

## Chapter 13

### Sexual Orientation

**A. Define and explain the meanings of homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgender people.**

A homosexual person is someone who is attracted primarily to people of the same gender to satisfy sexual and emotional needs.

A bisexual is a person who is sexually involved with or attracted to members of either gender.

Transgender people are those whose gender identity is the opposite of their biological gender.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are two very different concepts.

Sexual orientation appears to emerge early in life.

**B. Review some of the myths and stereotypes about gay and lesbian people.**

Many people harbor untrue stereotypes about lesbian and gay people, including the queen and the butch, playing male and female roles, and the myth of child molesting.

**C. Report estimates of how many people are lesbian and gay, and discuss some of the theories attempting to explain why people have diverse sexual orientations.**

Because of the large numbers of people who have homosexual experiences at some time during their lives, most people do not fall within the distinct categories of gay or lesbian or heterosexual.

Although various theories, including biological, genetic, brain, hormonal, and psychosocial, attempt to explain why people become lesbian, gay, or bisexual, no definite causes have been established. Most experts agree that homosexuality probably results from some interactionist mixture of biological and psychosocial variables.

**D. Address the issue of discrimination against lesbian and gay people and discuss the concept of homophobia.**

Homophobia is the extreme and irrational hatred of gay and lesbian people.

Homophobic reactions are common, can be vicious, and assume many forms.

**E. Describe lesbian and gay lifestyles, including lesbian and gay relationships, sexual interaction, lesbian and gay pride, empowerment, and sense of community.**

There is no one type of lifestyle adopted by all lesbian and gay people, just as there is no single lifestyle for all heterosexuals.

Lesbian and gay relationships vary, as do heterosexual relationships. Many lesbian and gay people seek monogamous relationships.

The physiological responses of lesbian and gay people are exactly the same as those of heterosexual people.

Gay men and lesbians can be empowered by developing “gay and lesbian pride” and a sense of community.

**F. Identify some of the life situations and crises affecting lesbian and gay people, such as legal empowerment, violence against them, coming out, ethnicity, adolescence, parenting, aging, and AIDS.**

Gay and lesbian people can experience legal discrimination in employment, in the military, concerning child custody, and in personal rights such as marriage.

Civil unions and domestic partnerships do not provide the intensity of rights that heterosexual marriage does.

Violence against gay and lesbian people is common and assumes many forms.

Coming out usually involves (1) coming out to oneself, (2) getting to know other people within the gay and lesbian community, (3) sharing with family and friends that one is lesbian or gay, and (4) coming out publicly.

It is important for social workers to focus on the issues involved in racial and ethnic diversity when working with lesbian and gay people.

Adolescence can be an especially difficult time for lesbian and gay people.

Many lesbian and gay people are parents and must address coming out to their children.

Lesbian and gay people face many of the same issues as heterosexuals during the aging process. Additionally, they face institutional, legal, and emotional concerns.

Although the gay and lesbian communities have made tremendous strides in curbing the spread of AIDS, the emotional and economic impacts on many gay people have been devastating.

To work with lesbian and gay people, social workers need to confront their own homophobia and to familiarize themselves with the lesbian and gay communities.