

Chapter

10

LGBTQIA+ Individuals and Relationships

We should indeed keep calm in the face of difference, and live our lives in a state of inclusion and wonder at the diversity of humanity.

George Takei

Chapter Outline

10.1 LGBTQIA+ Terminology	232	10.7b Lesbian Relationships and Sex	245
10.2 Conceptual Models of Sexual Orientation	234	10.7c Bisexual Relationships	246
10.2a Dichotomous Model	235	10.8 Mental Health, Violence, HIV, and Sexual Orientation	247
10.2b Unidimensional Continuum Model	235	10.9 Heterosexism, Homonegativity	247
10.2c Multidimensional Model	236	Self-Assessment 10-1:	
10.2d Sexual Fluidity	236	Sexual Prejudice Scale	249
10.3 LGB Feelings about Marriage and Family	237	10.9a Homonegativity, Homophobia, and Transphobia	250
10.4 Theories of Sexual Orientation	238	Social Policy 10-1:	
10.4a Biological Explanations	238	Same Sex Marriage	253
10.4b Social/Cultural Influence?	239	10.9b Discrimination Against LGBTQIA+ Individuals	254
10.5 Dangers of Conversion Therapy	240	10.9c Biphobia	255
10.6 Coming Out: Concealment or Nondisclosure?	240	10.10 How Heterosexuals Are Affected by Homophobia	255
10.6a Coming Out to Yourself and Others	241	10.11 What to Do About Anti-LGBTQIA+ Prejudice and Discrimination	256
Personal Decisions 10-1:		Chapter Summary	257
Benefits and Risks of Coming Out	241	Web Links	259
Technology and Sexuality 10-1:		Key Terms	259
Online LGBTQIA+ Support Groups	243		
10.6b Mixed-Orientation Relationships	243		
10.7 Relationships	244		
10.7a Gay Male Relationships	244		

Objectives

1. Differentiate the terms sexual orientation and sexual preference
2. Identify the meaning of LGBTQIA+ and review three conceptual models of sexual orientation
3. Know the percent of US adults who identify as LGBT
4. Review the theories of sexual orientation
5. Know the data on the lack of effectiveness of conversion therapy
6. Understand the advantage and disadvantages of coming out
7. Review gay/lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual relationships
8. Differentiate between heterosexism, homonegativity, and homophobia
9. Review how heterosexuals are affected by homophobia
10. Explore how college-age LGBT adults view marriage and the family



- T / F** 1. According to new longitudinal data, sexual identity is fixed.
- T / F** 2. There are discernible differences in sex hormone levels between lesbians and straight women.
- T / F** 3. College-aged LGBT people are anti-marriage and family.
- T / F** 4. Parents who believe sexual orientation is innate are more accepting of their LGB child.
- T / F** 5. Same-sex spouses are more likely to divorce than other-sex spouses.

Answers: 1. F, 2. F, 3. F, 4. T, 5. T

Note: Historically, the term “same-sex” has been used in both popular culture and in legislation when the term “same-gender” is more appropriate. With that in mind, the terms used in this text will stay consistent with the language used in laws and past research, despite the fact that they may not be accurate.

Schitt\$ Creek is a television comedy that ran for 6 years and 80 episodes (ending in 2020). Included in the main characters was David (a pansexual) who married Patrick in the last episode. Prior to the wedding, many episodes gave visibility to the couple’s relationship. Mainstream acceptance of *Schitt\$ Creek* was reflected in numerous awards, including four Emmys in 2020 for each of the lead characters. That there has been increased acceptance of the LGBTQIA community is evident. Almost three-fourths (74%) of a sample of 330 college students agreed that “same gender marriage is good for society” (Kaufman et al., 2021). The Respect for Marriage Act, signed into law by President Joe Biden in 2022, requires states to recognize same-sex marriages across state lines and grants same-sex couples the same federal benefits as any married couple. This law does not guarantee the legality of same-sex marriage because the Supreme Court could pass a ruling allowing states opposed to same-sex marriage to outlaw it. Meanwhile, based on a study of 330 college students, there has been a shift away from support for conventional marriage toward marriage as more inclusive of same-sex couples. However, less than half support polyamorous marriage (Kaufman et al., 2023).

Sexual and gender minority (SGM) people—including members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQIA+) communities—comprise approximately 7.5% of the United States population (Jones, 2022). In this chapter, we address the reality of these individuals, and their feelings and concerns.

10.1 LGBTQIA+ Terminology

Sexual orientation refers to the classification of individuals as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, or asexual, based on their emotional and sexual attractions, relationships, self-identity, and lifestyle. With the exception of pansexuality and asexuality, all of these classifications are based on a gender binary system of male and female.



National Data

In a 2021 Gallup poll, 86.3% of adults identified as heterosexual or straight and 7.1% as LGBT—up from 3.5% in 2012 (Jones, 2022). Of those identifying as LGBT, 56.8% said they were bisexual, 20.7% identified as gay, 13.9% identified as lesbian, 10% identified as transgender, and 4.3% identified as “other” (queer, etc.). These percentages add up to more than 100 because people could choose more than one

identity (e.g., “transgender” and “bisexual”). Younger adults were more likely than older adults to identify as LGBT. Nearly 21% of Generation Z adults (born 1997–2003) identified as LGBT compared to 10.5% of Millennials (born 1981–1996), 4.2% of Generation X (born 1965–1980), and 2.6% of baby boomers (born 1946–1964) (Jones, 2022). Grey et al. (2022) confirmed that bisexuals represent the majority of the LGBTQ community; over 80% are with a partner of another gender.

Sexual orientation

Classification of individuals as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual based on their emotional, cognitive, and sexual attractions, as well as their self-identity and lifestyle

Sexual orientation discordance

A discrepancy in sexual attraction and behavior

Heterosexuality

Sexual orientation in which the predominance of emotional and sexual attraction is to people of the other sex

Homosexuality

Sexual orientation in which the predominance of emotional and sexual attraction is to people of the same sex

Bisexuality

Emotional and sexual attraction to members of both sexes

Sexual identity may change over time. Longitudinal data on 16,870 adults reveals examples of such changes (Campbell et al., 2021): In 2013, 65.5% identified as “exclusively heterosexual,” with 60% selecting the same label 4 years later. Similarly, 7.5% identified as bisexual, with 10.4% selecting the same label years later. The researchers noted the importance of viewing sexual orientation as a dynamic. Lefevor et al. (2022) noted that a discrepancy in sexual attraction and behavior is known as **sexual orientation discordance**.

Heterosexuality refers to the predominance of emotional and sexual attraction to people of the other sex using a male/female binary system. Heteronormativity is the presumption and privileging of heterosexuality (Pollitt et al., 2021). The term **homosexuality** (an offensive term for some) refers to the predominance of emotional and sexual attractions to people of the same sex. Gay men and lesbians are the preferred terms. While attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women have become increasingly favorable, there are subgroups garnering less support. For gay men, the subgroup Flamboyant has emerged, and Butch for lesbian women. (McCutcheon & Morrison, 2020).

Bisexuality is the emotional and sexual attraction to members of both men and women. In one study, 84% of bisexuals reported involvement in other-sex relationships. The reasons most bisexuals are involved in other-sex relationships include sexual reproduction, conformity to common norms, and abundance of other-sex individuals available (Wu et al., 2020).

The *T* in LGBTQIA+ stands for trans, also referred to as TGNB (transgender and nonbinary). There are 1.5 million individuals in the US who identify as transgender. This group experiences pervasive social and economic marginalization and exclusion, including discrimination, unemployment, and violence, which adversely affects their health and well-being (Thomas, 2020). In some cases, transgender individuals may be sought as part of a sexual fetish. Anzani et al. (2021) sampled 142 transgender and nonbinary individuals who described their experiences of fetishization. While some reported negative experiences of fetishization, others reported it as being positive in that they felt sexually desired. Trans issues are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

LGBTQIA+ is an acronym that refers to **l**esbians, **g**ays, **b**isexuals, **t**rans individuals, **q**uestioning (those who question their sexual orientation or identity) and **q**ueer individuals, **i**ntersex individuals, and **a**sexual. Some have used the last *a* to stand for allies. Allies may also be businesses that display their commitment to sexually and gender diverse clients through flags, colors, and symbols (Whittlemore, 2022). The “plus” (+) stands for any other nonheterosexual, noncisgender identity, including “nonbinary,” “pansexual,” and “agender.” For brevity, we use the acronym LGBTQ+ or terminology consistent with sources we cite.

Queer is a blanket term that many gender-nonbinary individuals prefer. **Intersexed** are those who have physical characteristics of both men and women.

The term **asexual** describes an absence of sexual attraction, desire, interest, or fantasies (Catri, 2021). It is helpful to think of the capacity for sexual interest as being on a continuum from asexual, where there is no sexual attraction/arousal, to **allosexual** where there is sexual interest/arousal that can be directed to a person of another sex or one’s same sex. This continuum is referred to as the “ace” spectrum, which includes the person who is **graysexual**, meaning they only rarely experience sexual attraction, and the **demisexual**, who can experience sexual attraction but only if in an emotional



This woman reports that, while she is a romantic and loves emotional involvement, she has no interest in or sexual attraction to a partner.

bond. Some people identify as aromantic, where they have no romantic attraction to anyone. Regarding romantic orientation of asexuals, of 295 self-identified asexuals, 34% were aromantic, and 23% panromantic. Some had no romantic interest or need (Friedman et al., 2022).

Asexuality is a sexual orientation; about 1% of the adult population identify as asexual (Hall et al., 2021). In contrast to heterosexuals and gays/lesbians who are attracted to other and same-sex individuals, some asexuals have no sexual attraction to anyone; they do not see anyone as a potential sexual partner. Hall and Knox (2022b) reported on 75 self-identified asexual individuals who, when compared to heterosexuals, bisexuals, and gay/lesbians, were more likely to be single and to see themselves as remaining single and living in their parents’ house. Skorska et al. (2023) compared asexual men to gay and hetero-

sexual men and found lower genital and subjective arousal to erotic films but no difference in arousal related to personal sexual fantasy.

Asexuals are also likely to have a positive self-concept. Pluckhan (2023) analyzed 993 respondents representing heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, demi-sexual, and graysexual individuals in regard to their self-esteem and found that asexual spectrum individuals had the highest self-esteem, followed by other LGBTQ+ individuals, with heterosexuals having the lowest self-esteem. In a study of 1,093 people on the asexual spectrum, 56% were women, 10% men, and 23% “multiple genders” (Hille et al., 2020b). However, in spite of no sexual attraction, sexual behavior may occur. Thirty percent of asexuals, 56% of graysexuals, and 62% of demisexuals reported having had sexual intercourse. For asexuals and graysexuals, when sex occurred, it was consensual and engaged in to please the partner. Hence, there is a relational motivation for sexual behavior for the asexual. “Willing without wanting” is the phrase identified by Hille et al. (2020a).

LGBTQIA+

An acronym that refers to **l**esbians, **g**ays, **b**isexuals, **t**rans individuals, **q**uestioning (those who question their sexual orientation or identity) and queer individuals, **i**ntersex individuals, and **a**sexual. Some have used the last *a* to stand for allies.

Queer

A blanket term that many gender-nonconforming individuals prefer

Intersexed

Individuals who have physical characteristics of both sexes

Asexual

Refers to people who do not experience sexual attraction, desire, interest, or fantasies, although the person may form emotional attachments, masturbate, and experience sexual pleasure

Allosexual

Sexual interest/arousal that can be directed to a person of another sex or one’s same sex

Graysexual

A person who only rarely experiences sexual attraction

Demisexual

A person who can experience sexual attraction, but only if in an emotional bond

Since asexuality is thought of as the “absence” of sexual feelings, the asexual orientation is often viewed negatively. But this view fails to capture the fact that asexuals see themselves as normal, even though their sexual frequencies are lower when compared to heterosexuals, bisexuals, and gay/lesbians (Hall et al., 2021). Indeed, the sexuality of asexuals may include masturbation, sexual intercourse, and oral sex, often to please a partner.

Mitchell and Hunnicutt (2019) noted that those who are asexual often discover their lack of sexual interest/attraction after they have had sex. They also feel that telling others about their asexuality is a form of “coming out” for which they feel pathologized and disapproved of.

The Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) organization facilitates awareness of asexuality as an explicit identity category. Its website, asexuality.org, has 100,000 members (Solomon, 2021).

Pansexuality is not based on a gender binary system. *Pansexual* stems from the prefix *pan-*, which means “all.” Those who identify as pansexual are attracted to others regardless of their biological sex, gender, or gender identity.

The Pansexual Pride flag is shown. The pink symbolizes those who identify as female, the yellow symbolizes those who identify as outside the female/male binary, and blue symbolizes those who identify as male. Although the flag itself represents more of the gender aspect of attraction, a lot of people include orientation as well meaning, regardless of gender, they are attracted romantically and/or sexually to anyone.

Discovering one’s own sexual identity is a process. Walker et al. (2020) interviewed LGBT individuals who reported perusing movies, television, and social media to learn about the variety of sexual identities and discover what

felt right for them. They also reported having to navigate the negative messaging of religion and what their partners thought and felt. Most reported an amazing lack of conversation from parents about sexual identity issues. The questioning process can be precarious. Questioning or being unsure of or exploring one’s own sexual identity are associated with higher rates of suicidality compared to other LGBT youth (Price-Feeney et al., 2021).



The Pansexual Pride flag

Think About It

Take a moment to answer the following question. Although the terms sexual preference and sexual orientation are often used interchangeably, many sexuality researchers and academicians (including the authors of this text) prefer to use the latter term. Sexual preference implies that the individual is consciously choosing to whom they are attracted, whereas sexual orientation suggests that it is innate (as is handedness) or may be influenced by multiple factors. The term sexual identity may also be used rather than sexual preference. What are your feelings about using the respective terms, and what meaning does each have for you?

10.2 Conceptual Models of Sexual Orientation

Pansexuality

The state in which someone is attracted to people regardless of their gender identity

There are three models of sexual orientation: the *dichotomous* model, in which people are either heterosexual or gay; the *unidimensional continuum* model, in which sexual

orientation is viewed on a continuum; the *multidimensional* model, in which sexuality is seen as a function of degrees of various components, such as emotions, behaviors, and cognitions. An aspect of sexual orientation known as sexual fluidity, which is the capacity for variation in erotic response, is also discussed in this section. Some individuals are consistent in their erotic response independent of the situation/social context.

10.2a Dichotomous Model

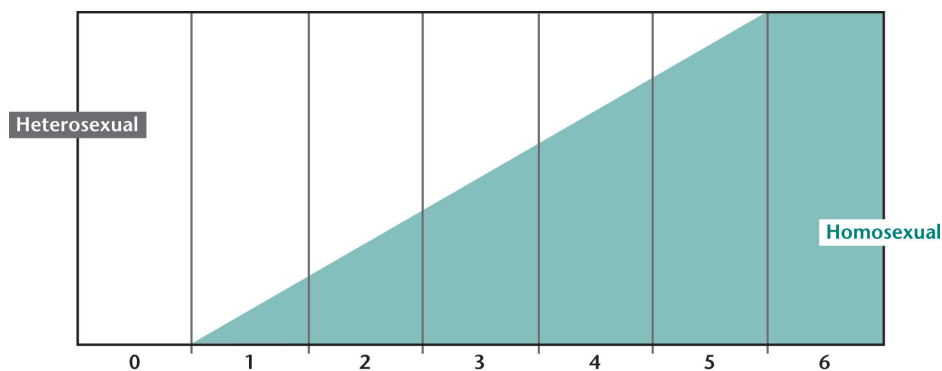
The **dichotomous model** (also referred to as the *either-or model of sexuality*) takes the position that a person is either gay or not. The major criticisms of the dichotomous model of sexual orientation are that it ignores the existence of bisexuality, asexuality, and pansexuality and that it does not allow for any gradations of sexual orientation as a continuum.

10.2b Unidimensional Continuum Model

In early research on sexual behavior, Kinsey and his colleagues (Kinsey et al., 1948, 1953) found that a substantial proportion of respondents reported having had same-sex sexual experiences, yet very few reported exclusive gay behavior. These data led Kinsey to conclude that, contrary to the commonly held dichotomous model of sexual orientation, most people are not exclusively heterosexual or homosexual. Swan et al. (2020) surveyed a nationally representative sample of Australian male students and found that while 77.4% identified as heterosexual only 67% said they were only attracted to females.

Kinsey suggested the **unidimensional continuum model** of sexual orientation and developed the Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale to assess where on the continuum of sexual orientation an individual is located (see Figure 10–1).

Figure 10–1 The Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale



Based on both psychological reactions and overt experience, individuals rate as follows:

- 0 Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual factors
- 1 Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
- 2 Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
- 3 Equally heterosexual and homosexual
- 4 Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
- 5 Predominantly homosexual, but incidentally heterosexual
- 6 Exclusively homosexual factors

Adapted from: Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., Martin, C. E., & Gebhard, P. H. (1953). *Sexual behavior in the human female* (p. 470, Figure 93). Philadelphia, PA: W. B. Saunders. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.

Dichotomous model

Way of conceptualizing sexual orientation that prevails not only in views on sexual orientation but also in cultural understandings of biological sex (male versus female) and gender (masculine versus feminine); also referred to as the *either-or model of sexuality*

Unidimensional continuum model

Identification of sexual orientation on a scale from 0 (exclusively heterosexual) to 6 (exclusively gay), suggesting that most people are not on the extremes but somewhere in between

The unidimensional continuum model recognizes that heterosexual and homosexual orientations are not mutually exclusive and that an individual's sexual orientation may have both heterosexual and homosexual elements. For example, Mendelsohn et al. (2022) reported on data from the California Health Survey, which included 116,950 individuals. Five percent reported identity behavior discordance, identifying as heterosexual but having sex with same-sex individuals.

A criticism of the Kinsey scale is that it does not account for some important aspects of sexuality, such as self-identity. You could place yourself on the continuum, but the criteria for doing so are not clear.

10.2c Multidimensional Model

The **multidimensional model** of sexual orientation suggests that orientation consists of various independent components—including emotional and social preferences, behavior, self-identification, sexual attraction, fantasy, and lifestyle—and that these components may change over time. Referring to the Swan et al. (2020) Australian nationally representative sample mentioned above, of 72% female students who self-identified as heterosexual, only 55.6% said they were only attracted to males. The most important contribution of the multidimensional model is its incorporation of self-identity as a central element of sexual orientation. Thus, individuals can engage in same-sex sexual behavior or interest or arousal but can self-identify as heterosexual and vice versa. However, Swan et al. (2020) argued that, because any one measure (including self-identity) is an inadequate indicator of sexual orientation, multiple measures should be used to determine sexual orientation.

While the above models are concerned with one's sexual orientation self-identity, Morandini et al. (2023) conducted research on the ability of others to identify the sexual orientation of someone on the basis of the person's voice. Based on voice recordings of a sample of 20 gay, 20 bisexual, and 20 straight Australian men and perceived sexual orientation, participants could correctly identify the sexual orientation of the gay and straight men at rates greater than chance.

10.2d Sexual Fluidity

Sexual fluidity, the capacity for variation in erotic response depending on the situation, is another way to characterize sexual orientation. In this view, orientation is not fixed, but is subject to context, experiences, age, and so on. Diamond et al. (2020) surveyed 76 women and identified four types of sexual gender fluidity:

1. fluidity as heightened erotic responsiveness to one's less-preferred gender (LPG) (e.g., a heterosexual experiences an erotic attraction to a same-sex person).
2. fluidity as situational variability in erotic responsiveness to the LPG (e.g., laboratory arousal but does not generalize to day-to-day attraction).
3. fluidity as discrepancy between sexual attraction and sexual partnering with the LPG (e.g., self-identified lesbians pursuing sex with men)
4. fluidity as instability in day-to-day attraction to the LPG over time (e.g., randomly discovering being attracted to LPG with no pattern). These patterns operated independently and may be associated with sex drive and sociosexuality.

Multidimensional model

Way of conceptualizing sexual orientation that suggests that a person's orientation consists of various independent components—including emotions, lifestyle, self-identification, sexual attraction, fantasy, and behavior—and that these components may change over time

Sexual fluidity

Capacity for variation in erotic responses depending on the situation

Gruia et al. (2023) conducted two assessments, 12 months apart, on the self-reported sexual orientation for 52 men and 67 women, and correlated genital arousal to erotic videos showing males or females. Genital arousal was stable, with self-reports varying in stability (women less relative stability). Su and Zheng (2023) also confirmed the stability of sexual data as in low sexual desire, high asexual identity, and sexual orientation of 168 individuals over a 3-year period. However, researchers often report different findings (a hallmark of sexuality). For example, other researchers have found that sexual desire does change (more often from high to low), asexuals may have this identity but engage in interpersonal and individual sexual behavior, and individuals change their sexual lifestyle (e.g., person in heterosexual marriage will divorce and pair bond in a new same-sex relationship).

10.3 LGB Feelings about Marriage and Family

How do sexual minority individuals feel about marriage and the family? Zacarias et al. (2022) interviewed college-age, self-identified lesbians and bisexuals who reported profound endorsement of marriage and looked forward to being a parent with their partner. One of the respondents noted:

Dad says I'm a late bloomer. Maybe. Or maybe you're blooming now, and you're just not the kind of flower he was expecting.

Alex Gino

I definitely want to be married, and I definitely want to have children and a family, because I had such a dysfunctional family dynamic growing up. I desperately crave that in my future, I need that stability. I need that meeting up for birthdays and Thanksgiving and Christmas and like without toxic relationships, no like, secret hatreds. I want a nice, reliable, healthy family dynamic because I didn't have that growing up. Like I cannot wait to build that one day.

Another respondent described a lot of pressure to have a family.

I feel pressure. I feel pressure from my mom because my brother is kind of dumb [laughs] and he doesn't, he's not great at dating because he is kind of lame and she's like, "You're my only shot at having grandbabies." So, she really, she has wanted grandchildren for so, so, so long and had a really good relationship with my grandparents growing up. So, she wanted to have that same dynamic and she talks to me all the time about like, "Are you talking to any boys? Like when are you going to get married?" And I was like, oh no, I feel pressure from my mom.

A third respondent is sensitive to the need to find a coparent as part of the marriage/family package.

I think it's important to me because to me marriage and family go hand and hand. [pause] Like I wouldn't want to have a kid without having a partner so, I don't know maybe that's the traditionalist in me but, I think that's really important. You know to be like, you know you and your partner are a team and now you're going to face the world, and it'll be that way forever barring any unfortunate circumstances. So, I don't know, marriage is pretty important to me I guess, so, it's like one of my life goals.

10.4 Theories of Sexual Orientation

One of the prevailing questions raised regarding one's orientation centers on its origin or cause. Gay people are often irritated by the fact that straight people seem overly concerned about finding the cause of homosexuality. The same question is rarely asked about heterosexuality because it is assumed that this sexual orientation is normal and needs no explanation. Questions about causation can imply that something is wrong with homosexuality.

Nevertheless, considerable research has been conducted on the origin of homosexuality and whether its basis is derived from nature (genetic, hormonal, innate) or nurture (learned through social experiences and cultural influences). Most researchers

In the end, everybody gets to decide what is and isn't sexual to them as well as what they find sexually attractive. And that, in a nutshell, is a person's sexual orientation.

Ashley Mardell

agree that an interaction of biological (nature) and social/cultural (environmental) forces is involved in the development of sexual orientation. Cook (2021) reviewed the scientific literature on the nature/nurture question and concluded that while the "cause" of

sexual orientation is both genetic and environmental "there is no currently convincing evidence that the social environment plays a significant part." It should also be noted that little research has been conducted on the origins of bisexuality, pansexuality, and asexuality.

10.4a Biological Explanations

Biological explanations of the development of sexual orientation usually focus on genetic, neuroanatomical, or hormonal differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals. Fausto-Sterling (2019) notes that "the body tells the brain about how it is feeling" (p. 549). Several lines of evidence suggest that biological factors play a role (Ablaza et al., 2022; Breedlove, 2017). A discussion of three biological explorations of sexual orientation follows.

Genetic Theories

Is sexual orientation an inborn trait that is transmitted genetically, like eye color? There does seem to be a genetic influence, although, unlike with the case of eye color, a single gene has not been confirmed. In the United States, a study of a national probability sample of twin and nontwin siblings concluded that "familial factors, which are at least partly genetic, influence sexual orientation" (Kendler et al., 2000). In this sample, 3.1% of the men and 1.5% of the women reported a nonheterosexual sexual orientation. The concordance rate in monozygotic twins was 31.6% for nonheterosexual sexual orientation; so, if one identical twin was gay or lesbian, the cotwin was also gay or lesbian in 31.6% of the pairs.

Further support for a genetic influence on homosexuality has been provided by Cantor et al. (2002), who noted that men with older homosexual brothers are more likely to be homosexual themselves: "[R]oughly one gay man in seven owes his sexual orientation to the fraternal birth order effect" (p. 63). Ablaza et al. (2022) found that men who have a greater number of older brothers are more likely to be in a same-sex union. This is called the fraternal birth order effect (FBOE.) The presumed mechanism at play is the maternal immune hypothesis (MIH), which is a reflection of "progressive immunization of some mothers to Y-linked antigens by each succeeding male fetus and the concomitantly increasing effects of anti-male antibody on sexual differentiation in the brain in each succeeding male fetus" (Blanchard, 2022).

How much of the link in sexual orientation between twins is accounted for by genetic inheritance? One large population-based twin study used the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council Twin Registry (Kirk et al., 2000) and measured behavioral and psychological aspects of sexual orientation. Of the 4,901 respondents, 2.6% of the women rated themselves as bisexual and 0.7% as homosexual; 3.2% of the men rated themselves as bisexual and 3.1% as homosexual. The researchers concluded that genetic influences were linked to homosexuality in both women and men, with estimates of 50%–60% heritability for women, about twice the men's rate of 30%. But researchers disagree about the level of biological influence on sexual orientation (Sanders et al., 2021).

Prenatal Hormonal Theories

In his discussion of prenatal influences on sexual orientation, Diamond (1995) discussed the effects of the maturation of the testes or ovaries and their release (or lack) of hormones. These hormones affect the structural development of the genitalia and other structures. At the gross and microscopic levels, they also organize the developing nervous system and influence gender-linked behaviors (biasing the individual toward traditional male- or female-typical behaviors).

Hormonal and neurological factors operating prior to birth, between the second and fifth month of gestation, may be one of the “main determinants of sexual orientation” (Ellis & Ames, 1987, p. 235). Fetal exposure to hormones, such as testosterone, is believed to impact the developing neural pathways of the brain. Sexual orientation is programmed into the brain during critical prenatal periods and early childhood (Money, 1987). Breedlove (2017) emphasized that lesbians, on average, show evidence of greater prenatal androgen exposure than groups of straight women. Hence there is some evidence to suggest the early biochemical lean toward one sexual orientation over another.

Postpubertal Hormonal Theories

Endocrinology (the study of hormones) research to determine whether the levels of sex hormones of gay men and lesbians resemble those of the other sex has yielded mixed results (Ellis, 1996). Ellis concluded that the connection between postpubertal sex hormone levels and homosexuality is complex and is probably applicable only to some subgroups of gay men and lesbians.

Harris et al. (2020) reviewed the literature in regard to whether lesbian and bisexual women have different levels of sex hormones compared to heterosexual women. The answer, based on 50 years of research is “little discernible difference in sex hormone levels between lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women excepting possibly higher testosterone.”

The belief in biological determinism of sexual orientation among gay men themselves is strong. In a national study of homosexual men, 90% believe that they were born with their homosexual orientation, while only 4% believe that environmental factors were the sole cause (Lever, 1994). Viewing sexual orientation as biologically based is associated with less prejudice by heterosexuals and less internalized homonegativity by gays (Blaszczynski & Morandini, 2014). Although there are those who believe that homosexuality is more of a choice, acceptance of a biological explanation is increasing.

10.4b Social/Cultural Influence?

Adrenal androgens provide the fuel for the sex drive (around age 10), but they do not provide the direction or sexual orientation. According to social/cultural theories

of sexual orientation, sexual orientation is determined by forces such as peer group, parents, and the mass media. Because many of these forces encourage heterosexuality, proponents of these explanations posit that unique environmental influences account for homosexuality.

In this regard, Barron and Hare (2020) argued that same-sex sex attraction (SSSA) has a prosocial benefit of not draining the person off to have/rear children in a small nuclear family context, but leave the person available to integrate more intensely in and support the wider social community. Luoto (2020) rejected the idea and suggested Barron and Hare have not given proper recognition to other data.

10.5 Dangers of Conversion Therapy

Individuals who believe that homosexual people choose their sexual orientation tend to think that they can and should change it. **Conversion therapy** (also called *reparative therapy*) is focused on this process and supported by conservative homophobic groups (Tenorio de Souza et al., 2022).

Thirteen percent of LGBTQ youth in the Trevor Project reported that they were in conversion therapy (Paley, 2021). The Independent Forensic Expert Group (2020) published a “Statement on Conversion Therapy,” which emphasizes that it is ineffective, a likely cause of significant harm, and should be banned. In addition, its position is that health professionals offering conversion therapy are violating professional ethics and health associations should denounce professionals who offer conversion therapy. Fifty years of research has confirmed there is no evidence that sexual arousal in response to same-gender individuals can be changed to those of another gender. Other research on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression change efforts has yielded the same conclusion; such experiences have resulted in “profound emotional distress, mental illness (e.g., anxiety and depression) and suicide” (p. 599).



Cultural Diversity

The acceptability of changing one's sexual orientation varies by culture. In a sample of 1,034 Guyanese individuals, almost a third (31%) believed that religious intervention was an appropriate remedy for same-sex attraction; 18% preferred a psychiatric/hospital approach (Jackman, 2022).

10.6 Coming Out: Concealment or Nondisclosure?

Conversion therapy

Therapy designed to change a person's sexual orientation, usually gay to heterosexual

Coming out

(Shortened form of “coming out of the closet”) Process of defining yourself as gay in sexual orientation and disclosing your self-identification to others

Coming out, a shortened form of “coming out of the closet,” refers to the process of defining one's sexual orientation and disclosing one's self-identification to others. Deciding to come out as a transgender person is different from the LGB+ coming out decision; the former is particularly important since the person typically needs the permission of the parents to use hormones (Fahs, 2021).

Sexual minorities are often distraught at coming to terms with their sexuality, particularly if they have a conservative, religious background. To cope with balancing who they perceive themselves to be and who they have been taught they “should”

My family told me that they loved me. But the world doesn't necessarily feel that way.

Kristen Stewart

Today I know the importance of coming out.

Robin Roberts, Good Morning America anchor

LGB friendships or joining LGB clubs/contexts; (b) discouraging same-gender sexuality by basically denying their identity and aligning closer with religion; and (c) being neutral regarding one's same-gender sexuality, such as developing a mindful and nonjudgmental approach to one's sexual attractions (Rosik et al., 2022).

Grafsky et al. (2020) identified the various strategies for coming out. Two examples include:

Direct disclosure. "I called my cousin and I was really excited and wanted to tell someone that I had my first girlfriend, and I was like, guess what, I kissed a girl." "We were driving in our truck, and I think that's when I told her [grandma] that I have a girlfriend."

Indirect disclosure. "My brother knows I'm not heterosexual . . . he's like, well I can see your Facebook profile."

Coming out is usually not a one-time event and the context can differ. Coming out may occur in person or online.



Adapted Adobe Stock



Cultural Diversity

Parental reactions to a child coming out vary throughout the world. Mouna is a Muslim who reported her mother's reaction to the disclosure that she is a lesbian:

She thinks of me as a sick person, as if I am disabled. She thinks I have a problem that can be fixed by her love and also by sessions with a psychiatrist. She is convinced a psychiatrist will be able to cure me from this disease. (Slimani, 2017, 138)

Mouna also reports the experience of one of her lesbian friends:

When she confessed to her parents, they had her admitted to a psychiatric hospital. I tried to protect her. I offered to put her up, to help her. But I couldn't do anything. She was sedated all the time. Now she's lost her job, her friends, and all contact with the outside world. (p. 140)

10.6a Coming Out to Yourself and Others

Defining yourself and coming out to yourself can be a frightening and confusing experience. Personal Decisions 10–1 examines the benefits and risks of coming out.

Personal Decisions 10–1:

Benefits and Risks of Coming Out



In a society in which heterosexuality is expected and considered the norm, heterosexuals rarely have to choose whether to tell others that they are heterosexual. However, decisions about coming out and being open and honest about your sexual orientation and identity (particularly to your parents) may create anxiety for individuals who are gay, bisexual, asexual, or pansexual.

Continues

Continued

Benefits of Coming Out

For some, coming out to parents has benefits. Reyes, Bautista, et al. (2023) noted the importance of parents responding positively to an offspring's coming out. However, when parental rejection occurs, minority children report higher levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidality (Seager van Dyk et al., 2022). In those cases where the parents are accepting, there is a 40% lower suicide attempt rate on the part of the child. Taylor and Neppl (2023) confirmed the positive associations of parental acceptance of 338 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning emerging adults on their well-being.

Coming out on campus may also have positive consequences. In a study of 1,110 college students who identified as a sexual minority, the more out a participant was on campus, and the stronger the sense of belonging they had to their campus, the less likely they were to experience sexual assault victimization (Nightingale, 2022).

Risks of Coming Out

While 4% of adolescent and young adults die by suicide, 12.1% report thinking about it. The percent is even higher for LGBT youth (Russon et al., 2022). The greatest risk of coming out is an increased suicide risk. Puckett et al. (2017) reported that LGBT youth who lost friends when they came out were 29 times more likely to report suicide attempts. Whether or not LGBT individuals come out is influenced by the degree to which they are tired of hiding their sexual orientation, the degree to which they feel more honest about being open, their assessment of the risks of coming out, and their prediction of how others will respond. Some of the overall risks involved in coming out include:

1. *Parental and family members:* Price and Prosek (2020) identified nine themes from interviews with seven college students who came out to their parents. These included an awareness of feeling different since coming out, a positive relationship prior to coming out, feeling unsure of how parents would respond to disclosure, parents assuring continued love and acceptance, parents affirming the identity of their child, increased relational depth with parents, increased sense of authenticity, and an appreciation for family's response/support. Chan et al. (2022) surveyed 146 Chinese parents of LGBT children and found that parental acceptance was negatively associated with depression and anxiety symptoms. Parents who viewed their child's sexual orientation as innate reported fewer symptoms. Some data reflect that parents are not always affirming. Only one in three of LGBTQ youth in the Trevor Project reported that their home was affirming (Paley, 2021).

Because parents are heavily invested in their children, most find a way to not make an issue of their child being gay. "We just don't talk about it," said one parent. Parents and other family members can learn more about orientation from the local chapter of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and from books and online resources, such as those found at the Human Rights Campaign's National Coming Out Project.

2. *Harassment and discrimination at school:* LGBT students who come out are more vulnerable to being bullied, harassed, and discriminated against both in school and online.
3. *Discrimination and harassment in the workplace:* By a 6–3 decision in 2020, Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects gay or transgender employees from employment discrimination, giving the LGBTQ rights movement another big victory from the nation's highest court. While discrimination and harassment may still occur, there are now legal protections in regard to employment.

In June 2023, the Supreme Court ruled that nondiscrimination laws could not be applied to businesses that involved expression, like those that create websites. This opens the door to continued discrimination against sexual minorities.

4. *Hate crime victimization:* Another risk of coming out is that of being a victim of antigay hate crimes against individuals or their property that are based on bias against the victims because of their perceived sexual orientation. Such crimes include verbal threats and intimidation, vandalism, sexual assault and rape, physical assault, and murder. Mitchell & Knittel (2023) noted that LGBTQ+ identity disclosure in an online dating profile must be considered carefully due to issues of personal security.
-

Technology and Sexuality 10–1:

Online LGBTQIA+ Support Groups



There are several reasons someone might turn to the internet for support and information. One reason is the constant availability—an online connection provides continuous access to the online world. Anonymity is another reason—the internet enables people to seek resources and support from others with similar experiences without having to reveal their own identity. Being anonymous provides a safe way to explore fantasies that a person would never discuss with a partner. In addition, anonymity allows people to take on another persona, which provides an escape from everyday life.

A major resource is the Trevor Project® (<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>). This project is specifically designed to help LGBTQIA+ youth who are in crises, including being suicidal. Princeton University's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Center (<https://www.purdue.edu/lgbtq/>) is another source that provides a multitude of links to online resources for the LGBTQIA+ community and their allies.

For people of all orientations and genders, the real world can be a confusing, lonely, and challenging place. Seeking information and support online can help you connect with others, feel less isolated, and find resources that can help you lead a happier, healthier life.

10.6b Mixed-Orientation Relationships

Gay and bisexual people marry heterosexuals for some of the same reasons heterosexuals marry each other—deep love for their partner, desire for children in a socially approved heterosexual context, family pressure to marry, the desire to live a socially approved lifestyle, and belief that marriage is the only way to achieve a happy adult life. A gay father (his daughter was in the first author's class) who married a heterosexual woman revealed his experience:

I had always known I was gay, but I knew coming out to my family was not an option. I had three older brothers, one who was in the ministry, my father was a minister, and so were his two brothers. My family had always been church fixtures, and a gay son would have ruined their reputation. I dated women in an attempt to turn myself and ended up getting my girlfriend at the time pregnant. I decided to marry her, even though I knew it wasn't going to work in the long run, because I wanted to give my child as normal of a childhood as possible.

After 5 years of marriage, we separated, and it felt like I could maybe stop hiding who I was. My family was pressuring me to get back out there, and after holding them off, I met a woman who I believed would be my saving grace. I learned that she had been with other women during college and felt like she could be my cover-up. However, after we married, it was apparent that would not be the case. I began drinking because I was ashamed of who I was and what my life had become because of it. I made the decision to end my second marriage and come out to my family. My parents and grandparents had passed away at this point, so I didn't feel like I had to worry about rejection from them. Coming out to the older members of our family led to a few interesting conversations, but they all assured me that they still loved me, and their opinion of me as a person and as a father to my children had not changed. Once I was honest with everyone, I felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

The immediate and long-term consequences for an LGBTQIA+ person coming out to a partner varies from couple to couple. Some who disclose are able to work through the revelation with their partner. Others file for divorce on disclosure.

10.7 Relationships

What is the relationship quality of LGB individuals? In a large sample of same-gender and different-gender couples about to begin couples therapy, researchers concluded that, “same-sex couples . . . were in much better shape than heterosexual

I realized that the labels didn't matter, because when two people feel that sort of pull toward each other, it just works, and the only label that mattered was that I was in love. Totally, fully, ecstatically.

Bill Konigsberg

couples,” noting that “same-sex couples were overall happier and had a better quality of intimacy and friendship (Gottman et al., 2020). Indeed, in a *New York*

Times article entitled “How to Make Your Marriage Gay,” family scholar Stephanie Coontz (2020) suggests that “many different-sex couples would have happier and more satisfying marriages if they took a few lessons from their same-sex counterparts.” One of those lessons is that “the happiest and most sexually satisfied couples are now those who divide housework and child care the most equally.” Same-sex couples rely less on gender stereotypes regarding who does what domestic task and are more likely to share routine tasks and childcare.

Coontz (2020) also explains that same-sex couples do not bring the historical gender-based power imbalances into the relationship. Such imbalances are evident in heterosexual couples when, in discussing disagreements, one partner is domineering and belligerent. In same-sex couples, partners are more likely to use affection and humor when discussing disagreements. When compared to different-sex couples, same-sex couples are more likely to try to influence each other by using encouragement and praise, rather than criticism or lectures (Umberson et al., 2018). This chapter's Self-Assessment provides a way to measure relationship satisfaction of individuals in same-gender relationships.



This couple is a gay male and a bisexual.

10.7a Gay Male Relationships

A common stereotype about gay men is that they prefer casual sexual relationships with multiple partners. However, De Santis et al. (2017) surveyed a sample of 103 Hispanic men (50 heterosexual, 43 gay, and 10 bisexual) and found that there were no differences between gay/bisexual and heterosexual men in regard to sex outside a primary relationship.

The degree to which gay men engage in casual sexual relationships is better explained by the fact that they are male than by the fact that they are gay. In this regard, gay and straight men have a lot in common, including that they both tend to have fewer barriers to engaging in casual sex than do women (heterosexual or lesbian).

Nevertheless, gay men (as well as heterosexual men) in romantic relationships, reported expressing both physical and emotional affection during their last sexual encounter (57% of gay men and 66% of heterosexual men said “I love you”) (Frederick et al., 2021). Newcomb et al. (2021) confirmed that the relationship variables of

connectedness, communication, and general relationship satisfaction were significantly associated with reported sexual satisfaction

There is significantly less data on Black same-gender couples. Lassiter et al. (2022) reviewed the literature and found that the research on these couples revealed that their age tended to be 30–49, some college education, and to have been involved 4.32 years. A focus on sexual risks, violence, and drug use revealed that researchers emphasized a negative/pathological view of these Black couples.

Previously, Lassiter et al. (2020) reported on 50 social media profiles representing 50 same-gender Black single or married couples (BSMC). The couples ranged in age from 18 to 50 and resided in cities across the United States. The researchers found that BSMCs used several terms of endearment, such as nicknames. Relationship commitment was expressed in posts by alluding to anniversaries, weddings, and use of spousal titles such as “hubby.” Physical affection was most often expressed through hand-holding, kissing, and cuddling. BSMCs displayed their love for each other in both public and private settings. They also expressed their care for each other in a variety of ways, including doing household chores and cooking. Love languages included gift-giving, words of affirmation, physical touch, and acts of service. Hass and Lannutt (2021) noted that gay males resolve conflict by giving each other advice, in contrast to lesbians who are more about the emotional context of the relationship.

What about gay fathers? Neresheier and Daum (2021) compared 35 gay fathers and 33 heterosexual fathers. The former showed higher levels of warmth and cooperation with their partner than heterosexual fathers. In addition, they reported less irritation if their first-born child displayed a negative temperament.

10.7b Lesbian Relationships and Sex

Like many heterosexual women, most lesbian women value stable, monogamous relationships that are emotionally and sexually satisfying. Lesbian and heterosexual women in US society are often socialized that sexual expression should occur in the context of emotional or romantic involvement. Chonody et al. (2020) analyzed survey data on 7,826 individuals from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia and found that LGB individuals in long-term relationships reported higher relationship quality compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Similarly, research by Holt et al. (2021) found that lesbians were more likely than heterosexual women to experience orgasms with their partners.

What is the definition of sex between women? Dion and Boislard (2022) noted that while vaginal penetration is the definition of heterosexual “having had sex,” no such definition exists for women who have sex with women (WSW). The researchers surveyed 84 WSW and found that anal stimulation and the use of sex toys with each other constituted first sex among lesbians. Heavy petting, caresses, and direct genital stimulation were not regarded as markers of first sex.

An element of fantasy is needed when falling in love and I was unable to find the fantasy element with any of the male gender.

Novala Takemoto

Up-Close 10–1

Lesbian Bed Death?

Previous researchers have referred to *lesbian bed death*, the idea that since males typically drive the sexual frequency of a relationship, a relationship of two females would be devoid of regular sexual behavior. Frederick et al. (2022) compared the prevalence and correlates of sexual practices in a national survey of 2,510 heterosexual and 283 lesbian women in relationships. Heterosexual and lesbian women were equally likely to be sexually satisfied (66% heterosexual women vs. 68% lesbian women). Among women who had been in relationships for longer than 5 years, heterosexual women were less likely than lesbian women to report having sex between zero and once a month (15%; 42%). The researchers noted that this discrepancy of less sex among lesbians has pejoratively been labeled the lesbian bed death.

Continues

Continued

However, the researchers suggested abandoning the “bed death” label in favor of focusing on “lesbian bed intimacies.” These involve the ways that lesbian women incorporate behaviors promoting emotional connection, romance, mood setting, and use of sex toys. When lesbians were compared to heterosexual women, lesbian women were more likely to usually/always receive oral sex during sex in the past month (47% vs. 28%). In regard to their last sexual encounter, when compared to heterosexual women, lesbian women were more likely to say “I love you” (80% vs. 67%), have sex longer than 30 minutes (72% vs. 48%), and engage in gentle kissing (92% vs. 80%). These intimacies likely help explain why sexual satisfaction was similar for the two groups.

What about the sexual behavior of the larger LGB community? Kattari et al. (2021) noted that being LGBTQ, and particularly trans/NB was associated with an increase in the likelihood of ever having sex, total number of partners, and lower age of sexual debut.

Some lesbians are not involved in a relationship and not making plans to be in one. Lavender-Stott and Allen (2022) interviewed 13 older baby boom sexual minority women. Overall findings were: They were happy, they either were or had been involved in relationships (both same and other gender), and they were embedded in a network of relationships—friends, family of origin (siblings), young people (children), and exes. Eight of the 13 were open to being in a romantic relationship but were not aggressively pursuing one.

10.7c Bisexual Relationships

Maliepaard (2022) conducted qualitative research on 31 bisexual people ages 18–37, including 21 women and 10 men. Most were cisgender, three were transgender. Most participants (28) identified as bisexual; one as pansexual, and two as both bisexual and pansexual. Themes included the impact that binegativity and bisexual stereotypes have on the romantic lives of bisexual people. Goffi et al. (2022) emphasized that bisexuality is an incomplete fit with both homosexual and heterosexual cultures and thus carries a unique burden of

I think choosing between men and women is like choosing between cake and ice cream. You'd be daft not to try both when there are so many different flavors.

Björk

intra-minority stress. For example, the stereotype that bisexual people are incapable of fidelity because they need to sleep with both men and women to be truly bisexual results in partners of bisexual individuals feeling insecure and mistrusting their partners. Among participants in this study, bisexual women reported more binegativity from lesbian women than from heterosexual partners.

Binegativity also results in some people not wanting to date or start a relationship with a bisexual person. Unwillingness to date a bisexual person is often based on the stereotype that bisexual people are actually gay and are either not accepting their orientation or are still “in the closet.” One participant, Bart, said that after disclosing his bisexuality to his ex-girlfriend, she “terminated our relationship, because she was thinking like, ‘Okay, I am not sure whether I can deal with it. Aren’t you just gay?’” Due to binegative reactions from others, some participants chose not to disclose their bisexuality to romantic partners (or potential partners) because, as one participant expressed, binegativity and judgmental others are “really annoying.”



This undergraduate pansexual notes that she is attracted to people independent of their gender and sexual orientation.

Another theme that emerged in Maliepaard's research involves the ways in which partners "made room" for one partner's bisexuality in the relationship "by providing space in which one can act on one's bisexual desire." One participant, Sylvia, discovered her bisexuality after she was already in a romantic relationship with a man.

We were at a festival, and at one point a girl was hitting on me. So I went to my boyfriend, like, "Huh, a girl is hitting on me." And he was like, "Okay, go for it," you know. I had to think, "Oh wait, is this what I want?" And then: "Okay, let's go for it!" So that ended in a successful evening, I should say . . . that was like an eye-opener for me, because he responded. . . . "Okay, go for it!" Totally not possessive or anything like that. He liked the idea. And then we talked about it, and we managed to explore, like, "Hey what can we do with it, with this new discovery of yours? And can we do something with it together?"

10.8 Mental Health, Violence, HIV, and Sexual Orientation

Regarding mental health, LGBTQIA+ youth are at elevated risk for suicidality, substance use, and other mental health concerns (Bochicchio et al., 2022). Shepp et al. (2023) also noted of 273 sexual minority youth in the southeastern United States, there were significantly higher levels of loneliness compared to a broader sample of LGBTQ adults. However, elderly LGBT also have their challenges. Hoekstra-Pijpers (2022) noted that the LGBT elderly aging in place may become disconnected from other LGBT people/community over time, feeling isolated/alone/lacking care. Hoy-Ellis (2023) noted that such a connection to sexual and gender minority communities helps to reduce minority stressors.

Intimate partner violence is another issue sexual minority youth confront with higher frequency than those in heterosexual relationships. This finding was observed by Reyes, Alday, et al. (2023), who compared the two groups.

Most worldwide HIV infection occurs through heterosexual transmission. However, in the United States, HIV infection remains the most threatening STI for gay males and bisexuals. Men who have sex with men account for more new cases of HIV in the United States than do people in any other transmission category. While the exchange of semen in men who have unprotected anal intercourse ("bareback") may meet emotional needs for the men, it remains a dangerous health practice. Drug use among men who have sex with men may also be significant. Scholz-Hehn et al. (2022) surveyed 597 men who have sex with men and noted that amyl nitrate and cannabis were the most frequently used substances; a fourth reported using MDMA, cocaine, and amphetamines.

Women who have sex exclusively with other women have a much lower rate of HIV infection than men (both gay and straight) and women who have sex with men. However, since female-to-female transmission of HIV is theoretically possible through exposure to the cervical and vaginal secretions of an HIV-infected woman, following safer sex guidelines is recommended. Lesbians and bisexual women are most at risk for HIV if they have sex with men who have been exposed to HIV or if they share needles to inject drugs.

10.9 Heterosexism, Homonegativity

Attitudes toward same-sex sexual behavior and relationships vary across cultures and historical time periods. Today, most countries throughout the world, including the United States, are predominantly heterosexist. **Heterosexism** is the belief, stated or

Heterosexism

Belief, stated or implied, that heterosexuality is superior (morally, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally) to homosexuality

implied, that heterosexuality is superior (morally, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally) to being gay. It involves the systematic degradation and stigmatization of any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, or relationship. Heterosexism results in prejudice and discrimination against nonheterosexuals. **Homosexism** (Hellman, 2021) refers to prejudice against same-sex male behavior. Foust et al. (2021) studied the messages undergraduates received from their parents about homosexuality and found that women reported receiving more positive messages from same-gender sources than men, and men report receiving more negative messages from same-gender sources than women.

Buck et al. (2019) reviewed three studies on public displays of affection (PDA) and found that all studies of participants' reactions to videotaped heterosexual, homosexual, and trans PDA revealed that participants were generally comfortable with viewing all PDA scenarios, but participants were most comfortable viewing heterosexual PDA and least comfortable viewing trans PDA.

Examples of negative stereotypes against gay people include that they are immoral, sexual predators, have HIV, and are gender transgressors. The latter implies that gay men are more feminine than straight men (Mishel, 2020). Negative outcomes from stereotypes and heterosexism begin early. Sieben et al. (2020) found LGB individuals reported higher frequencies of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Getting older seems to result in a continuation of negativism.

Heterosexism is pervasive. To avoid such prejudice, gay individuals going on vacation often look for specific gay-friendly tourist spots, bed-and-breakfast establishments, and cities such as Key West and San Francisco.

The effects of this type of discrimination are predictable. Checa et al. (2022) compared the scores on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) on a sample with 553 adults (208 males, 345 females; 212 heterosexuals, 182 gays, and 138 bisexuals, among other sexual orientations) and found lesbian/gay and bisexual participants obtained lower scores than heterosexual participants. Bisexual people obtained the lowest score in well-being compared with the other groups. Similarly, in a review of 30 research articles on sexual orientation and outcome, being nonheterosexual compared to being heterosexual was associated with a greater likelihood of reporting depressive symptomatology, suicidality, and substance use (Srivastava et al., 2022). Finally, Harkness et al. (2020) found lower mental health, particularly among sexual minority men, due to heterosexist norms. But based on national data, sexual minority women are more likely to report suicidal ideation (Banerjee & Anderson, 2022).

Prejudice begins early and is often instigated by one's peers. Farr et al. (2019) reported on 131 elementary school students (median age 7.79 years; 61 girls) who viewed images of same-gender (female and male) and other-gender couples with a child and then were asked about their perceptions of these families, particularly the children. Results indicated participants' preferences toward children with other-gender versus same-gender parents.

One striking antidote to homonegativity/minority stress is a love relationship. Liang and Huang (2022) analyzed data on 557 young gay men and found that those in a romantic relationship reported less minority stress.

With the legalization of same-sex marriage, the heterosexist norms will eventually change, albeit slowly. Before reading further, you may wish to complete *Self-Assessment 10–1: Sexual Prejudice Scale*.

Homosexism

Prejudice against same-sex male sexual behavior

Self-Assessment 10–1:

Sexual Prejudice Scale



Directions

The items below provide a way to assess your level of prejudice against gay men and lesbians. For each item, identify a number from 1 to 6 that reflects your level of agreement, and write the number in the space provided.

1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Mildly disagree), 4 (Mildly agree), 5 (Agree), 6 (Strongly agree)

Gay Men Scale

1. ___ You can tell a man is gay by the way he walks.
2. ___ I think it's gross when I see two men who are clearly "together."
- 3.*___ Retirement benefits should include the partners of gay men.
4. ___ Most gay men are flamboyant.
5. ___ It's wrong for men to have sex with men.
- 6.*___ Family medical leave rules should include the domestic partners of gay men.
7. ___ Most gay men are promiscuous.
8. ___ Marriage between two men should be kept illegal.
- 9.*___ Health-care benefits should include partners of gay male employees.
10. ___ Most gay men have HIV/AIDS.
11. ___ Gay men are immoral.
- 12.*___ Hospitals should allow gay men to be involved in their partners' medical care.
13. ___ A sexual relationship between two men is unnatural.
14. ___ Most gay men like to have anonymous sex with men in public places.
- 15.*___ There's nothing wrong with being a gay man.

Score: _____

Scoring

*Reverse score items 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15. For example, if you selected a 6, replace the 6 with a 1. If you selected a 1, replace it with a 6. Add each score of the 15 items. The lowest possible score is 15, suggesting a very low level of prejudice against gay men; the highest possible score is 90, suggesting a very high level of prejudice against gay men. The midpoint between 15 and 90 is 52. Scores lower than 52 reflect less prejudice against gay men, while scores higher than this reflect more prejudice against gay men.

Participants

Both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in social work courses made up a convenience sample ($N = 851$). The sample was predominantly women (83.1%), white (65.9%), heterosexual (89.8%), single (81.3%), nonparenting (81.1%), 25 years of age or under (69.3%), and majoring in social work (80.8%).

Results

The range of scores for the gay men scale was 15–84. ($M = 31.53$, $SD = 15.30$). The sample had relatively low levels of prejudice against gay men.

Continued

Lesbian Scale

1. ____ Most lesbians don't wear makeup.
2. ____ Lesbians are harming the traditional family.
- 3.* ____ Lesbians should have the same civil rights as straight women.
4. ____ Most lesbians prefer to dress like men.
- 5.* ____ Being a lesbian is a normal expression of sexuality.
6. ____ Lesbians want too many rights.
7. ____ Most lesbians are more masculine than straight women.
8. ____ It's morally wrong to be a lesbian.
- 9.* ____ Employers should provide retirement benefits for lesbian partners.
10. ____ Most lesbians look like men.
11. ____ I disapprove of lesbians.
- 12.* ____ Marriage between two women should be legal.
13. ____ Lesbians are confused about their sexuality.
14. ____ Most lesbians don't like men.
- 15.* ____ Employers should provide health-care benefits to the partners of their lesbian employees.

Score: ____

Scoring

*Reverse score items 3, 5, 9, 12 and 15. For example, if you selected a 6, replace the 6 with a 1. If you selected a 1, replace it with a 6. Add each score of the 15 items. The lowest possible score is 15, suggesting a very low level of prejudice against lesbians; the highest possible score is 90, suggesting a very high level of prejudice against lesbians. The midpoint between 15 and 90 is 52. Scores lower than 52 would reflect less prejudice against lesbians, while scores higher than this would reflect more prejudice against lesbians.

Participants

Both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in social work courses made up a convenience sample (N = 851). The sample was predominantly women (83.1%), white (65.9%), heterosexual (89.8%), single (81.3%), nonparenting (81.1%), 25 years of age or under (69.3%), and majoring in social work (80.8%).

Results

The range of scores for the lesbian scale was 15–86 (M = 30.41, SD = 15.60). The sample had relatively low levels of prejudice against lesbians.

Source: Chonody, J. M. (2013). Measuring sexual prejudice against gay men and lesbian women: Development of the Sexual Prejudice Scale (SPS). *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(6), 895–926. Copyright 2013 Taylor and Francis, Ltd., <http://www.tandfonline.com>. Reprinted by permission of the publisher and Jill Chonody.

10.9a Homonegativity, Homophobia, and Transphobia

The attack on the LGBTQ nightclub (Club Q) (Colorado Springs November 2022), in which 5 were shot dead and 25 were wounded, is a reminder that acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals is lacking and strikes disbelief/fear into the heart of the community. This type of violence is an extreme manifestation of **homophobia**, a commonly used term to refer to negative attitudes and emotions toward being gay and those who engage in same-sex behavior.

Homophobia is not necessarily a clinical phobia (that is, one involving a compelling desire to avoid the feared object despite recognizing that the fear is unreasonable). Other terms that refer to negative attitudes and emotions toward gay individuals include

Homophobia

Negative emotional responses toward, and aversion to, gay individuals

homonegativity (attaching negative connotations to being gay) and *antigay bias*. Trans people are targets of similar negativity. Puckett et al. (2018) revealed the difficulties trans individuals experience when they engage the medical community to transition. Barriers can be significant, from lack of information provided by the health-care professionals to outright rejection.

The stigma of same-sex behavior is greater for two males than two females. Kulibert (2020) conducted a content analysis of 150 mixed-gender threesome (MGT) pornography videos depicting sexual behavior involving three people where at least one female and one male were present (e.g., female, female, male; male, male, female). Results revealed that females were more likely to make eye contact with the camera (40%) than were males (4%). The researcher concluded that the findings reflect the erotic value society assigns to same-gender sexual behavior among females, but not males. This may help to explain why same-gender sexual behavior among men, even when a woman is present, remains highly stigmatized.

There are several sources for homonegativity and homophobia in the United States:

1. *Religion*: Worldwide, there is considerable homonegativity from most religions of the world. The Vatican (Catholic Church) does not endorse same-sex unions since it “cannot bless sin.” In January 2023, Pope Francis stated in an interview that homosexuality is a sin. Muslim and Christian religions are particularly negative, with traditional Chinese religions (e.g., Buddhism) being more tolerant/accepting (Suen & Chan, 2020b). Just as conservative, evangelical religion is negative toward LGBT individuals, interfaith churches/denominations are more accepting (Crandall et al., 2022). Anderson and Koc (2020) also noted that strongly identifying with being gay, as well as identifying with religion (identity integration), helps to mitigate the negative impact of religion. Houghton and Tasker (2021) noted several strategies LGBT individuals use to minimize the negative impact of religion: “I can be both LGBT and religious,” “The church may disapprove but God loves me,” and “Many in the Church accept me.” Other strategies of coping with earlier religious teachings that being gay was wrong include praying to be changed/delivered, reinterpreting the Bible to include exceptions to the conservative dogma, and aligning oneself with other minority individuals who were struggling with the same issues (Bergen et al., 2023).

Tolerance of intolerance enables oppression.

DaShanne Stokes

Homonegativity

Term that refers to antigay responses, including negative feelings (fear, disgust, anger), thoughts, and behavior



Cultural Diversity

Thirty-four countries recognize the marriage between same-sex couples in 2023. Sixty-seven countries have laws against being gay. In Gambia, homosexuality is regarded like rape or incest—a lifetime prison sentence may result. Under Sharia law, as practiced in Yemen, Iran, Mauritania, Nigeria, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, being gay is punishable by death.

International data on 13,403 self-identified heterosexual university students from Belgium, Italy, France, Portugal, Poland, Spain, and Greece (38.7% men and 61.2% women) revealed generally positive attitudes toward LG individuals and support for same-sex coupling and parenting in all countries, with Poland and Greece being significantly more negative (D’Amore et al., 2020).

2. *Marital and procreative bias*: Many societies have traditionally condoned sex only when it occurs in a marital context that provides for the possibility of reproducing and rearing children. Not until 2015 was same-sex marriage legal in every state in the United States (see *Social Policy 10–1* for a review of the pros and cons of same-sex marriage).

3. *Concern about HIV and AIDS:* Although most cases of HIV and AIDS worldwide are attributed to heterosexual transmission, the rates of HIV and AIDS in the United States are much higher among gay and bisexual men than among other groups. Because of this, many people in the United States associate HIV and AIDS with homosexuality and bisexuality. Lesbians, incidentally, have a very low risk for sexually transmitted HIV—a lower risk than heterosexual women.
4. *Rigid gender roles:* Antigay sentiments also stem from rigid gender roles. Lesbians are perceived as stepping out of line by relinquishing traditional female sexual and economic dependence on men. In the traditional patriarchal view, both gay men and lesbians are often viewed as betrayers of their gender who must be punished. Men who engage in cross-gender behavior are particularly suspect. Sanborn-Overby et al. (2020) confirmed that gender-atypical males were evaluated more negatively than gender-atypical females. This phenomenon is due to the perception/belief that gender-atypical males are more likely to be thought of as gay.
5. *Femmephobia:* Hoskin (2020) observed that the hostility leveled against the LGBT community is really about the social prejudice embodied in femmephobia—the devaluation and regulation of femininity. Dimberg et al. (2021) emphasized that microaggressions are relentless in school contexts and become exhausting for queer women.
6. *Psychiatric labeling:* Prior to 1973, the American Psychiatric Association defined homosexuality as a mental disorder. When the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)* was published in 1980, homosexuality was no longer included as a disorder. Homosexuality itself is not regarded as a psychiatric disorder, but persistent and marked distress over being homosexual is a concern. (See *Up Close 10–2*)
7. *Myths and negative stereotypes:* Homonegativity may also stem from some of the unsupported beliefs and negative stereotypes regarding homosexuality. For example, many people believe that gays are child molesters, even though the ratio of heterosexual to homosexual child molesters is approximately 11-to-1 (Moser, 1992). Further, lesbians are stereotyped as women who want to be (or at least look and act like) men, whereas gay men are stereotyped as men who want to be (or at least look and act like) women. In reality, the gay and lesbian population is as diverse as the heterosexual population, not only in appearance, but also in social class, educational achievement, occupational status, race, ethnicity, and personality.

In addition to homophobia there is transphobia, whereby transgender individuals are victims of prejudice and discrimination (Bae et al., 2020). Such discrimination against both trans women and men is associated with higher rates of suicidality and substance use (Schweizer & Mowen, 2022). Two researchers noted lower victimization where visual conformity occurred. Based on data from the 2015 United States Transgender Survey of 24,259 respondents, visual conformity significantly mattered in transgender victimization experiences. Hence, transgender individuals who underwent medical transitions or lived in their gender identity full-time reported lower rates of victimization than their counterparts (Bratton & Hudson, 2022).

Up-Close 10–2

APA Removal of Homosexuality as a Mental Disorder

The single best thing about coming out of the closet is that nobody can insult you by telling you what you've just told them.

Rachel Maddow

Prior to 1973, the American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality as a mental disorder, with treatments including chemical castration, electric shock therapy, mental institutionalization, and lobotomies. The catalyst for the change was a presentation in 1972 by psychiatrist and member of the organization, John E. Fryer. He appeared as Dr. H. Anonymous at the Annual Convention in Dallas in 1972 wearing a mask and a big curly wig, and he used a voice-altering microphone.

"I am a homosexual. I am a psychiatrist," he said, and noted that he had to remain anonymous for fear of losing his job as an untenured professor at a major university. Earlier, he had been terminated from his psychiatry residency program at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine when it was discovered he was gay.

A year after Dr. Fryer's presentation, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Dr. Saul Levin (also gay) was the CEO/medical director in 2017 and gave a keynote presentation that paid tribute to Dr. Fryer (De Groot, 2017).

Social Policy 10–1: Same Sex Marriage



In June 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage was legal in all 50 states. The decision was 5–4. Justice Anthony Kennedy, the pivotal swing vote, wrote the majority opinion. "They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law," Kennedy wrote of same-sex couples in the case. "The Constitution grants them that right." Previously paving the way for legalization of marriage, in 2013, in a five-to-four ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the **Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)**, which had passed in 1996 and defined marriage as a "legal union between one man and one woman." DOMA was ruled unconstitutional on equal protection grounds, thus confirming that the almost 1 million legally married same-sex couples throughout the country would no longer be denied access to federal recognition and marriage benefits. As noted earlier, the Respect for Marriage Act of 2022 requires states to recognize same-sex marriages across state lines and grants same-sex couples the same federal benefits as any married couple. (See "Cultural Context of Same-Sex Marriage" below.)

Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)

Legislative act that denied federal recognition of same-sex marriage and allowed states to ignore same-sex marriages licensed elsewhere

Arguments in Favor of Same-Sex Marriage

Aside from the basic issue of equal protection under the law, the primary argument for same-sex marriage is that it promotes relationship stability among gay and lesbian couples. Positive outcomes for gay marriage have been documented. Perales and Baxter (2017) analyzed data on 25,348 individuals in the United Kingdom, comparing same-sex couples with heterosexuals, and found similar levels of relationship quality. However, LeBlanc et al. (2018) provided data to confirm that although same-sex marriage is now legal in every state, unequal recognition continues, which is associated with negative mental health, such as psychological distress, depression, and problematic drinking. One negative aspect of the legalization of same-sex marriage has been to put enormous pressure on same-sex couples to "present an idyllic image of family." Indeed, same-sex spouses facing possible parental separation are concerned that their divorce "would disrupt efforts to achieve social and political acceptance" (Gahan, 2018). Regarding same-sex spouses as parents, when 33 gay father, 35 lesbian mother, and 43 heterosexual parent families who had an adopted adolescent in the family were interviewed (along with the adolescents themselves), there were few differences in family type as related to parental mental health, parent-child relationships, and adolescent adjustment (McConnachie et al., 2021). Children flourish in attentive, loving, nurturing contexts—and parents of same-sex and different-sex orientations can both provide this context. In a longitudinal study comparing children of lesbian mothers with children reared in a heterosexual context, there were no significant between-group differences with respect to adaptive functioning (family, friends, spouse or partner relationships, and educational or job performance), behavioral or emotional problems, scores on mental health diagnostic scales, or the percentage of participants with a score in the borderline or clinical range (Gartrell et al., 2018).

Continues

Continued



Tiffany Beaver

Arguments Against Same-Sex Marriage

The primary reason for disapproval of same-sex marriage is conservative morality. Gay marriage is viewed by some as “immoral, a sin, against the Bible.” Opponents of same-sex marriage who view homosexuality as unnatural, sick, or immoral do not want their children to view homosexuality as socially acceptable. There is also a belief on the part of about half of Americans that same-sex parents cannot parent as well as male-female parents (Whithead, 2018), despite the fact that research does not support that belief.

Based on data of over a million Swedish men and women, comparing individuals in same- and other-sex marriages, significantly higher levels of depression, substance abuse, and suicide (completed and attempted) occurred among those in same-sex marriages (Xu et al., 2023). Minority stress theory,

including victimization and discrimination, were identified as contributing to the difference. Rosario (2023) suggested an interplay of genetics and the environment as explanatory.

Divorce and Same-Sex Marriage

While a major presumed benefit of the legalization of same-sex marriage is that it would promote relationship stability among gay and lesbian couples, the reality is different. Allen and Price (2020) compared dissolution rates of same-sex and different-sex couples in three large, nationally representative data sets from the United States and Canada and found that same-sex couples were more likely to break up than different-sex couples. The gap was even larger for couples with children. One same-sex spouse/parent, Isabel Lima Dahl, suggested three factors that help to explain the higher divorce rates: lesbian couples may be rushing into marriage, less co-dependence in that both partners are likely to be financially independent, and there may be less stigma associated with same-sex divorce than other-sex divorces.

Cultural Context of Same-Sex Marriage Today

Even though same-sex marriage is the law of the land, debate for and against it continues. Heterosexism, homonegativity, biphobia, and transphobia are entrenched in American society. Nevertheless, the House and Senate passed a bipartisan bill that requires one state to recognize the same-sex marriage in another state. So even if a state decides to ban same-sex marriage, that state must still recognize the legality of a same-sex marriage in another state. That bill, known as the Respect for Marriage Act, was signed into law in 2022.

10.9b Discrimination Against LGBTQIA+ Individuals

Behavioral homonegativity involves **discrimination**, behavior that involves treating categories of individuals unequally. Taylor et al. (2022) confirmed that LGBTQ+ high school students, compared to their heterosexual and/or cisgender counterparts, were more likely to be discriminated against based on their gender or sexual identities. The trans students experienced the highest levels of discrimination. Sang et al. (2022) also noted higher rates of bullying directed toward sexual and gender minority youth than heterosexual peers. Such bullying may be at school or online (cyberbullying) (Fields & Wotipka, 2022). Hinton et al. (2022) noted that the more central the LGBTQ identity was to the person, the greater the reported discrimination experiences.

Discrimination has negative consequences for LGBT romantic relationships. Alibudbud (2023) surveyed 232 college students and found that discrimination and the stigma associated with being LGBT and being in a romantic relationship were the causes of anxiety and depression among nonheterosexual students in these relationships.

Discrimination

Behavior that involves treating categories of individuals unequally

Lewis et al. (2022) noted that LGBT respondents reported higher rates (36% vs. 29%) of negative behavior from their partner's parents than heterosexual respondents. These behaviors included that the parents were rude, controlling, critical, and tried to break the couple up.

Cultural messages about being LGBT begin early. In Chapter 1 we noted how media impact culture and meaning in sexuality. The relative lack of rainbow picture books for children in LGBT families reveals the degree to which LGBT families are treated differently and as less important (Hedberg et al., 2022). Similarly, Forbes (2022) noted that the discrimination against LGBTQ+ students impacts career choices since students regard social sciences as more welcoming/approving, creating inequities both on campus and beyond.

The consequences of homonegativity, discrimination, and bullying may be suicide. When 308 LGBT college students were compared with 673 heterosexual students in a national sample, 30% versus 16% reported that they had considered suicide (Bryant, 2022). Stress, anxiety, and decreased motivation were the top symptoms due to challenges related to their identity exploration, decisions about whom to be open with, and changes in one's social support system. O'Reilly et al. (2021) pointed to overall cultural toxicity. Aside from a higher risk of suicide, there is poorer mental health among LGBT individuals, with 70% seeking mental health services on campus (Bryant, 2022).

Feinstein (2020) reviewed the rejection sensitivity model as an explanation for lower LGBT mental health. The framework suggests that this population, due to previous learning experiences, has become more sensitive to negative social cues increasing their perceived exposure to being stigmatized.

What's unnatural is homophobia. Homo sapiens is the only species in all of nature that responds with hate to homosexuality.

Alex Sanchez

10.9c Biphobia

Just as the term homophobia is used to refer to negative attitudes, emotional responses, and discriminatory behavior toward gay men and lesbians, **biphobia** refers to similar reactions and discrimination toward bisexuals. Bisexuals are thought to be homosexuals afraid to acknowledge their real identity or homosexuals maintaining heterosexual relationships to avoid rejection by the heterosexual mainstream. In addition, bisexual individuals are sometimes viewed as heterosexuals who are looking for exotic sexual experiences. Bisexuals may experience double discrimination in that neither the heterosexual nor the homosexual community fully accepts them. Bisexual men are viewed more negatively than bisexual women, gay men, or lesbians (Eliason, 2000).

Outcomes of biphobia, particularly for men, include higher rates of mental health concerns than their lesbian/gay counterparts, higher rates of unsafe sex practices, and substance abuse. Two culprits have been identified as internalized biphobia and masculinity concerns (Chickerella & Horne, 2022).

One way to help reduce anxiety/bisexual prejudice is through electronic contact. "Electronic or E-contact is a text-based form of computer-mediated communication, designed to provide synchronous, structured online communication between members of different social groups" (Hatoum & White, 2022, p. 873).

10.10 How Heterosexuals Are Affected by Homophobia

The antigay and heterosexist social climate of our society is often viewed in terms of how it victimizes the gay population. However, heterosexuals are also victimized by heterosexism and antigay prejudice and discrimination. Some of these effects follow:

Biphobia

Fearful, negative, discriminatory reactions toward bisexuals

1. *Heterosexual victims of hate crimes:* Extreme homophobia contributes to instances of violence against homosexuals—acts known as **hate crimes**. Such crimes include verbal harassment (the most frequent form of hate crime experienced by victims), vandalism, sexual assault and rape, physical assault, and murder. In some instances, straight people are victims of hate crimes because it is assumed they are gay.
2. *Concern, fear, and grief over the well-being of gay, lesbian, or trans family members and friends:* Many heterosexual family members and friends of homosexual people experience concern, fear, and grief over the mistreatment of their gay or lesbian friends or family members; trans people are also at risk of abuse. This fear is well grounded considering the increase in violence against members of the LGBTQIA+ community.
3. *Restriction of intimacy and self-expression:* Because of the antigay social climate, heterosexual individuals—especially males—are hindered in their own self-expression and intimacy in same-sex relationships. Males must be careful about how they hug each other so as not to appear gay. Homophobic scripts also frighten youth who do not conform to gender role expectations, leading some youth to avoid activities, such as arts for boys or athletics for girls, and professions, such as elementary education for males.
4. *Rape/sexual assault:* Men who participate in gang rape may entice each other into the act by suggesting that they are gay if they do not join the train. Homonegativity also encourages early sexual activity among adolescent men. Adolescent male virgins are often teased by their male peers: “You mean you don’t do it with girls yet? What are you, a fag or something?” Not wanting to be labeled and stigmatized as a “fag,” some adolescent boys “prove” their heterosexuality by having sex with girls or even committing rape.

I imagined a time when being gay is as unquestioned and un-judged as is having blue eyes. Some might call it fantasy or science fiction. I'd like to think it's the future.

Missouri Vaun

10.11 What to Do About Anti-LGBTQIA+ Prejudice and Discrimination

Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals continues. LGBT protection against employment has been passed, but the Equality Act amending the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in housing, public accommodations, education, federally funded programs, credit, and jury service has not been passed. Philbin et al. (2023) noted how social policies are needed to support LGBT individuals. Until such legislation is passed/supportive and public policies initiated, members of the LGBTQIA+ community are vulnerable.

An **ally development model** has been suggested as a means of providing a new learning context for homophobic heterosexual students in grades K–12. Such a model is multilayered and involves school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists providing programs to expose K–12 children to the nature of prejudice and discrimination toward LGBTQIA+ individuals. In addition, LGBTQIA+ individuals should be provided with a framework for how to perceive prejudice and discrimination (e.g., as a learned behavior) as well as how to react to it (ignore so as not to escalate what could become a violent interaction). In some schools, the whole culture is LGBTQIA+ aware and supportive. Television has become a source of prejudice reduction and an

Hate crimes

Bringing harm to an individual because they are viewed as belonging to a group you don't approve of

Ally development model

Combating homophobia by exposing children in K–12 grades to the nature of prejudice and discrimination toward LGBTQIA individuals

increase in tolerance toward sexual minorities (Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2020). Social media has also helped to increase people's awareness of the LGBTQIA+ community.

As of 2022, seven states—California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, and Oregon—had laws that promote LGBTQIA+ issues in school curricula (Beagan, 2022). However, in 2022, Florida passed the “Parental Rights in Education” bill, nicknamed the “Don’t Say Gay” bill by critics, which bans discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity in primary grade levels or “in a manner that is not age-appropriate for students” and that allows parents to sue a school district for providing instruction about LGBT issues (Beagan, 2022). Four other states (Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas) have similar laws banning the discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in public schools, and several states are considering similar bills.

Chapter Summary

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals are receiving increased visibility in our society, though challenges remain.

LGBTQIA+ Terminology

Sexual orientation refers to the classification of individuals as heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, pansexual, or asexual based on their emotional and sexual attractions, relationships, self-identity, and lifestyle. Heterosexuality refers to the predominance of emotional and sexual attraction to people of the other sex; homosexuality, to people of the same sex; bisexuality, to both sexes. *LGBTQIA+* is a term that has emerged to refer collectively to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals; those questioning their sexual orientations/sexual identity those who are intersexed; those who are asexual; or those who are an ally/friend of the cause.

Conceptual Models of Sexual Orientation

The three models of sexual orientation are the dichotomous model (people are either heterosexual or homosexual), the unidimensional continuum model (sexual orientation is viewed on a continuum from heterosexuality to homosexuality), and the multidimensional model (orientation consists of various independent components).

LGBT Feelings about Marriage and the Family

Interviews with lesbians and bisexuals reveal a profound endorsement of marriage and the adoption of being a parent as a major goal.

Theories of Sexual Orientation

Basic theories of sexual orientation are biological (genetic, prenatal, and post-pubertal hormonal) and social/cultural (parent-child interactions, peer groups, mass media). Most researchers agree that an interaction of biological and social/cultural forces is involved in the development of sexual orientation. *Conversion therapy* is a forced attempt to change the sexual orientation of homosexuals. There is no evidence that such therapy works; in fact, not only does it fail to change its subjects, but it has been associated with attempted suicide, depression, and anxiety.

Coming Out or Concealment?

Coming out is not a linear, one-time event, but a complicated, over-time experience to different people in different contexts. The reactions are unpredictable. Coming out is different for those who are bisexual, asexual, or pansexual. Benefits of coming out to parents include higher levels of acceptance from their parents, lower levels of alcohol and drug consumption, and fewer identity and adjustment problems.

Relationships

Homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual relationships may be more similar than different, although those in nonheterosexual relationships are often more resilient to stress and difficulties in their relationships.

Gay male relationships are stereotyped as short-term and lacking closeness and intimacy. In reality, most gay men prefer long-term, close relationships. Many lesbians value monogamous, emotionally and sexually satisfying relationships. People who are pansexual report high sexual satisfaction.

Health, Mental Health, HIV, and Sexual Orientation

Worldwide, most HIV infection occurs through heterosexual transmission. HIV infection remains the most threatening STI for male homosexuals and bisexuals. Women who have sex exclusively with other women have a much lower rate of HIV infection than men (both gay and straight) and women who have sex with men. However, lesbians and bisexual women may also be at risk for HIV if they have sex with men who have been exposed to HIV and/or inject drugs.

Heterosexism, Homonegativity, and Homophobia

Heterosexism is the belief that heterosexuality is superior (morally, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally) to homosexuality and involves the systematic degradation and stigmatization of any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, or relationship. Homophobia refers to negative attitudes and emotions toward homosexuality and those who engage in homosexual behavior. Homonegativity includes negative feelings (fear, disgust, anger), thoughts, and behaviors.

How Heterosexuals Are Affected by Homophobia

Heterosexuals are affected by how homosexuals are treated. For example, hate crimes directed toward gays may hurt heterosexuals because homophobes who beat up gays may also target heterosexuals whom they perceive as gay. Also, heterosexuals who have gay and lesbian friends and family members are subject to emotional stress and anxiety about their well-being in a hostile culture.

What to Do About Anti-LGBTQIA+ Prejudice and Discrimination

One of the ways to address the discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people is to create learning environments that are more supportive. These programs can be implemented in grades K–12.

Web Links

Advocate (Online Newspaper for LGBTQIA+ News)

<http://www.advocate.com/>

Bisexual Resource Center

<http://www.biresource.net/>

COLAGE: People with a Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, or Queer Parent

<http://www.colage.org>

Gay Parent Magazine

<http://www.gayparentmag.com/>

Little Gay Book (LGBT Matchmaker)

<http://www.littlegaybook.com/about-dr-frankie/>

Out

<http://www.out.com/>

Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

<http://www.pflag.org>

Princeton University's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Center

<https://www.purdue.edu/lgbtq>

The Asexual Visibility and Education Network

<https://asexuality.org/>

Trevor Get Help Now

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/>

Key Terms

Allosexual	233	Heterosexuality	232
Ally development model	256	Homonegativity	251
Asexual	233	Homophobia	250
Biphobia	255	Homosexism	248
Bisexuality	232	Homosexuality	232
Coming out	240	Intersexed	233
Conversion therapy	240	LGBTQIA+	233
Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)	253	Multidimensional model	236
Demisexual	233	Pansexuality	234
Dichotomous model	235	Queer	233
Discrimination	254	Sexual fluidity	236
Graysexual	233	Sexual orientation	232
Hate crimes	256	Sexual orientation discordance	232
Heterosexism	247	Unidimensional continuum model	235