

## HETEROSEXISM AND CISGENDERISM

**Institutional heterosexism/cisgenderism**: refers to the ways in which governments, businesses, educational, religious, and professional organizations systematically discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or identity.

- Examples:
  - KU as an institution (policies on GN rr, GN housing, Admissions policies)
  - adoption laws
  - employment discrimination laws
  - Boy scouts of America (for a period)
  - the military (exclusion of transgende service members—for a period post repel of DADT)
  - places of worship that are unwelcoming of LGBTQ people

**Cultural heterosexism/cisgenderism**: Occurs when the social norms or codes of behavior that, although not expressly written into law or policy, work to legitimize oppression.

- Examples:
  - certain religions (places of worship are institutions, religions are belief systems),
  - races/ethnicities who have historically left out LGBTQ people (i.e. ignoring Bayard Rustin's involvement in the Civil Right's Movement)
  - the culture of universities (residential life, student programs, advertising, etc)
  - the culture of Greek Life
  - sports culture (not dictated by NCAA, etc)

**Social heterosexism/cisgenderism**: refers to the ways LGBTQ people are left out of society or ignored/unwelcome in certain settings, despite never being spoken or expressed.

These are usually considered microaggressions (although they can certainly be macro)

- Examples:
  - exclusion of gender-inclusive restrooms (everywhere)
  - policing of restroom, etc. (prior to Restroom bills—this is now more of an institutional issue)
  - Binary language: mom & dad, boyfriend & girlfriend, husband & wife
  - Sex education that caters only to sex acts between opposite gendered partners

## PRIVILEGE AND OPPRESSION

***Privilege*** is unearned, unasked for, often invisible benefits and advantages not available to members of targeted groups.

***Oppression*** is the discrimination of one social group against another, backed by institutional power. Oppression occurs at the group or macro level and goes well beyond individuals

Much of the privilege associate with being cisgender and/or heterosexual is never having to think about inequality or the ways in which LGBTQ are disproportionately affected by certain systems. It is a privilege is never think about what normal, everyday or big life events will be like because you are a member of LGBTQ community or having to worry about finding LGBTQ-friendly resources for basic needs.

## EXAMPLES OF HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGES

### **If you are heterosexual (or, in some cases, simply perceived as heterosexual):**

- You can go wherever you want and know that you will not be harassed, beaten, or killed because of your sexuality (in certain countries the punishment for same-sex sexual acts ranges from castration and genital mutilation to death).
- You do not have to worry about being mistreated by the police or victimized by the criminal justice system because of your sexuality.
- You can express affection (kissing, hugging, and holding hands) in most social situations and not expect hostile or violent reactions from others.
- You are more likely to see sexually-explicit images of people of your sexuality without these images provoking public consternation or censorship.
- You can discuss your relationships and publicly acknowledge your partner (such as by having a picture of your partner on your desk) without fearing that people will automatically disapprove or think that you are being “blatant.”
- You can express yourself sexually without the fear of being prosecuted for breaking the law (sodomy laws were enforceable in 16 states and were used to deny civil rights to lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals until 2003).
- You can expect that your children will be given texts in school that implicitly support your kind of family unit and that they will not be taught that your sexuality is a “perversion.”
- You can approach the legal system, social service organizations, and government agencies without fearing discrimination because of your sexuality.
- You can raise, adopt, and teach children without people believing that you will molest them or force them to adopt your sexuality. Moreover, people generally will not try to take away your children because of your sexuality.
- You can belong to the religious denomination of your choice and know that your sexuality will not be denounced by its religious leaders.
- You can easily find a neighborhood in which residents will accept how you have constituted your household.
- You know that you will not be fired from a job or denied a promotion because of your sexuality.
- You can expect to see people of your sexuality positively presented on nearly every television show and in nearly every movie.

## EXAMPLES OF CISGENDER PRIVILEGE

- Strangers don't assume they can ask you what your genitals look like and how you have sex.
- Your validity as a man/woman/human is not based upon how much surgery you've had or how well you "pass" as a "non-transperson".
- When initiating sex with someone, you don't have to worry that they won't be able to deal with your parts or that having sex with you will cause your partner to question their own sexual orientation.
- You are not excluded from events that are either explicitly or de facto men-born-men or women-born-women only.
- Your politics are not questioned based on the choices you make with regard to your body.
- You don't have to hear "So have you had THE surgery?" or "Oh, so you're REALLY a [incorrect sex or gender]?" each time you come out to someone.
- Strangers do not ask you what your "real name" (birth name) is and then assume that they have a right to call you by that name.
- People do not disrespect you by using incorrect pronouns even after they've been corrected.
- You do not have to worry about whether you will be able to find a bathroom to use or whether you will be safe changing in a locker room.
- When engaging in political action, you do not have to worry about the "gendered" repercussions of being arrested. (i.e., What will happen to me if the cops find out that my genitals do not match my gendered appearance? Will I end up in a cell with people of my own gender?).
- You do not have to defend your right to be a part of "Queer," and gays and lesbians will not try to exclude you from "their" movement in order to gain political legitimacy for themselves.
- Your experience of gender (or gendered spaces) is not viewed as "baggage" by others of the gender with which you identify.
- You do not have to choose between either invisibility ("passing") or being consistently "othered" and/or tokenized based on your gender.
- People will not assume your preferences regarding sexual acts based on your anatomy.
- You are not told that your sexual orientation and gender identity are mutually exclusive.
- When you go to the gym or a public pool, you can use the showers.
- Your health insurance provider (or public health system) does not specifically exclude you from receiving benefits or treatments available to others because of your gender.
- You are not required to undergo extensive psychological evaluation in order to receive basic medical care.
- The medical establishment does not serve as a "gatekeeper" that disallows self-determination of what happens to your body.