Asking a person if they "have a boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife" based on their gender expression

A heteronormative view perpetuating the idea that heterosexuality is the norm. Assuming someone's partner is either a man or woman may exclude non-binary people.

"You don't 'look' like a lesbian, you're so feminine!"

Perpetuating the stereotype that lesbians must present themselves in certain ways, often to conform with gender roles.

"I think I should just 'turn' gay/lesbian – life would be easier"

Flippant comments such as this are quite common and can feel quite invalidating for some people.

"When/why did you choose to be LGBTQIA+? Would you ever change your mind?"

Falsely assuming a person's sexual orientation or gender identity is a choice. They also infer being LGBTQIA+ is a 'deviation' from the norm of being heterosexual and cisgender.

"It's such a waste that you're not straight!"

Flippant comments such as this are quite common and can feel quite invalidating for some people.

"Ahh you're so gay"

Said in a derogatory way; here the word gay is being used as an insult, it may be particularly traumatic for individuals who have been bullied for their sexual preferences both real and perceived.

Asking a same sex couple "Who is the man and who is the woman in the relationship?"

Applying a heteronormative and gender normative view of relationships.

"Are you/they a man or a woman? Why can't you/they just choose one or the other?"

These questions can be extremely hurtful, by erasing non-binary gender identities and suggesting a trans person must 'pass' as their gender to be respected.

"You don't have a family so why don't you work the bank holidays or do the late shift?"

An assumption that same sex couples don't have children, therefore are able to and expected to work instead of people with children.

"I'm sorry that you're gay/lesbian or bisexual, trans or gender non-binary"

Assuming that being an LGBTQIA+ person is a negative thing and that it is likely to be a struggle or cause problems. This is patronising and negative.

"You're not gay/lesbian/bisexual or trans are you? It's against our religion and or culture. I can pray to fix you"

Some religions and cultures are not accepting of LGBTQIA+ people and may be prejudiced against individuals as the communities perceive being a LGBTQIA+ person as a negative thing.

"LGABCD..... i don't know all the letters in the acronym!"

Dismissing the LGBTQIA+ community and experience. This is a flippant comment which dismisses the LGBTQIA+ community and their experience.

"You don't look or seem gay or a lesbian"

Expecting a gay and lesbian person to have a certain personality or interests based on stereotypes, indicating you don't see that individual as a person.

"If you're gay, lesbian or transgender - it's not normal. You can go to conversion therapy to be fixed"

Implying that being LGBTQIA+ is a choice and a lifestyle – it negates the lived experience and adversity that comes with having this identity. Conversion therapy is extremely harmful for individuals and causes deep trauma.

"You don't look trans – you completely pass"

Making it sound as an accomplishment, assuming there is a right way to look male or female and a trans persons identity is one of the two binary genders (some non-binary people identify as trans because their gender differs from that which they were assigned at birth).

Asking "Who is the mum and who is the dad?" - when you're a same sex family

The presumption of a mother and father indicates an assumption of heterosexuality and gender normative roles.

Asking a woman "How long have you been with your husband?"

It's not active discrimination, but it's the assumption of the heterosexual relationship structure, it can make people feel minimized and feel like they have 'come out'.

Asking a trans person "When are you having the surgery"

It is a very personal question and it can make the individual feel like they're not enough. It also implies that trans people must have the surgery to be valid.

"Being gay is no big deal" or "you can come out as trans and it's safe"

Some people may not feel or be safe and may have experienced homophobia/biphobia/transphobia. These comments can feel like your experience is being negated or dismissed.

"You're only bisexual, because you haven't found the right man or woman yet" or "If you have a boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife how can you be bisexual?"

Imposing heteronormative views; that you can only be with one gender or that you're confused if you are sexually or romantically attracted to more than one gender.

Seeing a man in the park with a young child and asking ''Where is mummy?'' or asking a child with 2 women "Where is your daddy?"

There is a heteronormative assumption that all children have one male and one female parent.

Asking invasive questions about someone's body like "what parts do you have down there?

This is a very personal question that is an invasion of the individual's privacy, but it suggests that to you knowing someone's sex is an important part of understanding their gender identity. By asking this you're invalidating their experience of gender expression and identity.

"Ah, I KNEW you were gay!" Or "I was wondering if you were gay because you always wear nice clothes"

Based on stereotypes, assuming someones sexual orientation based on their physical appearance or because they have made a casual reference to your partner.

"You don't look non-binary"

There is no one way to look non-binary as the term covers a wide range of gender identities and expressions. This imposes gendered assumptions on another person's body.

"I'm sorry that you can't or won't have children"

Said in a pitiful or apologetic way as an assumption is made you don't have a family due to your sexual orientation or gender identity rather than choosing not to.

LGBTQIA+ Related Microaggressions

We've collected some real-life examples of verbal sexual orientation and gender identity related microaggressions, with an explanation of why these comments or questions can be offensive, insulting or insensitive.