

## Appendix 9G

# Examples of Heterosexual Privilege

Heterosexual Privilege: Unearned, often unconscious or taken for granted benefits afforded to heterosexuals in a heterosexist society based on their sexual orientation.

Notice that the items on the list represent personal, social, psychological, economic, and legal privileges that accrue to heterosexuals. The goal of reading and thinking about the list is to raise awareness about heterosexual privilege. All heterosexuals have these privileges most of the time. For heterosexuals, as you read this list, assess which of them you are aware that you have and which of them you never thought about before. For lesbian, gay, bisexual participants, identify which items on the list you are aware of and which ones you were not aware of. This is not a complete list. Please add other privileges you can think of that are not included here. The privileges are written from the perspective of heterosexuals.

1. I am not identified or labeled — politically, socially, economically, or otherwise — by my sexual orientation.
2. No one questions the “normality” of my sexuality or believes my sexuality was “caused” by psychological trauma, sin, or abuse.
3. I do not have to fear that my family, friends, or co-workers will find out about my sexual orientation, and that their knowing will have negative consequences for me.
4. I get paid leave from work and condolences from colleagues if my partner dies.
5. My sexual orientation (if known to others) is not used to exclude me from any profession or organization (teaching, coaching, the military, Boy Scouts).
6. In the event of my partner’s death, I can inherit automatically under probate laws.
7. I am not accused of being deviant, warped, perverted, or psychologically confused, or dysfunctional because of my sexual orientation.
8. I get reduced rates with my partner on health, auto, and homeowner’s insurance.

9. I can go home from most meetings, classes, and conversations without feeling excluded, attacked, ostracized, outnumbered, intimidated, invisible, stereotyped, dehumanized, or feared because of my sexual orientation.
10. I can have immediate access to my loved ones in the hospital in the event of accident or illness.
11. People don't assume that I know all the other heterosexuals just because they're heterosexual.
12. I have support and inclusion from my family of origin for my relationship with my partner.
13. People don't ask me why I chose my sexual orientation, and why I choose to be so open about it.
14. I can walk in public, holding my partner's hand, hug my partner, and even kiss my partner in front of others without disapproval, comments, laughter, harassment, or the threat of violence.
15. I can easily find a religious community that will welcome me and my partner.
16. I can talk openly about my relationship, my family projects, my vacations, my partner's activities, our family plans in personal and professional settings.
17. I am guaranteed to find sexuality education materials for couples of my sexual orientation.
18. I can disclose my pain if my relationship ends and expect that friends, family and co-workers will notice and express their support for me.
19. My gender identity is not challenged as a result of my sexual orientation.
20. I can work with young children and not fear being accused of molesting, corrupting, or recruiting them to my sexual orientation.
21. I can talk about my sexual orientation in casual conversation and not be accused of flaunting it, or pushing it on others.
22. I can volunteer or give money to organizations that discriminate based on sexual orientation, and not be held accountable for the organization's stance.
23. When I rent a movie, watch TV, listen to music, or go to the theater, I can be sure that my sexual orientation will be represented often and accurately.
24. I can date the person I am attracted to beginning in my teens and throughout my life.
25. I am guaranteed to find people of my sexual orientation represented in the school curriculum.
26. I can live openly with my partner without the scrutiny, curiosity, or condemnation of others.
27. People of my sexual orientation are well-represented in the positions of power in my workplace.
28. My relationship receives validation and blessing by my religious community.
29. My individual behavior does not reflect on all people of my sexual orientation.
30. I can expect social acceptance from my neighbors, colleagues, and new friends.
31. In everyday conversation, the language used assumes my sexual orientation (sex = heterosexual sex; family = a man, a woman, and their children; spouse = husband or wife of another gender).
32. I don't have to hide or lie about the social events I attend when talking to co-workers or classmates.
33. People do not assume that I am promiscuous or sex-focused because of my sexual orientation.

34. I am identified by my profession or interests rather than my sexual orientation (I am a teacher, not a gay teacher; I am a musician, not a lesbian musician).
35. I have a life rather than a lifestyle.
36. I did not grow up with games and pejorative terms that ridicule my sexual orientation (“fag tag,” “smear the queer,” “Thursday is queer day. Don’t wear green”).
37. My sexual orientation is not used as a synonym for “bad,” “stupid,” or “disgusting.” (“That’s so gay.” “What a fag.” “She’s a lezzy”).
38. I can raise children without threats of state intervention and without my children having to be worried about which friends might reject them because of their parents’ sexual orientation. I don’t have to prepare my children for the people who may treat them badly because of their parents’ sexual orientation.
39. People do not assume that I can magically identify all other heterosexuals.
40. I feel secure that few hate crimes are targeted at people like me because of our sexual orientation.
41. I don’t ever have to justify my identity, my life, or my sexual orientation to people who think I shouldn’t exist.
42. I benefit from public recognition and celebration of my relationship. I get cards congratulating me on my union, and there is a social expectation that my relationship will be committed, long, and stable (marriage).
43. I don’t have to choose between spending significant family time (religious holidays, family events) with my family of origin or my family of choice. I can assume that my family of origin will welcome or at least accept my partner.
44. I can live every day without ever having to face, confront, engage, or cope with anything on these pages. I can *choose* whether to pay attention to these privileges. I am not forced or compelled to address heterosexism.

