The Workplace Ally
Building Professional Spaces that Consciously Support Sexual and Gender Minorities

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Community Rules?
My personal philosophy is that education and dialogue are key components to creating safe spaces.

- Safe Spaces are figurative. The term indicates a place where LGBT people are welcomed.
- A place where disagreements happen, but we move beyond friction through dialogue and conversation.
- Not all Safe Spaces are fun. But, all fun spaces for LGBT people, are safe.
A Question?

While I know the initialism LGBT to mean Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans*. What does i, Q, and A stand for when I see LGBTQQIA?

A. Queer, Questioning, Interracial, Ally
B. Queer, Quotidian, Intersex, Asexual
C. Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual
D. Queer, Quoted, Interracial, Ally
The correct selection is C.

L-lesbian
G-gay
B-bisexual
T-trans*
Q-queer
Q-questioning
I-intersex
A-asexual
Let’s talk about what some of these terms mean. *L.G.B.T.Q.Q.I.A.*
A Question?

When you suspect someone might be trans* identified, how do you know which pronouns to use?

A. Decide based on a person’s gender presentation
B. Ask the person what pronouns they prefer
C. Ask the person’s friend what pronouns the person in question uses
D. Decide based on a person’s perceived or known biological sex
The most appropriate selection is B. Ask. Hey, what gender pronouns do you prefer?

- While it is okay to ask someone what pronouns they prefer, we know this can be awkward.

- So, how do we remedy this?
What are the difference between trans* identities and sexual identities? (Yes, they are different)
Sexual identity refers to someone’s attraction and desire (or lack thereof) for the opposite or same sex. Some people perform their sexual identity through romantic attachments or sexual acts, others do not.

Gender identity is the way in which one understands themselves in relation to masculinity, femininity, androgyny or neither of the three. Gender is commonly referenced in the language of man, woman, or trans*
Tobias, why do you use the term trans* and not transgender?
We use trans* to highlight the gender spectrum. Transgender is but one way someone who is trans can identity.
What are other ways trans* people identify?

**Trans*/Transgender**
Someone who does not identify with their sex assigned at birth

**Transfeminine/Transmasculine**
Someone who identifies more female than male or more male than female

**Trans Man/Trans Woman**
Someone who was female at birth but identifies as male/someone who was male at birth but identifies as female

**Agender**
Someone who does not identify with a gender

**Two-Spirit**
Someone who fits one of the many mixed-gender roles prevalent in Native American communities

**Multigender**
Someone who identifies with more than one gender (e.g. bigender)

**Gender Fluid**
Someone whose gender changes

**Genderqueer**
Someone who does not identify within the gender binary

Other identities not under the Trans* Umbrella:

**Cisgender**
Someone who is not trans*

**Drag Performer**
Someone who wears flamboyant clothes for entertainment value (can be trans*)

**Crossdresser**
Someone who wears clothes associated with the opposite gender (can be trans*)

**Intersex**
The presence of a less common combination of features that generally distinguishes male and female (can be trans*)

For more information, go to
www.transstudent.org/graphics

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TSER
Trans Student Equality Resources
I know that language shifts and evolves, so, what are some current ways people are discussing LGBT culture?
A matching game.

- Cisgender
- Non-mono sexual
- Demi-sexual
- Fluid
- Ace

- A self-identifying term for someone who is asexual
- A person who experiences sexual attraction only after forming close emotional ties with another person
- Someone whose gender/sexual identity changes
- Someone who has the capacity to be attracted to more than one gender or sex
- A person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth
What terms should I avoid within professional spaces?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Homosexual</td>
<td>• Gay or Lesbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sexual Preference</td>
<td>• Sexual Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gay Lifestyle</td>
<td>• Gay or Lesbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gay Agenda</td>
<td>• Lesbian and Gay civil rights movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special Rights</td>
<td>• Equal Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gay marriage</td>
<td>• Marriage Equality</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Notes on language.

- We cannot reclaim words that have not been used against us.
- We have to own our mistakes around language (misgendering someone, using the word homosexual). When it happens acknowledge it, apologize, rephrase.
- At no time do we use words like dyke, homo, tranny, or fag in the workplace.

- Try to not make assumptions about relationships in the way you speak: use partner, or, your partner, or, do you have a partner.
- While we may use certain language in our private lives, those same words may not be appropriate, or inclusive, at work.
- Language is a powerful and oftentimes strange thing. Do not expect all queer people to speak “progressive talk” or to come out to you.
How can I tell if my workplace is accommodating to LGBT folks?

- Do you have a non-discrimination policy, that includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression?
- Do you hire people who identify as LGBT? Could someone identify as LGBT and still get a job where you work?
- Do the people who run your business and/or institution recognize LGBT people and the need to create safe spaces?
- Does your workplace support organizations that are antigay?
- Does your workplace have/support LGBT employee groups?
- Does your workplace take strides to be more inclusive and not leave it to LGBT people to tell you when/if you’re not?
- Do you have gender-neutral restrooms at work?
- Does your workplace offer benefits to partners of same-sex couples?
How can I tell if I am accommodating of LGBT people?

Think:
Homophobia/transphobia and you.

### Riddle Homophobia Scale

#### Homophobic Levels of Attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repulsion</td>
<td>Homosexuality is seen as a crime against nature. LGBT people are sick, cruel, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc. Anything is justified to change them: Prison, hospitalization, negative behavioral therapy, violence, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pity</td>
<td>Heterosexual chauvinism. Homosexuality is more mature and certainly to be preferred. Any possibility of becoming “straight” should be encouraged, and those who seem to be born that way should be pitied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Homosexuality is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people grow out of. Thus LGBT people are less mature than heterosexuals and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child. LGBT people should not be given positions of authority because they are still working through their adolescent behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Still implies there is something to accept. Characterized by such statements as “you’re not a lesbian, you’re a person” or “what you do is your own business” or “it is fine with me, just don’t flaunt it.”</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Positive Levels of Attitude

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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Work to safeguard the rights of LGBT people. People at this level may be uncomfortable themselves but they are aware of the homophobic climate and act to mitigate it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td>Acknowledges that being LGBT in our society takes strength. People at this level are willing to truly examine their homophobic attitudes, values, and behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Values the diversity of people and see LGBT people as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturance</td>
<td>Assumes that LGBT people are indispensable in our society. They view LGBT people with genuine affection and delight, and are willing to be allies and advocates.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Does it surprise you to learn that tolerance and acceptance are homophobic attitudes? Have you thought of these as “positive” before?
What should I keep in mind as an ally?

- Though allyship can be challenging, it is not considered a marginalized identity.
- Your role as an ally is not to speak for LGBT people, but to allow room for them to speak.
- There are LGBT people in your family, at your workplace, and in your school. You should not understand LGBT identities as something only existing within others’ circles.
- One cannot claim to be an LGBT ally without ever having supported someone who identifies (or the group) in a conscious manner.
- Being an ally doesn’t mean that you always get a seat at the table.
- It is not necessary to declare one’s status as an ally. This can come across as pretentious and unnecessary.
What am I going to do differently?

What are things I can do in my workplace/space to be more inclusive of LGBT folks? Do share.
Sources for this presentation were compiled from BGSU’s 2013-2014 Safe Zone packet.

Questions?