



Myths and Facts about the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Communities

Myth: LGBT people can be easily identified by certain mannerisms or physical characteristics.

Fact: LGBT people come in as many different shapes, colors, and sizes as do non-LGBT folks. There is, however, a vibrant LGBT community and culture (clothing, music, art, history, jewelry, language) – some members of the community are going to reflect that culture.

Myth: All gay men are feminine and all lesbians are masculine.

Fact: Not all gay men fit the stereotype of the drag queen or sissy, nor are all lesbians “butch.” Also, some heterosexual men have feminine traits, and some heterosexual women have masculine traits.

Myth: LGBT people should not be parents or teachers because they will influence children or try to “recruit” them to the “homosexual lifestyle.”

Fact: LGBT “recruitment” is no more common than heterosexual “recruitment.” In fact, many LGBT parents and teachers live and work with the fear that they will lose their children or be fired if they are out.

Myth: Bisexual people are just confused, greedy, and can’t be monogamous.

Fact: As the pioneering studies of Dr. Alfred Kinsey suggest, very few people are either completely heterosexual or completely homosexual. Most people fall somewhere on the continuum between these two, and therefore have the capacity to experience both affectional and sexual feelings for members of both sexes. Sexual orientation and gender identity are fluid. Bisexuals have the potential to be attracted to people of more than one gender, but they do not necessarily need to have a partner of each gender. Most bisexuals do not have to be involved with more than one gender at a time in order to feel fulfilled.

Myth: LGBT people can be cured by the appropriate therapy.

Fact: In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Being LGBT is no more “curable” than being heterosexual/non-transgender. Gender Identity Disorder and Gender Dysphoria are still diagnosable mental illnesses, listed in the DSM-IV.

Myth: When youth identify as LGB or T, it’s “just a phase.”

Fact: Questioning one’s sexuality and gender expression is a normal part of adolescence. Some youth, however, have questioned their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and have concluded that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, and/or transgender.

Myth: LGBT people should just keep it to themselves and keep it in the bedroom.

Fact: LGBT people are not “flaunting” their sexual orientation or gender identity when they talk about their lives any more than when non-LGBT people are flaunting their sexual orientation or gender identity when they talk about their lives (i.e. marriage, dating, fashion, etc.)

Myth: No LGBT people live in rural areas.

Fact: Many LGBT people live in rural areas, but may be closeted. Census 2000 showed that at least one same-sex couple lives in every county in Arizona.

Myth: Children raised by LGBT people are more likely to become gay.

Fact: Numerous studies have shown this assumption to be false (and so what if it is true?). Remember that heterosexual people raised most LGBT people. ☺

Myth: Most trans people seek gender reassignment surgery.

Fact: Some transsexuals take hormones, have electrolysis (for transwomen) or mastectomies (for transmen), and undergo genital reconstruction surgeries. There are others who chose only some of these procedures because of the tremendous cost of the surgeries, the mixed results (especially for trans men) and their lack of access to medical care in general. Other transgendered people decide not to alter their bodies permanently, but seek to express their gender identities in other ways, such as through cross-dressing.

Myth: The majority of self-identified GLBT people are white Americans and Europeans.

Fact: People attracted to others of the same sex exist in all cultures and communities. However, the mainstream U.S. media and many gay publications fail to be inclusive of LGBT people of color.

Myth: Places of worship do not allow openly LGBT people to become members of their congregations.

Fact: While some places of worship and religious denominations are intolerant of people with different sexual and gender identities, others are very accepting. These include Reform Judaism, Unitarian Universalists, the United Church of Christ, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and the predominantly GLBT Metropolitan Community Church. Call Wingspan for referrals to churches and temples that readily welcome LGBT people as worshippers; some have LGBT clergy and perform same-sex union ceremonies.

Myth: “One is the man, one is the woman.”

Fact: In a same-sex relationship, one person doesn't take on the role or persona of a “man” and the other, a “woman.” Typically same-sex couples divide up tasks based on interest and skills. Expressions of femininity and masculinity vary from person to person in any relationship.

Myth: The Military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” policy has solved the issue of LGBT people in the military.

Fact: As reported in the Arizona Daily Star on June 22, 2004, at least 62 Southern Arizona service members have been fired for homosexuality between 1998 and 2003.

Myth: Same-sex marriage will lead to polygamy, people wanting to marry their dogs, and the end of the world.

Fact: Slippery slope theories are not an effective way to create policy. One could argue that heterosexual marriage was a slippery slope to marriage rights for same-sex couples. Policy makers must address the issue at hand, not vague, nebulous prophecies.