



Sticks and Stones: LGBT 101 List Making

Time Frame: Minimum of 25 minutes

Supplies Needed: 5 sheets of flip chart paper
Extra flip chart paper
Masking tape
5 different colored markers

Room Set Up: Flip chart paper is taped to the walls in separate areas of the room to allow for small group to rotate around the room without overhearing other group's conversations. One sheet should be labeled, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Heterosexual/Straight. If posting sheets up before workshop, fold the bottom half up and tape to wall loosely to cover up the label on the sheet. One marker is left by each area of the room with a sheet of paper. Extra flip chart paper is on hand in case a group needs more room, another sheet can be taped up during the activity.

Facilitator Notes: *This is a good time to assess energy and knowledge levels in the room. If it seems low, have participants stand and stretch, repeat after you some short phrase that is relevant to your upcoming section, or something that will increase the energy level in the room. This is also a GREAT way to break the ice for a group that doesn't previously know each other and/or if participants are nervous or anxious about the content of the workshop. While running the workshop, facilitators can also observe who the participants are that may need to talk more during the processing, be most uncomfortable with content, as well as finding any self-identified LGBT folks in the room who may move into "teacher" mode themselves instead of learning mode. Throughout the script are [facilitator notes in brackets like this.]*

The Script: Hi everyone, I'm [insert name]. Our next activity is going to expand on messages you got about your own and others' sexual orientations and sexual identities - and we're going to discuss messages you've received about transgender individuals as well.

First, we're going to get into small groups, so please count off by 5's.
[Have everyone count off 1,2,3,4,5,1,2,3,4,5,1,2,etc]

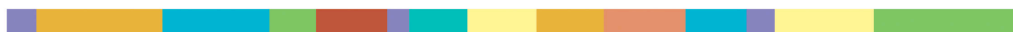
[Have each group (1's, 2's, 3's, etc) gather in separate areas of the room.]

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Now that we're in groups, pick up your marker. This marker is going to travel with your group as you move around the room. You may not get to all of sheets, depending on time. Go ahead and uncover your labeled sheet. On the top of your sheet of paper you will see an identity written at the top. For this identity, write any messages you have learned about this identity. These can be stereotypes, careers, slang, famous people, media images – anything at all – and we're looking for the good, the bad, and the ugly – so don't try to be polite! It may work best for one person in each group to write down what everyone else calls out. Remember, these don't have to be things you believe, just things you know are out there. It is important to remember that you will not be held personally accountable for anything that you write. It is not our fault that these messages are in our heads, but it is our responsibility to learn from these messages. You'll have two minutes to write down as much as you can! Go ahead and start!

[Give the groups two minutes ONLY to write things down and then switch the groups or the lists around the room (depending on space and energy of the participants – moving the lists will calm the participants down but you need more facilitators and moving the groups will add energy to the room and create more “get to know new people” space) twice so each group gets three lists throughout the activity taking their marker with them. Each time, they get two minutes. If you have enough trainers present, one facilitator should join each group as well but should have someone else write the terms down and should not dominate the conversation. To better manage time, you may also want to give two minutes for the first sheet and then taper time each rotation.]

Okay, now we're going to switch lists. Read what was written before you and add to what the group before you has already written down.

[Switch lists. Give two minutes.]

And now we're going to switch lists one last time.

[Switch lists. Give two minutes.]

Okay, if one person from Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexual/Straight groups could bring their list up and post it to this side of the room, please. Can one person from Bisexual and Transgender groups bring their list up and post it to this side of the room, please. And then have a seat back in the large group. I will take the markers back on your way back to your seats.

[Post the lists on opposite sides of the rooms with Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexual (in this order) on one side and Bisexual and Transgender on the other.]

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So, what was this activity like? How did it make you feel? Was there a list that was easier for you? Harder for you? Why?

I separate the lists in this manner so that we can first focus on what I have reclaimed as “monosexual” identities meaning, in this context, groups that have one option of attraction. By definition, “gay” means someone that identifies as a man that is sexually or romantically attracted to other men. “Lesbian” means someone that identifies as a woman that is sexually or romantically attracted to other women. “Heterosexual” could mean a self-identified man or woman that is attracted to the “opposite” sex (e.g. men to women and women to men). Some Gay and Lesbian people are not comfortable having something in common with Heterosexuals and some heterosexuals are not comfortable having this “one option” commonality with Gay men or Lesbian women. For the sake of this exercise, I want to show how different the messages are about these groups even with the “one option” commonality.

Let’s start with Gay. I want everyone to be aware of what is on this list so if we could have a volunteer to read the Gay listing.

[Have volunteers come up to read each list out loud. The facilitator should stand in front of Lesbian and Heterosexual to block the lists from the participants]

Are there any terms that you need clarification on? *[If yes, ask someone from that color of marker group to explain the term.]*

Do you notice any themes from this listing of words? *[The Gay list is usually very sexual and feminine. Jack from Will & Grace usually gets on the list – note not Will, but Jack. Gay list may also have words that use Gay as an umbrella term for all things not heterosexual. Try and focus on the individual Gay terms instead of the group terms, but discuss how “gay” may not represent people of color, women, or those with less financial means therefore not being a good umbrella term. Don’t push for themes for the list as it will become easier as you continue processing the other lists.]*

Ok, so can someone read the Lesbian List for us?

[Have volunteers come up to read each list out loud. The facilitator should stand in front of the Heterosexual list to block from the participants]

Are there any terms that you need clarification on? *[If yes, ask someone from that color of marker group to explain the term.]*

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Do you notice any themes from this listing of words? *[This list is usually more masculine, committed relationships, less sexual, unless talking about straight male fantasies, less fashionable.]*

Do you notice any themes or contrasts between the Gay and Lesbian lists? *[Both lists are very individual and binary. One is feminine and sexual and the other is masculine and asexual. You can have a discussion about sexism and patriarchy here and that masculine gay men happen and feminine lesbians happen. Discuss the pressures to be gay enough or lesbian enough.]*

Ok, so can someone read the Heterosexual/Straight List for us?
[Have volunteers come up to read each list out loud.]

Are there any terms that you need clarification on? *[If yes, ask someone from that color of marker group to explain the term.]*

Do you see any themes on this list? *[Usually, this list mentions children, family, religion, politics, and normal. Make sure “breeder” gets on the list so that there can be one “negative” term to discuss about this group. Other negatives may be geared towards the religious right hateful ideals, but this isn’t about the person.]*

If we compare the Heterosexual list to the Gay and Lesbian lists, what comparisons and contrasts can we make?

[Allow for a few minutes of comments and discussion. This is a good time to talk about internalized homophobia, coming out, and other key words. Also, that Gay men and Lesbian women may have religious identities, political views, children, etc. Heterosexuals may also be hyper-sexualized, fashionable (metrosexuals), be in committed relationships, etc. Also, within these groups is where the privilege of making up language exists. Language is created to determine which communities one belongs to and which communities a person doesn’t have or want membership to.]

Now, as we move to the other lists, let us keep these discussions in mind. I have Bisexual and Transgender here together to help explain what I like to call Fluidity. Where Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexual lists are coming from that “one option” similarity, Bisexual and Transgender listings come from many options. In fact, some would say that the system based on “one option” itself is limiting not their own identities. Let me explain by starting with Bisexual. *[Facilitator should be blocking Transgender from*

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participant's view.] In this context, I am using the term Bisexual to describe self identified men and women that are romantically or sexually attracted to either men or women.

Ok, so can someone read the Bisexual List for us?

[Have volunteers come up to read each list out loud.]

Are there any terms that you need clarification on? *[If yes, ask someone from that color of marker group to explain the term.]*

Do you see any themes on this list? *[This list has significantly less words on it than Gay or Lesbian, and is usually more confused and as I like to name it, homeless, meaning that the Bisexual is rejected from the heterosexual norm for being greedy and from the Gay and Lesbian communities for being confused or just a stepping stone to being gay or lesbian (bi now gay later). Have a discussion about how this is a real legitimate identity, but because of social pressures to pick one or the other, is seen by others as unstable or hyper-sexualized. If a bisexual woman is dating a man, she will be perceived as straight and if she claims a bisexual identity her commitment to her partner is questioned. She isn't given "room" to be fluid with whom she is romantically or sexually attracted to.]*

Ok, last but not least is the Transgender List. I use the term Transgender as both an umbrella term and an individual identity representing those individuals that are fluid in the sense of their own self-identified gender. A trans person may not identify with the gender they were given at birth. When we talk about Gay, Lesbian, Heterosexual, and Bisexual, these communities are labeled based on their gender identity and the gender identity of the folks they are romantically or sexually attracted to. Trans folks may identify as any of these sexual identities, and are the "T" in LGBT because of the role gender plays in labeling these communities. A trans person has "fluidity" in their own gender expression. So can someone read the Transgender List for us?

[Have volunteers come up to read each list out loud.]

Are there any terms that you need clarification on? *[If yes, ask someone from that color of marker group to explain the term.]*

Do you see any themes on this list? *[This list is even shorter yet as so few people know a lot about the trans population. Confused, depressed, evil, dangerous, perverts, complicated surgeries, and institutions like passports, doctor's, etc., usually come up on the list. This is a good time to talk about passing and "going stealth."]*

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What do you notice when you compare the Bisexual and Transgender lists? [*Terms like pansexual and omnisexual are being used to describe folks that have romantic or sexual attractions to others regardless of gender identity to be more inclusive than the binary implied in Bisexual. Both of these lists are negatively judged by Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexuals.*]

And how do the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender lists compare and contrast with one another? [*Allow time for discussion. Gay and Lesbian lists are much more about the individuals while Bisexual and Transgender are larger, macro institutionalized terminology – not personal or even seen as “real” individuals.*]

When looking at all of the lists, what messages do you see? [*Themes of what is normal, less normal, and abnormal are defined on the lists. Also, when someone is coming out, they are countering expectations that were placed on them by others instead of others being more careful when placing expectations or judgments on others. It is important to note that usually the lists are very western, American, white, upper-class, privileged lists and would vary from culture to culture. This is important to understand when the word “normal” is used or implied as this is our/your normal – not a unilateral normal.*]

Are there any questions or thoughts before we wrap up this activity? [*Often, points made at the very beginning of the workshop will come back up for clarification.*]

If doing other workshops after this activity, I would recommend taking a break here. If this is the end of the workshop, I would offer the organizer the opportunity to keep the lists for future reference. If followed by an open forum discussion, put the lists back up in the front of the room, in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Heterosexual/Straight order, and reinforce the “It isn’t my fault this stuff is in my head, but it is my responsibility to learn from it” theme. The lists taken out of context are usually seen as alarmingly honest and brave collections of truths that you can then say were written by folks in this community.

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