

Heterosexism Stand up/Sit Down Exercise

Due to the pervasiveness of heterosexism in our society, we have all (even people who identify as LGBTQ) perpetuated heterosexism in some form or fashion. This is not because we are mean or hateful, most of time these incidents are done unknowingly and without malicious intent. It is important that we not feel bad about ourselves for these incidents, nor defensive (as that will keep us from learning from the incident, and will draw focus from the person hurt by incident to our own feelings of defensiveness). Instead we should simply apologize, move on, and take the opportunity to learn.

Because heterosexism is so pervasive, we often don't recognize it in ourselves or others. This exercise will help to illustrate what both overt and subtle forms of heterosexism look like. Again, this exercise is not an attempt to make anyone feel bad, but instead to reflect and re-evaluate.

We will do this exercise in silence and debrief at the close.

Please stand (or raise your hand) if:

1. there were no visible lesbians, gay men, bisexuals or transgender people in your life growing up.
2. you or someone you know has ever used the word "fag."
3. you or someone you know has ever used the phrase "that's so gay."
4. you ever avoided contact with someone because of their LGBT identity
5. you ever heard derogatory comments about LGBT people and didn't speak up against it
6. you've ever been sad or frustrated because an LGBT friend or family member did not come out to you
7. you've ever felt reluctant to talk about LGBT issues because you didn't want to be rejected, or labeled as LGBT yourself
8. the bigotry against LGBT people has ever caused you to distance yourself from them
9. you have never had to define your sexuality and/or gender to others
10. you've ever felt afraid that an LGBT person may be attracted to you (and you're afraid because they were LGBT)
11. you think that if you or another family member were to come out to the family, you would be rejected or not welcome
12. you've ever had LGBT content (or examples) included in your coursework here at UT
13. you've ever not gone to an event or a location because you were afraid that someone might see and then think you were LGBT
14. you've ever asked or wanted a friend who is LGBT to not talk about it in front of your other friends and/or family members
15. you've ever assumed that someone was heterosexual only to find out later they identified as LGBT