Heterosexism

Demographics

3.80% (approximately 9 million people) of the population were LGBTQ at last Census count: 1.70% lesbian/gay, 1.80% bi-sexual and .30% transgender (2010 US Census)

The national average of LGBT by state was 3.5%, with the highest being in D.C. at 10% and the lowest being in North Dakota with 1.7%. California's average was 4.0%.

Violence

Anti-LGBT violence in 2013 had a total of 2001 incidents reported, with a substantial increase in severity of violence reported. (NCAVP, May 2014) LGBT persons were 1.7 times more likely to be injured and 2 times more likely to require medical attention as a result of hate violence than heterosexuals. (NCAVP, May 2014). There was a 13% increase in hate crimes against LGBT people between 2010-2011, with 1.7% of hate crimes being sexual orientation targeted. Offenders were mostly strangers, white and non-transgender men (USA Today, 2011). 1 out of 3 same sex couples has experienced domestic violence, compared to 1 out of 4 heterosexual women. Intimate partner violence victims were reported as 12% lesbian compared to 4% heterosexual, cohabiting/married women. (Center for American Progress, 2012).

Health/Access to Health Care

LGBT adults are more likely to not have reliable health insurance than their heterosexual counterparts, with a 17.6% average compared to 13.2%. (G. Gates, 2014)
Heterosexism

29% LGBT adults do not have a primary care doctor compared to 21% non-LGBT adults. Among women, the gap was 29% LGBT compared to 16% non-LGBT. (G. Gates, 2014).

Employment, Housing and Economic Discrimination

17 states and D.C. Prohibit housing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. (hrc.org, 2012). There is no federal law that consistently protects LGBT individuals from employment discrimination. There are no state laws in 29 states that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. (hrc.org, 2012) 15-43% of LGB experienced some form of harassment in the workplace, transgender reporting 90%. 17% LGBT report being passed over due to their orientation or gender identity. Nearly 41% have been verbally or physically abused in the workplace or had their workplace vandalized. (Center for American Progress, 2012) 30% of heterosexual workers have attested to witnessing LGBT discrimination in the workplace. Gay men earn 10-32% less than similarly qualified heterosexual men. (Crosby Burns and Jeff Krehely, 2011 Center for American Progress). The Human Rights Campaign has given Fortune 500 companies a Corporate Equality Index (CEI) score based on how proactive the are in implementing policies to prevent discrimination. Some companies with a 100 CEI score are Coca Cola, Mattel, Microsoft, Mastercard, Bank of America and Game Stop. Some still have a score of 0, with no policies in place to prevent discrimination. Some of those examples are ExxonMobil, Dollar General, Family Dollar Stores, while others fall in the middle such at Walmart at 40% and Cracker Barrel at 15%. 91% of these companies have banned sexual orientation based discrimination, 61% have banned gender identity
Heterosexism

based discrimination and 9% have bans on either. Still, there are 0% of Fortune 500 companies with an openly gay or transgender CEO. (hrc.org, 2013).

Mental Health

In American Psychologist (2000), a study found that there were higher rates of major depression, generalized anxiety and substance abuse issues in LGBT youth. There were nearly twice the rates of recurrent, major depression among gay men than heterosexual men. Also, that people aged 15 to 54 with same sex partners reported significantly higher rates of anxiety, mood and substance abuse disorders and suicidal thoughts than heterosexual people of the same age group. (T. DiAngelis, 2002)

30% of all completed youth suicides are LGBT (Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, M. Adams, et. al 2000). LGB youth are 4 times more likely to attempt suicide as their straight peers, with nearly 50% transgender youth having seriously thought about taking their own lives and 25% of those making the attempt. (CDC, 2014)

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, an estimated 26% of population experience mental illness in a given year. LGBT groups are about 2 and a half times more likely than heterosexuals to have mental health disorder. (nami.org).

Historically Significant Events

On June 28, 1969, a series of spontaneous, violent demonstrations began protesting a raid on The Stonewall Inn, a mafia owned hotel that was one of the few gay friendly establishments in New York. Police raiding gay establishments wasn’t rare at that time, but Stonewall was the first time gay and lesbians fought back against the everyday
Heterosexism
discrimination they were faced with. It is widely considered to be the single most
important event leading to the gay and lesbian movement. Within 6 months after, 2 gay
activist organizations and 3 newspapers promoting gay rights were formed. A year later
on June 30, 1970, Pride marches were held in NY, LA, SF and Chicago commemorating
the riots. There are still nationwide marches at the end of June celebrating Stonewall
and the LGBT rights movement.

In 1993, there was a “Don’t ask, Don’t tell” policy instituted in the US Military. This
allowed gays to serve in the military but banned homosexual activity. This was met with
opposition since there were no bans concerning heterosexual activity. As a
“compromise”, President Clinton allowed the honorable discharge of thousands of gay
men and women whom this affected. This law was repealed in 2010.
Until 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its
official list of mental disorders, homosexuals were often institutionalized against their
will, made to undergo dangerous and humiliating “aversion therapies” and at times even
lobotomized to alter their sexual desires.

The Briggs Initiative in the late 1970s, had it passed, would have required the
dismissal of CA teachers who supported gay, lesbian and bisexual rights, regardless of
those teachers sexual identity. (Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, M. Adams, et.
Al, 2000).

Current Events
A South Carolina transgender teen is suing the S.C. DMV over making her remove her
makeup for her Driver’s License picture. She was born male but identifies as female and
Heterosexism

regularly wears makeup and female clothing. The DMV claims it has a right to do this if the applicant “purposely alters his or her appearance so that the photo would misrepresent his or her identity”.

The White House announced it is lifting a long time ban on Medicare and private firms covering gender reassignment surgery. It is still approved on a case by case basis by insurance companies, but means the request will not be automatically denied as it has been since 1988.

CA Legislation passed a law in 2011 requiring public schools to teach students about LGBT contributions in State and US History classes. It was supposed to take effect in 2012, but due to budget cuts, revised textbooks including LGBT history have been placed on hold. Also the NFL drafted their first openly gay player, Michael Sam this year and the first transgender students admitted to all-female Mills College.

Analysis

It's still not always “OK” to be gay. While LGBT rights are becoming more recognized every day, there is still discrimination that takes place on a daily basis. As with many subordinate groups, you may have to be a member of this group to actually see the prejudice. It can be as subtle as looks same sex couples receive while holding hands walking through a store and as overt as anti-LGBT slurs or being asked to leave an establishment that doesn't support your lifestyle. Some privileges that Cisgender people enjoy every day that are simple, but important are: using a public restroom without fear or verbal abuse, intimidation or arrest, role models and mentors to emulate are easily found throughout history, legalized marriage, the ability to adopt children more easily,
Heterosexism

you can reasonably assume that you will not be denied services at a hospital, bank or other institution because your born gender does not match your gender expression and other seemingly small freedoms granted on a daily basis.

While marriage has been a right taken for granted by heterosexual persons, not every state allows or recognizes same sex marriages. The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996, prevented the federal government from recognizing any marriages between gay and lesbian couples for the purpose of federal laws or programs, even if these couples had been legally married in their states. It also said that individual states do not have to legally acknowledge the relationships of gay and lesbian couples who were married in another state. This prevented same sex couple from receiving their partner’s health insurance, social security benefits, joint tax filings, military spouse benefits and other federal rights afforded to heterosexual married couples. Section 3 of DOMA, the section regarding federal benefits, was struck down on 6/26/13. It was decided that this section violated the constitution’s “equal protection” promise. 19 states now have legal same sex marriages, 31 states have bans on gay marriages and the numbers are changing every day because there are appeals going on in at least 12 of those states. (glaad.org, 2014)

Media coverage of LGBT matters vary. When news agencies covers events such as Pride marches, the images shown are usually intoxicated, flamboyant participants that fill the stereotype many viewers have, rather than showing proud, marching families promoting marriage and holding signs such as “47 years together” or companies marching that support LGBT rights.
Heterosexism

There have been some mainstream television commercials showing LGBT support. There is a pretty clever Amazon commercial showing a man talking to a woman about her Kindle reader and she assumes he is interested in her so she politely says “My husband is getting us drinks at the bar” and the man answers “So is mine”. The commercial then cuts to the two husbands at the bar. There is also a Chemistry.com commercial that addresses the fact that EHarmony.com will not allow you to use their site if you are looking for a same sex partner. The most controversial so far has been JC Penny, who had a mother’s day and father’s day ad with same sex couples. An anti-LGBT group called A Million Moms, boycotted JC Penny due to this and the fact that they chose an openly gay spokesperson, Ellen DeGeneres. While there was much support for JC Penny, the CEO lost his job due to stocks and sales falling in backlash to these pro-LGBT moves. This will hinder other companies to take the chance to support the LGBT community and somewhat set that large step forward back a little bit.

Being a member of the LGBT community, sometimes discrimination is not instant. As with skin color or national origin, a person’s sexual identity is not always clearly identifiable upon first meeting. There are times a person’s sexual identity is not brought out into the open until they are asked about their families, family pictures are seen, a person’s same sex partner picks them up from work, etc. Sometimes it is never brought to light due to a person’s fear of being discriminated against. Often, a person with prejudice will begin treating someone differently after learning their sexual orientation, whether it be mild discomfort when discussing family/marriage or outright abuse and/or discrimination.
Heterosexism

A certain stigma also exists when dealing with same sex domestic violence. Same sex couples, especially lesbian couples, are stereotyped as being “emotional”, so when domestic violence incidents do happen, responding police are sometimes judgmental. Also, while LGBT domestic violence has many things in common with heterosexual domestic violence, there are differences. The abuser may threaten to “out” the victim to friends, family or coworkers, the victim may feel hesitation in reporting due to fear of outing themselves or facing the judgment of first responders, who are sometimes not trained in sensitivity or specific issues that may arise with LGBT victims. Also, it is common for gay/lesbian victims to “fight back” more so than heterosexual women, so the fighting is sometimes viewed as being “mutual” and overlooked as domestic violence.

LGB face challenges in healthcare, as well, that most heterosexuals do not face. Firstly, not having medical coverage. Many lesbians, gays and bi-sexuals do not have domestic partner or marriage benefits. Secondly, having a doctor who understands the specific risks and concerns of your particular sexual orientation and lastly, the fear of disclosing your sexual identity to the doctor can be problematic to some LGB persons. Transgender people face these same challenges in addition to the doctor understand and being willing/able to treat hormones, watching hormone levels, being treated for higher rates of depression and the danger of silicone injections. It has been a trend for transgender to turn to silicone injections as a way to give them instant curves instead of waiting for hormones to take effect. This is a danger because the silicone is not always medical grade, can migrate and cause scarring and is sometimes injected with a shared needle at “pumping parties”, which raises exposure to HIV and hepatitis.
Heterosexism

There is no federal law against discrimination in access to housing. Same sex couples may often pay more in taxes when buying and selling homes than heterosexual couples do because they are not afforded the option of buying jointly, as a married couple. In the event of a breakup or death, property may not automatically transfer as it does with married heterosexual couples unless the proper legal documents were drawn, and one partner may find themselves without a home. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 protects housing related transactions for many groups (race, national origin, religion, sex or disability) but does not protect people against discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

Not being protected against job discrimination has a greater reaching effect than we realize. Discrimination causes job instability and high turnover, resulting in greater unemployment and poverty rates for LGBT people, as well as a wage gap between LGBT and heterosexual workers.

Just as in interracial couples from the past, same sex couples face prejudice regarding their lifestyle and family choices. Some same sex couples have a harder time adopting or unsuccessful custody battles. Same sex couple’s parenting skills are also judged as though their lifestyle is doing harm to the children they are raising, while studies have shown that children of same sex couples perform just as well, if not better, in school and are healthy, well-adjusted children. At times, they are even more so, due to being taught tolerance and acceptance their entire lives.

Heterosexism is a subtle discrimination that can be easily reversed over time. Become an ally. Become informed. Spending time with people whose lifestyles do not closely match your own, whether it be race, religion, sexual orientation or any other
Heterosexism

difference makes you a better-rounded person. It expands your world larger than what you have been raised to know. You often meet many interesting people with interesting hobbies or personalities. Spending time within the life of an LGBT person, you also become less locked into sex-role stereotypes. Being an ally of an LGBT cause or person may help a teen or adult struggling with their sexual identity or the choice of whether or not to come out to realize there are allies and people who care about them who will accept them as they are. When given a choice to vote on issues that directly affect freedoms of LGBT individuals that you already enjoy, stop and think about how you would feel if you were not allowed that freedom in your life and vote with your conscience. There are laws moving through and also stalling congress and legislature that can change the lives of LGBT citizens. The ENDA act, for instance, has been introduced in every Congress since 1994 except the 109th. Similar legislation has been introduced without passage since 1974. In 2007, gender identity protections were added to the legislation for the first time. Some sponsors believed that even with a Democratic majority, ENDA did not have enough votes to pass the House of Representatives with transgender inclusion and dropped it from the bill, which passed the House and then died in the Senate. President Bush threatened to veto the measure. (en.wikipedia.org) These bills that are proposed, vetoed, stalled and forgotten sometimes include life changing rights for LGBTQ persons but will never adversely affect the rights of heterosexual citizens. If you want to be a part of positive change, do research and become an informed voter. Your active participation may change the lives of many.
Heterosexism

We all make decisions in our private personal lives that others may not agree with. Who we choose to love and spend our lives with should be a freedom we all enjoy, regardless of sex, race or any other difference which may be judged. Until we as a society accept that loving a person's heart, mind and values should not be decided by what physical characteristics, ethnicity/religion or in this case, what gender they are, we will always be missing out on diversity that can make the world a more interesting and positive place to raise our future generations.
Heterosexism

References


