

8

Breaking the Binary

LGBTQ+ Wildlifer Perspectives

If you dare to let go, if you dare to stop thinking about what box you fit into and just start being who you are and letting yourself want what you want, then I think you'll wake up one day and find yourself sitting in the right box, which might not be a box at all.

—Riese Bernard

Breaking the Binary

At an early age, we learn how to use basic characteristics to categorize animals. Birds have feathers, reptiles have scales, mammals have fur. When we learn about a new animal, we feel confident that we know what box it belongs in. A Swedish botanist with a childhood fondness for flowers, Carl Linnaeus, likewise recognized categories into which flora and fauna fell; in 1753, he created the neat and orderly system we scientists still use to classify species. As we grow, we learn about exceptions to these rules. Pangolins have scales, but they are not reptiles. Dolphins do not have fur, but they are still mammals. We begin to develop a more nuanced view of biology. The lines between categories become blurry, and we realize that the “rules” are much more complicated than we thought as children. As we mature academically and professionally, we see that the neat little Linnaean boxes we learned in Biology 101 are simplified versions of reality. Our modern nomenclature (both cultural and scientific) hides the infinite complexity present in the natural world adeptly described by J. B. S. Haldane (a pioneer in modern population genetics) as “*not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose*” (Haldane 1927).

Many human characteristics, including gender and sexuality, are no different. Though traditionally treated as simple binaries (either/or), aspects of gender and sexuality exist as spectrums with much more complexity than our cultural norms suggest. The tendency to treat these concepts as binary is a societal construct that is oversimplified and exclusionary. If there are only two boxes but neither one feels true, then the message is clear: you do not belong. Each aspect of sexuality and gender occurs on a continuum, and where a person falls on one spectrum (e.g., sexual orientation) does not dictate where they land on the others (e.g., gender identity). For many people, where they are today may not match where they are in the future—these sexuality and gender characteristics can be fluid, or it may take time for someone to find where they fit. In the United States and much of Western culture, for most people whose sexual orientation or gender identity does not neatly fit in a binary box (Figure 8.1), coming to terms with our identities is a process that takes years of often painful self-reflection and doubt.

The list of terms for describing gender and sexual identities continues to expand. With that growth, it has become common to see the familiar initialism LGBT with additional letters, including Q (queer, questioning), I (intersex), A (asexual, agender), and P (pansexual, polyamorous). In this chapter, we use LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and related identities) as an umbrella term for those who identify as gender and sexual minorities (i.e., non-cisgender, non-heterosexual). Though the term LGBTQ+ is widely used, we acknowledge that it is not perfect, as many non-cisgender and non-heterosexual people do not identify as L, G, B, T, or Q (Box 8.1). Furthermore, two people may identify with the same term but define it differently, or two people may have similar sexual orientations or gender identities but use different terms to describe themselves. Terminology also changes over time, often

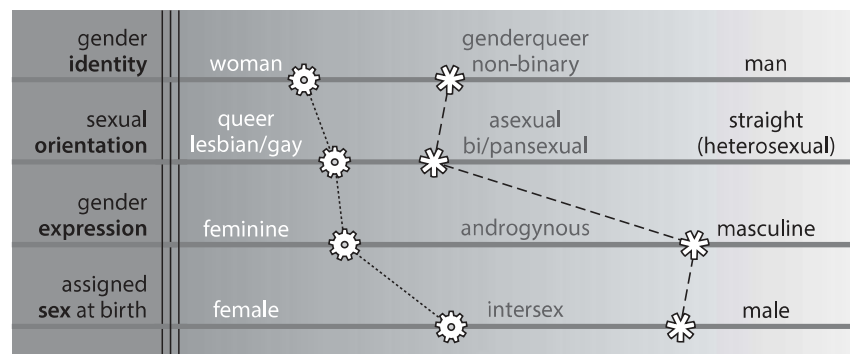


FIGURE 8.1. Spectrums of gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression, and biological sex. Two sets of dashed lines illustrate possible intersections of gender and sexual identities, but infinite combinations exist.

BOX 8.1 LGBTQ+ Terminology

We concede that these are simplified definitions and that this list is far from comprehensive. We also acknowledge that some may define these terms differently—even two people who identify with the same word. It is best to allow someone to share their identity and how they define it, if and when they feel comfortable doing so.

GENERAL

Queer: an umbrella term often used to refer to anyone who is not heterosexual or cisgender (a gender identity that conforms to the sex assigned at birth); increasingly used in place of “LGBTQ” (e.g., “the queer community” instead of “the LGBTQ community”)

SOGI: an acronym for “sexual orientation and gender identity”; terms like “SOGI minorities” are sometimes used instead of “LGBTQ” or similar initialisms

SEXUALITY

Sexual orientation: a deep-rooted emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people

Asexual: lack of sexual attraction/desire for other people (though some may feel romantic attractions)

Bisexual: emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to more than one sex or gender

Gay: emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of the same gender

Lesbian: woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women

Pansexual: someone who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people regardless of gender

GENDER

Gender identity: a person’s self-identification as man, woman, a blend of both (e.g., **genderqueer**, **nonbinary**), or neither (**agender**)

Gender expression: presentation of one’s gender identity through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, or voice; categorized on masculine-to-feminine spectrum

Gender nonconforming: broad term for those whose behavior does not fit conventional gender expectations or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a traditional archetype (related terms: genderqueer, nonbinary, **gender fluid**)

Androgynous: identifying or expressing as neither distinctly masculine nor feminine

Genderqueer, trans*, transgender: umbrella terms used to describe a person whose gender identity or expression does not align with their sex assigned at birth (antonym: **cisgender**)

Gender transition: process of aligning gender expression (appearance) with gender identity (internal); may include social transitions (e.g., changing name, pronouns, clothing), physical transitions (e.g., surgical, hormonal interventions), or both

SEX

Sex assigned at birth: also referred to as “biological sex”; involves hormones, chromosomes, and anatomy designated at birth; often only accounts for external anatomy; categorized on male-to-female spectrum

Intersex: a term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations in hormones, chromosomes, and anatomy; if apparent at birth, often “treated” by doctors to align all sex markers with either male or female sex, but these medically unnecessary procedures are becoming rarer as awareness increases (Note: “intersex” has replaced the term “hermaphrodite,” which is considered insulting)

resulting in generational differences in labels. For example, some members of older generations consider the word “queer” offensive, as it was once a commonly used insult. However, many people, especially in younger generations, have reclaimed the word and use it as an umbrella term encompassing many gender and sexual identities.

Reflect on the connotations associated with some labels that wildlifers commonly use to describe other species—“endangered,” “pest,” “game,” “predator”—each word is laden with implicit cultural values. People label other people, too, and those labels can have important personal and political implications. Labels can be used to marginalize or ostracize others, but they can also enable people to find others with similar identities and establish supportive communities. These groups can be incredibly important; the feeling of being seen, understood, and accepted by others is empowering. Labels also foster visibility, which contributes to increased societal acceptance and a broadening definition of the norm.

Understanding LGBTQ+ Identities within the Framework of Difference, Power, and Discrimination

Members of LGBTQ+ communities have long hidden their identities to avoid harassment and discrimination (e.g., James et al. 2016) or have chosen to live

and work in locations where supportive communities exist. Still, LGBT* US federal agency employees in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields have reported more negative workplace experiences than their non-LGBT colleagues (Cech and Pham 2017). These disadvantages extend across age and position level for LGBT-identifying women and men (Cech and Pham 2017), and they extend beyond the workplace (Mallory and Sears 2015). In a recent survey of transgender individuals in the United States, 16% of respondents were denied equal treatment within the previous year; 88% were based on gender identity or expression, and 36% on sexual orientation (James et al. 2016). The pervasiveness of inequalities is evident in our media, as evidenced by a sample of headlines we found using the search term “LGBT” in Google News in February and March 2019:

- “LGBT Community in Chechnya Faces ‘New Wave of Persecution’” (UN News)
- “South Dakota Leads the Way in Anti-LGBT Bills for 2019 Session” (*Washington Blade*)
- “64 Percent of California LGBT Students Are Bullied” (*Sacramento Bee*)
- “A Member of the West Virginia House of Delegates Is Facing Bipartisan Criticism for a String of Anti-LGBT Statements” (CNN)
- “LGBT Group Sues Arizona over Law Barring HIV, AIDS Instruction in Schools” (*Washington Post*)
- “Google Resists Pressure to Pull LGBT ‘Conversion Therapy’ App” (*Axios*)
- “United Methodist Church Keeps Ban on Same-Sex Weddings, LGBTQ Clergy” (NPR)

We lack data regarding the prevalence of these discriminatory behaviors in the wildlife profession, but our collective lived experiences[†] as LGBTQ+ wildlife professionals make it clear to us that we continue to face a unique set of challenges. How does a person’s gender identity or sexual orientation shape the feeling of inclusion or exclusion in various parts of their lives? Consider the variety of identities that people use to describe themselves (Figure 8.2). Within this conceptual framework, the central horizontal line represents privilege in our society. With privilege comes power, granted to an individual whether they want it or not. Privilege may be reflected by having opportunities that others

* Though we use LGBTQ+ in our writing, when referencing other sources, we use the term the authors used in the cited publication.

[†] In a social justice context, the term “lived experience” refers to firsthand narratives and impressions of people who are minorities or members of oppressed groups.

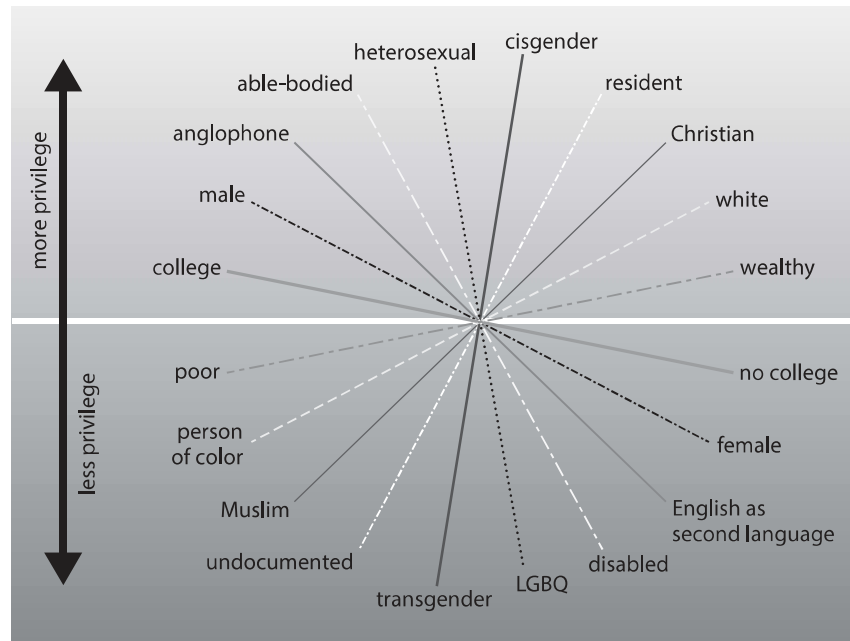


FIGURE 8.2. Illustration of power differentials based on a small sample of identities within the United States. The dashed lines of various types connect related identities above and below the privilege line. Adapted from Morgan 1996.

do not, having a voice in a decision, or simply by being a majority identity in a population; those differences confer power to a person above the privilege line. People above the privilege line may still face many challenges, but those challenges are not the result of their underrepresented identity, and they often face fewer obstacles to success and advancement than those with less privilege. Based on the lived experiences of the authors of this chapter, those we have observed, and the data provided by many citations listed at the end of this chapter, we recognize that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender nonconforming, and other queer people are granted less privilege than cisgender, straight people in current US society and the wildlife profession; consequently, they are placed below the privilege line. The relative distance of identities below the line may reflect the degree of privilege lost by an individual with that identity and the level of discrimination they may experience. For instance, although lesbians and gay men continue to face obstacles in society and the workplace, the hurdles faced by transmen and transwomen place them farther below the privilege line (James et al. 2016).

Context matters in this framework. The magnitude of disparities in societal privilege may be smaller in San Francisco than in rural Idaho, or in social work

careers versus those in natural resources agencies. We lack data to quantify where wildlifers fall on the diagram in Figure 8.2, but our experience indicates that the majority of wildlife professionals in the United States today fall above the privilege line in many, if not most respects—most (especially those in advanced career stages) are white, male, cisgender, straight, Christian, able bodied, English speaking, and were born in the United States. The US delegation to the Pacific Flyway Council, a policy-making body composed of the directors or appointees from each state and provincial wildlife agency in the western United States, Canada, and Mexico, provides one especially stark example: not a single woman or person of color was present as of 2019.

Individuals below the privilege line may face obstacles or anxiety about how their work is viewed by those in the majority. Consider the level of societal privilege within the wildlife profession for someone who is a person of color, transwoman, lesbian, Muslim, and disabled. What challenges might she face in a wildlife agency? What voice might she have in decisions about her workplace? At a practical level, would she face backlash for using a women's restroom at her office? If the wildlife profession (or any other STEM profession) is to promote *equity* in the workplace, then a concerted effort is needed to elevate all identities currently below the privilege line to be on par with those above it. That effort does not mean simply treating people *equally*; an individual with a marginalized identity will have faced a lifetime of obstacles that their peers have not. Equity efforts are most successful when those with greater societal privilege recognize inequity and work intentionally to raise privilege by removing barriers and providing opportunities for those with less privilege. Otherwise, the power differential is perpetuated, and the discriminatory environment persists. Progress may be happening in some venues for those who identify as lesbian or gay, but when those identities intersect with other marginalized identities, progress in equity may be assumed but is often overestimated.

An individual's professional success is not solely based on their workplace accomplishments; their ability to be successful depends on their whole lived experience. As a society, we may believe that we have become more accepting of LGBTQ+ identities since Matthew Shepard's murder in 1998, but some data indicate otherwise. In 2017, 7,175 hate crimes were reported in the United States, 1,130 (16%) of which were based on sexual orientation and 119 (2%) on gender identity (DOJ 2018). Crimes targeting LGBTQ+ people increased by about 6% in 2018 (DOJ 2019). Evidence of such explicit violence can be found in the news media daily. Reports of violence against LGBTQ+ individuals continue, and the level of violence is likely greater toward people who are also of minoritized races, religions, or ability status. The Human Rights Campaign

began tracking anti-transgender violence in 2013; it reported that at least 26 transgender and gender nonconforming individuals were killed in the United States in 2019 alone—a staggering 91% of whom were Black women (HRC 2019). Now place this information in the context of a wildlife professional, working in remote, often rural locations in communities where marginalized people are potentially at risk; bias may be explicit, confrontational, and deeply personal. LGBTQ+ professionals must include in their decision-making process about research and field work a variable that their cisgender, straight counterparts often do not—is this workplace safe for me?

In addition to explicit bias that can result in unsafe environments for LGBTQ+ people, interpersonal interactions expose implicit bias, often in subtle ways. We may make assumptions about someone's gender or sexual orientation, or their race or religion. These unconscious assumptions influence how we interact with others via our actions, conversations, and decisions. Although the validity of these tests has been questioned (Lopez 2017), implicit association tests may provide some insight into our own implicit biases on many topics, including gender and science, sexuality, and gender and careers (Project Implicit 2011). Whether or not you take these tests, introspection is important if we truly want to advance equity for marginalized individuals. Equity efforts may be particularly important at this time in the United States, as a divisive political environment has further eroded protections for those below the privilege line. Efforts to expel trans people from the military, revoke protection for young undocumented immigrants (DACA), or build border walls increase the differences in privilege between those above and below the privilege line. That may shift in the future with changes in elected representatives, but the divisions in our country seem clearer now than they have been in decades.

Why This Chapter Is Needed

It is impossible to know how many LGBTQ+ people are employed in the wildlife profession in the United States, as those data do not exist. Based on the proportion of the US population that identifies as LGBTQ+ (~4.5% overall, varying widely among states; Newport 2018) and the estimated number of zoologists and wildlife biologists (19,400; BLS n.d.), we conservatively estimate that there are 800–900 LGBTQ+ wildlife biologists in the United States (4.5% of 19,400 = 873), and approximately 500 LGBTQ+ members of The Wildlife Society (4.5% of 11,000 members = 495). However, we do not know whether these numbers are accurate because many LGBTQ+ wildlifers may not want to be labeled as such for reasons described on the next page (Box 8.2). Because

BOX 8.2 Out at Work

The act of coming out is often portrayed as a singular decision—an LGBTQ+ person comes to understand and accept their identity, they announce it to the world, and it's done. In reality, LGBTQ+ people must decide to come out (or not) in countless situations that happen every single day. The mental calculations (Is this person safe to tell? Can I mention my partner around these folks?) can be exhausting, especially in professional contexts where the “wrong” choice could harm your career.

Some of the aspects wildlifers most love about their profession—remote study locations, tight-knit field crews, attending conferences—are also aspects that can complicate LGBTQ+ wildlifers' decisions about if and when to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. It's different for every person and every situation. Even the most “out and proud” person might go back in the closet when they fear for their safety or their job. The risk of limiting career advancement is real, as are threats to physical safety and security in some situations (e.g., working in remote areas in small groups of people who may not understand LGBTQ+ identities, working in countries where one's sexual orientation or gender identity is illegal). How should an LGBTQ+ wildlife biologist act in a country where their identity is punishable by death? Should they follow their intellectual curiosity (and associated opportunities for professional development) to places they know are discriminatory?

The spectrum concept is again useful here. Rarely is someone either 100% closeted or 100% out (in all situations, to all people, etc.). In social science terminology, identity disclosure is a spectrum from concealment to revealment (Wax et al. 2018). As Figure 8.3 illustrates, an individual may choose to reveal their identity more freely in their personal life or their professional life. To describe some of these intersections of personal/professional “degrees of outness,” we borrow terms from a podcast episode, “Out at Work” (Low and Tu 2017). Under each heading below, we share our personal experiences when we found ourselves in one of these categories—each section was written by one of the authors of this chapter. We urge readers to think about where each of these narratives would belong on Figure 8.3.

Out and Proud: Doesn't Feel the Need to Censor Any Part of Their LGBTQ+ Identity

After coming out while a department head at a large university, I applied for a position as dean of a different prominent natural resources college. I was not offered the job, and there were undoubtedly many good reasons for that decision by the provost, but I was curious for feedback on how I could improve on my interviews for future positions. I contacted a colleague

who was close to the search process. He was kind and thoughtful in his response, but one comment caught me by surprise, and perhaps it should not have: concerns were raised about how alumni might react to a transwoman as dean. Among all the reasons for not getting the job offer, this one made me realize that there are limits to acceptance of trans identities, even in academia. I have encountered similar reactions from other academic and development offices since then. I am out. I am who I am. And that is a problem, but it is not my problem. I will not change who I am to get a job. People with the authority to hire others must become aware of the potential for the gender identity or sexual orientation of an applicant to influence their hiring decisions, consciously or subconsciously, and be bold in advancing those individuals who may face challenges because of their identity.

People Can Tell: Not Formally Out at Work, but Their LGBTQ+ Identity is Implicitly Known

In a recent chat with my lifelong friend—the one I first came out to—I mentioned that it was now 11 years since I had told her. She responded, “It seems almost longer to me because when you told me, it made the most perfect sense!” It didn’t surprise me to hear her say that. I know many people had a hunch well before I officially came out. Is it the clothes I wear, the way I cut my hair, the way I walk and talk? Or something less tangible? We all give off vibes, and something about mine says “gay” to those around me. Regardless of the reason, I realize that even if I haven’t formally come out to a colleague, they can probably tell. Quite honestly, I find it easier that way. When “people can tell,” it lays the groundwork for those moments when “implicitly out” becomes “explicitly out.” It means people aren’t surprised, and I don’t have to try to interpret their reactions.

For the past 11 years, my disclosure decisions have meant that I’m generally “out and proud” in my personal life, and I don’t actively hide my sexual orientation in work situations. Being in the “people can tell” realm leaves room for people to choose to ignore it if they’d rather. But that’s their decision—not mine.

It’s Complicated: Might Like to Be Out at Work, but Some Aspect of the Job Prevents It

A close LGBTQ+ colleague of mine felt forced to enter the closet every time they conducted fieldwork in rural villages. Their work consisted of surveying villagers by entering their houses, sitting down at their kitchen tables, and inquiring about their use of wildlife resources. They interacted with complete strangers in pretty intimate settings day in and day out. My colleague just didn’t feel safe working as an out LGBTQ+ professional in those settings, even while working in a small group. And their insecurity was well placed, as they often encountered outright racism, xenophobia,

and clear homophobia while interviewing people in the comfort of their own homes. To accomplish their work and remain safe, they simply lied about their personal lives when asked (and they were commonly asked if they had a family, spouse, etc.). Such are the compromises we must sometimes make as LGBTQ+ wildlife professionals. Sometimes you don't have the luxury of being out, of being you, and you have to endure the derogatory comments and shame heaped upon you by the people you are there to serve.

Not Out: Closeted on the Job

As a gay wildlife biologist, some of the most challenging situations regarding how "out" I am in the workplace occur in remote field situations. How do I address this topic with new graduate students or employees whom I have not previously met and do not know much about but am within 12 hours of finding myself sharing a one-room cabin or bunkhouse? Ideally, one has access to separate sleeping quarters, but the realities of fieldwork mean that a tiny cabin or cramped bunkhouse may be the only option to escape bears, bugs, rain, and snow. Sharing a room with same-sex subordinates is pretty commonplace in wildlife biology. So what are the guidelines for coming out in such situations? Is it better to state it up front? If so, when? During the interview process? As soon as the technician gets off the plane? During casual conversation over dinner? When you are unpacking your stuff in the shared bedroom? None of these felt like appropriate times to out myself to a new subordinate, and so I often didn't.

There are no clear guidelines for these situations, and I find myself following my gut, making some assumptions, and trying to judge the employee's viewpoints. Correct or not, my focus has always been on minimizing their discomfort, sometimes at my own expense. Thankfully, I've found that most younger wildlife professionals and students are pretty indifferent to the topic; meeting LGBTQ+ people isn't new to them, and they often don't see it as an issue (or they have at least acted convincingly so in my presence). After coming out in an international publication, my hope is that word gets around and people will know I am gay long before we meet. Even so, relying on that assumption is no guarantee, and not outing myself directly does nothing to advance the rights and visibility of LGBTQ+ biologists in our field. Hence, I am left judging each situation individually and responding accordingly, no manual included.

While some of these issues may appear to be personal, the importance of strong working relationships with coworkers, founded on good personal relationships, is extremely important to professional success. This is especially so in remote field camps where just a few coworkers live in an intimate work setting; we rely upon each other for safety, and job success depends heavily on successful teamwork. Consequently, the settings in which LGBTQ+ biologists may be most challenged by revealing their sexual orientation and gender identity are also the places where those challenges may have the biggest impact on job performance, satisfaction, and retention.

It's Irrelevant: LGBTQ+ Identity Has Nothing to Do with the Job

As is the case with many others I know who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, I uncovered my gender identity through a series of realizations over time. As I learned more about the gender spectrum, I refined the way I defined myself—first to myself, then to others. I thought of this internal discovery process as being like a personal philosophy or religion, in that it was not connected to my professional life. My commitment to the mission of my employer had not changed. I could continue all aspects of my work with success and satisfaction, regardless of my gender identity. And so, I did not share this self-discovery with my coworkers, colleagues or community; I shared it only with family and close friends. What's wrong with that? No harm, no foul, right?

Except that as my career matured, I found myself supervising others and serving in the roles of coach and mentor. I realized that other LGBTQ+ wildlifers were looking for role models, seeking acceptance and inclusion in a career field that is exciting, rewarding, important, and too often excludes or fails to embrace the marginalized. If my gender identity truly does not matter to my career, I reasoned, then what's the big deal about disclosing it? I was lucky enough to be in a supportive workplace. I was astonished to experience a release of tension, tension that I did not know I had been holding.

sexual minority students drop out of STEM fields at a higher rate than their heterosexual peers, the proportion of LGBTQ+ wildlife professionals may be lower than in the general US population (Hughes 2018). In fact, we know numerous highly qualified potential contributors who did not want to coauthor this chapter because outing oneself in this profession still has very real and sometimes serious negative consequences in both professional and personal contexts. In a self-perpetuating cycle, the resulting lack of visibility in our profession compounds the problem by leaving LGBTQ+ wildlifers (especially students and young professionals) with few role models and mentors. It also impedes the building of community, peer support, and acceptance that is needed to end this cycle of suppression and discrimination (Figure 8.3).

These biases are not restricted to the wildlife profession; they span many STEM fields. Neuroscientist Dr. Ben Barres (1954–2017) was a transman who experienced both gender discrimination (before he transitioned) and gender privilege (after transitioning) and, therefore, had a unique perspective about how prevalent these issues are in STEM professions (Allen and Daneman 2018; Barres 2006). He wrote about a revealing incident he experienced shortly after his transition, when a faculty member remarked about his previous work (pub-

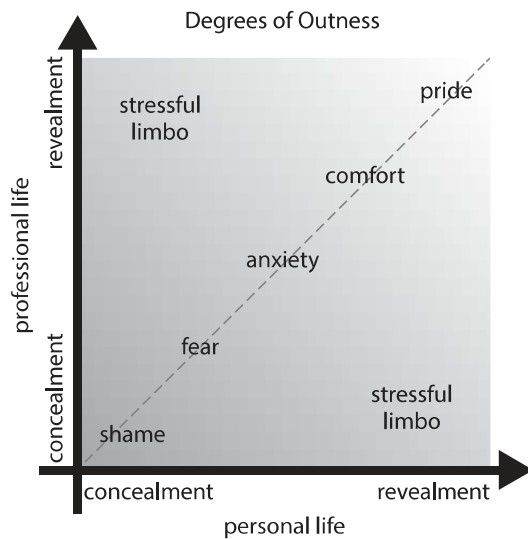


FIGURE 8.3. Because sexual orientation and gender identity can be “invisible” to others, the decision to come out is persistent. LGBTQ+ individuals choose how much of their identity to reveal in both personal and professional contexts—represented by the two axes here. The dashed line indicates congruence between the two contexts. Words within the figure reflect feelings associated with degrees of outness and congruence. We emphasize that these feelings can move around on a given day or in a certain situation. Even if you’ve been out and proud for years, anxiety can still creep in.

lished as Barbara Barres), “Ben Barres gave a great seminar today, but then his work is much better than his sister’s” (Barres 2006).

Legal Protections for the LGBTQ+ Community

Nondiscrimination protection for LGBTQ+ people falls into four main spheres of influence: federal law, state law, municipal ordinances, and employer commitments. Intersecting with these spheres of influence are specific policies or practices related to workplace protections, access to housing, public accommodations, access to credit, and public versus private employment. Regardless of where we work and where we live, these laws and policies affect all of us, wildlifers or not. Most antidiscrimination laws related to the LGBTQ+ community are enacted by individual states, but there are a few (currently contested) federal laws that provide a modest level of protection.

Federal Laws

No formal federal legislation specifically provides protection from discrimination for LGBTQ+ people, but executive orders and court decisions have enabled some protections by interpreting existing laws to include LGBTQ+ populations. Such recent changes have provided protections for some aspects of employment, education, marriage, adoption, and military service, but many of them are being challenged in court. For instance, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was

expanded to include LGBTQ+ federal workers and contractors in 2012 (based on gender identity) and 2015 (based on sexual orientation), but President Trump's administration filed a court brief in 2017 reversing those expansions. The reversal was challenged in court, and the administration's interpretation was overturned by the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in 2018. On June 15, 2020, the US Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the Civil Rights Act protects LGBTQ+ people from discrimination in employment. The ruling did not address protections from discrimination in other areas, such as housing and public accommodation.

In another example, President Obama's administration interpreted the Department of Education's Title IX legislation (which prohibits discrimination based on sex in schools and other institutions that receive federal financial assistance) to include protection based on gender identity. Subsequently, the Trump administration proposed to redefine the legislation to only include protection based on sex assigned at birth. After a legal challenge, the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled that gender identity protections do apply under the Civil Rights Act.

These two examples illustrate that while protections at the federal level do exist, enforcement depends on how the executive branch and the courts interpret existing legislation. While the Civil Rights Act does provide protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in employment, it is silent on other areas of potential discrimination. Hate crimes laws provide some additional protection under the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009. Other nondiscrimination protections vary among states, and these issues continue to be debated in court.

State Laws and Local Ordinances

As of 2019, most US states did not provide clear legal protection against discrimination for LGBTQ+ people. In terms of housing and public access, states vary widely in protecting LGBTQ+ people from discrimination. The passage of what are described as "religious freedom" laws also impacts the LGBTQ+ community, particularly where they apply to private schools and businesses. These laws allow individuals or private entities to deny service to someone based on the provider's religious beliefs—effectively allowing religious beliefs to justify discrimination. Note that the pattern of states with employment protections (prior to June 2020) largely mirrors the map of "religious freedom" legislation (Figure 8.4). The degree to which religious beliefs are used to discriminate against the LGBTQ+ population varies regionally but has had broad

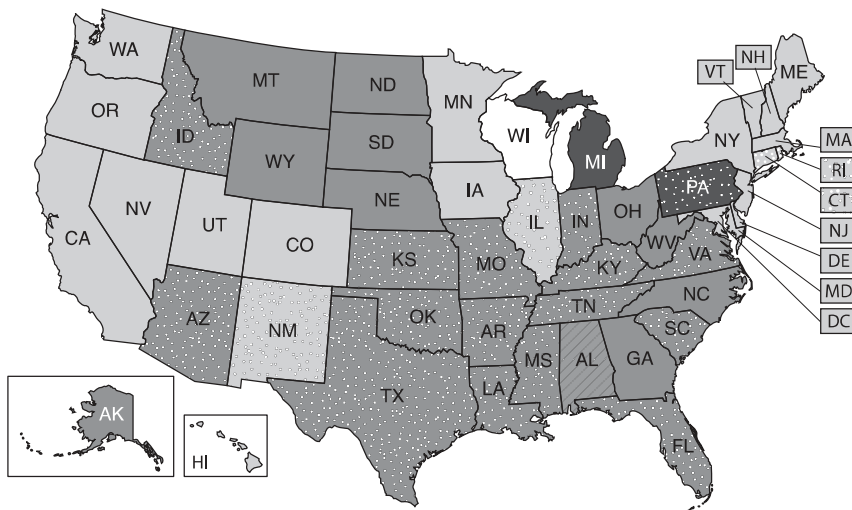


FIGURE 8.4. Employment nondiscrimination and religious exemption laws in the United States as of April 2019; in June 2020 the US Supreme Court ruled in favor of employment protection for LGBTQ+ employees under Section VII of the Civil Rights Act. Religious exemption laws persist in many states and influence LGBTQ+ people’s rights outside of employment.

From MAP (Movement Advancement Project), 2019b, 2019c.

implications nationwide. These sorts of laws make *explicit* discrimination legal in instances of housing and public access, and they may still have implications for hiring LGBTQ+ people despite the June 2020 Supreme Court ruling. Justice Neil Gorsuch, who wrote that majority opinion, recognized that “*the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act as a ‘super statute’ may offer a potential lifeline to employers who object, on religious grounds*” (Totenberg 2020). What is unseen in these maps are the *implicit* biases that employers, supervisors, advisors, and administrators have that accompany these religious beliefs and how they normalize discrimination.

Many cities and counties have nondiscrimination policies protecting LGBTQ+ people, even if the state does not, covering 2%–100% of LGBTQ+ people per state (Figure 8.4; MAP 2019a). Local ordinances have also been passed to allow or prohibit access to public facilities (e.g., restrooms). Consequently, someone may be protected from employment discrimination, but their lived experience in the workplace, school, or community may be complicated by other barriers depending on where they work, live, and even shop. These barriers affect people’s lives, both inside and outside of the workplace.

How Does All of This Relate to LGBTQ+ Wildlife Professionals?

We illustrate how these laws and policies may influence the success of LGBTQ+ people in the wildlife profession by providing examples of policies from states and universities. We assumed that most wildlifers have an educational background in wildlife biology, natural resources, biological sciences, or environmental sciences. Consider the following nondiscrimination policies from two universities that offer undergraduate degrees in biology or related fields.

Oregon State University, in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status in any of its policies, procedures, or practices. (OSU 2019a)

Liberty University does not engage in unlawful discrimination or harassment because of race, color, ancestry, religion, age, sex, national origin, pregnancy or childbirth, disability or military veteran status in its educational programs and activities. Liberty University maintains its Christian mission and reserves its right to discriminate on the basis of religion to the extent that applicable law respects its right to act in furtherance of its religious objectives. (Liberty University 2019)

Examine these two statements from the perspective of a potential LGBTQ+ student. How do they differ? Which one specifically calls out gender identity or expression? Sexual orientation? What exactly does “*reserve the right to discriminate on the basis of religion*” mean? What is the lived experience of a student attending either of these two universities with regard to implicit or explicit bias that they may face? How might that experience influence their success as a wildlife professional, and their interactions with other wildlifers?

Now conduct the same analysis for four potential employers:

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is an Equal Opportunity Employer. LDWF does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, veteran status or any other non-merit factor in any of its programs, activities, services or employment practices including but not limited to, recruitment, pay, hiring, firing, promotion, job assignment, training, leave, layoffs or benefits. (LDWF 2013)

It is the policy of the [California] Department of Fish and Game (Department) to provide equal employment opportunity (EEO) to its employees and job applicants

without regard to age, sex, race, ancestry, political affiliation, disability, religion, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or medical condition. (CDFW 2008)

The Commonwealth [of Massachusetts] provides equal opportunity in state employment to all persons. No person shall be denied equal access because of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or physical/mental disability. (Commonwealth of Massachusetts N.d.)

It is the policy of the State [of Idaho] to ensure equal employment opportunity for all individuals. Discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, pregnancy, military status, or any other characteristic protected by law is prohibited. (Idaho DHR 2019)

Analyze these four statements through the lens of a lesbian. Where would you feel most protected? Do the same analysis through the lens of a transwoman. What exactly is a “*non-merit factor*”? Which states offer explicit protections for lesbians? For transwomen? And keep in mind that all four of these statements come from state Equal Employment Opportunity websites.

Private companies also vary in the degree to which they are explicit in naming LGBTQ+ identities in their EEO statements. Many companies simply state that they are EEO compliant but do not provide an easily found EEO policy. Here is just one example:

The company does not discriminate in employment opportunities or practices because of a person’s race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, veteran status or genetic information. The company also prohibits harassment of any individual on the basis of any of these characteristics. (Georgia-Pacific 2019)

How does The Wildlife Society (TWS) fare in this regard? In its Code of Ethics, standards of professional conduct, members “*shall studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of professional authority for personal satisfaction*” (TWS 2017). Further, TWS’s Bylaws state, “(Section 4): *Composition—the Society shall be composed of professionals, students, and others, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or nationality who are interested in wildlife resources, and who subscribe to the Society’s Objectives and Code of Ethics.*” And further, it calls for “*whistleblower protection for employees*”—reporting of illegal or unethical behavior including “*age, gender or racial*

discrimination, physical assault, sexual harassment” (TWS 2012). Could TWS be more explicit in their protections for LGBTQ+ professionals? We believe that they can and should.

How does your school or workplace support LGBTQ+ students, employees and clients? Do some homework. Look for evidence that shows support (e.g., job announcements, EEO information). Does it exist? How might you improve the language presented for your institution? Your community? What resources are offered by your institution? In your community?

Where Do We Go from Here?

For many LGBTQ+ people in the United States, state-level workplace protection becomes one of many priorities when seeking a job. The relative proportion of self-identified LGBTQ+ people per state at least partially reflects the level of nondiscrimination protections in place. For instance, the estimated population of LGBTQ+ adults in Oregon is 5.6% of the total, similar to California and Massachusetts; all three states had workplace protection legislation prior to the Supreme Court ruling in 2020 (MAP 2019c). Compare those proportions to states that did not, such as Mississippi and South Dakota (2.8%–3.5% of the total population). Local nondiscrimination ordinances are most common in more urban areas, but few wildlife jobs are located there. Regardless of whether this pattern indicates a causal relationship, opportunities for wildlifers are limited when the locations with a high proportion of wildlife jobs are in areas lacking protections that could impact career security and personal safety. Based on our own experiences and our observations of other LGBTQ+ wildlifers, securing employment with public universities, some state agencies, federal agencies, and some nongovernment organizations is likely to provide the strongest workplace protections. Employees in states that lack other protections or that have religious freedom legislation are more likely to experience implicit or explicit bias on a daily basis. Until there is federal legislation that provides full nondiscrimination protection in all facets of life, some will feel free to discriminate against members of our LGBTQ+ community. In the meantime, a concerted effort by administrators, managers, colleagues, faculty, and human resources professionals is needed to both minimize instances of bias in the workplace and advance LGBTQ+ people into leadership positions. Establishing bias response protocols (OSU 2018) and search advocates on hiring committees (OSU 2019b) are two structural approaches to begin addressing issues of discrimination and implicit bias in the workplace. Intentional and effective implementation of such practices by well-trained supervisors, staff,

and administrators is imperative to make a difference, which to us equates to providing improved learning and career opportunities for LGBTQ+ wildlife professionals.

We find it interesting that the animal subjects that most draw our attention in the wildlife field are often those outside the normal bell curve. The elk, grouse, or wolf that does something completely different from its counterparts is the one that attracts our curiosity. These rare phenotypes are sometimes even afforded special legal protections and often, affection from us and society. For example, rare albino deer are protected from harvest in some states. We look forward to the day when such positive attention and protections are afforded to the rare and unique human phenotypes within our own wildlife profession.

Reasons for Hope

Although there is much more work to be done, perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community in the United States have shifted dramatically in a favorable direction over the past several decades. This shift first became evident in the 1990s. A study by Loftus (2001) showed an 18% increase in the number of Americans who reported that “*homosexuality is not wrong at all*” between 1987 and 1998. As attitudes about sexual orientation became more liberal, Americans became less willing to restrict civil liberties of the LGBTQ+ community. In the aforementioned study, the number of respondents who “*would not restrict any civil liberties of homosexuals*” increased by 29% between 1973 and 1998 (Loftus 2001). More recent studies show a continued liberalization of US views toward the LGBTQ+ community. Following the 2015 Supreme Court ruling in favor of same-sex marriage, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, perceived social norms among non-LGBTQ+ Americans shifted toward increased support of gay marriage and gay people (Tankard and Paluck 2017). According to a 2016 Pew Research Center survey, 63% of Americans said that “*homosexuality should be accepted by society*,” compared with 51% in 2006 (Brown 2017). It is no surprise then, that the number of Americans who openly identify as LGBTQ+ continues to rise, with more than 11 million people identifying as LGBTQ+ as of 2017 (Newport 2018).

So far, we have mentioned shifting perceptions and policies toward nonheterosexual individuals, but has the country experienced a similar change when it comes to the transgender community? In general, attitudes toward transgender people are strongly correlated with attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals (Norton and Herek 2013). However, only 0.6% of US adults identify as transgender, making it substantially less likely for non-LGBTQ+ people to knowingly interact with someone who identifies as transgender

(Flores et al. 2016). This lack of familiarity is relevant because those who report having some type of contact or interaction with a transgender individual are more likely to have a positive attitude toward the transgender community as a whole (Norton and Herek 2013). On the positive side, there has been a clear increase in the visibility of transgender individuals in the media over the past decade, which has been associated with increasingly supportive attitudes toward transgender people and policies (Gillig et al. 2018). Despite the early exclusion of transgender issues from the LGBTQ+ rights movement, they have since been included and have catalyzed an explosion of activism and policy changes (Taylor et al. 2018). These policy changes are far-reaching and include the regulation of identity documentation, discrimination and civil rights laws, health care policy, education policy, and criminal justice.

While LGBTQ+ visibility and advocacy hit society at large like a wave, similar changes have been slower to reach STEM fields. LGBTQ+ life science professionals are much less likely to be “out” to their colleagues (Box 8.3), compared to people in their personal life (Yoder and Mattheis 2016; Barres et al. 2017). This disparity is important because those who reported greater openness at work were more likely to feel safe and welcome there, which undoubtedly affects productivity and the potential for collaborations. This lack of visibility also reduces the number of LGBTQ+ mentors and role models available for future generations. Thus, it is unsurprising that LGBTQ+ students drop out of STEM fields at a disproportionately higher rate than non-LGBTQ+ students (Hughes 2018). In response to this lack of visibility in STEM fields, there has been a movement led by online communities to empower and acknowledge LGBTQ+ scientists. Notably, 500 Queer Scientists (500queerscientists.com) has emerged as a visibility campaign for LGBTQ+ people and their allies working in STEM and STEM-supporting professions. The campaign collects and posts individual, self-submitted biographies and stories to build community connections and to provide role models for the next generation. National organizations with similar goals include LGBTQ+ STEM (lgbtstem.wordpress.com) and oSTEM (ostem.org). Within The Wildlife Society, a new initiative called Out in the Field began in 2019, which aimed to increase visibility of LGBTQ+ wildlifers, build a community of LGBTQ+ wildlife professionals, and identify ways to support all LGBTQ+ wildlifers (Olfenbittel et al. 2020). This effort was an organic response by a few wildlife professionals (including some authors of this chapter [Travis L. Booms, Katherine M. O’Donnell, Claire Crow]) to an article (“I Am One of You”) written by Travis Booms in the March/April 2019 edition of the *Wildlife Professional* (Booms 2019). In the article—the first ever in the publication to address LGBTQ+ issues—Booms talked about his experi-

BOX 8.3 Profile of Kelly J., Professional Wildlife Biologist, TWS member

Kelly J. has been a member of The Wildlife Society for 21 years and earned a PhD in Wildlife Ecology from a prominent university in the southern United States. Kelly has authored 16 publications in top-tier journals, has given many presentations at professional society meetings, and now serves as a regional biologist for a state wildlife agency in the western United States. Kelly has received agency awards for their recent work that led to the recovery of an endangered species. Kelly aspires to move into an agency leadership position and is planning to apply for the director position when it is open in a few years. You know Kelly. You have worked with Kelly, attended professional meetings with Kelly, and cited Kelly's papers as the basis for decisions that you make about your own work. But there are some things that you do not know, and will not know, about Kelly.

Kelly is transgender. They transitioned as an undergraduate while earning a BS in biology at a top university in California. Kelly changed all documentation, including their birth certificate. Kelly's doctoral advisor does not know this, nor does their boss, nor do their colleagues. Kelly enjoys running for exercise but has avoided joining their colleagues who go running before work, not wanting to use either of the only two showers in the agency headquarters. Kelly is in a same-sex relationship with Kim, their partner of five years. Kim and Kelly do not live in the same town where either of them works—they live two towns away so that they do not encounter their coworkers while out together. Kim does not accompany Kelly to professional meetings or to social events with coworkers. You may not know these things about Kelly (or the >750 other people like Kelly who work in the wildlife profession in the United States) until they reach a point in their career where they trust that their LGBTQ+ status will not impact their ability to advance in the profession. Then, and only then, may Kelly choose to come out. Or they may not. Many people like Kelly will never come out to their colleagues, which is why we do not know exactly how many LGBTQ+ people there are in our profession. That is why we chose Kelly for this vignette. You may never know who they are. They will not let you.

ence as a gay wildlife biologist and emphasized the need to increase the visibility of LGBTQ+ wildlifers and role models. Recognizing Booms's courage, and seeing something of ourselves in his experience, we were inspired to seek a lasting and positive change in culture starting at the upcoming TWS annual conference. Over the next few months, we planned a social event and created informative tools that supported a safe environment for voluntary visibility of

LGBTQ+ members and allies. We reached out to TWS working groups and leadership, receiving encouragement and financial support. Looking at the 40 places set for the luncheon, we held our breaths, worried about how awkward it might be if only a few people showed up. It was thrilling to watch a crowd arrive that far exceeded the planned space, prompting then-CEO Ed Thompson to order more food and chairs in a clear signal of leadership support. Given the overwhelming support Booms received for the article and the subsequent and continuing success of Out in the Field efforts, it is clear that progress toward LGBTQ+ equity within our profession is moving forward.

Like the broader STEM fields, the wildlife and natural resource professions have room to grow when it comes to increasing the visibility and support of LGBTQ+ individuals. One approach is to create support groups or subcommunities within organizations and professional societies. For example, The Nature Conservancy sponsors an LGBTQ+ employee resources group called Nature's Pride. This group is one of several resources advertised to potential applicants on their website, signaling a welcoming workplace that is likely to attract a diverse applicant pool. Other simple approaches to being more inclusive of LGBTQ+ colleagues at wildlife and natural resource conferences include allowing attendees to have their pronouns (e.g., "they/them", "she/her") indicated on their nametags to reduce misgendering and normalize the practice of including pronouns; sponsoring LGBTQ+ socials to enhance personal and professional networking; choosing host locations that are LGBTQ+ friendly and avoiding those with anti-LGBTQ+ policies (e.g., HB2, a 2016 transgender bathroom bill in North Carolina); and ensuring accessibility to restrooms that align with a person's identified gender, including gender-neutral restrooms. At the annual meeting of the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology, which largely focuses on zoological research, meeting attendees self-organized an LGBTQ+ social that has grown from a small meetup to a gathering of 40–60 people. Although the road ahead is long, there are many opportunities for creative and engaging ways to support LGBTQ+ wildlife biologists and create an environment that celebrates diverse sexual and gender identities.

The message we leave with you is this—any wildlife professional (and, indeed, any member of our society) who does not identify as LGBTQ+ can be more intentional in their support for those of us who do. We are explicitly asking you to do so for the betterment of our society and our profession (Box 8.4). Out yourself publicly as an ally. Educate yourself about the unique challenges your LGBTQ+ colleagues and friends face. Work with us to overcome those challenges. Speak up about the barriers we face and about your out

BOX 8.4 Changing the Climate

Whether you are an ally or a member of the LGBTQ+ community, these are some actions everyone can take to help change the climate for LGBTQ+ people in the wildlife profession.

- **Know your rights.** Know your employer’s policy and what constitutes discriminatory speech, actions, and harassment. Understand whistleblower protection. Know what resources to use if you or someone at work is harassed.
- **Intervene.** When you witness LGBTQ+ discrimination or harassment, call it out. Whether in a duck blind with coworkers who crack a gay joke or at a conference where a colleague inappropriately remarks about another person’s gender identity, identify the statement as unacceptable and show your disapproval, provided you feel safe to do so. Calling out your friends, colleagues, and mentors who venture into the zone of disrespectful language can be terrifyingly difficult. If you fail to do so in the moment, think about how you could have handled it differently and make a plan to do better in the future. Memorize a short, direct statement such as, “That is disrespectful and inappropriate.” Encountering harassment in the moment can be stressful; memorizing and practicing statements is very useful and effective. Taking bystander intervention training can also help you prepare.
- **Be intentional with words.** Use “spouse” or “partner” in place of “wife” or “husband” when inquiring about a colleague’s significant other if you do not know your colleague’s sexual orientation. Use the same words to describe a person that they use to describe themselves.
 - Include your pronouns in introductions: “Hi, my name is Casey and I use ‘she’ and ‘her’ pronouns.” Add your pronouns to your email signature line.
 - If you inadvertently use the wrong pronoun for someone else, quickly correct yourself and go right back to the topic at hand. Mistakes are normal—we are all human. The most respectful action is to acknowledge the mistake without making it the focus of the conversation.
 - Gently correct others when they misgender a person who has told you their pronouns, then go back to the topic at hand. For example, “‘he’ is more appropriate,” or simply state the correct pronoun.
 - Use gender-neutral language like “everybody,” “friends,” “person,” “they”—language that does not assume anyone’s gender. For example, “the person behind the counter” rather than “the woman behind the counter” and “Everybody, may I have your attention” rather than “Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention.”

- **Network.** If your workplace has an LGBTQ+ employee resource group or network, join it. If your workplace does not have such a group, consider starting one. These groups provide mutual support and inclusive social space, advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and build inclusivity in the workplace culture, and support LGBTQ+ events that connect the workplace with the community (McNaught 2017).
- **Lead with empathy.** We collectively are unaware of the secret struggles, strife, and stories that our colleagues bring with them to work, meetings, and conferences. The facade you meet is false; the truth lies much deeper and is harder to see and address. If a colleague is struggling, recognize the struggle but realize you probably can't appreciate it fully. Simply listening and acknowledging what you hear is incredibly valuable.

Scenario: a coworker quotes a religious text (Bible, Koran, etc.) to support their belief that some sexual orientations or gender identities are unnatural, evil, or worse. Do not quote from a religious text in response. Quote (or paraphrase) from your company's policy on valuing diversity and on acceptable and expected behaviors for every employee in your workplace (McNaught 2017). Use your memorized response to harassment: "That statement is disrespectful and inappropriate."

Actions Specifically for Allies

- **Out yourself as an ally.** Proactively bring up LGBTQ+ issues in group settings and make it clear to those around you that you are an ally. If you know out LGBTQ+ colleagues, friends, or family members, find ways to work them into your conversation in a positive way. Unless you clearly out yourself as an ally and do so regularly, those around you will not know.
- **Ask LGBTQ+ people who are out.** Don't assume you are perceived as an ally simply because you identify as one. Ask, "What can I do to be supportive as an ally?"
- **Don't assume a person you just met is cisgender and heterosexual.** Always speak and behave as if someone in your workplace is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (McNaught 2017). If you believe in statistical probability (we presume that's all wildlife professionals), 1 out of the next 20 people you meet will identify as LGBTQ+. You may never know it, but we are here, listening, and present, nonetheless.
- If you suspect a colleague identifies as LGBTQ+, **do not put them on the spot** by asking them directly. The coming out process is different for everyone, but it is always deeply personal. For many, it is also challenging, painful, and lengthy. It is an intensely personal decision that each of us must make (repeatedly) and should only be made by the person leaving the closet. Rather than asking someone about their LGBTQ+ identity, ensure that they know you accept and support

LGBTQ+ people. Express your support in general terms—perhaps by mentioning a relevant news article or talking positively about an (out) LGBTQ+ relative or friend. Allow your colleague/friend/employee to come out when *they* are ready.

- **Practice using they/them/their to refer to one person.** It may feel normal to say, “Not everyone brings their lunch to the office” rather than “Not everyone brings his lunch to the office.” With practice, sentences like “Alicia always brings their lunch to the office” flow easily and sound natural. Use “they” and “their” for anyone who has not told you their pronouns.
- Acknowledge that **some people do not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions** but identify as neither, both, or fluid between the historically accepted male and female genders. They may describe themselves as nonbinary, genderqueer, or gender nonconforming.
- **Do your own research.** Don’t expect the LGBTQ+ person to educate you. It is normal to be curious about people who are different from you in some way, but it is also normal for people to feel upset when the depth of their personality is constantly overshadowed by their gender identity or sexual orientation. The internet provides a wealth of information about LGBTQ+ issues. If you do inquire about their gender(s) or sexuality, be respectful and accept their answer.
- **Take actions that invite trust.** Ask yourself, “What am I doing to make it easier for others to feel safe and valued at work?” (McNaught 2017).
- Keep in mind that everyone has the right to their beliefs, but nobody has the right to impose their beliefs on others. **Speak up** when someone exercises their beliefs at the expense of others, even when the “others” are not present. For example, if someone disparages another person’s sexuality or gender, tell them, “That’s not acceptable here.”
- **Advocate** for workplace equity by communicating with key decision makers in the company, supervisors, and Human Resources. If your employer does not provide diversity training to all employees, or if it does not include LGBTQ+ issues, request such training. If there are no openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer people in your workplace, your workplace may not be welcoming (McNaught 2017).
- **Build a welcoming culture.** Business executives and managers can develop clear policy on LGBTQ+ workplace rights, roles, expectations, and responsibilities, share this policy with all employees, and consistently stand by it with their words and actions. They can lead by example and create a protocol for supporting gender transition. They can provide trainings to educate staff specifically on LGBTQ+ issues and provide gender-neutral restrooms without an assigned sex on the door. Businesses can standardize leave (e.g., ensure parental leave is equally available regardless of sexual orientation, gender expression, or marital status), encourage internal LGBTQ+ resource groups and

networks, create a strong culture of inclusiveness, and support LGBTQ+ issues in the community (Miller-Merrell 2017). These measures support recruitment and retention of LGBTQ+ people.

Scenario: Someone in the workplace comes out to you as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Express your support. Smile and thank them for telling you, ask how you can be supportive (McNaught 2017). Recognize that this is not your story to tell: let them know that you will respect their privacy unless they tell you otherwise.

Additional Actions for LGBTQ+ Wildlifers

- Try not to assume that people with conservative religious beliefs will not welcome you (McNaught 2017).
- Everyone has the right to expect that people will use their correct name and their correct pronouns, and that they will be treated with professionalism and respect in the workplace. It's traumatic to experience harassment at work. As soon as possible, discretely document what happened. You may need to pause to process the injury before reporting it. You may need to reach out to your support network both inside and out of the workplace. If you know others have experienced these kinds of behaviors, consider filing your complaint as a group (J. D. Hollister, personal communication [telephone interview], March 2, 2019).
- Seek out support networks. Find other LGBTQ+ coworkers and wildlife professionals with whom you can confide and find strength. Build a community where none exists or build upon those that are present.

Scenario: your boss is homophobic and transphobic. Don't argue with them about your rights or who you are. Be prepared to report any inappropriate speech or actions to your Human Resources department; document and report, do not let it slide (McNaught 2017).

LGBTQ+ colleagues, especially in group settings and with students, mentees, and supervisees. Go a little out of your way (and possibly your comfort zone) to include illustrative examples of out LGBTQ+ colleagues accomplishing the same tasks as their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts. We can catch the same critters, learn the same methods, and model the same systems as well as anyone else. Our LGBTQ+ status has nothing to do with our ability to complete wildlife-related work tasks. Indeed, our learned experience and hard-earned compassion and appreciation for the innate value of nature's diversity may make us even more effective advocates for the wildlife resources we all dedicate our careers (and often lives) to. The authors of this chapter have each had many people support us in our careers. As a profession, we can do better

for LGBTQ+ individuals and anyone who falls below the privilege line. Want to know how? See Box 8.4. Then ask us.

Resources

- American Civil Liberties Union. www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health.” www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/index.htm.
- Diversity Best Practices resource list. www.diversitybestpractices.com.
- GLAAD resource list. www.glaad.org/resourcelist.
- Human Rights Campaign. www.hrc.org/.
- Movement Advancement Project. 2019. *How Employers Can Support LGBT People in Rural Communities*. www.lgbtmap.org/file/rural-lgbt-employers-recommendations.pdf.
- Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). <https://pflag.org/>.
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Discussion Questions

1. How many LGBTQ+ colleagues or students do you know at work or school? Given the statistics we’ve presented and the number of people you know, how many of your acquaintances likely identify as LGBTQ+?

- If that number is more than the number of LGBTQ+ acquaintances you have, why might that be the case? What actions might you take to more clearly demonstrate that you are an ally or make the environment in which you study or work more accepting and supportive of closeted LGBTQ+ acquaintances?
2. Using Figure 8.2, where do you fit in the privilege spectrum and what traits do you possess that place you there? Perhaps more importantly, what societal (external) and personal (internal) forces provide you that amount of privilege (or lack thereof)? Can you change any of those forces to increase your amount of privilege? Can you change any of those forces to increase the privilege of those around you? If so, which factors and how can you influence them? If you fall into a place of privilege, do you have a moral obligation to help those who do not?
 3. If you have a spouse or partner, think back over the past month of conversations you've had with your coworkers or classmates. How many times did your partner come up in conversation and in what context? Why did they come up? How would your discussions have been different if you withheld the fact that you had a partner? How would that have made you feel? Can you imagine a scenario where you wouldn't feel comfortable divulging the fact that you had a partner? What would that scenario be and why would you feel compelled to hide that information?

Activity: Identity and Pronouns

Learning Objectives: Participants will think about the connection between identity and pronouns, be able to appropriately and comfortably ask for and use individuals' pronouns, practice correctly using the pronouns of others, explain the importance of using the pronouns that an individual identifies with, and understand the importance of how the use of correct pronouns fosters an inclusive environment.

Time: 1–1.5 hr.

Description of Activity

Materials needed: None.

Process:

Part 1: Role Playing (20–30 min.)

The pronouns people use for themselves reflect their gender identity. However, gender identity may not be the same as perceived gender expression. The

pronouns people use for themselves are important and meaningful, and it is respectful to give people the dignity of using their correct pronouns. When someone is comfortable sharing their pronouns with you, that is a sign of trust.

Pronoun Examples:

They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
He	Him	His	His	Himself
Ze/Zie	Zim	Zir	Zis	Zieself
Per	Per	Pers	Pers	Perself
Ey	Em	Eir	Eirs	Eirself

Participants will meet in small groups of 2–3 people to work through the role-playing scenarios, which will involve practicing asking for pronouns, using the correct pronouns, dealing with situations of misgendering (when someone uses the wrong pronoun), and addressing groups without using gendered terms.

Scenario 1: You are meeting a new colleague that was just hired to work with you in the same office. How would you introduce yourself and include your pronouns?

Scenario 2: You are a faculty member teaching in an undergraduate wildlife program. How would you ask your students for their pronouns?

Scenario 3: While having lunch with a couple of new friends, you use the wrong pronoun with one of them. What do you do?

Scenario 4: You're leading a meeting with people from across various management districts. How could you encourage attendees to share their pronouns and use others' pronouns?

Scenario 5: You are about to call to order a large group of people to begin a seminar. How would you do this using gender-neutral or inclusive language? Can you think of several options?

Scenario 6: As a supervisor of a field crew, you are meeting with the crew members in the morning to help everyone plan their work day and overhear one person use the incorrect pronouns for another crew member. What do you do?

Part 2 (30 min.): Have everyone form a larger group and ask for examples of responses to the six scenarios.

Part 3: Debriefing and Discussion Questions (30 min.)

1. What did you learn?
2. How did you feel when thinking about your pronouns?
3. Why is it important for people who do not identify as male or female to have descriptive pronouns? Do you think many people identify as “Other,” which is a common third option when selecting gender on surveys?
4. How would you feel if someone regularly or repeatedly misgendered you by using the incorrect pronouns?
5. What was most surprising about this exercise?
6. Why is using correct pronouns important?
7. How would you use the information you learned or your experience from this activity in your life as a wildlife professional, student, or citizen?

References and Resources

<https://www.glsen.org/article/pronouns-resource-educators>

<https://www.mypronouns.org>

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