



November 7 - December 6, Thursday - Saturday at 7pm and Nov 10, 11, 12 & 23 at 3pm. (Please note: No performances Nov. 13 or Thanksgiving Week, Nov. 24-Dec. 3rd).

Written by Dan Kitrosser
Directed by Kristin Skye Hoffmann

Play Goer Guide for Teachers and Students

Please note this play contains strong themes of sex and violence.



Dear Educator,

Welcome to the Education Guide for Dead *Special Crabs*. Through this guide, we aim to help you create the fullest experience for you and your students. This resource guide includes a range of information, discussion topics, and activities. Each activity is designed to meet New York State Common Core Standards, NYC Blueprint for the Arts and will help foster critical thinking and problem solving skills. We hope that you use these materials to prepare your students for the play and to enhance understanding of the material after the performance.

When seeing the play, please remind your students that this is a live performance and there is certain etiquette that must be followed in order for it to be an enjoyable experience for all. The audience is essentially another character in the play. Just as the actors onstage must listen attentively when onstage, the audience must listen attentively. The actors appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the restroom for intermission. Also, there is no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.

We encourage you and your students to share your thoughts with us! If you have comments or suggestions please email us: ldbernstein@gmail.com

Enjoy the show!

Wide Eyed Productions Education Department

Leonora Bernstein

Stephanie C. Cunningham

Matt Hagmeier



Table of Contents



1. Synopsis of the play
2. Interview with director Kristin Skye Hoffmann
3. Interview with playwright Dan Kitrosser
4. Discussion Points
5. Pre - Show Activities
6. Post Show Activities

Play Synopsis

Dead Special Crabs is a road trip play that follows our protagonist, Loomer, and his best friend June as they drive from Maine to Florida to deliver a brand new tan Corolla to Loomer's sister as a wedding present. Meanwhile, a serial killer is on the loose and seems to be matching Loomer's location step for step. Loomer's Aunt Missy- hires Detective Barney Horntub to track Loomer down in an attempt to protect him, and also to regain control of the car.



Meet the Director



Kristin Skye Hoffmann's directing credits include *Animals* by Sam Byron (WINNER: Outstanding Direction at the New York International Fringe Festival 2012), *Red Light Winter* by Adam Rapp (New School for Drama, Pam MacKinnon Advisor) *Le Pond* by Dan Kitrosser, *The 'You Knows' Know* by Derek Ahonen, *The Accommodation* by Paul Cohen, *Venus in Fur* by David Ives (NSD), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Jackson Rep), *Plays for the Sunni Triangle* and *In Sheeps' Clothing* by Jerrod Bogard. For Wide Eyed Productions: *The Trojan Women*, *The Return of Toodles von Flooz* by Lisa Ferber, *My Daughter Keeps Our Hammer* by Brian Watkins, *Being Late* by Judith Goldsmit, *Outstanding* by Bekah Brunstetter, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's*

Nest by Ken Wasserman, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Medea*. Hoffmann holds a Bachelor's Degree in Performing Arts with a Major in acting & directing. She is the Founding Artistic Director of Wide Eyed Productions. Hoffmann graduated with a directing MFA Candidate from The New School for Drama. She is the Founding Artistic Director of Wide Eyed Productions.

Interview with Director: Kristin Skye Hoffmann

1. Tell us about yourself. Where you were born? Where did you grow up?

I'm very lucky because I have lived all over. I was born in Anchorage, Alaska, where I spent a significant portion of my early years. I have also lived in Hawaii on a coffee farm and Wyoming for a couple of years but the state where most of my family lives is Colorado. I grew up in a little town called Pueblo (Spanish for "town"). It's south of Denver. It is a good town. I love visiting.

2. Did you always know that you wanted to be a director? When did you realize you wanted to be a director?

In elementary school, I was pretty sure I was going to be a famous actress. I asked my mother to enroll me in acting, singing and dancing classes at our local arts center, which she did (thank goodness), and I was on the track to be a grown up artist. I started touring with theatre sports (based out of improv) with an acting class in middle school. When I entered high school, I performed in plays and musicals, as well as their summer district wide productions. Some of my best skills came from classes in interpretive categories, such as

Duet Acting, Drama interp and Poetry interp on the school Forensics team. That was a great learning experience.

It was no surprise that when it came time for higher education I applied to the strongest program in my state. I was so lucky to be accepted into the University of Northern Colorado's Performing Arts Acting program. It was there that I met Wide Eyed founders Liz Latonero and Sky Seals along with many other talented and brilliant artists who have also relocated to NYC. (A few alumni are Broadway performers.)

During my time at UNC I was invited into a selective directing program so I added that to my degree. I received all the basics on how to be a director at UNC, and within their program I discovered a part of theatre arts that I was shocked to find that I loved as much, if not more, than acting. While at UNC, I got my first taste of directing classical work, adaptations, experimental work, a full one-act play and my senior class thesis production. I still held onto that acting dream for a year or two after moving to New York but it became pretty clear early on that directing was where my heart and talent leaned furthest.



3. How did you get involved with *Dead Special Crabs*?

In 2011, I was accepted into The New School for Drama's MFA directing program. NSD is a conservatory-style program that focuses heavily on developing new work and the director/writer collaborative process. For this reason a small directing class is often paired with a similarly small playwriting class. *Dead Special Crabs* author Dan Kitrosser was in my year as a playwright and we hit it off immediately. Together we were in a shared play script analysis class the professor requested that the writers bring in a text and then a director would be assigned and the other members of the class would "act" in the piece as we explored it together in class. Dan brought in *Dead Special Crabs*, a text he had begun before being accepted into graduate school. Another director was assigned to it and I was cast as Aunt Missy. As soon as I read it, I knew I wanted to direct it. I thought it would be perfect for Wide Eyed Productions. After gushing to Dan about how much I loved it, he granted me permission to include the play in a staged reading for the first installation of Wide Eyed Productions' Winks reading series. I directed the reading, and all who were involved had

blast! The cast and audience had a great time at the reading and the company completely fell in love with it. The rest is history!

4. Will you talk about how the script resonated with you personally?

On the basest level, I just love the comedic tone of the play. It is really inspired by the classic comedy of Mel Brooks in movies like *Blazing Saddles*, *Young Frankenstein* and *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*, as well as Jonathan Lynn's movie *Clue* and Robert Moore's film *Murder by Death*. There are jokes everywhere, and not just in the dialogue. There are so many opportunities for comedic elements in the costumes, lights, sound and set designs. And the jokes aren't overly sexual in nature. That is a rarity in texts these days.

What is so special about Dan Kitrosser's writing is that while it is truly hilarious, it is also human and touching. This play is about people trying to overcome fears and deal with their own identities. The world we live in is a mess in terms of trying to find ourselves. Current generations are acting younger for longer periods of time because we are dreaming big and taking longer to figure ourselves out. *Dead Special Crabs* deals with this topic. Dan's ability to hone in on those things is what makes the play timely, special and important.

5. Will you talk about casting for *Dead Special Crabs*? What is your process when casting?

Oh my, I do love casting. I think I really hit it out of the park this time, if I do say so myself. For any play I really want to put together a great ensemble. I use an intuitive method to put together actors with similar sensibilities, meaning they all "get" the tone and humor of the play, but with different experience levels. I like to put together a group that creates a constant exchange of driving each other, and learning from each other. This group is so fun and they really seem to enjoying themselves. I don't have a lot of patience for "diva" actors and I generally err on the side of good personality over a perfect audition. If I don't want to spend 15 minutes with you in a callback, I don't want to be responsible for forcing actors to spend time with them for an entire rehearsal and performance period. No thank you.

6. Can you tell us about choosing and collaborating with your design team? How will the play manifests itself visually?

Choosing a great design team is vital, and once again, I think we nailed it. It is important to me that each designer is first and foremost, excited and inspired by the play. More and more I meet designers that come off with an attitude, like they are doing us a favor and every play is just a job. I can sympathize with that but I'm also not interested in working with those people. Theatre is art and what makes it special is that it is a collaboration of so many different types of artist's visions and sensibilities. I want designers who appreciate the play and who also have specific ideas when I meet with them.

Dead Special Crab's set design is a little more muted; it's inspired by an old Maine crab shack. As a general feeling, the play moves across the country with only one location repeating itself. It was important to Joshua Rose, our set designer and I that nothing was too specific so that it would be easy for the audience to imagine all the different locations without being literal.

The sound design is a vital part to the play. Designer J. Alexander Diaz is already having fun putting together the sound design. Dan has written in a variety of radio moments to convey exposition and he adds some great jokes. Because of this I have invited a few actors from the company to participate in creating the sound. One duo is actually composing a song for the production! There is a lot of music in the play, which makes sense since Dan specializes in musicals. The sound design is very vital as it will convey a variety of locations to the audience as well.

The costume color palette exists within a purple, yellow, black world, simply because that is the way I envision it and our costume designer, Elivia Bovenzi, immediately agreed with my perspective. I'm very excited to see what happens with our lighting design which is done by Cate DiGirolamo. Lighting really can make or break a production so I'm lucky to be in such good hands.

7. When working on a new play, do you have a certain way in which you approach the writer if something is not working?

Writing a play is a vulnerable act and every playwright is different. I'm always careful not to get involved in the premiere of a play if the playwright seems unwilling to examine and analyze their text. More often than not a playwright is eager to figure out how to make their play stronger and clearer but every now and then it can be a real struggle!

Dan and I have worked together a few times now. We kicked off our relationship with *Le Pond*, a devised musical (in our former class). Directing/creating *Le Pond* was a joyful experience. Often the other members of that devised production, reminisces about the process and we feel happy that we created such a wonderful piece and that always reminds me, Dan and I started off with something beautiful. Dan also chose me to direct his thesis play, *The Old Forever New Things*, which was a truly unique and beautiful piece. We worked together a lot on problem solving, editing and rewriting the text. I think, more often than not, it was a smooth process. Dan tells me that I don't let him get away with anything. That

is probably a little annoying for him, but I'm not sorry. I want everything he does to be great so no cutting corners! Not on my watch.

8. What advice would you give to young people who want to direct for the theatre?

See lots of theatre! It is important to figure out what it is you love about theatre and what you want to say as an artist. For me, that came from exposure to the art form. Directing is not about praise or acclaim. It is about telling a story in the most original and effective way. That will always vary from project to project so it is important to have a clear vision of what you want the audience to take away. Something I also think is important is not to lock into any specific methodology. There are too many sensibilities coming together for a director to be overly rigid. Truly finding a balance between commanding a room with confidence and kindness and being open to ideas and collaboration is the biggest trick. If you can do that, you are probably on the right track.



Meet the Playwright

Interview with Playwright: Dan Kitrosser



Dan Kitrosser's plays and musicals have appeared at DR2, P.S. 122, Urban Stages, 45 Bleecker, The Ohio Theatre, Brooklyn Lyceum and American Place Theatre. His children's musical, *Night of the Butterfly*, had an extended Off-Broadway run. He was the recipient of the 2010 Brooklyn Arts Council Grant for his musical *The Legend of Ichabod Crane*. Kitrosser's play *Be Here Now* won the Philadelphia Young Playwrights Festival, and was a finalist in Stephen Sondheim's National Playwriting Competition. He also collaborated with Desiree Burch on her solo comedy *Tar Baby*. He is currently adapting the national bestselling novel *We the Animals* by Justin Torres with Emmy-nominated director Jeremiah Zagar for UnionHZ films. Dan

Kitrosser teaches playwriting to teens and tweens at Writopia Lab and recently earned his MFA in playwriting at the New School for Drama, where he was the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Playwriting Fellow.

1. Tell us about yourself. Where were you born? Where did you grow up, etc...?

I was born in a hospital. While my mother was in labor, apparently the heart and lung monitor declared I had neither a heart nor lungs. Panic set in and it must have been a horrifyingly sad scene, until an intern accidentally kicked the machine, and I was declared healthy again. I will always thank that intern for giving me a heart and lungs.

From there, it took me a little more than 30 years to be as old as I am now. But in that time I watched a lot of television and had a little pony collection. I grew up in Philadelphia and while my brother was the captain of the cross country team, I hated running and became the team's manager. That was a big deal for me, as I recall, I wore a strange hat. Other than that my life was tame.

2. At what point did you know you were going to be a writer?

I don't think I ever thought when I was younger that I would be a writer. But I always knew that I was happiest when I was creating my own little universes and living inside of them. Around puberty, writing became an exertion of that need. I think totalitarian dictators have the same experience.

3. What inspired you to write *Dead Special Crabs*?

I love comedy. I was talking with a student of mine yesterday about comedy--she's writing a hilarious short play. I told her, it needed to get deeper. She said, "But I still want it to be funny." "It will be funny," I told her, "If you go deeper to the extreme." My favorite movies and plays had always been

comedies, and while I had been writing what I would call comedic dramas, there was richness in the flat-out-funny, which I wanted to try. But I didn't know how to access that side of my voice with sheer abandon. The way I remember it, I picked up *A Devil Inside* by David Lindsay-Abaire, read the first page, closed the play and started writing *Dead Special Crabs*. I was in a playwriting class at the time with Julian Sheppard and would bring in ten pages every week, with the goal of trying to make people laugh. After the first act, I found that the jokes could only get funnier if I went deeper with the characters. To the extreme.

4. What would you say the play was about?

My first instinct is to say this: The play is about the characters with the conflicts that they encounter until the play is over.

But my second instinct is to say this: Dan, that's a cop-out. And rude. And a little pretentious.

And my third instinct is to say this: Yeah, but I already wrote the thing. It took me a 127 pages to say what the play was about. If I could widdle it down to a paragraph or sentence, I wouldn't have written the play.

And my fourth instinct--at this point it's not really instinct--is to say: Yes, Dan, it's hard to figure things out simply. It's hard to come to terms that you did all that work--four years of work--to figure out the very simple notion that the play is about coming to terms with who and what you are. And sometimes we are afraid of our very simple truths.

And my fifth instinct says: Are you talking about the play, or are you talking about me?

5. What was the most challenging part of writing this play? What part was the most fun?

I think every play needs to have a thing that almost kills you. Watch *August: Osage County* and that dinner scene. I like to think that Tracy Letts finished the scene, smiled and then passed out.

For me, there is a scene towards the end of the play which breaks out into an all-out farce--people running through rooms, slamming doors, hiding behind the doorways, etc. I used my mother's Russian dolls to map out the scene and it took me forever to write. I finished it, of course, on the day we rehearsed it. And it was hilarious. And then I passed out.



6. Can you describe what you look for in a director?

Ah, what a question. I want a director who hears how I hear it. Who knows when it's a script problem or an acting problem. Who isn't afraid of the hard stuff and knows when things can (every so often) be easy. I want a director who can let the play be the play, because I think I write plays that are good enough to be themselves. And most importantly, I want a director with whom at the end of the night, we can gab about boys. Kristin Skye Hoffmann comes to mind.

7. Who are your favorite playwrights?

The three K's: Kushner (Tony), Kron (Lisa) and Kandolean (Harry). Ibsen, Shaw, Shakespeare, of course. David Lindsay-Abaire thrills me every time; Sondheim would not call himself a playwright, but I will. Loving Thornton Wilder these days and Paula Vogel always makes me feel like I could be smarter. And Sarah Ruhl always makes me think my imagination could expand further. And Doug Wright lets history be fantastical. And John Guare makes fantasy historical! And what about my wonderful colleagues--Zack Friedman, Matt Herzfeld, Sam Byron, Molly Haas-Hooven, Nick Gandiello, Krista Knight-- And my mentors--Julian Sheppard, Laura Maria Censebella, Jon Robin Baitz, Christopher Shinn, Frank Pugliese, Michael Weller. Oh, and my students--Rachel Calnek-Sugin, Amelia Sylvor-Greenberg, Stephanie Okun, May and Leila Treuhaft-Ali, to name a few. There are so many playwrights and we're all doing what Sophocles did. With a little less money.

8. Do you find seeing plays helpful?

You have to see plays. Even the ones that don't work. You have to see them and you have to be critical and then you have to be caught off guard and then you have to fall in love and then you have to be devastated when they are over. You have to always be pushing your own boundaries and limits. As a playwright you can't get too comfortable with your style, form, and approach.

You know who else is comfortable? Dead people.

9. What advice would you give to a young person who wants to write for theatre?

Be Patient and Don't Wait.

Be patient.

They may not produce your play right away. They may not read your play right away. They may never produce your play and they may never read your play. But there will be someone, I promise you, there will be someone, if you keep writing, and sharing it to friends, colleagues, festivals, producers, actors, directors, designers, teachers, there will be someone who likes it. But it takes time because there are a lot of things people need to do every day. They have to decide what to have for lunch and to pay the cable bill and whether or not they are going to have kids and they already promised this really close friend that they were going to read their novel. It takes time for all of those people who act like they are so important to realize that you are in fact much more important than they. It took me a long time to find some of those people for me, and even still, I have to be patient.

Don't wait.

You don't need anyone's permission to write and surprise, surprise, you don't need anyone's permission to put on your work. I know, I know. "But Dan, I don't want to do it, I want someone else to produce it, because that will give it merit." Did you not read what I wrote in the "be patient" section? They don't know who you are yet! You have to tell them! And putting up your own work is how you do it. It's what Shakespeare did. It's what Kushner did. And all those folks at Naked Angels (my mentors). It's what I did. And I'll tell you something, if you don't do it. If you just submit your work and wait, fingers crossed, your next play will not be better than its former. Because you didn't learn what worked and what didn't- by putting it up on its feet. Get your work out there, be relentless and tireless. It's a big beautiful world.

So: Be Patient and Don't Wait.

10. What are you working on now besides the production of *Dead Special Crabs*?

It's a delightfully busy time. I'm in the process of finishing the screenplay adaption of Justin Torres' beautiful novel *We the Animals* which will shoot in the summer. I'm part of Terra Nova Collective's Groundbreakers Playwrights Group where I'm working on a new play called *Third Person* about a man who is struck by lightning and narrates his life. On the television front, Fox optioned a play of mine called *The Mumbblings* and I'm working on turning it into a television series. There are a couple of things on the back burner as well, so as a writer I'm grateful there are things to do. Otherwise, I'd just go back to watching *Murder She Wrote*. Did you know the whole series is on Netflix?



Discussion Topics



Part I – Sexual Orientation

1. When Loomer first tells June his important secret, that he is a homosexual, June says “I’ve always known you were homosexual.” “Everyone knows you’re a homosexual.” Do you think Loomer’s sexual orientation is important to June? Do you think sexual orientation matters with friendships?
2. What are the differences between Loomer, Virgil and Walter’s coming out stories?
3. Are there assumptions made in *Dead Special Crabs* about certain character’s sexual orientation?
4. Have assumptions ever been made about your sexual orientation?
5. Have you ever been in a position where someone questioned your sexual orientation?
6. How does sexual orientation influence the character’s choices? Where does this matter? And where doesn’t it matter?

Part II – Hero’s Journey

1. The playwright, Dan Kitrosser has this quote listed in the script of his play
 “It’s amusing the way in which the landscape and the conditions of the environment match the readiness of the hero. The adventure he is ready for is the one that he gets.” --Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*: -----Do you agree with this quote? Why or Why not?
2. Who do you think is a hero in *Dead Special Crabs* ?
3. What is your definition of a hero’s journey?
4. Do you think Loomer undertook a hero’s journey?
5. Besides Loomer who in *Dead Special Crabs* do you feel is true to themselves? And why do you think they are true to themselves? Which characters have not been true to themselves?

6. Would you call the journey that Aunt Missy took a hero's journey? Why or Why not?
7. Can you name some plays and movies that focus on a hero's journey?

Part III – Miscellaneous Topics

1. How does Aunt Missy's Crunken the crab story parallel what is going on in the play?
2. In *Dead Special Crabs* violence is betrayed in a humorous way, what make violence funny? Do you find violence portrayed as funny effective in art?





Pre – Show Activity #1

Dead Special Crabs Pre-Show Activity Character Packs

Introduction to main characters of *Dead Special Crabs*

Purpose: To introduce students to the characters in *Dead Special Crabs*. This lesson should be used in the classroom before the students have seen the play.

Grade Level: 11th and above

Objectives: Students will:

1. Work in small groups and negotiate creative choices.
2. Become familiar with characters from *Dead Special Crabs*.
3. Use problem solving and critical thinking skills to form hypotheses about characters from *Dead Special Crabs*.

Materials Needed: 5 boxes or large manila envelopes, filled with items that will represent the characters (or pictures of the actual objects). Also inside the box are lines of dialogue that each of the characters speak. See last page of this activity, for how to create Character Boxes/Envelopes. You will also need:

5 pieces of paper

5 pens or pencils

5 pieces of paper, each piece of paper has written in bold each character name - , Loomer, Aunt Missy, June, Detective Horntub and Virgil – This is the answer key

Chalkboard, Whiteboard or Large Pad

Prior Knowledge: No prior knowledge is necessary for this lesson.

Duration: 30 - 45 minutes

Procedure:

1. Before class make the character boxes. Instructions and items needed on last page.
2. Before class make the answer key this is on 5 separate pieces of paper. To make the key write down each of the characters names. You will have one page for Loomer, Aunt Missy, June, Detective Horntub and Virgil.
3. Divide Class up into 5 groups and hand our character packs.
4. Give each group a piece of paper and pencil.
5. Tell the group to pick a group presenter.
6. Ask the groups to open up their box; they are to examine the contents of it.

7. Ask them to write down the clues this box gives them about the person who owns these items. To get them started use some of these questions: (Give them around 10-15 mins)
 1. Does this person have a job? (If so where do they work?)
 2. Are they married? Are they in love?
 3. Look at the line of dialogue on the strip of paper, does this tell you anything about the character?
 4. What do you imagine their personality is like?
8. Have a class discussion, start with group 1 ask the group leader what they learned about their character? Did they find out if their character was male or female? What do they think the name of their character is? Write on the board what they learned about their character. Then (with the answer key) show the name of the character to the class.
9. Repeat this with all of the groups.
10. Have each student journal or free write- on the questions: What would they like to learn about all of these characters? What do they hope to discover upon seeing the play?

Modifications: If you cannot find items for boxes, use pictures of items.

Assessment/Reflection:

What questions do they have about *Dead Special Crabs*? What do they hope to discover upon seeing the play?



Character Packs

1. Procure 5 large manila envelopes or 5 shoe boxes.
2. Label each box or envelope as Character 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, the number will correspond to the character. The students will not know the name of the character they will only see the number on the box/envelope.
3. Add the items below inside each box/envelope.

Character #1 – Loomer

Car Keys

Road map of the U.S. (eastern seaboard)

Pamphlet – (Attached to the end of this guide–print out the last 6 pages.)

(On a slip of paper write/type this line of dialogue)- *What about the possibility of love?*

Character #2 – Aunt Missy

Cigarette

Crab

Picture of a Toyota Corolla (or mid-sized sedan car)

Bingo Card

(On a slip of paper write/type this line of dialogue)- *I love the sea. And I love crabs. And I never go in the first and I always kill the second.*

Character#3 – June

A self-help book (any variety will do)

Flashlight

A bank deposit slip from a bank with total of \$10,000

(On a slip of paper write/type this line of dialogue) – *I believe in light, Kathy.*

Charcter#4 – Detective Horntub

Small notebook and pencil

Soda can

Folder -written on the outside Background Checks

(On a slip of paper write/type this dialogue)- *You ever heard of that word, Aunt Missy? A hunch?*

Charcter#5 – Virgil

Metamucil

Book of poems

Microphone

(On a slip of paper write/type this dialogue) – *My pain is one too great for this earth. I should just end it all.*

Pre-Show Activity #2



Dead Special Crabs Pre-Show Activity How a Playwright Creates Conflict Introduction to conflict writing and *Dead Special Crabs*

Purpose: Students create dramatic conflict through writing short scenes.

Grade Level: 11th and above

Objectives: Students will:

1. Work in pairs and negotiate creative choices.
2. Write lines of dialogue.
3. Create a tableau of a production photo.

Materials Needed

Paper, pencils or pens, pictures in this guide

Prior Knowledge: No prior knowledge is necessary for this lesson.

Duration: 30 - 45 minutes

Procedure:

1. Show production photos from *Dead Special Crabs* (images throughout this guide)
2. Inform students that this play is about relationships and several different relationships conflicts, with family, friends, and lovers.
3. Have students create a tableau of production photos, ask the students to improvise a line of dialogue.
4. Divide students up into pairs.
5. Ask students to write four lines of dialogue for the characters in that moment.
6. When all students have finished, ask them to imagine what was happening ten minutes before this photo was taken and have them write several lines of dialogue from that moment.
7. Have students perform each other's dialogue for the class.
8. Discuss from each piece the conflict that was created and how it developed.

Assessment/Reflection:

Do the students have some of the same conflicts? What conflicts do they think they will see in *Dead Special Crabs*?

Post Show Activity #1



Dead Special Crabs Post-Show Activity Titles & Themes

Purpose: Students explore the many themes contained within the play through creation of a new title for the play.

Grade Level: 11th and above

Objectives: Students will:

1. Work in small groups and negotiate creative choices.
2. Discuss themes from *Dead Special Crabs*.
3. Use problem solving and critical thinking skills to create a new title for *Dead Special Crabs*.

Materials Needed:

5 pieces of paper

5 pens or pencils

Prior Knowledge: Have seen or read *Dead Special Crabs*.

Duration: 15- 30 minutes

Procedure:

1. Divide the students into groups.
2. Ask each group to create a new title for the plays based upon what they feel are the strongest themes.
3. Have students present their new titles and why they have chosen to describe the play in this manner.
4. Discuss what groups have similar titles and/or reasons for choosing these titles. How is each title different?

Assessment/Reflection:

Were the students able to reflect an understanding of the main themes in titles of the play?

Post Show Activity #2



Dead Special Crabs Post-Show Activity

Internal Character Conflict

Purpose: Students explore outside expectations faced by characters that are conflicted by the expectations that they must meet.

Grade Level: 11th and above

Objectives: Students will:

1. Work in pairs.
2. Discuss internal conflict of characters from *Dead Special Crabs*.
3. Use problem solving and critical thinking skills to create short sketches.

Materials Needed: paper and pencils

Prior Knowledge: Have seen or read *Dead Special Crabs*

Duration: 45- 60 minutes

Procedure:

1. Discuss the outside expectations faced by some of the characters from *Dead Special Crabs* (Loomer, Aunt Missy, Walter, June) what did they think was expected of them? How was each character conflicted about meeting these expectations? Where these characters true to themselves? What happened as a result of these expectations and conflicts?
2. Have students write their own original character, who is conflicted about the expectations that they must meet? (Make sure they include who the character is- name, age, gender, occupation) Have the students list 2 expectations the character must live up to.
3. Divide students up into pairs.
4. In pairs the students improvise, one student plays their conflicted character and the other plays his/her therapist. The therapist's objective is to ask questions and learn about the conflict from the expectations. The character's objective is to find a resolution for the conflict.

Assessment/Reflection:

Were the students able to reflect on the *Dead Special Crabs* characters' external and internal conflicts? Did the students come up with their own character and conflicts?



Resources

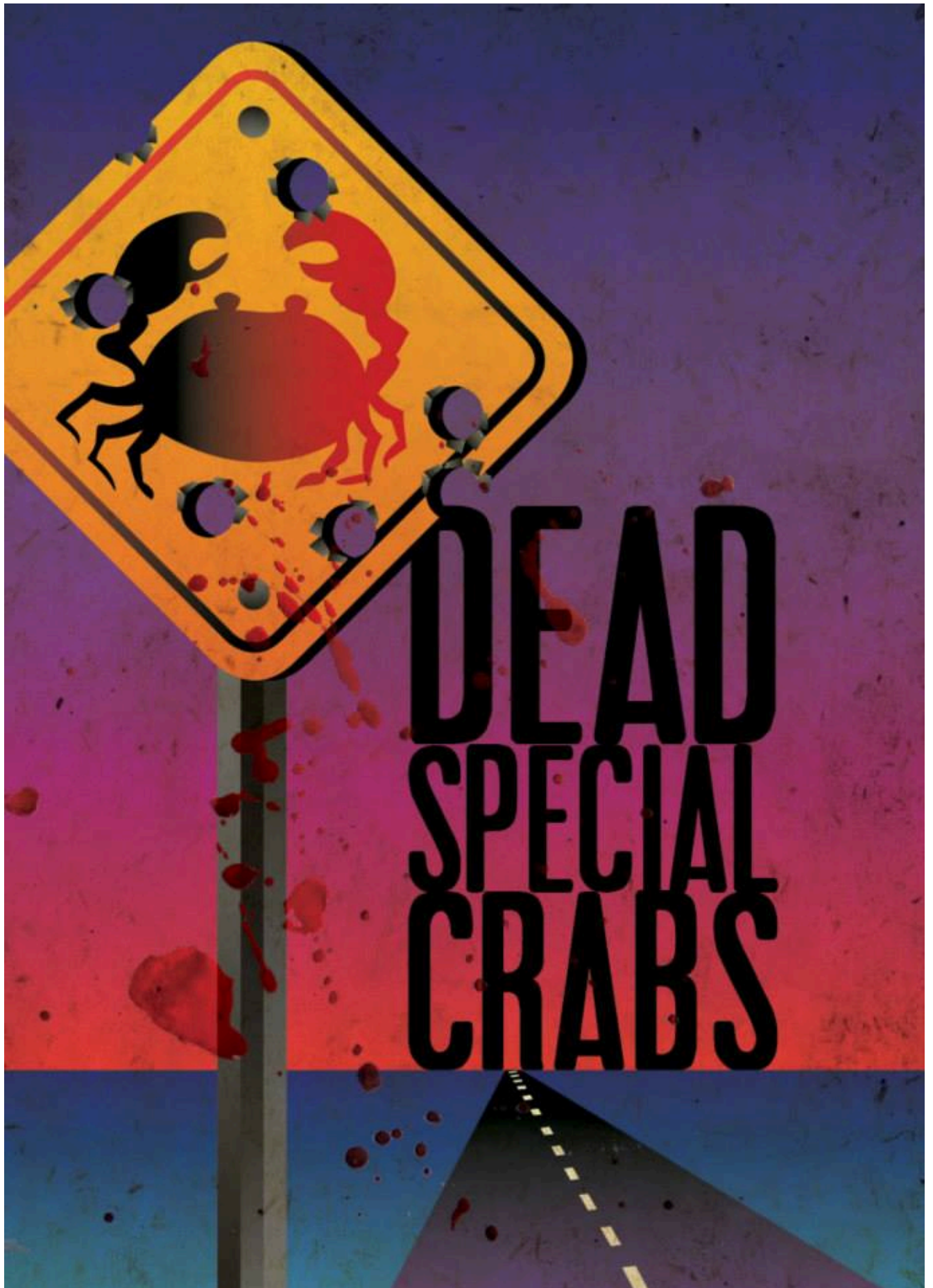
These resources were consulted in the creation of this Education Guide.

On the Web:

Brochure Downloaded from American Psychological Association <http://www.apa.org/>









AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

Answers to Your Questions

FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION & HOMOSEXUALITY

Since 1975, the American Psychological Association has called on psychologists to take the lead in removing the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientations. The discipline of psychology is concerned with the well-being of people and groups and therefore with threats to that well-being. The prejudice and discrimination that people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual regularly experience have been shown to have negative psychological effects. This pamphlet is designed to provide accurate information for those who want to better understand sexual orientation and the impact of prejudice and discrimination on those who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

What is sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions. Research over several decades has demonstrated that sexual orientation ranges along a continuum, from exclusive attraction to the other sex to exclusive attraction to the same sex. However, sexual orientation is usually discussed in terms of three categories: heterosexual (having emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of the other sex), gay/lesbian (having emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of one's own sex), and bisexual (having emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to both men and women). This range of behaviors and attractions has been described in various cultures and nations throughout the world. Many cultures use identity labels to describe people who express these attractions. In the United States the most frequent labels are *lesbians* (women attracted to women), *gay men* (men attracted to men), and *bisexual people* (men or women attracted to both sexes). However, some people may use different labels or none at all.

Sexual orientation is distinct from other components of sex and gender, including biological sex (the anatomical, physiological,

and genetic characteristics associated with being male or female), gender identity (the psychological sense of being male or female),* and social gender role (the cultural norms that define feminine and masculine behavior).

Sexual orientation is commonly discussed as if it were solely a characteristic of an individual, like biological sex, gender identity, or age. This perspective is incomplete because sexual orientation is defined in terms of relationships with others. People express their sexual orientation through behaviors with others, including such simple actions as holding hands or kissing. Thus, sexual orientation is closely tied to the intimate personal relationships that meet deeply felt needs for love, attachment, and intimacy. In addition to sexual behaviors, these bonds include nonsexual physical affection between partners, shared goals and values, mutual support, and ongoing commitment. Therefore, sexual orientation is not merely a personal characteristic within an individual. Rather, one's sexual orientation defines the group of people in which one is likely to find the satisfying and fulfilling romantic relationships that are an essential component of personal identity for many people.

How do people know if they are lesbian, gay, or bisexual?

According to current scientific and professional understanding, the core attractions that form the basis for adult sexual orientation typically emerge between middle childhood and early adolescence. These patterns of emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction may arise without any prior sexual experience. People can be celibate and still know their sexual orientation—be it lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual.

Different lesbian, gay, and bisexual people have very different experiences regarding their sexual orientation. Some people know that they are lesbian, gay, or bisexual for a long

* This brochure focuses on sexual orientation. Another APA brochure, *Answers to Your Questions About Transgender Individuals and Gender Identity*, addresses gender identity.

time before they actually pursue relationships with other people. Some people engage in sexual activity (with same-sex and/or other-sex partners) before assigning a clear label to their sexual orientation. Prejudice and discrimination make it difficult for many people to come to terms with their sexual orientation identities, so claiming a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity may be a slow process.

What causes a person to have a particular sexual orientation?

There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.

What role do prejudice and discrimination play in the lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people?

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in the United States encounter extensive prejudice, discrimination, and violence because of their sexual orientation. Intense prejudice against lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people was widespread throughout much of the 20th century. Public opinion studies over the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s routinely showed that, among large segments of the public, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people were the target of strongly held negative attitudes. More recently, public opinion has increasingly opposed sexual orientation discrimination, but expressions of hostility toward lesbians and gay men remain common in contemporary American society. Prejudice against bisexuals appears to exist at comparable levels. In fact, bisexual individuals may face discrimination from some lesbian and gay people as well as from heterosexual people.

Sexual orientation discrimination takes many forms. Severe antigay prejudice is reflected in the high rate of harassment and violence directed toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals in American society. Numerous surveys indicate that verbal harassment and abuse are nearly universal experiences

among lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Also, discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in employment and housing appears to remain widespread.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is another area in which prejudice and discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people have had negative effects. Early in the pandemic, the assumption that HIV/AIDS was a “gay disease” contributed to the delay in addressing the massive social upheaval that AIDS would generate. Gay and bisexual men have been disproportionately affected by this disease. The association of HIV/AIDS with gay and bisexual men and the inaccurate belief that some people held that all gay and bisexual men were infected served to further stigmatize lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

What is the psychological impact of prejudice and discrimination?

Prejudice and discrimination have social and personal impact. On the social level, prejudice and discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are reflected in the everyday stereotypes of members of these groups. These stereotypes persist even though they are not supported by evidence, and they are often used to excuse unequal treatment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. For example, limitations on job opportunities, parenting, and relationship recognition are often justified by stereotypic assumptions about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

On an individual level, such prejudice and discrimination may also have negative consequences, especially if lesbian, gay, and bisexual people attempt to conceal or deny their sexual orientation. Although many lesbians and gay men learn to cope with the social stigma against homosexuality, this pattern of prejudice can have serious negative effects on health and well-being. Individuals and groups may have the impact of stigma reduced or worsened by other characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, or disability. Some lesbian, gay, and bisexual people may face less of a stigma. For others, race, sex, religion, disability, or other characteristics may exacerbate the negative impact of prejudice and discrimination.

The widespread prejudice, discrimination, and violence to which lesbians and gay men are often subjected are significant mental health concerns. Sexual prejudice, sexual orientation discrimination, and antigay violence are major

sources of stress for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Although social support is crucial in coping with stress, antigay attitudes and discrimination may make it difficult for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to find such support.

Is homosexuality a mental disorder?

No, lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientations are not disorders. Research has found no inherent association between any of these sexual orientations and psychopathology. Both heterosexual behavior and homosexual behavior are normal aspects of human sexuality. Both have been documented in many different cultures and historical eras. Despite the persistence of stereotypes that portray lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as disturbed, several decades of research and clinical experience have led all mainstream medical and mental health organizations in this country to conclude that these orientations represent normal forms of human experience. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual relationships are normal forms of human bonding. Therefore, these mainstream organizations long ago abandoned classifications of homosexuality as a mental disorder.

What about therapy intended to change sexual orientation from gay to straight?

All major national mental health organizations have officially expressed concerns about therapies promoted to modify sexual orientation. To date, there has been no scientifically adequate research to show that therapy aimed at changing sexual orientation (sometimes called reparative or conversion therapy) is safe or effective. Furthermore, it seems likely that the promotion of change therapies reinforces stereotypes and contributes to a negative climate for lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. This appears to be especially likely for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals who grow up in more conservative religious settings.

Helpful responses of a therapist treating an individual who is troubled about her or his same-sex attractions include helping that person actively cope with social prejudices against homosexuality, successfully resolve issues associated with and resulting from internal conflicts, and actively lead a happy and satisfying life. Mental health professional organizations call on their members to respect a person's (client's) right to self-determination; be sensitive to the client's race, culture, ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, language, and disability status when working with that client; and eliminate biases based on these factors.

What is "coming out" and why is it important?

The phrase "coming out" is used to refer to several aspects of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons' experiences: self-awareness of same-sex attractions; the telling of one or a few people about these attractions; widespread disclosure of same-sex attractions; and identification with the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community. Many people hesitate to come out because of the risks of meeting prejudice and discrimination. Some choose to keep their identity a secret; some choose to come out in limited circumstances; some decide to come out in very public ways.

Coming out is often an important psychological step for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Research has shown that feeling positively about one's sexual orientation and integrating it into one's life fosters greater well-being and mental health. This integration often involves disclosing one's identity to others; it may also entail participating in the gay community. Being able to discuss one's sexual orientation with others also increases the availability of social support, which is crucial to mental health and psychological well-being. Like heterosexuals, lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people benefit from being able to share their lives with and receive support from family, friends, and acquaintances. Thus, it is not surprising that lesbians and gay men who feel they must conceal their sexual orientation report more frequent mental health concerns than do lesbians and gay men who are more open; they may even have more physical health problems.

What about sexual orientation and coming out during adolescence?

Adolescence is a period when people separate from their parents and families and begin to develop autonomy. Adolescence can be a period of experimentation, and many youths may question their sexual feelings. Becoming aware of sexual feelings is a normal developmental task of adolescence. Sometimes adolescents have same-sex feelings or experiences that cause confusion about their sexual orientation. This confusion appears to decline over time, with different outcomes for different individuals.

Some adolescents desire and engage in same-sex behavior but do not identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, sometimes because of the stigma associated with a nonheterosexual orientation. Some adolescents experience continuing feelings of same-sex attraction but do not engage in any sexual activity or may engage in heterosexual behavior for varying lengths of time. Because of the

ORG
A

stigma associated with same-sex attractions, many youths experience same-sex attraction for many years before becoming sexually active with partners of the same sex or disclosing their attractions to others.

For some young people, this process of exploring same-sex attractions leads to a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. For some, acknowledging this identity can bring an end to confusion. When these young people receive the support of parents and others, they are often able to live satisfying and healthy lives and move through the usual process of adolescent development. The younger a person is when she or he acknowledges a nonheterosexual identity, the fewer internal and external resources she or he is likely to have. Therefore, youths who come out early are particularly in need of support from parents and others.

Young people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual may be more likely to face certain problems, including being bullied and having negative experiences in school. These experiences are associated with negative outcomes, such as suicidal thoughts, and high-risk activities, such as unprotected sex and alcohol and drug use. On the other hand, many lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths appear to experience no greater level of health or mental health risks. Where problems occur, they are closely associated with experiences of bias and discrimination in their environments. Support from important people in the teen's life can provide a very helpful counterpart to bias and discrimination.

Support in the family, at school, and in the broader society helps to reduce risk and encourage healthy development. Youth need caring and support, appropriately high expectations, and the encouragement to participate actively with peers. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth who do well despite stress—like all adolescents who do well despite stress—tend to be those who are socially competent, who have good problem-solving skills, who have a sense of autonomy and purpose, and who look forward to the future.

In a related vein, some young people are presumed to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual because they don't abide by traditional gender roles (i.e., the cultural beliefs about what is appropriate "masculine" and "feminine" appearance and behavior). Whether these youths identify as heterosexual or as lesbian,

gay, or bisexual, they encounter prejudice and discrimination based on the presumption that they are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. The best support for these young people is school and social climates that do not tolerate discriminatory language and behavior.

At what age should lesbian, gay, or bisexual youths come out?

There is no simple or absolute answer to this question. The risks and benefits of coming out are different for youths in different circumstances. Some young people live in families where support for their sexual orientation is clear and stable; these youths may encounter less risk in coming out, even at a young age. Young people who live in less supportive families may face more risks in coming out. All young people who come out may experience bias, discrimination, or even violence in their schools, social groups, work places, and faith communities. Supportive families, friends, and schools are important buffers against the negative impacts of these experiences.

What is the nature of same-sex relationships?

Research indicates that many lesbians and gay men want and have committed relationships. For example, survey data indicate that between 40% and 60% of gay men and between 45% and 80% of lesbians are currently involved in a romantic relationship. Further, data from the 2000 U.S. Census indicate that of the 5.5 million couples who were living together but not married, about 1 in 9 (594,391) had partners of the same sex. Although the census data are almost certainly an underestimate of the actual number of cohabiting same-sex couples, they indicate that there are 301,026 male same-sex households and 293,365 female same-sex households in the United States.

Stereotypes about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people have persisted, even though studies have found them to be misleading. For instance, one stereotype is that the relationships of lesbians and gay men are dysfunctional and unhappy. However, studies have found same-sex and heterosexual couples to be equivalent to each other on measures of relationship satisfaction and commitment.

A second stereotype is that the relationships of lesbians, gay men and bisexual people are unstable. However, despite social hostility toward same-sex relationships, research shows

that many lesbians and gay men form durable relationships. For example, survey data indicate that between 18% and 28% of gay couples and between 8% and 21% of lesbian couples have lived together 10 or more years. It is also reasonable to suggest that the stability of same-sex couples might be enhanced if partners from same-sex couples enjoyed the same levels of support and recognition for their relationships as heterosexual couples do, i.e., legal rights and responsibilities associated with marriage.

A third common misconception is that the goals and values of lesbian and gay couples are different from those of heterosexual couples. In fact, research has found that the factors that influence relationship satisfaction, commitment, and stability are remarkably similar for both same-sex cohabiting couples and heterosexual married couples.

Far less research is available on the relationship experiences of people who identify as bisexual. If these individuals are in a same-sex relationship, they are likely to face the same prejudice and discrimination that members of lesbian and gay couples face. If they are in a heterosexual relationship, their experiences may be quite similar to those of people who identify as heterosexual unless they choose to come out as bisexual; in that case, they will likely face some of the same prejudice and discrimination that lesbian and gay individuals encounter.

Can lesbians and gay men be good parents?

Many lesbians and gay men are parents; others wish to be parents. In the 2000 U.S. Census, 33% of female same-sex couple households and 22% of male same-sex couple households reported at least one child under the age of 18 living in the home. Although comparable data are not available, many single lesbians and gay men are also parents, and many same-sex couples are part-time parents to children whose primary residence is elsewhere.

As the social visibility and legal status of lesbian and gay parents have increased, some people have raised concerns about the well-being of children in these families. Most of these questions are based on negative stereotypes about lesbians and gay men. The majority of research on this topic asks whether children raised by lesbian and gay parents are at a disadvantage when compared to children raised by heterosexual parents. The most common questions and answers to them are these:

1 Do children of lesbian and gay parents have more problems with sexual identity than do children of heterosexual parents?

For instance, do these children develop problems in gender identity and/or in gender role behavior? The answer from research is clear: sexual and gender identities (including gender identity, gender-role behavior, and sexual orientation) develop in much the same way among children of lesbian mothers as they do among children of heterosexual parents. Few studies are available regarding children of gay fathers.

2 Do children raised by lesbian or gay parents have problems in personal development in areas other than sexual identity?

For example, are the children of lesbian or gay parents more vulnerable to mental breakdown, do they have more behavior problems, or are they less psychologically healthy than other children? Again, studies of personality, self-concept, and behavior problems show few differences between children of lesbian mothers and children of heterosexual parents. Few studies are available regarding children of gay fathers.

3 Are children of lesbian and gay parents likely to have problems with social relationships?

For example, will they be teased or otherwise mistreated by their peers? Once more, evidence indicates that children of lesbian and gay parents have normal social relationships with their peers and adults. The picture that emerges from this research shows that children of gay and lesbian parents enjoy a social life that is typical of their age group in terms of involvement with peers, parents, family members, and friends.

4 Are these children more likely to be sexually abused by a parent or by a parent's friends or acquaintances?

There is no scientific support for fears about children of lesbian or gay parents being sexually abused by their parents or their parents' gay, lesbian, or bisexual friends or acquaintances.

In summary, social science has shown that the concerns often raised about children of lesbian and gay parents—concerns that are generally grounded in prejudice against and stereotypes about gay people—are unfounded. Overall, the research indicates that the children of lesbian and gay parents do not differ markedly from the children of heterosexual parents in their development, adjustment, or overall well-being.

What can people do to diminish prejudice and discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people?

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people who want to help reduce prejudice and discrimination can be open about their sexual orientation, even as they take necessary precautions to be as safe as possible. They can examine their own belief systems for the presence of antigay stereotypes. They can make use of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community—as well as supportive heterosexual people—for support.

Heterosexual people who wish to help reduce prejudice and discrimination can examine their own response to antigay stereotypes and prejudice. They can make a point of coming to know lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, and they can work with lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals and communities to combat prejudice and discrimination. Heterosexual individuals are often in a good position to ask other heterosexual people to consider the prejudicial or discriminatory nature of their beliefs and actions. Heterosexual allies can encourage nondiscrimination policies that include sexual orientation. They can work to make coming out safe. When lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people feel free to make public their sexual orientation, heterosexuals are given an opportunity to have personal contact with openly gay people and to perceive them as individuals.

Studies of prejudice, including prejudice against gay people, consistently show that prejudice declines when members of the majority group interact with members of a minority group. In keeping with this general pattern, one of the most powerful influences on heterosexuals' acceptance of gay people is having personal contact with an openly gay person. Antigay attitudes are far less common among members of the population who have a close friend or family member who is lesbian or gay, especially if the gay person has directly come out to the heterosexual person.

Suggested Bibliographic Citation:

American Psychological Association. (2008). Answers to your questions: For a better understanding of sexual orientation and homosexuality. Washington, DC: Author. [Retrieved from www.apa.org/topics/orientation.pdf]

This material may be reproduced and distributed in whole or in part without permission provided that the reproduced content includes the original bibliographic citation and the following statement is included: Copyright © 2008 American Psychological Association.

This brochure was created with editorial assistance from the APA Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns. Produced by the Office of Public and Member Communications

The American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

○ ○ **American Psychological Association**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns Office
750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002
E-mail: lgbc@apa.org
<http://www.apa.org/pi/igbc/>

○ ○ **Mental Health America** (formerly the National Mental Health Association)

2000 N. Beauregard Street, 6th Floor
Alexandria, VA 22311
Main Switchboard: (703) 684-7722
Toll-free: (800) 969-6MHA (6642)
TTY: (800) 433-5959
Fax: (703) 684-5968
<http://www.nmha.org/go/home>

What Does Gay Mean? How to Talk With Kids About Sexual Orientation and Prejudice

An anti-bullying program designed to improve understanding and respect for youth who are gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (GLBT). Centered on an educational booklet called *What Does Gay Mean? How to Talk with Kids About Sexual Orientation and Prejudice*, the program encourages parents and others to communicate and share values of respect with their children.

○ ○ **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**

Division of Child and Adolescent Health
141 Northwest Point Blvd.
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
Office: (847) 228-5005
Fax: (847) 228-5097
<http://www.aap.org>

Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Teens: Facts for Teens and Their Parents



Office of Public and Member Communications
202.336.5700

All Rights Reserved