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Winter 2012 First Year RA Training on LGBTIQQ Issues

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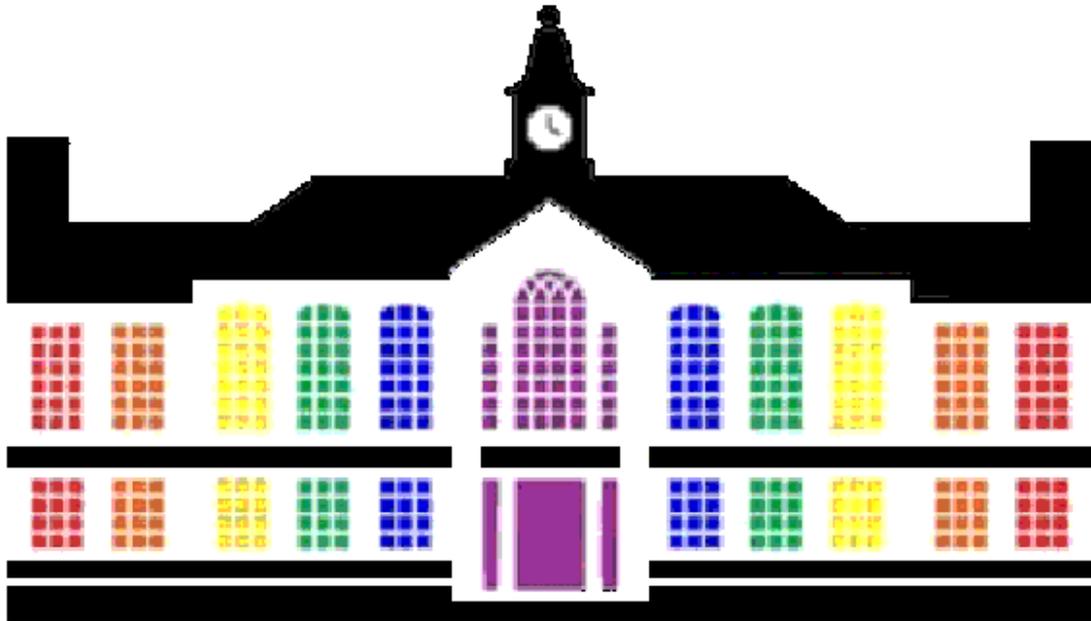
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LGBT 101: RA Training

January 20, 2011



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Working Definitions

*Note: The following definitions are short working definitions to create a basic understanding of LGBT issues and concerns. You are encouraged to seek additional information for a better understanding of the many aspects of each term.

Advocate: A person who actively works to end intolerance, educates others, and supports LGBT issues, concerns, equal rights legislation, etc.

Ally: A heterosexual person who supports LGBT people.

Asexual: A person who does not identify emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual attraction to any group of people.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted to members of more than one gender. It also can be referred to as omnisexual and pansexual.

Biological Sex: A binary system (male/female) set by the medical establishment, usually based on reproductive organs. *See Intersexed.*

Cisgender Privilege: Advantages that come with having your gender identity match with your biological sex, which is given preference and authority.

Closeted: One who has not “come out of the closet” or who has come out to only a few people. One who may not be comfortable enough with their own sexuality or gender to share it with others.

Coming Out: The life-long process of discovering, defining, and proclaiming one’s sexuality or gender identity.

Cross Dressing: The act of wearing the clothing of the “opposite” sex for performance, sexual encounters, or comfort. Generally, the term cross dresser is preferred to transvestite. *See Transvestite.*

Drag: Queen, a person who consciously performs femininity, sometimes in an exaggerated/theatrical manner, usually in a show or theatre setting; King, a person who consciously performs masculinity, sometimes in an exaggerated/theatrical manner, usually in a show or theatre setting.

Dyke: Derogatory slang term used to identify lesbians. This term has been embraced and reinvented as a positive, proud, political identifier when used by some lesbians among and about themselves. *See: faggot, queer.*

Faggot: Derogatory slang used to identify gay men, which has been embraced and reclaimed as a positive, proud, political identifier when used by some gay men among and about themselves. *See dyke, queer.*

Gay: Usually, but not always, refers to homosexual men. Also used as an umbrella term for the LGBT community.

Gender Expression: How we communicate our gender to other people, including the way we dress, act, look, and interact.

Gender Identity: How a person perceives themselves and what they call themselves in terms of their gender.

Gender Queer: A gender identity in which a person either identifies as both man and woman or neither man or woman.

Hate Motivated Offenses: Assault, rape, arson, and murder are crimes under any circumstance, but when a victim of such a crime was targeted simply because of their affiliation (or perceived affiliation) with a minority group, the FBI considers the crime a ‘hate crime.’ In some states, hate crimes carry an additional penalty beyond the standard penalty for assault, murder, etc. Also known as “gay-bashing,” acts of intolerance, or hate crimes.

Heterosexual: A person who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual attractions to persons of the “opposite sex.” The sexuality that dominant discourse prescribes.

Heterosexual Privilege: Advantages that come with heterosexuality in this society and culture; i.e.: Marriage and all the benefits that go along with it, acceptance from family, safety, and acceptance in their chosen career field.

Heterosexism: The belief that all people are heterosexual, the assumption and/or belief that heterosexual relationships and behavior are superior, and the actions based on this assumption.

Homosexual: A person who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual attraction to persons of the “same sex.” More of a medical term, it is considered an outdated term when referring to gay people or communities.

More Working Definitions

Homophobia: Fear, anger, discomfort, intolerance, or lack of acceptance toward LGBT people, or experiencing these feelings about one's own non-heterosexual preference.

Human Sexual Response: Behaviors, thoughts, dreams, fantasies; not just behavior.

Intersexed: People born with “unexpected” genitals. Formerly referred to as hermaphrodites, intersexed people are not easily categorized as male or female because of ambiguous genitals. Most intersexed people do not possess “both” sets of genitals, rather a blending or a different appearance that is medically unacceptable to most doctors. Intersexuality is fairly common. Many who identify as intersexed believe that early childhood surgical intervention is not only unnecessary but cruel and advocate counseling and support for children and families.

Lavender: This association goes back into ancient times and has been strengthened by the fact that lavender, or purple, is the combination of red (pink) and blue, the traditional gender-identified colors.

Lesbian: A self-identified woman who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual attractions to other women.

Lifestyle: How a person chooses to live and behave. Being LGBT is not a lifestyle decision for most.

Normal: Can refer to what is statistically more common, but is often confused by heterosexuals to refer to whatever it is that they condone morally. Only the individual can decide what is normal for them and it need not be what is normal to others.

Outing: To declare a person's identity publicly; people can out themselves, or someone can out them either with or without their permission.

Questioning: The process of exploring one's own sexual identity, including but not limited to one's upbringing, expectations from others (family, friends, church, etc.), and inner motivation.

Queer: Derogatory slang term used to identify LGBT people. This term has been embraced and reinvented as a positive, proud, political identifier when used by some LGBT people among and about themselves. *See dyke, faggot.*

Rainbow Flag: In 1978, San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker designed a flag for the city's Gay Freedom celebration and LGBT movements worldwide have since adopted it as a symbol of gay identity and pride. It has six stripes in the traditional form, but can be seen as streamers, etc, which run in the order of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The flag also symbolizes diversity within unity.

Same gender loving (SGL): A term from the African American/Black LGBT community and used by people of color who may see 'gay' and 'lesbian' as terms of the white LGBT community.

Sexual Orientation: The direction of one's attractions toward members of the same, opposite, or both sexes. It is a direction based on whom a person is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted. It is not a simple matter of 'choice.' It is not to be confused with *sexual preference* (What a person likes to do sexually), which implies making a choice.

Stonewall: On June 28, 1969, NYC police attempted a routine raid on the Stonewall Inn, a working class gay and lesbian bar in Greenwich Village. Unexpectedly, the patrons resisted, and the incident escalated into a riot that continued for several days. Most people look to this event as the beginning of the American Gay Liberation movement and all subsequent LGBT movements.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people who transgress society's view of gender and biological sex as necessarily fixed, unmoving, and following from one's biological sex. They view gender on a spectrum, rather than a polarized, either/or construct. This can range from identification to cross dressing, to undergoing hormone therapy, to sex reassignment surgery and/or to other forms of dress/presentation. Transgender people can include transsexuals, cross dressers, drag kings/queens, masculine women, feminine men, and all those who defy what society tells them is appropriate for their “gender.” Political trans activists seek to create more space around gender, and to create a space and a society where the choice of gender expression/presentation is safe, sane, and consensual.

Transsexual: A person whose core gender identity is “opposite” their assigned sex. Transsexuals may live as the opposite sex, undergo hormone therapy, and/or have sex reassignment surgery to match their bodies with their gender identity.

Transvestite: A person who cross-dresses for erotic pleasure or relaxation.

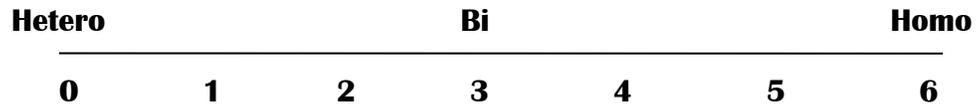
Triangle: *Pink Triangle:* This was a symbol used by the Nazi's to label gay men in the concentration camps. It has since been adopted as a symbol of identity and pride. *Black Triangle:* This was a symbol used by the Nazi's to label lesbians and other women deemed 'antisocial' in the concentration camps. It has since been adopted as a symbol of identity and pride.

Sources:

- ◆ Florida State University's Campus SafeZones web page: <http://www.fsu.edu/~volunteer/news/safe.html>
- ◆ Ohio University's Office of LGBT Programs
- ◆ Plymouth State College's Task Force Against Homophobia SafeZone handout
- ◆ Virginia Association of College and University Housing Officers (VACUHO) SafeZone Project handout

Scales and Continuums

Sexual Orientation (Kinsey)



Biological Sex



Gender Identity



Gender Expression



1. How do these scales fit together?
2. What assumptions do we make about the interrelatedness of these issues?
3. How can we work to not make assumptions?

Favorite or Most Important

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Potential Internal Stresses of LGBT People

1. Low self-concept due to the societal messages that heterosexuality and being cisgendered is “normal.”
2. Pain of invisibility; thus not meeting other LGBT people.
3. Pain of having to suppress and not explore sexual orientation.
4. Conflict due to gender role stereotypes.
5. Anger and frustration toward society and its expectations of conforming to heterosexual norms.
6. Depression due to a build up of stresses from the items above and more.
7. Cautious of how they look – not being too stereotypical.
8. Critical evaluation of whom to trust – so they are not ridiculed and exposed.
9. Fear of others and self being defined by sexuality ONLY.
10. Homophobic to self – believing that their feelings are “wrong” due to societal pressure.

Coming Out

The term “coming out” (of the closet) refers to the life long process of developing a positive lesbian, gay, or bisexual and/or transgender identity. It is a long and difficult struggle for many LGBT individuals because they often have to confront the homophobia, biphobia, and/or transphobia they learned growing up.

Before they can feel good about whom they are, they have to challenge their own attitudes. For some, it takes years of painful work to develop a positive lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity, for others it may not seem to take as long...it is an individualized journey.

Each LGBT individual needs to decide when and to whom they will disclose their sexual/gender identity. At times, they are afraid to come out to their friends, family, and coworkers.

What might lesbian, gay men, bisexual, & transgender people be afraid of?

1. **Losing:** friendships and family connections, closeness in relationships/friendships, their job, their children, and/or financial support from family members.
2. **Being:** the subject of gossip, harassed, physically assaulted, and/or thrown out of the house.

Why might lesbian, gay men, bisexual, & transgender people want to come out to others?

1. **To end:** the secrecy and to stop wasting energy by hiding an essential part of themselves.
2. **To feel:** closer to those people, like they have integrity, and/or “whole” around them.
3. **To make:** a statement that being LGBT is OK.

How might lesbian, gay men, bisexual, & transgender people feel about coming out to someone?

1. Scared, Vulnerable, Relieved, Concerned about how the person will react
2. Proud

How might an individual feel after someone has come out to them?

1. Supportive, Flattered, Honored
2. Disbelieving, Uncomfortable, Scared, Shocked, Angry, Disgusted
3. Not sure what to say or do next

What do lesbian, gay men, bisexual, & transgender people want from the people they come out to?

1. Acceptance, Support, Understanding, Comfort, A closer relationship
2. Hearing that disclosure will not negatively affect the relationship
3. An acknowledgement of their feelings
4. A hug and a smile

Ways that you can help when someone comes out to you:

1. Remember that the person has not changed. They are still the same person you knew; you just have more information about them now than you did before. If you are shocked, don't let the shock lead you to view the person as suddenly different.
2. Don't ask questions that would have been considered inappropriate before their disclosure.
3. If you would like more information, ask in an honest and considerate way. If you show a genuine and respectful interest in their life, they will most likely appreciate it. Some good questions to ask are:
 - a. How long have you known that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?
 - b. Are you seeing anyone?
 - c. Has it been hard for you having to conceal your sexual/gender identity?
 - d. Is there some way that I can help you?
 - e. Have I ever offended you unknowingly?
4. Don't assume that you know what it means for the person to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Every person's experience is different.
5. They may not want you to do anything necessarily. They may just need someone to listen.
6. Consider it an honor that they have trusted you with this very personal information. Thank them for trusting you.
7. Clarify with them what level of confidentiality they expect from you. They may not want you to tell anyone else, or they may be out to others and not be concerned with who finds out.
8. If you don't understand something or have questions, remember that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender are often willing to help you understand their life experiences and we're just a step away in the LGBTQ Center.

Guidelines for Positive Interactions with LGBT Students

1. Understand and check your feelings, values, beliefs, and thinking about LGBT issues and people.
2. Talk with LGBT people and those who support them.
3. Provide a supportive atmosphere for those who are or think they may be LGBT.
4. Avoid language (both on forms and in person) that implies that all people are heterosexual, "male or female," and either "single, married, or divorced."
5. Advocate and participate in educational programs for your staff, so that LGBT people receive service without prejudice and with the empathy and warmth deserved by all.
6. Do not presume that all LGBT people regret or dislike their orientation or gender identity.
7. Remember that societal oppression and discrimination create much unhappiness for many LGBT people.
8. Remember that the oppression laid on lesbians differs in many ways from the oppression that gay men suffer, just as there are differences in the oppression experienced by gender non-conforming people. Non-white LGBT people suffer in other ways, as well. We must value every individual for all of their identities.
9. Know when your skills and your knowledge reach their limit. Refer people elsewhere when they need help that you cannot effectively supply.
10. Know when and how negative feelings you may have toward LGBT people may prevent you from offering prejudiced help. If you cannot change your feelings, refer elsewhere.

Ally Guidelines

1. Remember that not everyone is heterosexual/straight.
2. **Use inclusive language.** Use “partner,” or other gender-neutral terms, instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” when talking to others. Ask “Are you seeing anyone?” instead of “Do you have a girlfriend?”
3. Stress that anything brought to you is confidential and keep all things confidential!
4. **Confront homophobic and anti-LGBT jokes and comments.**
5. Familiarize yourself with campus and community resources. Refer people to those resources as necessary. Know your organization’s nondiscrimination policy.
6. **If someone comes out to you, respond with warmth and friendship.** Remember that coming out to someone can be very difficult for LGBT people, so be honored that someone chose to tell you.
7. **Be Visible: Participate in LGBT events at URI throughout the year and wear your support – shirts, buttons, etc.**
8. Continue educating yourself about LGBT issues by attending university events and reading magazines, newspapers, and books. Know what is current and in the news.
9. If you are unable to remain impartial, refer an LGBT person to another resource or person who can help them. If you cannot be a strong support, be a strong referral agent.
10. **Be a 100% ally – no strings attached. Unconditional acceptance is a must...this cannot be faked.**
11. Encourage other allies by recognizing and acknowledging their efforts. Allies need support too!
12. **Go through the Safe Zone Workshop at URI and encourage others to do the same!**

Resources

1. LGBTQ Center at URI – see information above.
 - a. Conversation Groups – Monday and Thursday at 7:30pm in the LGBTQ Center
 - b. Welcome Wednesdays – Once a month, TBA, in the LGBTQ Center
 - c. LGBTQ Symposium – April 2-6, 2012
 - d. Safe Zone, Lavender Graduation, Support Groups, and MORE TO COME!
2. GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) at URI – Website: urigs.weebly.com, Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/URIGSA>; Email: uri.gsa@gmail.com; Office: Union 126; President: Brian Sit
3. LGBTQ Women’s Group at URI – Contact Holly Nichols at hjnichols@uri.edu for more information
4. Equity Council – Office: Green Hall 306; Co-Chairs: Lynne Derbyshire and Michelle Fontes-Barros; Website: www.uri.edu/equity
5. President’s Commission on LGBTQ – Co-Chairs: Ann Morrissey and Lynn McKinney; Website: www.uri.edu/diversity/email.html
6. Human Rights Campaign – www.hrc.org
7. Campus Pride – www.campuspride.org