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Gay and Lesbian Students on Teaching Issues at Ohio State

Nancy Chism and gilda lopez

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To establish an informational base on the concerns and perceptions of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students regarding teaching at Ohio State, we conducted a study during April and May of 1992 as part of our work with the Multicultural Teaching Program (MTP) of the Center for Teaching Excellence. The goal of the study was to describe conditions affecting the learning of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. Our intent was to use the resulting data in future programming and print pieces aimed at increasing faculty and TA sensitivity and promoting helpful teaching behaviors.

With the help of the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services, who provided a list of names, we contacted students requesting their participation through either of three options: focus group, individual interview, or survey. Sixteen students participated: nine gay men and seven lesbian woman. No participant identified as bisexual. Eight students participated through the focus group format; four through individual interview; and four through completing a survey. The students were from twelve departments. Twelve were undergraduates and four were in graduate or professional programs.

The Director of the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services led the focus groups with our participation. We conducted the individual interviews and surveys. Each of us took notes at focus groups and interviews. A revised set of combined notes was produced from these copies of raw notes and we worked together to clarify or expand the notes as needed. The resulting versions of the notes were then coded independently by each of us, operating from a taxonomy of categories that had been developed inductively

from joint work with the first few sets of notes. We then reconciled codes together to produce final coded documents. Coded segments were entered into a database system, reviewed for consistency of coding once again, and displayed by category. The category displays were then reviewed for themes by each of us and by the MTP program director, who served as a peer debriefer. The themes were noted and led to the generation of this report, which is being sent to each participant and to the Director of the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services for review. Following that review, revisions will be made and a final draft will be produced.

Several participants in the process said that they did not feel that they spoke for all gay men or lesbian women and that others might feel differently. The importance of stressing the personal point of view and also the bias of the sample (only individuals who were out to the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services; no self-identified bisexuals; only those who felt comfortable participating in the study) means that the results of this study are not meant to be generalizable in a scientific sense. Rather, the patterns we found across cases suggest themes that are sensitizing, but might not be representative of other gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in other contexts.

The general categories that were explored through the study are presented here in four clusters: Identity; Climate; Instructor Issues; and Learning Issues. Many statements and ideas pertained to more than one category and were multiple-coded, but for purposes of this report, these were broken down into smaller units that did fit only one category or were described under the major category.

Identity

This cluster revolves around background issues connected with being gay or lesbian. The categories that we coded included the coming out process, preferences for terminology, disclosure in instructional settings, and personal activism on gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues.

Coming Out

Thirteen participants talked directly about the coming out process. The coming out category described the original process of self-identification and the emotions that surrounded it. There appeared to be differences in the length of time that participants associated with the initial coming out period, from over a period of a few months for some to two years for one. Several pointed out that although their first acts in coming out to themselves and others occurred during high school or early college, coming out is a continuous process in that one reaches new levels of understanding of one's identity and one expands the group to which one comes out. For this reason, the "coming out" and "disclosure" and "activism" categories are closely related.

Many of the participants described the pain involved in the process by using the terms, "suffering," "nervous breakdown," "an awful time," and "life turning upside down." One participant said that during his coming out process, he was "one inch short of a nervous breakdown." Three participants related feelings of anxiety to social homophobia but to self hatred as well. One participant said that he had to keep telling himself, "I am a good person." Another said he was blaming his poor academic performance during the period on teaching and a lot of other things, but now realizes that basically he did not like himself. He felt that he did not understand what was going on at the time. A reason for self-hatred was given by one participant. He said, "It is crucial to realize that everyone is brought up to be homophobic. This fact causes the self-hatred [in gay, lesbian, and bisexual students]."

One participant noted that the coming out process varies with the individual—some people have always known that they are gay, and others go through a near crisis. A few participants talked about the inevitability of the process. One, for example, said he saw "the exit ramp of heterosexuality" and couldn't get off. Another said that during the first two years of college, he felt compelled to get control of life and wanted to break away from everything.

Several participants described feeling alone and absorbed in only one issue during the coming out process. One student said that the only things he could read during that period were about gay issues. Another said that it took so much energy that it was hard to concentrate and get anything else done.

Several students talked about practical problems associated with their coming out. One mentioned that some students "freak out," thinking that their parents are going to kick them out of the family or stop paying for their tuition. Another said that when a gay, lesbian, or bisexual student comes out, they open themselves to hostility and they can suffer because of it.

Academic difficulties were common during the initial coming out period. One student said, "There's no way you can go through 15 [course] hours when you're going through this." Several participants noted that their grades dropped during this period. One participant had a 2.1 GPA the quarter of his coming out, far lower than his typical performance. Another participant who struggled for a while during her coming out dropped out of school during that time, while other participants talked about wanting to do so. One participant who came out at a small private liberal arts college said that coming out to himself had more negative academic impact than coming out to others. Another referred to the impact that the relief, rather than anxiety, of coming out can have on academics, saying that when gay, lesbian, and bisexual students realize that they can date and do things that they've never been able to do before, some just go wild and consequently, academics suffer.

Most participants, however, expressed that the sense of happiness that stemmed from acceptance of their identity actually improved their academic performance. The participant who dropped out of school for a while said that once she came out and accepted herself, she was able to change other parts of her life. One who had come out in high school said that by the time he came to college, he was confident of who he was and what

he wanted to do. Another participant said that his academic performance improved after he came out because he was happy.

Others spoke of the resources (both university and non-university) available to them when they came out. One participant said that the university counseling and consultation center helped him immensely. Another said that although she was not in school during her coming out process, her time in her graduate department was crucial. There were "out" lesbian students and professors and she felt supported in her process. Another mentioned that the affirming attitude of the Residence and Dining Halls staff helped her adjust. In a playfully sarcastic way, she said that the staff "brainwashed" her and others into feeling that it is okay to be gay. Another student mentioned Residence and Dining Halls's support. A staff person who was also gay guessed what was going on with him. This participant thought that it would take a "family member" to understand the dilemma of students going through the coming out process. Still another said that although he had to take charge of the process of coming out himself, the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services was a great help. Another said that Ohio State had lots of resources. One participant said that she has noticed a change in society's tolerance of coming out since 1987 and that her sense of society's increased tolerance might have made her coming out process quicker. Community groups also help, she added.

Some of the participants had suggestions for instructors. They said that instructors should know that students may ask them for help during the coming out process. They could also respond to journal entries in which students might be expressing their feelings. Another said that instructors should be understanding. They should allow students undergoing the coming out process the same consideration as they would students who have a death or serious illness in the family, because "people don't realize that when we come out, we risk everything." One said, "For a student to risk disclosure and try to explain the emotional upheaval that is occurring is an immense task. To have an instructor respond to this as if it were trivial or "something to get over" would be a severe blow to a

student. Another student said that instructors could help during the coming out process by "not acting like they don't know what's happening, by talking like they [gay, lesbian, and bisexual students] are real people."

Participants had mixed opinions about how proactive instructors should be in class. One said that an instructor could make a statement such as, "If you are struggling with this, here's a number you can call." One participant thought that it might help a student to erase lingering doubt if something proactive were done in class, yet others felt that it might be better for instructors to offer to listen in general than to suggest specific help. Another student felt that it would have to take a faculty person who was either gay, lesbian, or bisexual him- or herself to recognize the problem of a student who is coming out. Although he said that he would not have thought a faculty member were intruding if he or she approached him while he was coming out, he said that it would be easier for a TA to try to help, due to the smaller discrepancy in age. Another said he would have welcomed a sympathetic teacher who noticed what was happening and asked "What's wrong?" but thinks that not all students would want the professor to say anything. Likewise, another participant said that a welcoming stance would help to alleviate anxieties. She added that gay, lesbian, and bisexual students are different in their preferences so there's no one way for instructors to respond.

Disclosure

Twelve participants made comments we categorized as disclosure. Disclosure involved issues surrounding a gay, lesbian, or bisexual student's decision to come out to students, teachers, and others in instructional settings. Participants described the decision to disclose or not as one that is very context-specific. One said she will only reveal that she is a lesbian when she is in a place where she feels "safe and comfortable." Another talked about taking some time to size things up when he entered a new program before he makes direct references to being gay. Among the things that influence the decision in academic settings are the size of the class, the subject being studied, the class climate, the student's

perception of the instructor's receptivity, the people who are present in the setting, and the personality or stage of the coming out process of the student.

Several participants said that large, introductory classes feel like dangerous places for disclosure. A few said that they look to see if there are other gay, lesbian, or bisexual students in the class and are more likely to disclose if there are. One participant said that one-on-one situations are the hardest for her. Two said that in Women's Studies and English classes, they are more likely to feel free to disclose. Another who said he was in a "fuzzy" program [one of the human services professions] said that it is easier for him to disclose than it would be for someone who is in a "hard" field like statistics. Some said they look to the instructors for cues, and if they feel they are friendly, they are more likely to disclose than if they feel they are unfriendly. Several students said that their decision is influenced by who will hear the disclosure. For example, one did not want to disclose in the residence hall for fear that her brother, who lives in the hall, would be hurt; another would not be on a panel discussing gay and lesbian issues because a student from his home town was in the class and he did not want word to get back to his home town.

Students express having different styles about disclosure. Some express the viewpoint of a participant who said that he does not go out of his way to disclose or be active, but if the opportunity comes up, will. Others talk of being afraid to disclose, such as one who said he has to "police my words" or another who said that you have to say to yourself, "I'd better not let anything slip." Two students said that they are very proactive about disclosing. One said that he "likes to shock" and another said that she "outs herself" right away, particularly in Women's Studies classes.

Several talked about indirect methods of disclosure, some intentional and some not. One participant, for example, drew a distinction between making "gay positive" remarks and actually coming out to the class. Another talked about voicing his opinions about gay issues on an anonymous class evaluation. Several, however, expressed the concern that if you demonstrate that you are knowledgeable about gay, lesbian, or bisexual

issues or counter homophobic remarks, you are automatically assumed to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual yourself. The decision to be "gay positive" is for them, then, a decision to disclose. One student, for example, read a statement on nondiscrimination to a group that he was training. He could tell from the kind of probing he got afterward from the students that they were trying to confirm their suspicions that he was gay. Similarly, another participant talked about how a decision to write a paper on gay or lesbian issues has to be thought of as a decision to disclose or not, since submitting such a paper "might cause the professor to make assumptions [about the orientation of the writer] that the student might not want the professor to make."

Surrounding decisions about disclosure are various fears that the participants expressed. One fear is about the response of the instructor. Some participants felt that there might be grade retaliation if the instructor is homophobic. One hypothesized that it might be expressed in such situations as converting a grade of 89.8 to a B or an A. Others thought that it would make the student-instructor relationship uncomfortable. A participant, for example, said he's afraid of "coldness. . . . Finding out that a professor has animosities towards gays would be too threatening."

One participant, in recounting an instance in which a sexual overture was made to her by a lesbian instructor, illustrates the sensitive instructor issues that can be present during coming out when the instructor is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. While disclosure on the part of the instructor can be interpreted by the student as an overture or even sexual harassment, it can also be interpreted as affirming. The student might think that coming out of a gay, lesbian, or bisexual instructor could place them in a vulnerable position, since there is a power relationship between student and teacher that could be jeopardized.

Another kind of fear that participants expressed related to student reaction. Some feared actual violence. One participant said she was "petrified" about walking around alone in the residence halls because she "might get the shit beat out of her." She was not sure if this was a legitimate concern or not. Another said that "when a gay, lesbian, or

bisexual student brings up an issue or self-identifies, they can get silent tension or backlash." They risk, said another, becoming "an object" in class. One participant said that coming out made her more reserved around her peers outside of class. On the other hand, one participant said that she frequently comes out very quickly as a "protective mechanism." By making her lesbianism public, she protects herself from hearing slurs that students might normally make in her presence if they were not aware of her orientation.

The uncertainty surrounding what reaction will occur often is the greatest impediment to disclosure. One participant said that he has seen the "full gamut" of reaction from people who say, "So what?" to those who are shocked and disgusted. A similar continuum was described by one participant who said that sometimes students are "aghast" when she discloses, while others "take it in stride."

A third fear is more long-term and was expressed by a participant who felt that if a person in a tight-knit professional group discloses, there may be repercussions against him or her in finding a job and in future professional opportunities.

Students are frequently uncertain about which consequences are associated with coming out and which are not. Two students wondered whether their disclosure resulted in special treatment. One said that during the acceptance process into his academic program, he was wearing a jacket that had a pink triangle pin on it. When asked about it, he said that the pin showed that he was for gay, lesbian, and bisexual rights. Since then he has wondered if he got into the program because of his good academic standing or whether the program thought that his lifestyle could contribute to the program's claim of diversity. The second student said that sometimes after he comes out to instructors, "it's as though they go out of their way to be approachable, as though they are trying to prove that they are not homophobic."

Participants also recounted several instances in which they came out in which instructors or students were supportive. One had a positive experience when he came out to his philosophy TA when he was having a problem. Another said that she has written a

couple of papers about lesbian issues in classes taught by woman and has not felt any repercussions.

The participants were sometimes ambivalent about their actions. A few expressed a sort of regret that they could not disclose. Another student talked about having buttons with GLB slogans on them pinned inside her bag, but doesn't let others see them.

Activism

In addition to disclosure, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students have to make decisions daily about how involved they will become in combatting homophobia. Thirteen students made comments we classified in the category of activism. Responses to this category discussed students' descriptions of out-of-class activities, such as work with the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services, as well as in-class activities, such as countering biased or misinformed remarks in class or calling for curricular inclusion in courses.

Since activism is often interpreted as disclosure, there is similar variety within this category as in the disclosure category on the degree to which students are comfortable with being proactive. Also, as with disclosure, the decision is made within the context.

Four participants felt reluctant to be very active on gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. One said, "I'm not a confronter." Recounting a recent instance of having heard homophobic comments, she said that she "bit her lip and took it." Another talked about a course that concentrated on Michelangelo's work and never mentioned the homosexual themes in the artist's life and work. The participant said that he "cowered" from saying anything because the professor had an international reputation. Another student who called himself "quiet" said, "I keep thinking that in a few years, I'll be mad that I didn't speak out more."

Three of the fourteen students took a moderate stance, saying that they respond only when there is an obvious situation and when the environment feels safe. One participant said that he would bring up gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues "in classes where it

is directly relevant, but not in others." He said that he would do so, for example, in English but not in Chemistry.

Six students indicated feeling a very strong responsibility or commitment to activism in the classroom. One participant said that although he wouldn't use the label "activist" (activists, he said, "are people who yell or have microphones"), he doesn't tolerate any sort of joke about any oppressed people because to "laugh at an oppressed group is to laugh at yourself." Another expressed the opinion that she has a responsibility to protect other oppressed groups. Referring to her assertive behavior as "obnoxious," she said, "it has to be done." Although some people, she said, say it's not their job to educate the masses, she takes a different point of view. Another participant felt it her duty, her desire to make the world right and expressed a frustration with people who aren't out, especially when they are in a gay-affirming environment. Another said that despite a large class's being disgusted with his constantly asking questions and bringing up issues, it was more important for him to raise his hand and ask questions rather than to keep quiet. One participant said that he brings up gay, lesbian, and bisexual topics in discussions and puts students in their place when homophobic comments are made. He added that activism is a manifestation of self-empowerment and self-worth. Although referring to out of class situations, another student also expressed enjoying the educative role, saying that it gave him "a sense of triumph."

Participants also talked about their strategies. One student said that his strategy is to pull people aside, rather than deal with problematic behavior publicly, feeling that you get more accomplished that way. Another said in order to avoid the appearance of undermining instructors' authority, she goes to them early in the course and tells them that she will be talking out in class, particularly on gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. A third preferred interventions that are planned. He suggested that the instructor plan ahead if he or she wants to ask him to be a resource in a class discussion, and to make it clear to the rest of the class that he doesn't represent all gay men.

The participants talked about the toll that being very active took on them personally. Some resented the time that educating others took from their own pursuits as students. One participant said that it galled him that gay, lesbian, and bisexual students had to teach instructors and/or students about gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues because it was detrimental to the students' grades and frustrating as well, since "Professors are ignorant and want to stay that way." Another said it was a question of setting his priorities: should he drop his books and demonstrate on the Oval? Right now, he said, he knows he has to limit his activism. A participant who chooses to be very active said that often she feels "drained" and needs the support of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community to buoy her up. Another very active participant said that while she embraces this work, she would welcome similar efforts from instructors, since it "would save her the trouble." One participant advocated moderation, saying that at times a person has to attend to his or her own mental health and "tune out the mumblings" in the classroom.

Labels

Very much linked in with other topics pertaining to identity were participants' views on labels used to describe themselves. Twelve participants provided information on problems of labeling in general, the sexual preference/orientation issue, or their preferences for the terms used to refer to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students.

Regarding the use of labels, several participants had general misgivings. One participant said that she would "like to throw labels out the window" since sexuality is fluid and labelling leads to stigma and stereotyping. Another felt that labelling was dangerous and possibly oppressive. Still others felt that labelling often results in several different populations "being lumped together." Three participants objected to putting the words "gay," "lesbian," and "bisexual" together. A lesbian women, for example, said she "does not appreciate being called gay. It is a man's label that makes women invisible." Another participant said that the bisexual culture is still being established, so it needs to be treated differently. One student said, however, that putting the terms together gives one a

sense of "unity in talking about discriminations." Another said that stringing the three terms together is easier so that one can treat the whole topic, while one acknowledged that the use of labels is "politically expedient."

Students disagreed on the topic of the terms "sexual orientation" and "sexual preference." One made a distinction between "essentialists" (who would argue that one is born with a given orientation) and "social constructivists" (who argue that through socialization and life experience one develops a preference). While she herself chooses "preference" over "orientation," she was the only one who took this position. One other voiced the opinion that for some people, being gay or lesbian is a preference while for others it is an orientation. The four others who spoke to this issue objected to using the term "sexual preference." One of these drew the distinction between choosing a way of living and simply being what you are by saying that when he hears it said that being gay is a "lifestyle," he wonders why that for everyone else, it is said they have a "life." He said, "The term 'gay lifestyle' is a misnomer since it implies that gay people live a certain style of life different from straight people. Aside from the sex of the partner, the 'style' in gay relationships fluctuate as much as they would in heterosexual relationships." Another participant objected to the emphasis in both the sexual orientation and sexual preference terms on the word "sexual," since it focuses only on sex. For him "affection orientation" was a better alternative.

The concentration on sex was a a major reason for the unanimous distaste the participants expressed regarding the term "homosexual."

Three participants indicated that homosexual was too clinical and scientific. One said it is "Freudian" and not indicative of the culture. She said that the use of the term automatically makes "heterosexual" the norm, a viewpoint another echoed when he said the word "homosexual" sounds like a pathology. Similarly, another said that he hates it when people use the term "straight" to describe heterosexuals since it makes gay, lesbian, and bisexual people "seem crooked."

The alternatives that those participants who commented on labelling preferred was "gay men," "lesbian women," and "bisexual men/women." Eight also indicated that they liked other terms, but drew a distinction about who can use them without offense and who cannot. They indicated that they were not offended by and used words such as "queer" and "dyke," referring to these terms as "cute," "powerful," and "bawdy and brave." They indicated, however, that these words were accepted and used playfully only within the community of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people: these words would be offensive if others such as an instructor or non-affirming people would use them.

Climate

The Overall Environment

Integrally related to issues of coming out and disclosure are students' feelings about the environment for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students at Ohio State. Several participants, in speaking about their coming out, talked about their choice of Ohio State as a place to attend college. For one participant, Ohio State was a way of getting away from the state university near his home, a physical move that would signal his intentions to break away from being closeted and feeling bad about himself. Others felt that the large, diverse setting of the University would give them some anonymity and freedom to explore options. One said that it is harder to find resources and friendly places like gay bars in small college towns. They rejected the idea of going to colleges that had conservative or "Fundamentalist" reputations.

Several of the participants said that once they were at Ohio State, they became impressed by the support that there is for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. One said that he was unaware when he chose Ohio State that these resources were in place, so he considers them "gravy."

In comments that we categorized as "climate" and "student reactions," we classified gay and lesbian students' perceptions of belonging and comfort on the campus as a whole

and specifically in classrooms. Ten participants made statements categorized under "climate."

On overall climate, one participant echoed the comments made by students who alluded to environment in talking about coming out. This participant called Ohio State a "gay positive university." He referred to the existence of the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services (one of only a few in the country), the University's firm handling of an incident involving harassment of gay students in a residence hall, and the existence of the annual Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Awareness Week and the participation of two gay men in Homecoming Court. One participant indicated that, on the surface, Ohio State is very gay positive. He said, "Down in the muscle and bones of the University, homophobia has not been eradicated." Another participant was negative about the overall climate, indicating that she was thinking of transferring to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, which she felt has a better reputation for tolerance.

Two students talked about specific hostile and unpleasant incidents that they experienced at Ohio State. One said that flyers for gay dances always get ripped down. Another said that there are often signs on dorm rooms that say such things as "Bash them back into the closet," and "Straight is best." During Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Awareness Week, such posters appeared on her door. Signs for that week that were put in the dorm were torn up.

Several participants talked about homophobic comments. One heard two students who watched flyers for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Awareness Week being put up and said that they were going to leave Ohio State if gay, lesbian, and bisexual students were here. The student felt particularly bad because the speakers were African American and she felt that there should be some unity among oppressed people. Another said that he frequently hears "Hey, faggot" when he walks down 15th Avenue past the fraternity houses. He called fraternities "the virtual institutionalization of homophobia" and said that the University should take a close look at its relationship with fraternities and sororities, who are often, in

his opinion, "worse than evangelical groups" when it comes to homophobia. Two other participants specifically mentioned fraternities. Another student talked about "weird dynamics on the Oval," where students bash Fundamentalist preacher Brother Jed until he talks about homosexuality, then they agree.

Participants also talked about hearing public homophobic remarks that were not directed specifically to them, a situation that makes them angry but frustrated because they are fearful of the consequences of countering these comments. One talked about walking along and hearing a conversation going on behind him that involved students using words like "faggot" and "fruitcake." He said that he wanted to turn around and say, "Hey, we're all around you," but didn't.

Three participants talked about a general feeling of alienation, of not belonging, in their departments. One said that everything in his department perpetuates a WASP look and jock mentality.

Student Reactions

An important part of climate is experienced by students through peer interaction in the classroom setting. Fourteen participants spoke directly about the student reactions that they encounter in class. These are verbal and nonverbal signs from other students that signaled affirming or negative response to them specifically or to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students or issues in general. While some of these reactions were described in the section on disclosure, the comments in this section support those findings.

There is a general sense that there are fewer incidents of homophobic comments made by students in class than in other campus settings. Three participants said that they had never heard a student make a homophobic comment in class. Several others indicated that there have been occasional instances. One student talked about presenting a slide show (in a setting in which no professor was present) and experiencing an atmosphere of constant homophobic comments from students in his department. Another made a statement in class about the absence of male majors in his department. He was told, "Oh,

there are more male [name of department] majors, and I'm sure that you'll have *intimate* contact with each and every one."

One participant felt that homophobic comments from students are more common in required introductory courses than in upper-division courses. He hypothesized that this might be developmental or that students who entered with provincial attitudes might gain awareness with time. "By the time they're juniors," he said, "they know what's appropriate and what's not." Another participant said that many lower division students think that they have never met a gay or lesbian person. In upper division classes, she said, students are more knowledgeable—or they could just be more polite. Another talked about what he considers a sort of venting mechanism. He said that when issues about gay, lesbian, and bisexual people come up, the general student attitude is negative, but it has been his experience that once the fundamentalists and biased people say something, they don't go on. They "say their piece and shut up."

Indirect reactions also contribute a large part to the climate that gay, lesbian, and bisexual students encounter. One participant said that she could perceive when students hated her behavior in class. They looked at each other when she speaks, they rolled their eyes. She also said that an instructor told her that students commented on her participation in their journals. Another participant said that he could sense in a large class that students were "disgusted" with him whenever he wanted to discuss gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues or issues affecting other oppressed groups.

Participants also felt that students sometimes express support. One participant said that some students begin to show support by smiling at her, talking to her after class, saying good bye to her, sitting by her, and starting to challenge people in class before she did. Another said that as the students were announcing their paper topics in one class, he was cheered on after he mentioned his intention to write on a gay, lesbian, and bisexual topic.

Several participants talked about student naivete on gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. One mentioned that others don't understand his anger when they think they are

complimenting him by saying, "You don't *look* gay." Others talked about the kind of questions students ask, which often surface when an instructor has scheduled an open discussion through the use of gay and lesbian panels or other activities. Some common questions include:

Who's the man and who's the woman?
 "Do you miss having a penis?"
 What kind of music do lesbians like?
 How did you know that you are gay?
 What do you do to have sex?
 How can you justify being Christian?
 Why is it such a big deal to talk about coming out?
 How do lesbians have babies?
 What do you do in your spare time?
 Where do you meet each other?

Very rarely, observed one participant, do you get a question like "Do you have a hard time living in a heterosexist society?" or other questions that would demonstrate sensitivity and a recognition that there are differences among gay, lesbian, and bisexual students on preferences in music and that sex is not the only thing there is to talk about. One participant talked about an instructor who wanted to raise student sensitivity on these issues by following a gay and lesbian panel with a heterosexual panel to which the same kinds of questions were addressed, such as "When did you first know you were a heterosexual?" "What do heterosexuals do in their spare time?"

Instructor Issues

Central to the learning experience of all students is the instructor. Throughout the study, participants talked about their perceptions of instructor responsiveness to them personally and to gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues; ways in which they judge how receptive a given instructor might be to gay, lesbian, and bisexual people and issues; and ways in which instructors do or do not create a climate for tolerance within the classroom.

Receptivity

All participants commented upon their perceptions of the receptivity of their instructors to themselves personally or to gay, lesbian, and bisexual people and issues. While receptivity is also evidenced in other comments, we separated out those dealing with disclosure and course content into separate categories, treated in different parts of this report: here, we concentrate on the instructor's personal stance as students understand it.

Throughout the comments, participants noted great variability among instructors with respect to how welcoming they are to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. One said, "There are always bad and good instructors. . . . [Some] are supportive, others are stuck up—they are always right." Another said of instructors in her department, "Once in a while a gem appears, but mostly how lesbians and others are affected is ignored."

The participants talked about various factors that are associated with an instructor's receptivity. One, who noted differences in approachability and friendliness, said that she thinks the variation has more to do with individual personalities than their receptivity to her as an African American lesbian. Several participants talked about context: they found that faculty and teaching assistants in particular departments, were more open than faculty in other departments. Still another said that the variation in response is sometimes linked with the situation. She felt, for example, that instructors respond differently to different styles of lesbians. Finally, one participant explained variation in instructors' receptivity by the degree to which they are committed or care about the issues. On the whole, they said that overt homophobic remarks from instructors are much rarer than from students.

The kind of responses described ranged from welcoming attitudes, to avoidance, to negative reception. One participant said that so far, in his experience, instructors have been very receptive to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. He sometimes thinks that they are intimidated, since they agree with all his points and tie into his disclaimers. They go out of their way to be approachable and he generally has found that after he comes out, his grades improve. He does wonder, though, if the instructors are just afraid to disagree with him or

are trying to prove that they are not homophobic. He thinks that instructors expect more of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, thinking that if the students are strong enough to be out, they are "intelligent, resourceful and liberal."

Many more participants talked about instructor avoidance. Sometimes this is deliberate and sometimes it comes about because instructors are operating from heterosexist assumptions and don't notice that they have gay, lesbian, and bisexual students or that there are content issues relating to gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. Instances of deliberate denial are detailed later in the discussion of how instructors treat course content, but here we can talk about the personal dimension that is more often unconscious. One participant observed that instructors often assume that all their students are heterosexual. He pointed out that according to *The Kinsey Report*, ten percent of the population has had homosexual experiences and so if an instructor has three hundred students, he or she should assume that about thirty are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Participants, however, observe that instructors don't seem to operate from this assumption. One participant said that instructors don't even realize that they have any gay, lesbian, or bisexual students. Another said that a problem he encounters all the time in class is that he is "assumed to be something I'm not in daily life [heterosexual]." The "invisibility" of being gay, lesbian, or bisexual was discussed by several participants, one who pointed out that there is more heightened awareness of other minorities because often they are physically identifiable.

Students are alerted to heterosexist assumptions in several ways. Some use instructors' language as a cue to what assumptions they have. For example, if they use the words, "husband" or "wife" instead of "partner," "significant other," or "friend" or if they use heterosexist examples, such as "Let's say that your boyfriend . . . [to a lesbian student]," gay, lesbian, and bisexual students feel that they are being ignored or written off.

Some participants felt that instructor stance is generally negative. One student, who said he had to get over his "Ph.D. awe," observed, "I've had to learn that bigotry doesn't

diminish with authority or stature." He noted several instances where he was told by instructors that he was oversensitive and creating issues where there weren't any. Another was upset when an instructor called a journal in their field a "fag magazine." One talked about a professor who frequently made "sly, homophobic remarks." For example, while discussing a painting he said, "Note the two *dandies mincing* across the boulevard."

Negative stance is often revealed to students by instances of instructors' humor that are connected to gay, lesbian, or bisexual people. One participant recalled that an instructor made a joking reference to a letter in *The Lantern* about gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. It so happened that the participant had written the letter and was sitting in the class. While the instructor realized his error and quickly tried to recover, such "slips" are interpreted by students as indicative of what the instructor really thinks.

Class Management

Class management is a critical indicator for students of how welcoming the instructor is. Fifteen participants commented on the instructor as classroom manager in a category that we called "referee." This category involved opinions on whether or not the instructor should take a public stance supporting nondiscrimination or intervene with homophobic comments are made in class.

Participants universally felt that instructors have clear responsibilities for the kind of dialogue that goes on in class. One participant said, "From day one, the instructor can set the atmosphere. . . . They can do everything to create a nurturing environment. The instructor should remind people that they are diverse and that he or she respects diverse points of view." Another viewed the instructor role as "the mediator, the referee." Another saw it as a University-wide responsibility to battle homophobia and ignorance.

Participants, however, held different opinions on how strongly instructors should communicate their authority and intervene in discussion. When asked if they favored an instructor's reading a nondiscrimination policy at the beginning of a course, twelve participants thought it would be a good idea. One said, "An instructor has to take the first

step for [gay, lesbian, and bisexual] students to get over the risk." Had such a statement been issued, said another, she would have felt more comfortable addressing lesbian issues, especially if TAs in the course would be held responsible for abiding by it themselves and enforcing it in their classes. A third participant talked about the protective benefit of such a statement saying that the action would enable you to know what to expect of the teacher and know you are in a controlled atmosphere. One participant said that she did not see a conflict between such a statement and free speech, since "It is a gross twisting of constitutional rights to allow bigotry."

Some participants stressed that a statement alone would not be enough. One said that the reading of such a statement would be "awesome, especially if they follow up on it." Others said that they would be surprised but supportive of instructors who issued a statement. One emphasized that the instructor should not read a statement, but say it in his or her own words, so it would sound genuine rather than pro forma. One participant said that although he would admire and respect an instructor who took this action, he wouldn't believe it unless the instructor's actions later on proved it.

On the other hand, three participants did not favor the reading of an antidiscrimination policy by the instructor. All were very concerned about open discussion and individual rights. One said that he believes in free speech and that a benefit of having a homophobic comment occur is that a lively discussion ensues and people can be made more sensitive. Also, he said, "I'd rather know my enemies than keep them hidden." Another reason for not issuing a statement, one participant pointed out, is that students might begin wondering if the statement was made solely for the benefit of one student and would begin looking around to see who might be gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Participants had other suggestions on what actions instructors should take in class management. One said that instructors have to mediate conflict, not necessarily being an advocate for gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues, but ensuring a collegial atmosphere for self-expression, either pro-or anti-gay. Another said they have a clear responsibility to confront

homophobic remarks if they occur. He added that the more subtle, offensive comments often escape instructors' notice and students might point these out to instructors after class. A few participants said that in their experience, instructors don't step in when offensive remarks are made. One participant observed that "Doing nothing is doing something. To a gay, lesbian or bisexual student, failure to act could make students feel that the instructor is unsupportive and possibly hostile." One said that they should treat verbal homophobic harassment as any other form of minority harassment. Another advocated a more moderate course of action. He suggests that instructors ideally should talk to offenders after class rather than in front of other students, since people remember negative experiences and the experience of being embarrassed in class might aggravate the behavior rather than stop it.

Reputation

Throughout the discussion of instructors' receptivity, eight participants' remarks alluded to ways through which they learned which instructors were gay-affirming and which were not. Two spoke specifically of a "network" that operates within the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community. Sometimes the communication is about specific courses or entire departments, such as "which is the least white male oriented history class;" other times, it is about individual instructors. One participant said that you hear such things as "He is sexist and will kill you gradewise," or "This is an instructor you just have to take," components of what she termed, "the blacklist and the wonderful list." Another said she routinely tells other students "which teachers are homophobes, who is harmless, and who is supportive." One participant said that an academic advisor tells him this kind of information.

Learning Issues

In addition to commenting on instructors, participants in the study were asked their opinions on whether there is a learning style preference among gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. We also asked them about course content issues, including how inclusive the

curricula are and whether or not they feel that they can explore gay, lesbian, and bisexual topics in their own research.

Learning Styles

Participants were divided about whether or not there is a particular learning style associated with gay, lesbian, or bisexual students. Eight participants felt that there are many differences across the groups. One said that she is more sensitive to differences than similarities because gay, lesbian, and bisexual students are from so many walks of life and cultural backgrounds.

One participant said that since there are unique cultures associated with being gay, lesbian, or bisexual, there must be some commonalities in learning style. Six other participants identified common characteristics that could be considered learning style. One student said that he and his gay friends don't have to study a lot—they are bright and naturally good at leadership activities. Another participant said he used to share this same feeling that gay students were of superior intelligence, but now as a teacher, he sees that this is not so since he sees a range of intelligence among his gay students. He did point, however, to a level of attention and readiness in gay students that isn't there with other students. Other participants talked about this level of attention in terms of the gay experience. Three gay men talked about an achievement orientation in gay students that originates with oppression in high school, often associated with disinterest or failure in athletics or dating. Such students, they explained, often turn to academics as an area in which they can excel and feel good about themselves. One student observed that the more secure gay men are, the better achievers they are. A second factor related to the perception of higher attention levels is particularly reflected in courses that treat gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues, where "everyone who is gay, lesbian and bisexual and studies those issues wants to excel in those courses." One participant said that although there are differences among gay men and lesbian women, "queer men relate better [than heterosexual men] to feminist thought and teaching."

One participant said that students who are out tend to be more liberal in their thought and more lively in their discussions. This theme was picked up by two other participants. One said that because gay, lesbian, and bisexual students have to "fight to learn," they become more sensitive than those who do not and thus pursue freedom to explore and challenge. Another said that since most gay, lesbian, and bisexual students had heterosexual parents, they are still rebelling against the "false expectations" about personal sexuality that their parents developed in them. Consequently, they challenge more and can be regarded as "problem children."

None of the participants talked about learning style preferences in terms of differences in kind of cognitive functioning, such as abstract vs. concrete or analytical vs. holistic orientation; interpersonal focus, such as introversion vs. extroversion or interdependence vs. independence; or modality, such as visual vs. aural vs. tactile.

Content

All participants commented in the category we called "content." These concerned opinions on how inclusive the overall curriculum or specific course curricula can be toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual people and issues, how inclusive they have found their courses to be, how such content is covered, why they think this is so, and what benefits they see of an inclusive curriculum.

In discussing how inclusive course content can be with respect to gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues, the participants who spoke to this topic named the arts, humanities, and social sciences as obvious disciplines that should treat these issues. One participant said that there is also ample opportunity to mention gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues and scholars in mathematics and physics as well. "Even in the hard sciences," he said, "a young engineer should be able to know that Nikola Tesla was gay." Another participant said that he doesn't agree with the idea of science as a strict separation of person and abstract idea: students could be motivated to learn something if they are hooked in by the human interest.

Three participants discussed whether gay, lesbian, and bisexual content should be treated intensively in special classes or programs or mainstreamed throughout the entire curriculum. One called for mainstreaming; the other two felt that eventually, mainstreaming is the goal, but for now, separate programs, such as a minor in Gay and Lesbian Studies will have to be created until the scholarship is developed and the issues are recognized as legitimate across the curriculum.

Participants talked about 12 instances in which gay, lesbian, and bisexual content was included in courses they took and 23 instances in which they felt there were obvious omissions. Some students described notable examples of inclusion. One student said that his instructor listed six topics for students to choose from as a class presentation topic. One of these was diversity, which had as a subcategory gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. Another talked of an ethics course in which an entire week was devoted to these issues. The treatment of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people was especially supportive and thorough in a Health course that one participant took. Courses in English and Women's Studies were singled out by several participants for their inclusiveness. One participant talked about an extracurricular instance of inclusiveness exemplified by the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alliance's meetings at which gay, lesbian, and bisexual faculty lecture, occasions that he feels are very well-attended, good, scholarly exchanges.

With respect to omissions, many participants said they had courses where gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues were not mentioned in the syllabus or in class sessions. Often, the omissions seemed intentional. Participants talked about how the sexual orientation of or themes used many artists or historical figures are often ignored, even if these are integral to a discussion of their works or lives. Among the specifics mentioned were Emily Dickinson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Walt Whitman, Jane Addams and themes used in Shakespeare's sonnets and Michelangelo's art. One participant talked about trying to raise the subject of Eleanor Roosevelt's liaison with another woman. He was told that the evidence was subjective and vague. When he asked about evidence such as letters, he was

told that her sexuality was not relevant. He felt that it "was swept under the rug and dismissed like all gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues."

Participants also talked about omissions in courses in which one would clearly expect issues to be discussed. Two participants talked about the failure to address gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in human sexuality courses. Another talked of skipping over the chapter on homosexuality in a different section of the same ethics course that another participant had praised for its inclusiveness. One participant talked about skipping the chapter on homosexuality in developmental psychology.

Required history courses were often found to be less inclusive than the participants felt warranted. One participant called Ohio State history courses, "white boy history," saying that they would never cover Harvey Milk, the Stonewall Riots, Malcolm X, or other "radical" people or issues. She said, "They've written scores of people out of history." One student who was looking forward to the coverage of the Stonewall Riots was discouraged to see the instructor pass over them with only a mention, calling them the "so-called" Stonewall Riots. One instructor said that there were no gay or lesbian people in colonial America. Another denied that there were any gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in a particular third world country they were discussing.

In English, one participant said, instructors very rarely initiate discussion about gay, lesbian, or bisexual authors or topics, but are responsive when students raise them. Another student talked about an occasion in a logic class when a student suggested analyzing a false argument having to do with gay men. The participant said that "The instructor did not want to touch that one," and quickly moved on.

Beyond simple inclusion is the way in which gay, lesbian, and bisexual topics are covered. Three students talked about positive experiences with instructors, all of which centered around their use of panels to discuss sexuality. One student talked about a panel in which two heterosexual and two lesbian women were asked to exchange opinions. Since

it wasn't "an us versus them," she liked that panel. Another mentioned a gay and lesbian panel being followed by a heterosexual panel.

Several participants talked about negative treatment of gay, lesbian, and bisexual content. One said that when topics come up in introductory psychology or history, they concern only sexual issues like sodomy, and never broader cultural issues. Lesbians in sports as treated in a physical education course was portrayed as an undesirable thing. An instructor dealing with the section of Dante's *Inferno* that relegates homosexuals to the pit endorsed the view that homosexuality is a major sin. Another instructor discussing a film containing a character who was a lesbian said that homosexuality represented evil. One participant stated that in a class on human relationships, homosexual relationships were under the category "unusual relationships." In a few instances, participants said that the word "deviant" was used to describe gay or lesbian people.

In considering why gay, lesbian, and bisexual content is not more prevalent, participants voiced several reasons. Some participants said that instructors simply don't know about the issues. They stated that ignorance can no longer be an excuse since solid information that is not "academic fluff" is more available now than it was some years ago. Other participants cite lack of interest or a feeling that the material is not relevant as a reason why faculty do not include it. Instructor discomfort was also given as a reason. One participant said that often, when an issue comes up, an instructor will make a note of it and pass on. "Instructors get kind of annoyed that you're adding something that they consider deviant and interrupting their content." Another, speaking about the instructor who skipped the chapter on homosexuality in a health course, said that when asked, she said that she didn't feel comfortable discussing the topic. He told her that it is her role to teach the material, whether she is comfortable with it or not. One participant urged faculty to be less inhibited. "Just say it—Walt Whitman was gay!"

Throughout the discussion of content decisions, the participants talked about the effect that inclusion or omission of gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues had on them as

learners. They talked about how inclusion was so important to their urgent need for validation, legitimacy, and visibility. One participant said that gay, lesbian, and bisexual students "flock to Women's Studies because it is so affirming." The participants pointed out that for students who are in the coming out process, inclusiveness can be immensely supportive. One participant said that if there had only been options like Women's Studies or a teacher who had an understanding of gay history when he was an undergraduate, "It would have changed my life." Some participants also mentioned the importance that inclusiveness has in presenting students with positive role models. Two other students talked about the positive effects inclusiveness has for heterosexual students, saying that when the issues have been treated well in his courses, he has seen a broadening effect on other students and watched them become more open-minded.

Research

Closely related to the issue of inclusiveness in content is the question of whether or not students feel free to pursue gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues in their papers, presentations, and other coursework. Often, as we have described above, the decision to work on these topics is made within the context of disclosure, since it may be assumed by the instructor or others that a student is gay, lesbian, or bisexual simply because she or he is interested in these topics.

Eleven participants commented on whether or not instructors welcomed them to pursue research on gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. Seven of them said that they had had instructors who encouraged such work. Three of these, however, said that they had also had instructors who discouraged them. One talked about wanting to do a paper on gay men and lesbian women in colonial times, but was told by his instructor that there were no gay men and lesbian women in America at that time. Even though he showed her his list of sources, she claimed that there was no evidence. Another student who wanted to write about a bisexual pattern in Native American culture was discouraged from doing so by her

instructor. The remaining four participants said that they had neither been encouraged or discouraged from pursuing these topics.

When participants talked about their actual experiences, they used such examples as doing a book review on a gay, lesbian, or bisexual work; a major piece on homophobia; a paper on Harry Hay; a paper on lesbians and sexually-transmitted diseases; and a talk on lesbian rights. All of these were positive experiences for the students involved. Three others talked about negative experiences. One talked about writing an essay on the woman's movement that disagreed with everything that the professor had said in class. He felt that he "wouldn't have made it" had it not been for a sympathetic TA who graded the paper. Two students felt that the kind of response they got was somewhat artificial. One participant said that he sometimes wonders whether the good grades he gets on his work in this area are deserved or given through lack of knowledge on the instructor's part. Another said that perhaps instructors are afraid to hurt her feelings. She said that she would actually welcome criticism on her work if she felt that she as a person were still valued.

Several participants talked about the efforts they must make to research gay, lesbian, or bisexual topics. A few focused on the difficulty of finding good sources. One said, "It is easier to find a twelfth-century bishop's speech in translation than works on gay, lesbian, and bisexual topics." He added, however, that there is now a good selection of books at Border's Bookshop. Another said that there are some resources in the library but for the most part, they are negative. He observed, "The placement on the shelves between sexual deviance and prostitution is even negative." For him, the collections in the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services, and information from the Stonewall Union and the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alliance have been helpful. Another participant, who also had praise for the collection in the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services, said that he wishes these works could be in a more neutral location so that students who

are not out wouldn't feel that they are risking unintentional disclosure by going to that office to use them.

Several participants talked about the time involved in pursuing gay, lesbian, or bisexual topics. One said that it is "ludicrous" that he doesn't know about his own heritage. He does try to read, but much has to be done on his own time. He wishes that he could take courses where he is guided through and rewarded for this work by a scholar as is the case with other issues. Another echoed this sentiment, saying that he has to buy his own literature in this area because it isn't available in the library. He wants the time he spends on this scholarship to be "legitimate" and get credit for it. Two other participants talked about how their research in this area detracts from the time they spend on "official" studies. They, also, feel that it should be considered part of their academic work, rather than a personal pursuit.

One factor that three participants addressed is instructors' lack of knowledge on gay, lesbian, and bisexual topics. All three talk about how this ignorance puts the instructors in a defensive stance and makes them uncomfortable in approving paper topics or grading work. Two other students talked about the resulting pressure they feel is put on them. One said that instructors expect him to be the expert on these topics, which is unrealistic since he is learning too. Another talked about the added burden of educating instructors and said that there is no longer any excuse for instructors to be ignorant, since sources are now available. One participant observed, however, that instructors who encourage their students to pursue work on gay, lesbian, and bisexual topics present themselves with a good opportunity to broaden their own knowledge base.

Implications

In reviewing the data collected for this study, we are struck with several broad patterns of agreement among the participants. Although any implications have to be offered with the caution that individual preferences and contexts require the instructor to

gauge whether the advice is applicable in the particular situation at hand, we did arrive at some suggestions for instructors:

1. Recognize that you do teach gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. They may or may not make their presence known to you, but they are there.
2. Understand that many gay and lesbian students are in the process of coming out to themselves and others during the college years. There is likely to be stress associated with this period.
3. Students will vary as to what kind of support they will want during the coming out period. It is perhaps safer for you to present yourself as a generally gay-affirming person and let students seek you out than to make a direct offer to help a student whom you think may be making the decision to come out. If you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual yourself, be aware that your coming out to a student may be interpreted as sexual harassment. You may instead want to direct the student to a support program such as the mentoring program offered by the Association of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Faculty.
4. Students will make their decision to identify as gay or lesbian only under conditions that appear safe and comfortable to them. They often experience the campus climate as hostile and even threatening to their physical well-being, so you should not put them on the spot or urge them to disclose if they do not judge it wise.
5. Gay and lesbian students often feel a responsibility to be active in the quest for equal rights and education of the campus community on gay and lesbian issues. They may feel torn between their responsibilities toward these activities and their own school work.
6. Students feel very strongly that your choice of terms be very informed by their preferences. The students in this study preferred the terms "gay men" and "lesbian women" to the term "homosexual." Though they did not seem completely pleased with either the term "sexual orientation" or "sexual preference," they want people to avoid in their language the implication that being gay or being lesbian is something that people deliberately control. They also want to discourage the exclusive focus on sexuality and

have people be conscious of the cultural aspects of belonging to the gay and lesbian community. One current suggestion that avoids the "choice" dichotomy, but still contains a reference to sexuality is "sexual identity," a term that recognizes the social basis of identity. While many of the participants use terms like "queer" and "dyke" affectionately within the community, they are not comfortable with others using these terms.

7. Students acknowledge that there are some very supportive resources on the Ohio State campus, such as the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services and the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alliance. They also feel that the size of the University and cosmopolitan setting can be positive. On the other hand, they recount numerous instances of hostility in the comments they overhear or are addressed directly to them. Recognize that they often experience fear in classrooms or other campus settings and try to create safe environments for them.

8. Gay and lesbian students are very sensitive to the kind of receptivity that instructors demonstrate to them as people and to their issues. They exchange information about this and judge it by the language you use, your response to issues and situations that come up in class, your inclusiveness in course content decisions, and the way you respond to student work on these topics.

9. Gay and lesbian students feel that you as instructors have very important class management responsibilities. While not all recommend that you issue a strong antidiscrimination statement at the beginning of a course, there seems to be general agreement that it is helpful if you talk directly about valuing diversity and take strong action if homophobic comments are made. You have this responsibility not only to them but to your broader educational goals in increasing the tolerance of all your students as part of their college experience.

10. You have a responsibility to educate yourself on gay and lesbian issues and to include material pertinent to your discipline in your course content decisions.

11. You should encourage students to pursue gay and lesbian topics in their independent work such as papers and presentations. You should be open to topics that you may not be familiar with yourself and give fair and honest criticism to this work.

Further Research

Two major limitations of this study are the absence of bisexual participants and the inclusion of only those participants who had come out to the extent to which they could be invited to participate and felt comfortable participating. It would be very important to gain the perspective of bisexual students and students who are not generally public about their being gay or lesbian. It also seems like it would be helpful to gain better information on how many gay, lesbian, and bisexual students are on campus so that their issues could not be marginalized so easily. Since the intersection of race and sexual identity is so powerful, it would also be important to explore this in a study that included more students of color. Finally, it also seems important to do more study on the attitudes of heterosexual students and instructors on gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues, as they report it themselves. We recognize that this report is only a beginning and welcome more attention to these issues.