

# **‘Seeing** the Invisible, **Speaking** about the **Unspoken’**

**ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT  
WORKSHOP FOR SPORT ORGANIZATIONS**



Canadian Association  
for the Advancement  
of Women and Sport  
and Physical Activity

## **Participant Handouts**

# PARTICIPANT HANDOUTS

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# 1. Heterosexual Privilege<sup>1</sup>

The following are but a few examples of the privilege which heterosexual people have. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer-identified folk have a range of different experiences, but cannot count on most of these conditions in their lives.

*On a daily basis as a heterosexual person:*

- If I pick up a magazine, watch movies or TV shows, go to the theatre or play music, I can be certain my sexual orientation will be represented.
- I have positive role models of my sexual orientation.
- I grew up thinking my romantic feelings towards others were perfectly normal and healthy.
- In everyday conversation, the language my friends and I use generally assumes my sexual orientation. For example, “sex” referring to only heterosexual sex or “family” meaning heterosexual relationships with kids.
- I was able to put pictures of my “crush” up in my locker when I was in high school, and talk to my friends about him / her.
- I do not have to fear revealing my sexual orientation to friends or family. It's assumed, and it has never been associated with a closet.
- I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there will be economic, emotional, physical and psychological consequences.
- When I talk about my heterosexuality (such as in a joke or talking about my relationships), I will not be accused of pushing my sexual orientation.
- I am not accused of being abused, warped or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation, or of wanting to recruit others (particularly children) into my lifestyle.
- I am never asked to speak for everyone who is heterosexual.
- I am not asked why I chose my sexual orientation, or why I made my choice to be public about it. I don't have to defend it, and nobody tries to convince me to change it.
- I do not need to worry that people will harass me or assault me because of my sexual orientation.
- I can go for months without being called heterosexual, nobody calls me heterosexual with maliciousness, and people can use terms that describe my sexual orientation as a positive (i.e. "straight as an arrow", "standing up straight" or "straightened out") instead of a negative (i.e. "ewww, that's gay" or being "queer").
- I'm not grouped because of my sexual orientation.
- People do not assume I am experienced in sex or am sexually promiscuous (or that I even have sex!) merely because of my sexual orientation.
- I can choose to not think politically about my sexual orientation.
- I can easily find a religious community that will not exclude me for being heterosexual.
- I can count on finding a therapist or doctor willing to talk about my sexuality.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my sexual orientation will not work against me.

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<sup>1</sup> Heterosexual Privilege is based on “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh, in 1989. “[White Privilege](#),” dealt with the unacknowledged privileges of being white. Among Caucasians, there were many special and unearned assets that accrued because of their skin color, but about which white people remained largely oblivious. It is no different for the LGBTQ community. The adapted version was written by students at Earlham College, and modified January 2006 by Karla Stewart, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.

- I can walk hand-in-hand in public with my partner, or kiss him/her goodbye at the airport and not have people stare at us, talk about us, insult or assault us.
- I can talk freely to others about my relationship with my partner, our vacation or our plans for the future.
- I can marry my partner without public controversy, and enjoy all the social, legal and financial benefits that go along with being married.
- My partner and I can find appropriate anniversary cards for each other in any store.
- My partner and I can attend family functions together, and my partner is included in family photographs.
- My partner and I can easily find appropriate housing, and we can expect that our neighbours will be friendly or at least neutral toward us.
- My partner and I can comfortably purchase a “couples membership” at a gym or fitness centre.
- I am easily able to find sex education literature for couples with my sexual orientation.
- My partner and I can adopt children, or have children by in vitro fertilization or artificial insemination, without being criticized and without our motives being questioned.
- My partner and I can parent our children without threat of intervention by child protection agencies based on our sexual orientation.
- I do not have to worry about telling my co-workers about my sexuality. It is assumed I am a heterosexual.
- I can be pretty sure that my co-workers will be comfortable with my sexual orientation.
- I can go home from work without feeling excluded, fearful, attacked, isolated, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, stereotyped or feared because of my sexual orientation.
- I can be sure that reference materials used in my work setting reflect the existence of people with my sexual orientation.
- I am guaranteed to find people of my sexual orientation represented in my workplace.
- I can be open about my sexual orientation without worrying about my job.
- I am not identified by my sexuality in my workplace (e.g., “that heterosexual nurse”).
- If my partner was to die, I would have paid bereavement leave from my job. My name would automatically be included in the obituary as his/her survivor.

## 2. Take a Walk in Our Shoes<sup>2</sup>

The comments below are frequently made about lesbians and gay men. In order to give a better sense of the realities of being a lesbian or gay man the terms 'lesbians and gay men' have been replaced with 'heterosexual'.

- When did you decide to become heterosexual?
- If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer it?
- So what do straight people do in bed anyhow?
- But you look so normal – you don't look heterosexual at all!
- Why do straight people have to flaunt who they are and make a spectacle of themselves - like holding hands in public or marching in those straight parades? They don't have a special parade for us!
- You're too young to know that you are straight – this is just a phase – you'll grow out of it
- Why are heterosexuals so promiscuous?
- All you need is a good same-sex lover to change your mind.
- Do straight people hate or distrust people of the same sex? Is that what makes you straight?
- How would you feel if your child turned out to be heterosexual?
- Maybe you should go and see a therapist.
- Most child molesters are heterosexual. Wouldn't you be worried if your child had a heterosexual teacher/coach?
- I think straight people are totally disgusting.
- Who have you talked to about your heterosexual tendencies and how did they react?
- I have a great minister you could talk to -- he's helped other straight people become gay
- How can you do this to your family? How will they be able to hold their heads up in public?
- The holy book says that heterosexuality is a sin.
- You have always had a very close relationship with your parent of the opposite sex. Do you think that might have made you heterosexual?
- People like you are just not normal!

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from: A Positive Space is a Healthy Place. The Public Health Alliance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-spirit, Intersex, Queer and Questioning Equity. A Workgroup of the Ontario Public Health Association

### 3. How Homophobia and Heterosexism Hurt LGBTQ People

*For those not yet out:*

- May feel the necessity to lie and pretend that you are something that you are not.
- Can only be affectionate with a loved one when you feel it is “safe”.
- Have to pretend the person that you’re with is not your lover.
- Have people try to “fix you up” with members of the opposite sex.
- Feel forced to adopt a gender presentation that you are not comfortable with.
- Unsolicited advice such as “you’ll never catch a man/woman if you act/dress like that.”
- Assumptions that you and everyone else are heterosexual.
- Being around people who are free to express their sexuality, while having to hide your own.
- Having a hard time finding/meeting other LGBTQ people.
- Thinking you are the only one.
- Thinking something is wrong with you.
- Feeling that you don’t fit in or belong.
- Not being able to get close to another person because of this “secret”.
- Feeling panic about being found out, and feeling like a coward or a dishonest person.

*For those coming out, the possibility and fear of:*

- Rejection from friends, family and/or co-workers.
- Rejection of your friends or your lovers.
- Rejection of other things that are important to you – your work, interests, etc.
- People refusing to accept your gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Having to deal with fear and anger toward you from others, including those who have been your best supporters on everything else.
- Losing your job, your living space or financial supports.
- Getting lower grades or poorer performance evaluations than you think you deserve and wondering if your LGBTQ identity is why.
- Subtle rejection or distance from people and having to wonder the cause.

*For those who are already out:*

- Dealing with heterosexism, transphobia and homophobia.
- Dealing with put-downs, slurs, jokes, and being talked about or stared at by others.
- Not getting jobs nor into groups and organizations.
- Being made into a special case – a “good” or “different” LGBTQ person.
- Any affection you show towards a same-sex person may be seen as a sexual “come on”.
- Encountering verbal or physical abuse/violence against you by total strangers just because of whom you are.
- Encountering emotional abuse in the form of graffiti, jokes and defaced posters.

## 4. Action List for Addressing Homophobia in Sport

It is necessary to understand that people take time to change behaviours and attitudes. In most cases, individuals need to first be made aware that an issue or problem exists, and then understand it. Once they understand it, they can begin to make changes in their behaviours and actions. This is certainly the case with homophobia. The following action lists are divided into three stages:

### **Stage 1: Creating Awareness and Understanding of Homophobia**

If people in your organization are unaware that there is an issue around homophobia, it is necessary to help them become aware before they understand that there is a need for change. In creating awareness, here are some actions that have proven success.

- \_\_\_ Become aware of 'heterosexual privilege' in sport and society. (see *Section 9 of Participant Handout*)
- \_\_\_ Educate yourself and colleagues about lesbian and gay issues in sport.
- \_\_\_ Assume there are lesbians and gays involved in your organization.
- \_\_\_ Provide opportunities for open discussion on homophobia allowing for expression of concern, fears, expectations, challenges.
- \_\_\_ Learn the language and terms used to allow for meaningful discussion.
- \_\_\_ Provide anecdotes and stories to help others understand other situations. These make powerful messages.
- \_\_\_ Monitor your own stereotyped beliefs and challenge them if necessary.
- \_\_\_ Ask for opinions about issues facing lesbians in your sport and compile suggestions for change.
- \_\_\_ Promote the benefits to your sport of allowing all to be able to participate fully as a whole person, not hiding a part of themselves.
- \_\_\_ Involve people in the process making sure they have a clear understanding of the problem and desired outcome.
- \_\_\_ Share information regularly and take time to celebrate successes and reward progress.
- \_\_\_ Challenge any words or comments that demean individuals because of their sexual orientation.
- \_\_\_ Do not make assumptions about people's sexual orientation.

### **Stage 2: Preparing for Action**

- \_\_\_ Create a 'Positive Space' where you practice sport.
- \_\_\_ Speak out against harassment due to sexual orientation.
- \_\_\_ Clearly state the organization/team/club's expectation of acceptance of diversity among all members.
- \_\_\_ Prepare a plan for implementing a welcoming and respectful environment, including a clear vision of what it looks like.
- \_\_\_ Put a "Positive Space" sticker in your office, locker room.
- \_\_\_ Learn to use inclusive language and seize the teachable moment.
- \_\_\_ Include sexual orientation in equity and non-discrimination policies and procedures.
- \_\_\_ Develop anti-harassment policies and include sexual orientation.
- \_\_\_ Educate organizational/team personnel on homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation.
- \_\_\_ Build a network for support.
- \_\_\_ Consider taking steps to live life more openly if you are lesbian or gay – become visible.
- \_\_\_ Know what community support is available for lesbians and gays seeking affirmative counseling or support services.

- \_\_\_ Answer questions about sexual orientation in ways that do not support or accept prejudice.
- \_\_\_ Ensure same sex partners are offered the status and benefits afforded heterosexual partners.
- \_\_\_ Ensure expectations for dress and appearance are gender-neutral.
- \_\_\_ Ensure sexual orientation is not a factor in hiring, eligibility, awards.

**Stage 3: Maintaining**

- \_\_\_ Set examples through their actions of your leaders.
- \_\_\_ Respect the rights of all, regardless of differences.
- \_\_\_ Maintain a safe and respectful environment for all.
- \_\_\_ Respond to others based on character and ability, not sexuality.
- \_\_\_ Celebrate successes.
- \_\_\_ Continue to build a critical mass of people committed to the vision.
- \_\_\_ Watch for windows of opportunity to make changes.

**ACTION PLAN FOR MY ORGANIZATION**

As a result of the discussion, I am going to implement the following actions in my organization:

**Action 1**

- Who will I get involved in this?
- When will I initiate? Complete?
- What will be different as a result of this action?

**Action 2**

- Who will I get involved in this?
- When will I initiate? Complete?
- What will be different as a result of this action?



## 5. Action Guide for Coaches: *Making Sport Welcoming for Coaches who are LGBTQ*

Adapted from: © Pat Griffin, 368 Hills South, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003 (413) 545-0211, [griffin@educ.umass.edu](mailto:griffin@educ.umass.edu)

- Educate yourself and colleagues about LGBTQ issues in sport (read, attend workshops, talk with school counselors or community groups).
- Put a "Positive Space" sticker on the locker room door and your office door.
- Discourage slurs, jokes or other comments or actions that demean or attack lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.
- Use inclusive language that does not assume that all coaches or athletes are heterosexual.
- Schedule an educational program on LGBTQ issues in sport for your team.
- Use the words "lesbian," "gay," and "bisexual," "transgender", and queer in positive ways.
- Always assume that there are LGBTQ people on athletic teams, among the coaching and support staff even if they have chosen not to identify themselves.
- Monitor your own stereotyped beliefs about LGBTQ people and commit yourself to challenging them.
- Treat all athletes and coaches fairly and respectfully regardless of their sexual orientation or gender expression.
- Make clear your expectations for acceptance of diversity among all members of the team.
- If LGBTQ athletes or coaches identify themselves to you, respect their right to confidentiality and privacy.
- Expect the same standards of behavior from all athletes regardless of their sexual orientation or gender expression.
- Ask LGBTQ friends or colleagues how you can show support for them.
- Propose a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender expression.
- Know what groups or agencies provide resources or support for LGBTQ athletes and coaches.
- Make it clear to athletes and coaches that anti-gay actions will not be tolerated.
- Answer questions from athletes' parents about lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people in ways that do not support or accept prejudice.
- Answer questions about LGBTQ people in sport from the media in ways that do not support or accept prejudice.
- When traveling internationally with teams, be aware that other countries may have strict laws about homosexuality.

## 6. Action Guide for Athletes: *Making Sport Welcoming for Athletes who are LGBTQ*

*Adapted from:* © Pat Griffin, 368 Hills South, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003 (413) 545-0211, griffin@educ.umass.edu

- Stop using anti-gay or other slurs or comments that demean groups of people because of their race, culture, gender, or religion.
- Speak out against anti-gay harassment directed at individuals or teams from spectators, opponents, coaches, or teammates. Your silence supports prejudice.
- Do not let others intimidate you by calling you gay or lesbian (fag, dyke, sissy, pussy, etc.).
- Judge teammates and coaches on the basis of their character and personality, not their sexual orientation or gender expression.
- Support teammates who are targeted by anti-gay harassment, vandalism, or violence.
- If you are targeted by anti-gay or gender discrimination, harassment, or violence, tell someone who can help.
- Support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender teammates who choose to identify themselves to others.
- Respect the rights of all teammates to safety.
- Treat all teammates and coaches with respect regardless of your differences.
- Do not make assumptions about teammates' or coaches' sexual orientation based on appearance.
- Do not make assumptions about teammates or coaches based on their sexual orientation or gender expression.
- Assume that every team is a mixed group of gay/lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and heterosexual people.
- If a teammate is depressed or afraid about sexuality or gender issues, encourage them to seek help (counselors, coaches, trained peer support groups).
- Encourage your coach to schedule seminars on homophobia, racism, and sexual harassment in sport.
- Understand that when someone uses anti-gay slurs or harasses lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people, they are expressing prejudice and fear.
- Take classes or seminars that will help you to better understand prejudice and discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and religion.
- Understand the important role that heterosexual allies can play in making sport safe and welcoming for everyone.
- If you are a team leader, use your leadership role to set an example for other members of the team.

## 7. Action Guide for Sport Organizations: *Making Sport Organizations more welcoming for LGBTQ people*

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### **Policy Guidelines for Ensuring Fair Treatment for LGBTQ People**

- Avoid treating LGBTQ athletes and the issues raised by their participation in sport as a "special" situation. Integrate policy applying to LGBTQ athletes into overall team or department policy.
- Rather than responding to individual situations case by case, identify overall policy to apply in individual situations.
- Be proactive. Anticipate issues that might arise and plan sound policy before a problem arises.
- Make policy based on ethical principles and fairness, not prejudice and fear.
- Ensure your organizations media strategy includes all your athletes and coaches, not just the heterosexual ones.

### **Legislate: *Develop Institutional Policies and Procedures Protecting LGBTQ People***

- Include sexual orientation and gender identity in non-discrimination policies and if your province has an inclusive non-discrimination policy, expect all staff and volunteers to abide by that policy.
- Develop anti-harassment policies that address harassment based on perceived or actual sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as sex, race, or religion. If your organization has an inclusive anti-harassment policy, expect all staff and volunteers to abide by that policy.
- Develop policies that address the use of lesbian baiting to intimidate women who challenge gender inequity in sport.
- Develop same-sex partnership policies for athletes and athletic department personnel.
- Develop ethics policies that address sexual relationships between coaches and athletes, between athletes, or between coaches without regard to the gender or sexual orientation of the people involved.
- Encourage coaching associations and other sport governing bodies to develop similar policies.

### **Educate: *Provide Educational Programming and Material about Policies and Expectations***

- Provide orientation programs for new staff and volunteers about non-discrimination, anti-harassment and coaching ethics policies and procedures.

- Provide information about non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies to parents of athletes.
- Schedule regular workshops or seminars about homophobia or discrimination against LGBTQ people for athletes, coaches, and other personnel.
- Provide a way for coaches to discuss issues related to homophobia and discrimination.
- Encourage coaches' associations and other sport governing bodies to provide educational programs and materials.
- Share the CAAWS position paper with your Board, staff, volunteers, coaches and athletes and encourage discussion about your organization's experiences with homophobia.

**Locate: *Identify Local and National Resources for LGBTQ People***

- Identify campus and community resources for athletes, coaches, or parents of athletes seeking LGBTQ affirmative counseling or support services.
- Identify sport advocacy or sport governing organizations that can provide resources and support for addressing homophobia in sport.
- Identify resources for athletes, coaches, or other personnel who engage in anti-gay harassment or discrimination.
- Identify print, video, and Internet resources for addressing homophobia in sport.
- Identify workshop or seminar leaders and consultants who can address homophobia or other issues related to LGBTQ people in sport.
- Encourage coaches' associations and other sport governing bodies to develop resource materials or collect resource lists for coaches, athletic directors, parents, and athletes.

## 8. Action Guide for Parents: *Making Sport Welcoming for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People*

*Adapted from:* © Pat Griffin, 368 Hills South, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003 (413) 545-0211, [griffin@educ.umass.edu](mailto:griffin@educ.umass.edu)

- Monitor your own stereotyped beliefs about LGBTQ people and commit yourself to challenging them.
- Talk with your daughter or son about LGBTQ people in sport to understand questions or negative stereotypical beliefs they have about them.
- Encourage young people to stand up for fairness for everyone, even when peer pressure does not support this perspective.
- Encourage your school's physical education department to sponsor educational programs for athletes, coaches, and parents on LGBTQ issues in sport.
- Thank coaches and athletic directors when they do sponsor educational programs focused on encouraging fairness, safety, and respect for all.
- Stop young people from using anti-gay or sexist language and talk with them about why it is not acceptable.
- Role model respectful treatment of LGBTQ coaches and athletes for your son or daughter.
- Challenge your own assumptions about the importance of rigid adherence to stereotypical gender expression for your children.
- Consider the possibility that your son or daughter might be LGBTQ and identify ways you can support him or her.
- Make it clear to your children that they have a right to set their own personal boundaries for interactions with teammates and that any unwanted breach of those boundaries is unacceptable.
- Make it clear to your children that any coach, regardless of sexual orientation or gender, who engages in sexual talk or behavior with athletes is unethical.
- Attend school-sponsored programs about LGBTQ issues.
- Talk with other parents about the importance of encouraging young people to appreciate differences and treat all teammates and coaches with respect.
- Read books or news articles about LGBTQ issues in sport to better understand how to make sports safe for all.
- Use inclusive language that does not assume that all coaches or athletes are heterosexual.

- Always assume that there are LGBTQ people on teams and among the coaching and support staff even if they have chosen not to identify themselves.
- Propose a non-discrimination policy for your athletic department that includes sexual orientation and gender expression.
- Treat all athletes and coaches fairly and respectfully regardless of their sexual orientation or gender expression.

## 9. References and Resources

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### **Books and Educational Resources**

**Center for the Study of Sport in Society** has a Northeastern University program that offers educational programs to eliminate violence, sexism, racism, and homophobia in sport [www.sportinsociety.org](http://www.sportinsociety.org)

**Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport** by: Susan K. Cahn [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

**Documenting Visibility: Selected Bibliography on Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Health**  
Jaquelyne Luce with Janet Neely, Teresa Lee and Ann Pederson free download at  
[www.bccewh.bc.ca/pub.htm](http://www.bccewh.bc.ca/pub.htm)

**Eliminating Homophobia: Resources for Use in Women's Sports and Fitness – expert packets**  
[www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/shop/experts/index.html](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/shop/experts/index.html)

**Harassment-free sport: Guidelines to address homophobia and sexuality discrimination in sport**  
Australian Sports Commission [www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/docs/homo\\_sexuality.pdf](http://www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/docs/homo_sexuality.pdf)

**It Takes a Team!: Educational Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport** [www.ittakesateam.org](http://www.ittakesateam.org)

**Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality**  
Helen Lenskyj [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**Positive Space** is the University of Toronto's LGBTQ website at [www.positivespace.utoronto.ca](http://www.positivespace.utoronto.ca) and  
[www.ac-fpeh.com/about/equity.php](http://www.ac-fpeh.com/about/equity.php)

**Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Athletic Settings – expert packets**  
[www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/shop/experts/index.html](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/shop/experts/index.html)

**Sexual Abuse in Sport - Recognition and Prevention**  
[www.wsf.org.uk/publications.htm](http://www.wsf.org.uk/publications.htm)

**Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport**  
Pat Griffin [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**The Declaration of Montreal** was endorsed by the participants of the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights, which was held in the framework of the 1st World Outgames in Montreal (Canada) in July 2006. The Declaration of Montreal is meant to be an advocacy tool, to be used according to national and local circumstances. <http://www.declarationofmontreal.org/>

**The Stronger Women Get, the More Men Love Football: Sexism and the American Culture of Sports** Mariah Burton Nelson [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)