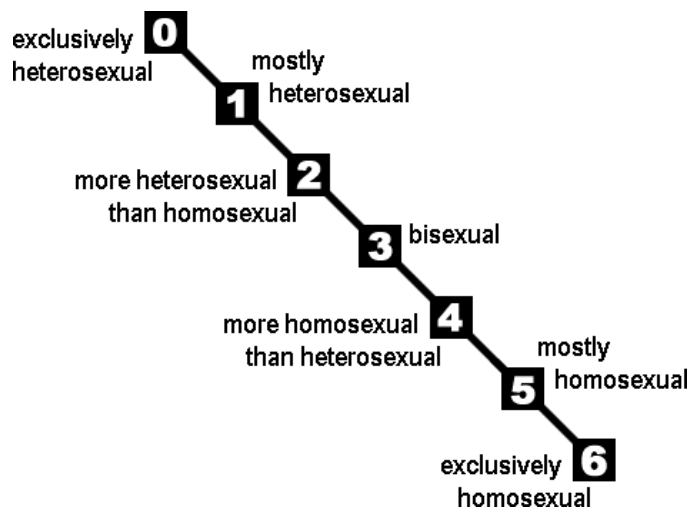
Sexual Orientation Transparency 3

JANIE



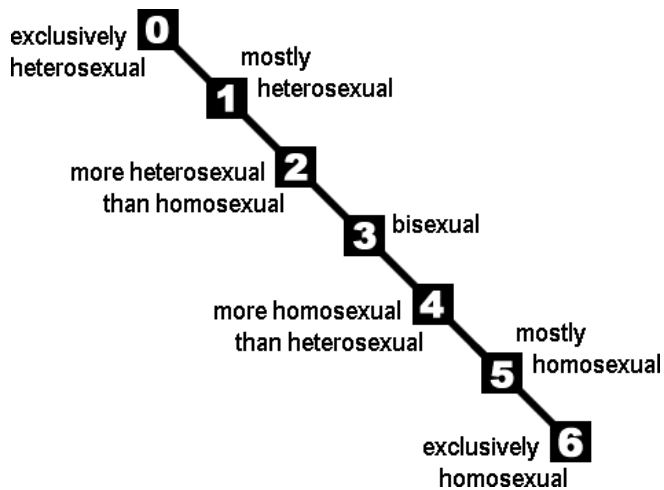
Sexual Orientation Transparency 4

MARK



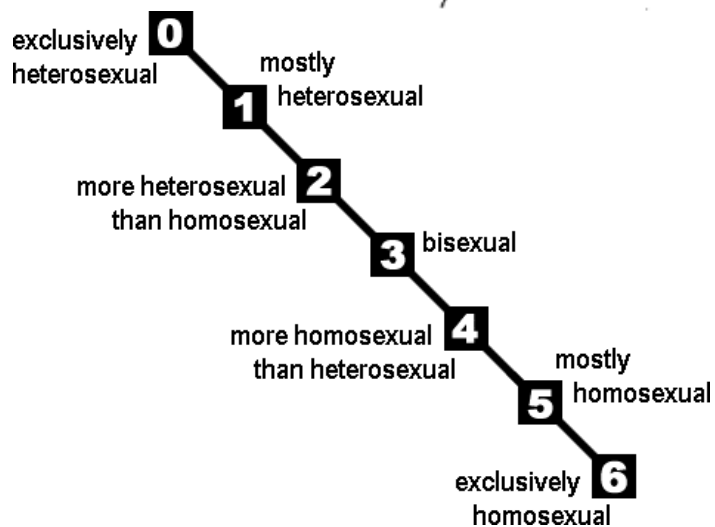
Sexual Orientation Transparency 5

ANTONIO



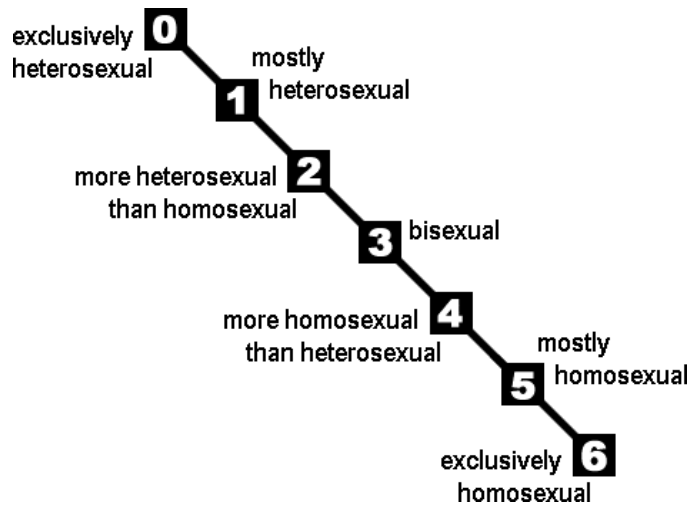
Sexual Orientation Transparency 6

HAHN



Sexual Orientation Transparency 7

THEO



Sexual Orientation Transparency 8

ANSWER KEY

- 1: C — No; it's a matter of feelings, not behavior**
- 2: B — Most often during their preteen or teen years**
- 3: C — It may vary from person to person, but for some people, at least, it's biological**
- 4: B — No**
- 5: B — No, that's a stereotype**
- 6: B — No, not usually**
- 7: B — No, not usually; that's a stereotype**
- 8: B — No**
- 9: C — Maybe rarely, but there's no reliable evidence**
- 10: B — No, most say they would not**
- 11: B — No, no higher than the rate among heterosexuals**
- 12: B — No, that's a myth**

Sexual Orientation Quiz

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD _____

DIRECTIONS: Check one answer for each question. Guess, if you aren't sure. But **please use pencil**, so you can go back and correct any mistakes. (You will turn this quiz in, after you correct it, for "participation credit".)

1. Does being gay mean having sex with someone of your own gender?
 a. Yes, if you have sex with someone of your own gender, you are gay
 b. Yes, but not just one sexual experience
 c. No; it's a matter of feelings, not behavior
2. When do people first realize they are gay?
 a. Most often before age twelve
 b. Most often during their preteen or teen years
 c. Most often during their 20's, 30's or later
3. Why are some people gay or lesbian or bisexual, and others are heterosexual?
 a. We're born with whatever orientation we have; it's genetic or prenatal
 b. It's a matter of infant or preschool development
 c. It may vary from person to person, but some people, at least, it's biological
4. If one of your parents is gay or lesbian, are the chances greater that you will be, too?
 a. Yes
 b. No
5. Can you tell if someone is gay or lesbian by how he or she acts and dresses or by the kind of career choices he or she makes?
 a. Yes, usually
 b. No, that's a stereotype
6. Do gay men think they are women ... or want to be women? Do lesbians want to be men?
 a. Yes, often
 b. No, not usually
7. Do lesbians dislike men? Are they afraid of men? Do gay men hate women?
 a. Yes, often
 b. No, not usually; that's a stereotype
8. Is homosexuality a mental illness?
 a. Yes
 b. No

9. Can people change their sexual orientation (from homosexual to heterosexual) through therapy?
- a. Yes, usually
 - b. No, never
 - c. Maybe rarely, but there's no reliable evidence
10. Would many gay men and lesbians change if they could?
- a. Yes, most say they would
 - b. No, most say they would not
11. Are a high percentage of gay people child molesters?
- a. Yes, higher than the rate among heterosexuals
 - b. No, no higher than the rate among heterosexuals
12. Do gay and lesbian people "recruit" heterosexuals?
- a. Yes, often
 - b. No, that's a myth

Trevor Project Helpline is a national toll free 24-hour, 365-day a year confidential suicide hotline for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning teens.

- Web site: www.thetrevorproject.org
- Toll-free phone: 1-866-488-7386
- Email: Support@TheTrevorProject.org

GLBT National Youth Talk Line provides telephone and email peer-counseling, as well as factual information and local resources for cities and towns across the U.S.

- Web site: www.glnh.org
- Toll-free phone: 1-800-246-7743 (**HOURS:** Monday thru Friday from 5pm to 9pm, *Pacific Time*; Monday thru Friday from 8pm to Midnight, *Eastern Time*)
- Email: youth@GLBTNationalHelpCenter.org

Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (also known as "PFLAG") provides support and resources for families.

- Phone (not toll-free): 202.467.8180
- Email: info@pflag.org
- Find a chapter near you: www.pflag.org/index.php?id=189

Safe Schools Coalition helps students and staff to problem-solve anti-LGBT harassment and violence, provides staff training and workshops for students, and has a great web site and listserv.

- **In an emergency**, call toll-free 1-877-SAFE-SAFE (1-877-723-3723) or email intervention@safeschoolscoalition.org and they will have a Safe Schools Coalition Intervention Specialist volunteer get back to you within 24 hours.
- Phone (not toll-free): 206-632-0662, ext. 49
- Email: questions@safeschoolscoalition.org
- Web site: www.safeschoolscoalition.org

Sexual Orientation Reference Sheet

Related Definitions

GENDER = one's biological sex (male or female) ... chromosomally, hormonally and anatomically.

GENDER IDENTITY = one's understanding or feeling about whether one is male or female, emotionally and spiritually.

GENDER EXPRESSION = All the ways that a person communicates to the world what it means to them to be male or female ... how they act (dress, walk, talk, react to an insult, etc.), what career they choose, what hobbies and chores seem most fun to them

GENDER VARIANCE = Not choosing – or not being able – to conform to your culture's expectations for people of your gender

SEXUAL ORIENTATION = the gender of persons to whom one feels attracted ... whether one has crushes on, dreams about, falls in love with, or feels romantic/sexual/spiritual/emotional attraction mostly to men, women or both.

Common Questions

1. Does “being gay” mean having sex with someone of your own gender?

No. Being gay or lesbian is not a matter of what you do, so much as what you feel, who you mostly find attractive or fall in love with. Many people know whether they're gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual, without ever having had sex with anyone.

Many heterosexual people have had same-sex experiences, especially when they were children or teens. Similarly, many gay and lesbian people have had heterosexual experiences. Having one – or even a few – sexual experiences with someone of another gender doesn't mean a person is necessarily straight; having sexual experiences with someone of a person's own gender doesn't mean they're necessarily gay or lesbian. Just remember that **SEXUAL BEHAVIOR** and **SEXUAL ORIENTATION** are different. And anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, can choose to abstain from sexual intercourse!

2. How do you know if you're gay? When do people (male or female) first realize they're gay?

Often, people gradually begin to realize that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual during their preteen or teen years.¹ That's when they start to get more crushes and attractions than they did when they were younger.

If their strongest attractions, over several years, seem to be on people of their own sex, if their strongest feelings of wanting to be close to someone, of falling in love, are for someone of their own sex, then they may begin to identify themselves as gay or lesbian. If they seem to have those feelings just as often, or just as strongly, for a guy as for a girl, they may begin to consider themselves bisexual. If most of their attractions are to people of the other sex, they'll probably conclude that they're heterosexual ... if they think about it at all. It may be difficult to even think about not being heterosexual, no matter what a person feels, if they grow up in a society that only shows them heterosexuality.

Some people, of course, may not have (or may not pay attention to) their feelings of attraction until their twenties, thirties or later.

3. Why are some people gay or lesbian or bisexual, and others heterosexual? What causes homosexuality?

It may vary from person to person. Sexual attraction is complicated.

We *do* know that certain old myths are not true. People do not "become gay" because they are sexually abused or raped. It doesn't make any difference if they have a certain kind of father or mother, or whether their father lives at home. Playing with traditionally "boy" or traditionally "girl" games and toys won't effect whether a child is gay or straight.

Dozens of studies since the 1990's have shown that, at least for some people, their genes and/or the hormones in their mother's uterus (before they were born) influence their sexual orientation.²

People's feelings may change somewhat over time, of course. And some people don't recognize their feelings until later in life. But people don't suddenly *decide* to be gay as teens or adults. It's something a person feels way down inside, not something he or she chooses.

4. If one of your parents is gay or lesbian, does that mean you are, also?

No. Your parents' sexual orientation has nothing to do with your sexual orientation. In one Seattle study, about 91% or 9 out of 10 high school students described themselves as heterosexual.³ Some of them undoubtedly have Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender (GLBT) parents. Some of the other 9% also have GLBT parents. Your parents' sexual orientation doesn't predict what yours will be.^{4,5}

5. Can you tell if a guy is gay by how he acts and dresses (sort of effeminate) and by his choice of careers? Aren't most lesbian women "tomboys" (sort of masculine) in their actions and clothes?

No and no. Those are stereotypes. A few people fit any stereotype. Most do not. You see gay and lesbian people every day. You just don't notice most of them, because they look and act like everyone else. You only notice those who do fit the stereotypes. There is support in the gay/lesbian/bisexual culture for being yourself ... even if that self is most comfortable in a non-traditional role. But, whether they are homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual, whether they are male or female, some people are strong, brave, attractive, gentle, athletic, artistic, etc. There are gay hairdressers and gay soldiers. There are lesbian truck drivers and lesbian secretaries. Remember that GENDER EXPRESSION and SEXUAL ORIENTATION are two different aspects of our sexuality.

6. Do gay men think they are women? Do they want to be women? Do lesbians want to be men?

No. Most gay men are glad they are men and most lesbians are glad they are women. People who are unhappy with the biological sex they were born with are *transsexual*. People who can't live comfortably within the narrow expectations for people of their biological sex are *transgender*. Many transsexual and transgender people are heterosexual. GENDER IDENTITY and SEXUAL ORIENTATION are different parts of our sexuality. Gender identity is which gender feel you are (emotionally or spiritually). Sexual orientation has to do with the gender(s) of the people you're most attracted to.

7. Do lesbians dislike men? Are they afraid of men? Do gay men hate women? Is it possible they just never had a good heterosexual experience?

No, no, and no. That's like asking whether heterosexual men dislike other men, or whether heterosexual women hate other women. Just because you don't fall in love with someone, that doesn't mean you hate or fear him or her. The person might even be your best friend. You just don't find them sexually, emotionally, spiritually attractive as a partner. Some gay and lesbian people have had heterosexual relationships, or even marriages, but they are most often (if not always) attracted to people of their own sex in a romantic or sexual way.

8. Are gay people mentally ill?

Some are, of course, just as some heterosexual people are. But no, homosexuality is not a mental illness.^{6,7,8} Some gay, lesbian and bisexual teens do feel anxious or depressed.⁹ Why? They have faced hatred and discrimination on a daily basis, since young childhood. It may not have been aimed at them directly, if they looked and acted no different than other children, but they heard the jokes, saw the snickers,

and eventually connected that mean “humor” with themselves. Gay, lesbian and bisexual teens are, therefore, at higher risk for alcohol and other drug problems and for attempting suicide than heterosexual teens. But the majority of GLBT teens *don’t* do those things. GLBT people can be mentally healthy, happy, mature individuals.

9. Can people change their sexual orientation through therapy?

Maybe rarely, but there’s no reliable evidence. Studies have mostly had small, biased samples. Experts have questioned whether, even in the unusual situation where a person does report some change, it’s their actual sexual orientation (feelings) that changed, or simply their behavior.^{10,11} With no proof it ever works, and with the possibility that trying might actually do harm, the American Psychiatric Association says that it’s unethical for a psychiatrist to try to change a person’s sexual orientation.¹²

10. Would many gay people (men and women) change if they could?

A few would. Most would not. Most say that their sexual orientation is such a core part of themselves, that changing it (if they could) would be like changing skin color or culture ... not something they would choose to change. Some people disagree. They say that, through religion or therapy, they have changed and are glad.

11. Do a lot of gay people molest children?

No. Most people who molest children are heterosexual men who molest children or teens.¹³ Men who sexually abuse boys mostly consider themselves heterosexual. They may be married or have girlfriends and they are attracted to adults of the “opposite” sex. They have a need to overpower or humiliate male children or teens. Relatively few reported child sex offenders (“pedophiles”) are female, but there are some, of course. Some abuse girls; some abuse boys. Most are heterosexual. In any case, pedophiles have what might be called a PSYCHO-SEXUAL DISORDER (mental illness of a sexual nature), no matter what their SEXUAL ORIENTATION may be.

Most gay and lesbian adults (like most heterosexual adults) would find a sexual relationship with a teen or child uninteresting or offensive. Most people fall in love with people who are more or less their own age.

12. Do gay and lesbian people “recruit” heterosexuals?

No. That’s a stereotype. Most people are attracted to people who are also attracted to them. And if they don’t know whether the person is interested, they tend not to flirt. Think about your own experience. When you get a crush on someone who is probably not interested, you don’t say anything, right? You don’t want to be rejected. Neither does anyone else.

13. What should you do if a gay person “comes on” to you?

What would you do if a heterosexual person (of the “opposite” sex) “came on” to you? If you didn’t find the person attractive, their gender probably wouldn’t make any difference.

If it were simple, friendly flirting and you knew and cared about the person, you might say something like, “I’m flattered, but I’m not interested. I care about you, but only as a friend.” If it was simple flirting but the person was a stranger or a recent acquaintance, you could simply say, “Sorry, I’m not interested.”

On the other hand, what if the person was being inconsiderate or rude, for example if they were drunk or touched you without your consent? No matter what sex they were, you would probably say something like, “Cut it out!” and you would leave.

14. Do you have to be homosexual to get AIDS?

No. Being gay has nothing to do with it. AIDS is caused by a virus, HIV. That’s a germ that anyone can catch, whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual; male or female; rich or poor; married or single ... if they have sex with, or share a needle with, someone who happens to have it. It happens that, in the United States (but not in every country), more gay men than heterosexual people have gotten the virus so far.

15. Did gay men cause the AIDS epidemic?

No. Sometimes when people feel scared, they get angry and look for people to blame. The French used to call syphilis “the Italian disease.” What do you think the Italians called it? That’s right, “the French disease!” And just because babies and children used to be the group hardest hit by polio, doesn’t mean they caused polio. Blaming the victim of a problem is nonsense.

16. Can gay and lesbian people have long, monogamous relationships? Can they marry?

Yes and no. Yes, some gay and lesbian couples are together for their whole adult lives. They may raise children together or own a home together. Some gay and lesbian couples have ceremonies to celebrate their commitment to one another. Some clergy of various faiths conduct such rituals to recognize and honor these relationships.

As of November, 2006, same-sex couples can be legally married in the U.S. only in Massachusetts. In a few other states (Connecticut, Vermont, and California) legal unions offer same-sex couples all the rights and responsibilities of marriage under state law, although they aren’t called marriages. The New Jersey legislature will

decide by April, 2007 whether to grant same-sex couples marriage equality or to offer, instead, some kind of civil union. More than 30 other states have banned same-sex couples' legal recognition, in some cases even overturning local laws in the process.

17. Can gay people (men, women) be parents? How?

Yes. Historically, some gay people have married someone of the "opposite" sex and had children with them. Maybe they happened to fall in love with that person, even though they mostly had crushes on people of their own sex. Other same-sex couples have had children from previous heterosexual relationships. They may have married before they realized they were gay or lesbian. They may have married to try to change their feelings. They may not have married; some people just decide to have a child together.

Increasingly, same-sex couples are having children together through donor insemination, surrogacy or adoption or by becoming foster parents.

18. Are most gay people middle-class, white, able-bodied, and young?

No. Those are stereotypes fed by the media. There are gay, lesbian and bisexual people of all classes, races, and ages. Some are hearing-impaired or blind; some use wheelchairs or crutches. There are gay and lesbian organizations for people of color, youth, and people who are elderly, differently-abled and of many different religions, cultures, and political parties.¹⁴

19. Is it against the law to be gay?

No (but see question 21). Remember, sexual orientation is something each of us feels inside. It doesn't necessarily have anything to do with sexual behavior. No one even knows what sexual orientation a person is, unless the person tells them. How can a feeling be illegal? How would anyone know if someone broke such a law? But besides, people do not choose how they'll feel, so making it illegal to be gay would be like making it illegal to be left-handed or blonde.

20. Is homosexual sex (same-sex touch) against the law?

Not in the United States. In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that homosexual conduct laws (which 13 states still had at the time) are unconstitutional.¹⁵ That case reversed a 1986 U.S. Supreme Court ruling which upheld a Georgia law used to convict a gay man for having sex in his home.

In some countries, however, a person can be imprisoned or even executed for being in a same-sex relationship.¹⁶

21. Is it against the law to discriminate against gay people?

That depends. On a federal level, no. Federal (United States) civil rights laws do not specifically protect gay, lesbian, and bisexual people from discrimination. Federal employees (people who work for the U.S. government) are protected from job discrimination based on “factors unrelated to job fitness” ... unless they work in the military or in a job that requires a security clearance. On a state level, only some states prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.¹⁷

Around the country, only some counties and cities also have laws (ordinances) or executive orders protecting some of the civil rights of gay and lesbian people and prohibiting discrimination. People — and courts and legislatures — disagree about what constitutes “discrimination” ... what is, and isn’t, fair:

- Is it right to have to rent a house to someone who can afford it, but who is gay or lesbian? Does a seller have a right not to sell his or her house to a gay or lesbian buyer?
- Is it wrong to fire someone on the basis of sexual orientation? To make a hiring decision on that basis?
- Should a restaurant owner have to serve a gay or lesbian customer?
- Should the police treat a gay or lesbian victim of a crime exactly as they would a heterosexual victim?
- Is a gay or lesbian parent entitled to visitation or custody, if there are no other reasons to question his or her fitness?
- Does a gay/lesbian student group have the same right to meet on school property as other student groups? Is it the school board’s right/responsibility to turn them down?
- Is it wrong to expel a student on the basis of sexual orientation? Is it wrong not to expel him or her?

Tonight’s homework addresses some of these questions and more.

22. Is it immoral to have sex with someone of your own sex?

This, too, is a controversial matter of values. People disagree. Some believe that sex between people who love and are committed to one another is something to be celebrated. Others believe that young people should abstain, but that sex between any two adults is fine, as long as it is consenting and private. Still others would say that same-sex touch is fine for preschoolers and children (“playing doctor”), but that for teens and adults, it is a problem. And still others would say that any sexual behavior between people of the same gender is wrong.

We think it is a good idea to talk about values with people you trust in your family, your community of worship (if you have one), and among your friends. Again, tonight’s homework will address this issue.

Footnotes

- 1 Data originally reported by Herdt, G. and Boxer, A. *Children of Horizons*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) cited in *Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools*, Human Rights Watch, 2001. Retrieved November 2, 2006: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/>
- 2 Cohen, K.M. (2004). Etiology of Homoeroticism in Perrin, EC; Cohen, KM; Gold, M; Ryan, C.; Savin-Williams, R.C. & Schorzman, C.M. (2004, November/December) Gay and Lesbian Issues in Pediatric Health Care, *Current Problems in Pediatric Adolescent Health Care*, 34(10), 357-358.
- 3 Reis, B. & Saewyc, E. (1999) *Eighty-three thousand youth: Selected findings of eight population-based studies*. Safe Schools Coalition. Retrieved November 2, 2006 from <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/83000youth.pdf>
- 4 Tasker, F. (2005, June). Lesbian mothers, gay fathers, and their children: A review. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*. 26(3):224-240.
- 5 Bailey, J.M., Bobrow, D., Wolfe, M., & Mikach, S. (1995). Sexual orientation of adult sons of gay fathers. *Developmental Psychology*, 31:124-129.
- 6 Jackson, K. (2005) Reparative therapy — What's broken? *Social Work Today*, 5(3):12
- 7 *Answers to Your Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality*. (n.d.) Retrieved November 2, 2006 from <http://www.apa.org/topics/orientation.html#mentalillness>
- 8 *Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Clients*. (n.d.) Retrieved November 2, 2006 from <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgb/guidelines.html>
- 9 Gilman, S.E.; Cochran, S.D.; Mays, V.M.; Hughes, M; Ostrow, D. & Kessler, R.C. (2001). Risk of psychiatric disorders among individuals reporting same-sex sexual partners in the National Comorbidity Survey. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(6): 933-939.
- 10 Jackson, K. (2005)
- 11 *Answers to Your Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality*
- 12 *COPP Position Statement on Therapies Focused on Attempts to Change Sexual Orientation (Reparative or Conversion Therapies)* (n.d.) Retrieved November 2, 2006 from http://www.psych.org/psych_pract/copptherapyaddendum83100.cfm
- 13 Groth, A.N. & Birnbaum, H.J. (1978, May) Adult sexual orientation and attraction to underage persons. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 7(3):175-181.
- 14 See:
 - *Resources for GLBT Youth of Color*: www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-glbt_youth_of_color.html
 - *SAGE – Senior Action in a Gay Environment*: www.sageusa.org
 - *Resources for GLBT Youth with Disabilities*: www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-glbt_youth_with_disabilities.html
 - *Rock the Vote's* (nonpartisan) page on Gay Marriage: http://www.rockthevote.com/is_gay_marriage.php#_ftn3
- 15 *Lawrence v. Texas*: States may not prohibit private homosexual activity between consenting adults (n.d.) Retrieved November 2, 2006 from <http://www.law.duke.edu/publiclaw/supremecourtonline/commentary/lawvtex.html>
- 16 *Where Having Sex is a Crime: Criminalization and Decriminalization of Homosexual Acts* (n.d.) Retrieved November 2, 2006 from <http://www.iglhrc.org/site/iglhrc/content.php?type=1&id=77>

- 17 Employment Non-Discrimination Act (n.d.) Retrieved November 2, 2006 from http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Employment_Non-Discrimination_Act

Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 14.04 and King County Code (KCC) 7430 (fair employment ordinances); SMC 14.08 (housing and public accommodations), KCC 5280 (fair housing), SMC 12A.06 (malicious harassment). Washington State Law Against Discrimination (RCW 49.60) covers employment, real estate, credit, insurance and public accommodation – such as service in a restaurant. Look up your local laws here:

<http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/FAIRAmicus-LocalLawsTable.pdf>

Discrimination complaints may be made (SE HABLA ESPAÑOL) to:

- **The Seattle Office for Civil Rights**, 206-684-4500, TTY: 684-4503.
- **The King County Office of Civil Rights**, 206-296-7592, TTY: 206-296-7596, Civil-Rights.OCR@metrokc.gov.
- **The Washington State Human Rights Commission**, Toll Free: 1-800-233-3247, TTY: 1-800-300-7525.

Anywhere in the United States, for legal advice or a referral, call **Lambda Legal** (www.lambdalegal.org): Northeast - 212-809-8585, Western Region - 213-382-7600, Midwest - 312-663-4413, Southern Region - 404-897-1880, South Central Region - 214-219-8585. Ask for the Legal Help Desk.

Family/Friend Homework on “Sexual Orientation”

A: Sexual Behavior

Below are a number of questions about the ethics (right and wrong) of same-sex sexual behavior (touch between two men or two women). Read them and think about them. Talk them over with a family member or another trusted adult or with a close friend. Then, together, sign the homework confirmation slip, below. Return it for credit.

- (1) Under what circumstances, if ever, do you believe that same-sex touch is wrong, sick or sinful?
- (2) Under what circumstances, if ever, do you believe that same-sex touch is right, healthy or loving?
- (3) In your opinion, is it right or wrong for two men or two women to hold hands in public or kiss hello when they see each other? Why or why not?
- (4) In your opinion, should it be legal or illegal for two adult people of the same gender (two men or two women) to have sex? Why or why not?
- (5) Do you believe gay and lesbian couples ought to be allowed to marry? Why or why not?
- (6) If your parent told you he or she had ever had a same-sex sexual relationship, how would you feel? What would you say?
- (7) If your child told you he or she had ever had a same-sex sexual relationship, how would you feel? What would you say?



Family/Friend Homework on Sexual Orientation

EXERCISE A • CONFIRMATION SLIP

FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS EXERCISE IS DUE: _____

We have completed Sexual Orientation Homework Exercise A.

Date: _____

student's signature

signature of family member or friend

Family/Friend Homework on “Sexual Orientation”

B: Religion, Therapy

Below are a number of questions about the ethics (right and wrong) of trying to change people’s sexual orientation through religion or therapy. Read them and think about them. Talk them over with a family member or another trusted adult or with a close friend. Then, together, sign the homework confirmation slip, below. Return it for credit.

- (1.) If you believe in God, how do you think God feels about gay, lesbian and bisexual people? Do you believe God made some people gay, lesbian or bisexual? Do you believe God wants everyone to be heterosexual? Why do you believe as you do?
- (2.) If you belong to a church, synagogue or mosque (or other organized religious group), does your religion have a belief about the ethics (rightness, sinfulness) of same-sex loving? Same-sex touch? Same-sex attraction? If so, what are these beliefs? If different members of your faith believe differently, what are some of their beliefs?
- (3.) Some psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors say they can change people’s sexual orientations; most say that is not possible. If a therapist had a way to change a person’s sexual orientation ... would it be right or wrong to try? Why? What if they could help a person abstain from sex, but not eliminate the person’s crushes and loves? What if they could prevent a person from ever feeling any sexual feelings? Would that be good or bad?
- (4.) Suppose you belong to the board or the advisory group of a church, synagogue or mosque. The minister, priest or rabbi tells your committee that one member of the congregation is gay and has AIDS. How would you feel? How do you think others on the committee might feel? What is the best thing for your group to do? Why?



Family/Friend Homework on Sexual Orientation

EXERCISE B • CONFIRMATION SLIP

FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS EXERCISE IS DUE: _____

We have completed Sexual Orientation Homework Exercise B.

Date: _____

student’s signature

signature of family member or friend

Family/Friend Homework on “Sexual Orientation”

C: Friend, Bystander/Ally

Below are a number of questions about the ethics (right and wrong) of being friends with someone who is gay, lesbian or bisexual and of how you act when you overhear teasing or harassment. Read them and think about them. Talk them over with a family member or another trusted adult or with a close friend. Then, together, sign the homework confirmation slip, below. Return it for credit.

- (1.) Suppose your friend told you he or she was gay, lesbian or bisexual. How would you feel? What would you say or do? Would it make any difference if your friend were male or female? Would you be proud or ashamed of what you said? Why?
- (2.) Suppose you are heterosexual. Your friend Pat (same sex as you are) invites you to go camping next weekend. You love camping and you don't get to go very often. You have heard rumors that Pat is gay. What would you probably say or do? Why? Do you wish you could say something different from what you really think you would say? What? Why?
- (3.) Suppose there is a girl in your school who acts kind of tough. She rides a motorcycle. She doesn't go out with guys, as far as you know. You overhear some kids, male and female, laughing about her, saying, “She's a ‘dyke’ and she should go to some other school.” What would you probably say or do? Do you wish you could do something different from what you really think you would do? What? Why?
- (4.) Suppose a student in your school writes an article for the school newspaper about his being gay. The next day, his locker has graffiti on it: “queer” “pervert”. Would you do or say anything? What? Why or why not? Would your own sexual orientation make any difference? Would you be proud or ashamed of your reaction? Why?



Family/Friend Homework on Sexual Orientation

EXERCISE C • CONFIRMATION SLIP

FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS EXERCISE IS DUE: _____

We have completed Sexual Orientation Homework Exercise C.

Date: _____

student's signature

signature of family member or friend

Family/Friend Homework on “Sexual Orientation”

D: Jobs, Housing, Insurance

Below are a number of questions about the ethics (right and wrong) of basing hiring, housing and insurance decisions on a person’s sexual orientation. Read them and think about them. Talk them over with a family member or another trusted adult or with a close friend. Then, together, sign the homework confirmation slip, below. Return it for credit.

- (1.) In most parts of the country, a boss (or the owner of a business) can decide not to hire someone because that person is gay, lesbian, or bisexual? Do you think that is ever the right decision? Why or why not? Does it depend? If so, what does it depend on? Regardless of whether it is the right thing to do ... is it the owner’s right to decide? Should it be illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation?
- (2.) Do you believe it is strictly a landlord’s right to decide who to rent to? Is it ever OK to decide not to rent to someone based on his or her race or religion or whether or not he or she has children? Is the renter’s sexual orientation the same thing, or is it different? Why or why not? Should laws protect a landlord’s right to decide or a renter’s right to housing? Why?
- (3.) Suppose an insurance company did a background check and a former roommate told them someone was gay, lesbian or bisexual. In your opinion, is that a good reason not to sell the person insurance? Why or why not? Should that insurance company get to decide to whom to sell their own policies ... on that or any other basis? Should that person have a right to buy the insurance?
- (4.) Should the partner of an unmarried employee be able to receive health care benefits as a legal spouse would? Why or why not? Does it matter if the couple is gay, lesbian, heterosexual or bisexual? Does it matter how long they have been a couple?



Family/Friend Homework on Sexual Orientation

EXERCISE D • CONFIRMATION SLIP

FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS EXERCISE IS DUE: _____

We have completed Sexual Orientation Homework Exercise D.

Date: _____

_____ student’s signature

_____ signature of family member or friend

Family/Friend Homework on “Sexual Orientation”

E: PARENTING, CUSTODY, ADOPTION, SCHOOL

Below are a number of questions about the ethics (right and wrong) of gay and lesbian parents and school-aged youth. Read them and think about them. Talk them over with a family member or another trusted adult or with a close friend. Then, together, sign the homework confirmation slip, below. Return it for credit.

- (1.) Suppose a gay man or lesbian woman has children from a previous marriage. In the past, most courts have said these parents may not have custody or visitation. In some cases, these days, the court is allowing the gay or lesbian parent to continue parenting. What do you think? If you were a judge, on what would you base your decision? Do you believe a gay or lesbian parent can do a good job? Why or why not?
- (2.) It used to be impossible in most parts of the country for a gay or lesbian person or couple to become foster parents or to adopt children. That is beginning to change in some states. Some laws and judges do allow gay and lesbian parents to adopt or become foster parents. Do you believe gay and lesbian people should be allowed to be foster parents or to adopt children? Why or why not? Does it depend? If so, on what?
- (3.) Suppose the principal learns from a teacher that a student is gay, lesbian or bisexual. Should he or she do anything? Encourage the student to change schools? Ask a counselor to meet with the student? Talk with the student’s family? Talk with the teacher about the student’s confidentiality (privacy)? Why should the principal do, or not do, any of these things?



Family/Friend Homework on Sexual Orientation

EXERCISE E • CONFIRMATION SLIP

FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS EXERCISE IS DUE: _____

We have completed Sexual Orientation Homework Exercise E.

Date: _____

student’s signature

signature of family member or friend