

WORKSHOP 9 Sexual Orientation

This workshop benefitted from the contributions of Eli R. Green.

A WORD TO THE FACILITATORS

This workshop continues the focus on sexual identity, one of the circles of sexuality. The final component to explore in detail is sexual orientation—our feelings of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction toward other people. Same-gender attraction, different-gender attraction, and attraction to people of more than one gender are all natural in the range of human sexual experience. It is also natural to have no sexual attraction to others. The need and desire for emotional relationships is separate from the desire for sexual relationships, even though these desires go hand in hand for many people.

Some people experience their sexual orientation as consistent, staying the same throughout their entire lives; other people experience their attractions or even their very orientation as fluid, shifting over the course of their lifetime. Some people come to an early awareness of their sexual orientation, others come to a much more gradual awareness of it. Although many people believe that sexual orientation is not a choice, the topic is very complex. Young people often experience a lot of pressure to “decide” or “figure out” their sexual orientation, and this pressure can be lessened when adults and peers create space for ambiguity and exploration. We can choose how authentically we live out our identities and which attractions we pursue. Mindful and sensitive facilitation of this workshop can go a long way toward empowering participants to make healthy choices and explore their own authenticity.

Although this workshop explores all sexual orientations, there is a much greater focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) orientations. In spite of a more LGBQ-positive political and social climate, *heterosexism* (the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual), *homophobia* (bias against LGBQ people), and *biphobia* (aversion to bisexuality and bisexual people) still exist. Today, many LGBQ youth are growing up healthy and thriving, with access to role models of diverse sexual orientations in their families, friend and peer circles, and communities and in the media. They will benefit from legal gains in areas such as marriage equality and antidiscrimination protection and a changing social climate in which LGBQ individuals are coming out earlier and more safely than in previous generations. However, many LGBQ youth continue to live in isolation, are afraid or unable to disclose who they are, live in families that don't accept them, or suffer harassment at school, and LGBQ youth are disproportionately at risk for running away, homelessness, and suicide.

Although we typically use the acronym LGBTQ in *Our Whole Lives*, the “T” is left out for this workshop because we are only discussing sexual orientation and not gender identity. Gender identity is a completely different issue, although transgender people are often grouped with gay, lesbian, and bisexual people because all face

discrimination and oppression due to homophobia and gender-role pressures. However, *transgender* is not a sexual orientation, which is the focus of this workshop.

The Q in the acronym LGBTQ stands for *queer* in Our Whole Lives. However, in other settings or publications, the Q might stand for *questioning*. Some people don't use the Q at all. Terminology can be challenging and sometimes political. The word *queer* has been reclaimed—especially among younger generations—and is now frequently used as an identity label that affirms the diversity and complexity of gender and sexual orientation. However, many people, especially those in older generations, still find the word pejorative or hurtful, and it is still being used to wound in many situations. As facilitator, you'll be in the best position to assess your agency and your group to determine which terminology and language will be most respectful and affirming. Words can be empowering for some people and hurtful to others, and individuals have the right to claim the language that is most authentic for them. Facilitators are expected to model acceptance and affirmation of each person's unique experience and right to claim the language most authentic for them. Be prepared to affirm *queer* as a valid sexual orientation label.

If you're in a setting that has offered Our Whole Lives for many years, you might question the need for this workshop because your environment appears to be LGBTQ-inclusive. While youth with Our Whole Lives values are more likely to accept and affirm LGBTQ people, they may

- witness homophobic and biphobic attitudes, harassment, and discrimination at school and in their communities
- be less accepting of LGBTQ people than they are assumed to be
- experience concerns, questions, fear, embarrassment, bullying, or self-hate related to their own orientation or the orientation of someone close to them
- belong to groups or cultures that intensely oppose homosexuality, such as a boys' sports team or certain ethnic or religious communities
- bring a whole host of new assumptions and stereotypes about LGBTQ people as a result of influences from the media and elsewhere

Thus they will still benefit from the activities in this workshop. The overarching goal is to provide knowledge, attitudes, and skills to enable participants to affirm the dignity and worth of people of all sexual orientations and to promote full equality for all people. It is hoped that all participants will feel empowered to intentionally claim and affirm their own sexual orientations.

Note: Always assume that there are non-heterosexual participants in your group and participants who are questioning their sexual orientation. Never assume a youth is straight. It's quite likely that one or more participants will come out to you before, during, or after this workshop. Some youth may be comfortably out and open about their sexual orientation. Others might be questioning or struggling, and you could be one of only a few people they have told. If this happens, respond with acceptance and respect the individual's confidentiality. Do not overtly or subtly encourage any youth to come out to others; rather, help them carefully consider the pros and cons of disclosure before making a possibly impulsive decision. If anyone does come out or disclose a sexual orientation to the group during this or other workshops, remind all participants that they need to respect confidentiality and never share that information with others or on social media without the person's express permission.

WORKSHOP GOALS

- to define *homophobia*, *biphobia*, and *heterosexism*
- to describe the impact of homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism on the mental health, safety, productivity, and quality of life of LGBTQ people, their families, and their friends
- to identify and reject myths about LGBTQ orientations
- to explore personal attitudes and values about LGBTQ orientations
- to increase empathy for LGBTQ individuals and those who are perceived as being non-heterosexual

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this workshop, participants will be able to

- describe their attitudes about LGBTQ orientations
- define the terms *sexual orientation*, *homophobia*, *biphobia*, and *heterosexism*
- list three negative effects of homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism
- list at least three myths about LGBTQ people and issues
- identify at least two ways to be allies to LGBTQ people

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Reentry and Reading (R&R)	15 minutes
Sexual Orientation, Homophobia, Biphobia, and Heterosexism	20 minutes
Myth Information Game OR Values Voting	20 minutes
Being an Ally	20 minutes
Preparation for Guest Speakers	10 minutes
Reflection and Planning	5 minutes
OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Coming Out Stories	25–30 Minutes

MATERIALS CHECKLIST

- newsprint, markers, and tape
- the Group Covenant chart
- the Question Box, index cards, and pencils
- the Circles of Sexuality chart
- Facilitator Resource 16, Sexual Orientation Definitions
- Facilitator Resource 18, Organizations and Websites with Resources on LGBTQ Youth

For Myth Information Game

- Facilitator Resource 17, Myth/Fact Statements and Answers

For Values Voting

- optional:** two signs, labeled Agree and Disagree

For Being an Ally

- optional video:** “Ash Beckham at Ignite Boulder 20” (5:30 minutes), www.youtube.com
- optional:** a computer with Internet access or downloaded video and a large monitor or digital projector

For Optional Activity, Coming Out Stories

- a computer with Internet access or downloaded video and a large monitor or digital projector

PREPARATION

1. Read the workshop plan, including facilitator resources. Decide together which activities will work best with your group and discuss how to share leadership responsibilities. Choose whether you will conduct the Myth Information Game or Values Voting, and whether you will show the optional video as part of Being an Ally. Consider showing one of the optional coming out story videos if you have extra time for this workshop.
2. Do some background reading on LGBTQ teens. Check out the websites and resources listed in Facilitator Resource 18, Organizations and Websites with Resources on LGBTQ Youth, and review the Human Rights Campaign 2012 report *Growing Up LGBT in America* (www.hrc.org/youth).
3. Review Facilitator Resource 16, Sexual Orientation Definitions, prior to the workshop to get comfortable with the terms and their meanings.
4. Post the *Circles of Sexuality* and *Group Covenant* charts.

For Sexual Orientation, Homophobia, Biphobia, and Heterosexism

1. Make the following chart:

Six Beliefs

- All sexual orientations are valid and healthy.
- Homophobia and biphobia exist.
- Heterosexism also exists.
- Homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism hurt people of all sexual orientations, including heterosexuals.
- Ignorance is a problem.
- Individuals have the right to hold personal beliefs and values but not to discriminate.

For Myth Information Game

1. Familiarize yourself with the information in Facilitator Resource 17, Myth/Fact Statements and Answers, so you can give explanations in your own words. You should also feel free to read explanations from the resource during the activity.

For Values Voting

1. Review the sample statements and choose five or six to use with your group.
2. As with all movement-based activities, make sure all can participate. Arrange the room so all participants will be able to maneuver as needed, or adapt the activity so everyone votes while seated.

For Being an Ally

1. Preview the Ash Beckham video and decide whether you will show it.
2. If you plan to show the video, get your equipment ready and make sure you have a good Internet signal.

For Preparing for Guest Speakers

1. Decide whether to have a guest panel at the next workshop and what the composition of the panel will be. Depending on the needs of your group, decide whether to have an LGBQ panel, a transgender panel, or a combined LGBTQ panel. Since many youth may have more experience with LGBQ people, it is highly recommended that the panel include transgender people, either exclusively or along with LGBQ people. See Workshop 10 for guidance on inviting guest speakers and conducting the panel.
2. Read the activity Preparing for Guest Speakers to see if it would be helpful for your group. If you don't think you need to do any preparation, you have an extra 10 minutes for this workshop.

For Optional Activity, Coming Out Stories

1. Both Ellen DeGeneres, an actor, comedian, and talk show host, and Jason Collins, an NBA athlete, waited until they were in their thirties to come out publicly. It is highly recommended that you show some of both of the coming out stories. Preview the videos and choose one or two of the Jason Collins clips.
2. Make sure the video is ready to show and, if you have not downloaded the videos, that your Internet signal is strong.

Workshop Plan

REENTRY AND READING (R&R)

15 Minutes

1. *Reentry*

Welcome participants back and help them reenter the program by asking

- Which of you asked your parents or caregivers to tell you about gender roles back when they were teens?
- Who tried out a nontraditional gender role since the last workshop?
- How is your life better since the last workshop?

2. **Question Box**

Take a few minutes to answer any questions from the Question Box.

3. **Reading**

Refer participants to the Circles of Sexuality chart. Explain that today's workshop focuses on sexual orientation. Ask someone to define *sexual orientation*, or give a brief explanation yourself, such as "*Sexual orientation* refers to our feelings of emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to other people." Introduce today's readings with these comments:

- In 2012, the Human Rights Campaign surveyed 10,000 13–17-year-old LGBT youth and published a report called *Growing Up LGBT in America*.
- We're going to read quotes from some of the teens who participated in the survey.

4. Read or have volunteers read the following:

- It's nice that my school is very open. I have a lot of friends who are okay and are helpful with my being bisexual.
- I live in such a narrow-minded community—it's really hard on me. I deal with so much ignorance on a daily basis.
- I have been graciously accepted by my peers but the biggest issue I face is my parents.
- I wish I could meet more gay people to talk to and get to know.
- In school the people I am friends with are completely OK with my sexuality, at church I haven't brought it up.
- It's very easy to look at me and tell that I'm gay and it makes me feel afraid to walk around knowing there are people here in my hometown who hate me and people like me enough to attack me.
- A lot of kids at my school think it's sick and nasty and will give me looks when I hold hands with my friend, and call us fags and lesbos. I am proud of who I am and don't intend on changing, I just wish I wasn't viewed differently.
- This is me. This is how I was born and I'm happy with it.

—*Growing Up LGBT in America* (Human Rights Campaign, 2012)

5. Process the readings with the following prompts:

- What are your reactions to these comments?
- What are some of the different experiences you heard? [Make sure participants grasp both the positive and the challenging aspects of the comments.]
- Drawing from your own experience or observations, what would you say it's like to be an LGBQ teen growing up in America?

SEXUAL ORIENTATION, HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, AND HETEROSEXISM

20 Minutes

1. Post the chart of beliefs you prepared and explain that this workshop is based on the six beliefs listed on the chart. Clarify that you won't be dealing with the T of LGBTQ because the T stands for *transgender*, which is an issue of gender identity, and today's focus is on sexual orientation only. Make the

following points about the first belief, “All sexual orientations are valid and healthy.”

- Everyone has a sexual orientation.
- *Sexual orientation* refers to a person’s feelings of attraction toward other people. This attraction can be emotional, romantic, and/or sexual.
- Some people are attracted to a different gender; others are attracted to the same gender; others are attracted to the same and a different gender.
- Some people are attracted to only one gender; others are attracted to two or more genders. Some people aren’t sexually attracted to anyone.
- People use many different terms and labels to describe their sexual orientation, such as *heterosexual* or *straight*, *homosexual* or *gay* or *lesbian*, *bisexual*, or *asexual*. These labels can mean different things to different people.
- For some people, their sexual orientation feels fixed and stays the same their whole lives. For others, their sexual orientation is fluid or may shift over the course of their life.

2. Explore belief 2, “Homophobia and biphobia exist,” using the following process:

- Ask volunteers to define the terms *homophobia* and *biphobia*.
- Explain that
 - **Homophobia** is discomfort, dislike, fear, or hatred of non-heterosexual people and/or of expressions of sexuality that do not conform to heterosexual norms.
 - **Biphobia** is discomfort, dislike, fear, or hatred specifically of bisexual people, often based on negative stereotypes or the belief that bisexuality doesn’t really exist. Both gay and straight people can be biphobic.
 - Both of these phobias are often accompanied by discrimination against LGBTQ people, whether by belief, word, or action.

Discriminatory actions can range from very violent acts, such as beating or murdering someone, to bullying and harassing, to telling anti-LGBQ jokes, to treating bisexuals like they don’t exist or are just pretending that they aren’t really gay or lesbian.

3. Explore belief 3, “Heterosexism exists,” using the following process:

- Ask someone to define the term *heterosexism*.
- Explain that
 - **Heterosexism** is the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and/or should be.
 - Most people assume, for example, that young women have, or wish to have, boyfriends and that young men have, or wish to have, girlfriends.
 - Heterosexism is also the belief that heterosexuality is the normal and better way to be.
 - Because of heterosexism, people who are heterosexual have greater privileges in society than those who are not, such as the ability to show affection in public without fear of harassment.
- Ask participants for examples of heterosexism from their own lives or the media.

4. Explore belief 4, “Homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism hurt people of all sexual orientations, including heterosexuals,” using the following process:

- Ask for examples of ways that homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism hurt LGBTQ teens and people of all ages. Possible responses include
 - making people feel isolated, unhappy, and lonely
 - making people feel excluded (maybe even in communities they thought would embrace them)
 - making people more likely to use alcohol and drugs
 - inducing them to lie about and hide who they are
 - putting them at risk for verbal, physical, and sexual abuse
 - putting them at risk for being bullied in person or online
 - making them feel unsafe in school, at home, and in other settings
 - making them more likely to skip classes, cut school, or drop out to avoid harassment, which can lead to lower grades and inability to attend college
 - putting them at risk for family rejection, running away, homelessness, or placement in foster care
 - Ask for examples of ways that homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism hurt heterosexual people. Possible responses include
 - making them more likely to limit their interests, hobbies, and expressions to avoid being perceived as LGBTQ
 - putting them at risk of being shamed or bullied because they are *perceived* as LGBTQ if they don't conform to rigid gender roles
 - putting them at risk of being offended or hurt by homophobic comments or behaviors because they have friends or family who are LGBTQ
 - making them uncomfortable in the face of obvious inequality and discrimination
 - making them uncomfortable because they know they have rights, privileges, and comforts that their LGBTQ peers, unfairly, do not have
 - cutting them off from LGBTQ friends and family who think they can't be themselves around heterosexual people and therefore choose to form new families and communities
5. Make a few brief points about belief 5, "Ignorance is a problem":
- Most of us don't have a formal way to learn about LGBTQ orientations. It's not covered in most schools or discussed openly or positively in many families or religious communities.
 - Happily, there are more and more positive LGBTQ role models in society.
 - When individuals have no exposure to LGBTQ people and issues, they are left to rely on misinformation and urban legends.
 - When people are ignorant and misinformed, they are more likely to avoid and/or be afraid of/nervous around LGBTQ individuals.
 - When people have exposure to LGBTQ people and get to know them as human beings, they are more likely to become comfortable with them.
 - Education and exposure do not cure all homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism. Changing the hearts and minds of individuals is only one step; institutional oppression must be dismantled before homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism can be eradicated.
 - Ignorance is not an excuse for stereotyping, bias, or hatred.
6. Make a few brief points about belief 6, "Individuals have the right to hold personal beliefs and values but not to discriminate":

- While there is much difference of opinion and belief among people of different religions and walks of life, more and more religious voices from many faith traditions and leaders from many different communities are speaking up and affirming LGBTQ people.
- Keep in mind that values and beliefs are different from facts. It's important for everyone to be fully informed and have factual information about sexuality and sexual orientation.
- People often have negative views that are based on misinformation.
- Individuals who don't accept LGBTQ persons because of personal or religious values do not have the right to oppress or discriminate against them because of their sexual orientation.
- In school and work situations, individuals with diverse perspectives and beliefs must learn and work together respectfully.

MYTH INFORMATION GAME

20 Minutes

This activity is an alternative to Values Voting. You should only conduct one of these two alternatives.

1. Remind the group that points of view are often formed from a lack of information. Tell participants they will play a fun myth information game to separate facts from myths regarding LGBTQ issues.

Note: Feel free to adapt the format of the game. You might have each team choose a permanent spokesperson, who will give all the answers for that team. Or you might eliminate the teams if you want to avoid competition. The competition does add some energy, however. Just make sure your format is fun and interactive, and that learning takes place.

2. Divide the group into two or more teams. Post a sheet of newsprint and make columns for scorekeeping. Ask each team to choose a name. Write the team names at the top of the columns.
3. Explain the rules:
 - You'll hear a series of statements.
 - You'll take turns being the spokesperson for your group. When it is your turn, you must decide whether the statement is a fact or a myth.
 - Team members may talk among themselves briefly, but the spokesperson must give the answer.
 - A correct answer earns a point.
4. Read a statement to the first player on one team. Once an answer has been given, state whether it is correct, and if so, record a point on the newsprint. Then have the team explain their response.
5. Allow a few minutes for discussion of the statement and provide additional information as appropriate from Facilitator Resource 18, Myth/Fact Statements and Answers. Sometimes it is helpful to read the answer from the Facilitator Resource, to make sure all the facts have been clarified.

6. Continue by reading the next statement to the first player on the next team. Move from team to team, and from player to player on each team, until all statements have been discussed.

VALUES VOTING

20 Minutes

This activity is an alternative to Myth Information Game. You should only conduct one of these two alternatives.

1. If you made Agree and Disagree signs, post them at a distance from each other.
2. Invite the group to vote on some values about sexual orientation. Review the process of values voting and the ground rules; explain them in detail if you haven't done a values voting activity before.

Process

- I will read several statements to you, one at a time.
- We have an imaginary line or continuum to indicate positions that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
- After you hear each statement, you'll move to a position on the continuum to indicate how much you agree or disagree.
- There are no wrong or right answers, so please be honest.

Ground Rules

- Avoid pressuring each other or getting into debates.
 - Have an open mind.
 - Listen to and respect each other.
 - Use "I" language.
 - Stay away from put-downs, including negative labels.
 - Feel free to change your position.
3. Begin reading one of the five or six statements you've chosen from the list below:

Values Voting Statements

- I would feel comfortable having an openly LGBTQ teacher.
- I would feel comfortable having an openly straight (heterosexual) teacher.
- I would feel comfortable having an openly asexual teacher.
- I would feel as comfortable seeing a guy and a girl kissing as I would seeing two guys or two girls kissing.
- I would feel uncomfortable undressing in a locker room with someone of a different sexual orientation.
- I would feel comfortable standing up for a friend who I saw being harassed because of their sexual orientation.
- I would want my friends to stand up for me if I were being harassed because of my sexual orientation.
- If a friend of a different sexual orientation told me that they had a crush on me, I would feel uncomfortable about our friendship.
- Our school [or church, organization, etc., as appropriate] should take steps to be more welcoming of LGBTQ people.

- If one of my close relatives came out to me, I would feel uncomfortable keeping that to myself.
 - If I came out to my relatives, I could trust them to respect my confidentiality.
 - Young teens are too immature to know whether they are straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or another sexual orientation.
 - It's better for people to tell very few people about their sexual orientation until they are out of high school. [You might see if participants feel differently about this statement if it specifies a heterosexual orientation rather than an LGBTQ orientation.]
 - LGBTQ people should never stay in the closet.
4. As you read each statement, have participants move to positions along the line that reflect their feelings or opinions. Once participants have voted, ask a few volunteers in each position to explain why they chose that position. Keep the pace lively.
 5. Process the activity with the following discussion questions:
 - How much did people agree or disagree on the statements?
 - Reflect on the attitudes and values you expressed in this activity. Which do you feel comfortable with and which, if any, would you like to shift or change?
 - If we agree that our school, culture, or community is not welcoming enough of LGBTQ persons, what could we do about that?

BEING AN ALLY

20 Minutes

Note: Consider showing the video “Ash Beckham at Ignite Boulder 20” (5:30 minutes), www.youtube.com, which explains why the phrase “that’s so gay” is pejorative and homophobic, and how the words that we choose matter. Ash Beckham uses appropriate language throughout the video; however, in one brief shot, there is a protest sign containing the f-word, which might make the video problematic for some groups.

1. Explain that the next activity will look at some specific examples of homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism in action in young teen environments. Ask group members to turn to the person next to them and brainstorm ways they hear or see people express the idea that anything other than heterosexuality is bad or wrong, such as put-downs, teasing, or insults directed at people who are (or are perceived to be) LGBTQ.
2. After a minute or two, ask volunteers to share some of the things they brainstormed. List these on newsprint. Use the following questions to process the list:
 - How do you react to the things on this list?
 - What does it feel like, or what would it feel like, to be the recipient of any of these comments or actions?
 - How do you think these kinds of put-downs and insults affect people?

3. Briefly give the following information:
 - These are examples of everyday, brief, commonplace verbal and behavioral insults and indignities that send a negative message about LGBTQ identities. Often these are called *microaggressions*.
 - Often these put-downs and insults are nonphysical, and sometimes they're unintentional, but they are insulting and they hurt.
 - They build on each other and contribute to high rates of depression and suicide among LGBTQ youth.
4. If you decided to use the Ash Beckham video, show it now and briefly discuss reactions.
5. Invite participants to discuss ways to react or speak up when people say or do hurtful and discriminatory things. Explain that you will identify two sets of strategies:
 - what LGBTQ people could say or do
 - what heterosexual allies could say or do
6. Ask group members to define what it means to be an *ally*. After hearing some of their definitions, offer the following as an additional definition. It was developed by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) as part of its Ally Week Campaign (glsen.org/sites/default/files/Ally_Week_101.pdf).

An ally is a member of a privileged group who takes a stand against oppression. An ally works to be part of social change rather than being part of the oppression.

—“Ally Workshop” (GLSEN)
7. Post a sheet of blank newsprint. Ask the group to brainstorm ways that LGBTQ people can respond to hurtful or discriminatory comments or actions. Clarify that can be tricky because some LGBTQ people may not be open about their identity and may not feel safe responding as they would like to. Possible responses include
 - Talk about it with someone you trust.
 - Seek support from a caring adult.
 - Report the incident to someone in a position of power.
 - If you're sure it's safe, tell the person how their behavior affects you.
 - Ask questions: What do you know about being bisexual? Why is this so important to you?
 - Proactively, work to educate people about LGBTQ issues.
 - Form a gay-straight alliance at your school. Consult GLSEN resources.
8. Next, ask the group to first identify ways that heterosexual or straight youth can be allies to LGBTQ peers. (You might have participants brainstorm in pairs or small groups.) List their responses on the chart. Possible responses include
 - Say something like
 - I don't like to hear the word *gay* used like that.
 - My cousin is gay, and I wish that you wouldn't say that around me.

- I think you're just trying to be funny, but what you're doing bothers me. It feels like a put-down.
 - That's not funny.
 - If someone tells an offensive joke about LGBTQ people, don't laugh.
 - Take the person aside and tell them privately how you feel.
 - Report the incident to someone in a position of power.
 - Be a role model; be respectful, inclusive, and supportive.
 - Assume that people around you might be LGBTQ. For example, ask a new friend, "Are you going out with anybody?" instead of asking a girl if she has a boyfriend or a boy if he has a girlfriend.
 - Attend or be supportive of any LGBTQ events in your community, school, or church.
 - Join a gay-straight alliance or a similar group, if one exists.
9. Thank participants for their great ideas. Remind them of the Our Whole Lives values of justice and inclusivity. Stress the importance of being safe when attempting to intervene after a negative comment or action. Because homophobia can be violent, sometimes it's safest to ignore the behavior at the time and report it later to someone who can safely take action.

PREPARATION FOR GUEST SPEAKERS

10 Minutes

1. Announce that you've invited some guests to come to the next workshop to discuss their lives and share their perspectives with the group. In keeping with your decision about the panel, define who the guests will be—LGBTQ only, transgender or gender nonconforming only, or a combined LGBTQ panel. Explore expectations by asking
 - What do you think the speakers will be like?
 - What kinds of things will they say?
 - How will they look and act?
 - How do you think this group will respond to them?
2. Engage the group in establishing ground rules for appropriate behavior. For example, if a participant feels upset, uncomfortable, or unwilling to engage, how should they handle those feelings? Explain that youth will be free to ask any questions they like, but that the speakers will have the right to not answer any questions they feel are inappropriate or too personal.
3. Participants with limited exposure to LGBTQ people may have some stereotypical thoughts or beliefs. Emphasize that the speakers are individuals who will not represent all LGBTQ people.
4. Ask participants to brainstorm a list of topics they would like the speakers to address or questions they would like the speakers to answer. Record the topics and questions on newsprint. Share them (or a condensed or revised list), as well as any relevant anonymous questions from the Question Box, with the guest speakers before the next workshop or when they arrive.

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REFLECTION AND PLANNING

5 Minutes

1. Write one or more of the sentence stems below on a piece of newsprint and post it. Whip around the room, asking participants to complete one or more of the sentences.
 - Today I learned . . .
 - I never knew that . . .
 - I'd like more information about . . .
 - One thing I'm going to do differently is . . .
2. Pass out index cards and pencils and invite participants to write their anonymous questions for the Question Box. Remind the group that everyone should write something on a card, even if it is only "I have no questions."

FACILITATOR REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your co-facilitator:

- What was good about this workshop? Why?
- What was not good? Why?
- What can we learn from this workshop to strengthen future workshops?
- What preparation do we need to do for the next workshop?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY COMING OUT STORIES

25–30 minutes

Ellen DeGeneres, "The Beginning-Part 1" (7:53 minutes), www.youtube.com

1. In this video, Ellen uses dance to illustrate her experience of coming out as a lesbian. Preview the video so you can be prepared to stop it right after Ellen completes her dance (the dance segment is the middle 5 minutes).
2. Introduce the video by explaining that Ellen DeGeneres, an actor, comedian, and talk show host, disclosed her sexual orientation publicly in 1997, when she was thirty-nine, during an appearance on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. At that time, she was starring in a TV sitcom, *Ellen*, and the character she played on the show also came out as a lesbian.
3. Show the video. Stop it as soon as Ellen completes her dance, just under 6 minutes in. Then ask the following questions:
 - What kinds of feelings did Ellen express in her dance?
 - How typical do you think those feelings are for someone coming out? [Point out that Ellen was older and not dependent on her parents' approval; she had countless fans and admirers to support her emotionally; she seems to be an extrovert; and she is white and financially well-off.]
 - How did the dance make you feel about Ellen? About her coming out experience?

Jason Collins, "First Openly Gay NBA Player Jason Collins and His Family,"
www.oprah.com/own-oprahs-next-chapter/Oprahs-Next-Chapter-NBA-Player-Jason-Collins-and-His-Family

1. In these video clips, Jason tells Oprah Winfrey about his decision to come out, what it's been like to be black and gay, how his twin brother and family have reacted, and how his coming out might affect the team. Preview the clips and choose several to show to your group. If you prefer, you can read excerpts from Jason's first-person article in *Sports Illustrated*, "Why NBA Center Jason Collins Is Coming Out Now" (www.si.com/more-sports/2013/04/29/jason-collins-gay-nba-player)
2. Introduce the video clips by asking the following questions:
 - How many of you have heard of Jason Collins? [He is one of the first professional male athletes actively playing in a major North American team sport to come out publicly as gay.]
 - Why do you think so few male professional athletes come out?
3. Explain that, in April 2013, Jason published an article in *Sports Illustrated* and then appeared on Oprah Winfrey's OWN network. Introduce and show the clips you've selected (or read excerpts from the article).
4. Process the clips or reading with questions such as
 - What are your reactions to Jason?
 - How would you feel or react if you were one of Jason's teammates?
 - How do you think being black affects the experience of being LGBTQ in America and the decision to come out? How about other ethnicities?
 - How did Jason's coming out experience compare with Ellen's? [Ask this only if you also showed Ellen's video.]

Facilitator Resource 16

WORKSHOP 9: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

SEXUAL ORIENTATION DEFINITIONS

Most of these definitions come from “Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity 101,” a page on the UUA website at www.uua.org/lgbtq/identity/. As these definitions continue to evolve, please check that website for ongoing updates.

sexual orientation: the direction of a person’s sexual attractions. Some people are attracted to people of their own gender; some are attracted to people of a different gender; some are attracted to only one gender; some are attracted to more than one gender; others are not attracted to anyone. Sexual orientations include *heterosexual* or *straight*, *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, *queer*, *pansexual*, and *asexual*.

asexual: a person who is not sexually attracted to others. Someone might be asexual for a short time (like after the end of a relationship) or for their whole life. People who identify as asexual may engage in loving relationships with other people, but sexual activity is not a central part of the relationship.

bisexual: a person who is attracted both to people of their own gender and to people of another gender. Two common misconceptions are that bisexual people are attracted to everyone and anyone, and that they just haven’t decided what gender they are really attracted to.

gay: word generally used to describe a man who is attracted to men. Sometimes it refers to all people attracted to people of their own gender. Sometimes *homosexual* is used to describe these people, but today this term is often seen as a medicalized term that should be retired from common use.

heterosexual: attracted to people of a different gender. Another word for *heterosexual* is *straight*, which is also sometimes generally used to describe people whose sexualities are societally normative.

lesbian: a woman who is attracted to women. The term *lesbian* is derived from the Greek island of Lesbos and can be considered a Eurocentric word that does not necessarily represent the identities of African Americans and other non-European ethnic groups; however, individual women of any ethnicity may embrace the term.

pansexual: a person who is attracted to other people regardless of their gender. Other words for *pansexual* include *polysexual* and *omnisexual*.

queer: a self-identity label for people who feel they do not fit cultural norms for sexual orientation or gender identity. This word can also mean transgressive and challenging of the status quo. It is sometimes used as an umbrella term for all people with non-heterosexual sexual orientations. The word *queer* is historically a pejorative term; its use today is met with disfavor by some and worn proudly by others.

questioning: unsure of or exploring one’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

same gender loving (SGL): a term coined in the African-American/Black community to describe gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientations in a way that resonates with the uniqueness of Black culture. It has since been embraced more broadly in a variety of ethnic communities.

ally: a member of a privileged group who supports LGBTQ individuals, usually by advocating for equal rights, taking conscious steps to be inclusive, and confronting prejudice and discrimination.

biphobia: negative attitudes toward and feelings about bisexual people and the idea that people can be attracted to more than one gender, often based on negative stereotypes and/or the invisibility of bisexuals. People of any sexual orientation can exhibit or experience biphobia.

coming out: the experience of self-discovery, self-acceptance, openness, and honesty about one's sexual orientation or gender identity, and the decision to share this with others. For example, someone may come out to one friend, or a group of friends, then maybe later to their family, and later still or not at all at school or work. Coming out can be a life-long process.

discrimination: the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people on the basis of factors such as their background, identity, ethnicity, or ability. It occurs when people use individual or institutional power to act on their prejudices against a less powerful group, such as by denying members of that group certain rights or privileges. Discrimination is the combination of prejudice and power.

heterosexism: the assumption that all people are or should be straight/heterosexual; prejudice against LGBTQ individuals and groups based on heterosexuality as the norm or superior/correct/appropriate orientation.

homophobia: negative attitudes toward and feelings about people with non-heterosexual sexualities, or dislike of or discomfort with expressions of sexuality that do not conform to heterosexual norms. Homophobia can incline people to avoid, discriminate against, and use violence against people they know or perceive to be LGBTQ.

in the closet: unable or unwilling to disclose one's sex, sexuality, sexual orientation, or gender identity to friends, family, co-workers, or society. There are varying degrees of being in the closet; for example, a person might be out in their social life, but in the closet at school, at work, or with their family.

Facilitator Resource 17

WORKSHOP 9: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

MYTH/FACT STATEMENTS AND ANSWERS

1. Same-sex sexual behavior is unnatural.

MYTH. The anthropologists Clellan Ford and Frank Beach found that same-sex sexual behavior is present in every species of mammal that has been carefully studied. Since human beings in all cultures, animals, and insects engage in sexual behavior with the same sex frequently and in significant numbers, it cannot be considered unnatural.

2. LGBTQ people can be easily identified by the way they look and act.

MYTH. Sexual orientation means a person's feelings of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to other people, not the way they look or act. There is no way to know for sure how someone identifies unless they tell you. For example, two women in a relationship are not necessarily lesbian; one or both of them could easily identify as bisexual, queer, same gender loving, or another identity.

3. All gay men are effeminate and all lesbian women are masculine.

MYTH. As we learned in previous workshops, gender expression is different from sexual orientation. Men with a feminine gender expression may be gay, bisexual, straight, or any other sexual orientation. Women with a masculine gender expression may be lesbian, bisexual, straight, or any other sexual orientation. Masculine men can be gay. Feminine women can be lesbian. Gender expression is not tied to sexual orientation.

4. Parents are the major influence on whether their child is straight or gay.

MYTH. Straight and gay children are raised in all kinds of families. Studies have been unable to show that any particular style of parenting leads a child to have a particular sexual orientation or that the sexual orientation of the parent is a factor. Remember that most non-heterosexual people have been raised by heterosexual parents who may have expected their children to be heterosexual. The fact is that children seem to develop their sexual orientation independently of their parents.

5. LGBTQ people can become heterosexual if they really want to and work hard at it.

MYTH. Although many attempts have been made, efforts to change the orientation of LGBTQ people have overwhelmingly failed. People who view homosexuality as an illness have sought so-called cures, but there is no cure because being gay is not an illness. LGBTQ people have been able to change their sexual behavior but not their sexual orientation. This means that gay men and lesbians who try to be straight are acting in deep contradiction to their innermost feelings, a practice that usually leads to psychological turmoil and pain.

6. If you've had a pleasurable sexual experience with someone of the same sex that means you're gay or bisexual.

MYTH. Identity and behavior are very different things; behavior does not dictate identity, and identity is not dependent on behavior. Regardless of behavior, we each get to choose the language or label that feels most authentic to describe our sexual orientation, according to our own internal understanding of our attractions and how we want to communicate them. A person does not need to have had certain sexual experiences before they can claim a sexual orientation, nor do certain sexual experiences have to mean anything about a person's identity.

7. Some people do not experience sexual attraction at all.

FACT. Asexuality is real. An asexual person does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which is an intentional choice, asexuality is a sexual orientation like any other. Many asexual people form intimate romantic relationships and will seek long-term partnerships that are emotionally fulfilling. The need and desire for emotional relationships is separate from the desire for sexual relationships, even though these desires go hand in hand for many other people.

8. There is no such thing as a true bisexual; being bisexual is a phase. Bisexual people are generally confused about their sexuality or they are exploring.

MYTH. Bisexual people are emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to more than one gender. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders; a bisexual person may prefer one over others. Bisexuality is a lifelong orientation, although some individuals may never act on their attraction to a particular gender or may only do so during a particular period in their life. Some people are attracted to more than one gender but do not identify as bisexual. Bisexual people may feel that they are not accepted in either gay or straight communities.

9. Bisexual people are promiscuous and are incapable of long-term committed relationships.

MYTH. People don't need to be partnered or sexually active with people of more than one gender to be bisexual; they only need to feel capable of being romantically or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender. Many bisexual people have happy, long-term, committed relationships.

10. The United States Constitution protects LGBQ people from being fired or denied housing on the basis of their sexual orientation.

MYTH. The United States Constitution provides no civil rights protection on the basis of sexual orientation. In other words, there is no national law that prevents employers, landlords, or service providers from discriminating against someone because they are (or are perceived to be) LGBQ. However, some states and localities do provide such protections.

11. Gay and bisexual men are no more likely than straight men to molest children.

FACT. Research has shown that gay and bisexual men are not any more likely to molest children than straight men. In fact, some research has indicated

that many child molesters feel attractions primarily on the basis of age, rather than gender, and thus their orientation is toward children, not men or women.

12. In LGBQ relationships, one partner plays the “man” role and the other plays the “woman” role.

MYTH. As we learned in the last workshop, the idea that all people fit into strict gender roles is flawed and untrue. Similarly, the idea that all relationships involve two people playing male and female gender roles is flawed and untrue. Not only can people in same-gender relationships break out of these roles, so can people in different-gender relationships.

13. LGBQ relationships seldom last.

MYTH. LGBQ people, like straight people, have many different kinds of relationships. Some last and some don't. The myth is that it is rare to see long-term same-sex relationships. Some such relationships have lasted for twenty, thirty, forty years and longer. Also, remember that nearly 50 percent of heterosexual marriages in the United States and Canada end in divorce. Relationships don't always last, regardless of the genders of the people involved.

14. People who are not fully out about their sexual orientation in every part of their lives are unhealthy, ashamed, or deceptive.

MYTH. How open a person is about their sexual orientation is completely up to that person and depends on many different factors. One can be out only to oneself and be perfectly healthy and self-assured. For some people, coming out to family, employers, health care providers, or others can mean being denied basic needs, being kicked out of their home, losing their job, or worse. There are many important reasons people choose not to disclose their sexual orientation.

15. There is an LGBQ community.

MYTH. Popular media promotes the idea that there is a singular community of LGBQ people that shares goals, views, and characteristics. For example, “the LGBQ community” is presented by the media as predominantly white, well educated, middle class, liberal, and urban. In fact, LGBQ people are incredibly diverse. LGBQ people have formed many communities, around such things as race and ethnicity, geography, gender, gender expression, and many other identities and characteristics. Furthermore, many LGBQ people don't consider themselves part of any of these communities.

16. Society now accepts LGBQ people, so there is no need to talk about LGBQ issues.

MYTH. While acceptance of and legal equality for LGBQ people have grown over the past decades, there is still a very long way to go before LGBQ people can enjoy equity with their heterosexual counterparts. LGBQ people still face regular discrimination. For example, they may be verbally or physically harassed or rejected by their families. LGBQ people have higher rates of depression and suicide, related to the personal and social challenges they face because of their sexual orientation.

Facilitator Resource 18

WORKSHOP 9: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

ORGANIZATIONS AND WEBSITES WITH RESOURCES ON LGBTQ YOUTH

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), www.glsen.org, strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN believes that such an atmosphere engenders a positive sense of self, which is the basis of educational achievement and personal growth. The organization seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes in creating a more vibrant and diverse community. GLSEN welcomes as members any and all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or occupation, who are committed to seeing this philosophy realized in K–12 schools.

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), www.pflag.org, promotes the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, their families, and their friends by offering support to help LGBT people cope with an adverse society; education to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. PFLAG provides an opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

The Gay-Straight Alliance Network, www.gsanetwork.org, is a national youth leadership organization that connects gay-straight alliances to each other and to community resources through peer support, leadership development, and training. GSA Network supports young people in starting, strengthening, sustaining, and building the capacity of GSAs.

The Safe Schools Coalition, www.safeschoolscoalition.org, is an international public-private partnership in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth. It works to help schools all over the world become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Teaching Tolerance, www.tolerance.org, was founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center and is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations, and supporting equitable school experiences for children. It publishes a magazine entitled *Teaching Tolerance* and provides free educational materials and curricular kits to teachers and other school practitioners in the U.S. and abroad.

The Trevor Project, www.thetrevorproject.org, is determined to end suicide among LGBTQ youth by providing life-saving and life-affirming resources, including a nationwide, 24/7 crisis intervention lifeline, digital community, and advocacy and educational programs that create a safe, supportive, and positive environment for everyone.

YouthResource, www.youthresource.com, is a website for and by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young people that takes a holistic approach to sexual health. It is hosted by Advocates for Youth, www.advocatesforyouth.org.

The Family Acceptance Project, www.familyproject.sfsu.edu, is a community research, intervention, education, and policy initiative that works to decrease major health risks and related risks for LGBTQ youth, such as suicide, substance abuse, HIV, and homelessness, in the context of their families. The organization uses a research-based, culturally grounded approach to help ethnically, socially, and religiously diverse families decrease rejection and increase support for their LGBTQ children.