

# Working Paper # 4

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## Social Norms and Homophobia: Exploratory Research and A Group Norms Intervention

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### Editor's Note

This Working Paper focuses on a topic of growing interest to social norms practitioners—the application of social norms theory to issues of social justice. Throughout the country educators are finding ways to use social norms techniques to support attitudes and behaviors that value diversity, tolerance, and prejudice reduction. Preliminary research suggests that these values, appropriately termed "egalitarian yearnings" by Patricia Fabiano, are held by a majority of our students. Research and programs that correct misperceptions about social justice attitudes can reduce isolation, foster ally behaviors between groups, and encourage individuals to confront prejudicial remarks. When individuals do choose to be passive bystanders it is often because they incorrectly assume that others do not share their social justice values and are therefore comfortable with prejudicial behavior (Berkowitz, forthcoming). The social norms approach can thus lead to promising strategies and interventions to promote social justice on our campuses and in our communities.

There are two parts to this Working Paper: the results of a study documenting misperceptions of college students' attitudes towards homosexuality, and a workshop to promote ally behavior and reduce homophobia that incorporates a small group norms challenging intervention. Each of these papers expands our knowledge in important ways. The study by Erick Dubuque and colleagues from Westfield State College (MA) confirms previous research documenting misperceptions of support for lesbian, gay and bisexual persons and extends this research by looking at the interaction of gender and misperception for each of these identities. The workshop presentation by Tanya Smolinsky from the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley (NY) represents a paradigm shift in thinking about homophobia reduction, focusing on the fostering of ally behavior instead of providing information about experiences of oppression. The norms correction component of this workshop is an important tool for bringing about this shift and contributes significantly to the literature on being an ally to GLBT students (for a review of this literature see Broido, 2000).

This is the fourth Working Paper of seven to be issued this year. Each working paper focuses on a particular aspect of theory, research, methodology, or application of the social norms approach. The goal is to help advance the field of social norms by providing a lively forum for best practices, controversial issues, and creative applications. Each working paper is a "work in progress" rather than a final statement and is offered to stimulate thought and discussion.

We are extremely interested in your comments, reactions, and thoughts on each working paper. You can send them to Alan Berkowitz, the Editor of *The Report on Social Norms*, or to the individual authors of each paper.

Thank you!

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# Measuring Misperceptions of Homophobia on Campus

By Erick Dubuque, Claudia Ciano-Boyce & Lynn Shelley-Sireci, Westfield State College (MA)



The present study measured students' attitudes towards homosexuality and compared them with their perceptions of their peers' attitudes toward homosexuality. This research extends the work of Bowen and Bourgeois (2001), who determined that students incorrectly perceive their friends and the average student on campus to be less accepting of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students than they actually are.

There were five hypotheses tested in the study which were all confirmed in the data analysis (see sidebar). In addition to documenting misperceptions of peers' attitudes towards homosexual individuals, the study found differences in an individual's perception of tolerance for gay, lesbian, and bisexual members (with the least tolerance being exhibited for homosexual individuals of the same gender as oneself), and gender differences between men and women in degree of acceptance.

## Procedure

Our concern when considering sampling techniques was that only students who were sensitive to the plight of the gay culture would take part in the study. We addressed this problem by enlisting the assistance of the faculty on campus. All professors received a flier in their mailboxes that briefly explained the study and requested 10 minutes of their class time for survey administration. Twelve professors responded from 7 major departments and agreed to administer the survey during the last 10 minutes of class time. During our data collection no student, unless they had already filled out the questionnaire in another class, neglected to take a survey. Close to 18 percent of the surveys were omitted from the final data analysis because they were incomplete. There were 321 usable surveys, and we

believe the students responding were a representative sample of Westfield students.

## Instrument

Applying social norms research to campus attitudes toward homosexuality and bisexuality is a new area, which required the development of a new measure. Before developing a social norms measure we took into consideration two factors. First, a problem with the majority of questionnaires used to assess attitudes toward homosexuality is that they typically use "heterosexual" and "homosexual" as categories to describe all sexual orientations. This approach overlooks the marked differences between bisexuality and homosexuality, as well as between gay men and lesbian women, and bisexual men and bisexual women. Using an umbrella term like homosexuality to describe these specific sexual orientations may actually confound the data, especially when research is being done on attitudes. Second, it was hypothesized that the student respondents would perceive their male and female peers as having different attitudes toward homosexuality and bisexuality.

To measure differences in attitudes between sexual orientations and sex, we decided to split the categories to include measures for six separate sexual orientations. These orientations included: lesbian women, gay men, bisexual men, bisexual women, heterosexual women and heterosexual men. Furthermore, we felt it was important to separate and measure the differences in the respondent's perception of male and female peer attitudes.

The downside to splitting the sexual orientations and the perception of male and female peers was the length of the questionnaire. To remedy this situation the questionnaire was divided into four

versions, each measuring a combination of only three sexual orientations. For instance Version 1 contained measures for bisexual men, lesbian women, and heterosexual men and Version 2 contained measures for lesbian women, gay men, and heterosexual women.

The pages containing the attitude measures had two columns. The right and left side of the page contained the same list of questions except the right side questions began with the prompt, "I would..." and depending on the section the left side questions began with either the prompt "I believe the majority of male students would..." or the prompt "I believe the majority of female students would..."

All questionnaires contained the following identical six sections: Demographics; Social Desirability Scale; Definitions; Your Sexual Orientation; Contact With Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual People; and Information Sources on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Cultures.

## Results

The results indicate that there were significant discrepancies almost across the board between student's personal attitudes toward homosexuality and their perception of their peer's attitudes. As hypothesized, male respondents reported their personal attitudes as more negative toward gay men, lesbian women, and bisexual men than female respondents.

Applying social norms research to campus attitudes toward homosexuality and bisexuality is a new area, which required the development of a new measure.

## Results of the Study

1. Individual college students perceived their own attitudes toward bisexual males, bisexual females, gay men, and lesbian women as more positive than the attitudes of their peers.
2. Respondents reported more negative personal attitudes towards homosexual and bisexual individuals of their own sex.
3. Respondents perceived their own attitudes toward bisexual males, bisexual females, gay men, and lesbian women as more positive than the attitudes of their same-sex peers.
4. Respondents perceived their peers as having more negative attitudes toward homosexual and bisexual members of their own sex.
5. Male respondents had comparatively more negative personal and perceived attitudes toward homosexuality and bisexuality than females.

*Note: Data was analyzed by conducting 3x2 analyses of variances (ANOVAs). Where appropriate, Bonferroni post hoc comparisons were made. Next, independent t-tests were conducted to see if male and female respondents differed in their perceptions of negative discrimination. All comparisons were significant at the .05 level or greater.*

Male respondents also reported that their personal attitudes were more positive toward lesbian women, bisexual men, gay men, and bisexual women than their same-sex male peers. Male respondents reported having more negative attitudes toward gay men and bisexual men than lesbian women and bisexual women. Furthermore, male respondents perceived their male peers as having more negative attitudes toward gay men and bisexual men than lesbian women and bisexual women. Male respondents also perceived that their personal attitudes toward lesbian women and bisexual women were more positive than their female peers' attitudes, although they did

**In summary, the present study determined that pluralistic ignorance exists with respect to attitudes toward homosexuality on campus.**

report that their personal attitudes toward gay men were more negative than perception of their female peers' attitudes.

Female respondents reported their personal attitudes as more positive toward lesbian women, gay men, bisexual women, and bisexual men than their perception of their same-sex female peers. The most significant discrepancies occurred between female respondents' personal attitudes and their negative perception of their male peers' attitudes toward gay men, lesbian women, bisexual women, bisexual men and even heterosexual women.

## Discussion

The results confirm previous research documenting pluralistic ignorance about attitudes towards homosexuality among college students. Attitudes toward homosexuality and bisexuality were perceived as much more negative than they were personally reported to be. This misperception may influence students to be more negative toward gay culture than they would if they were aware of the correct perception. In other words, consistent with Social Norms Theory, it is possible students would feel more positive about homosexuality if they perceived their peers as feeling more positive about it.

There were three significant findings. First, there is a significant difference between males' and females' personal attitudes. Second, a difference was found between the respondents' perceptions of their male and female peers' attitudes. Lastly, significant differences of personal and perceived attitudes were found between sexual orientations. These implications suggest that interventions should take into account the differences between sexes as well as sexual orientations. We also propose that due to sex differences, separate programs for males and females may help foster more positive attitudes toward homosexuality and bisexuality than all-inclusive programs.

Future research should measure faculty's personal attitudes and perceptions since they are an important part of the campus community. To better understand gender roles, future research should also measure attitudes and perceptions toward the transgender culture.

In summary, the present study determined that pluralistic ignorance exists with respect to attitudes toward homosexuality on campus. These results suggest that the correction of misperceptions about homosexuality may be an effective strategy for addressing prejudice towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals on campus.

*Erick Dubuque received a B.A. degree from Westfield State College in 2002. Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce and Dr. Lynn Shelly are both Professors of Psychology at Westfield. To contact them or to obtain a more detailed description of this study e-mail [ccianoboyce@wisdom.wsc](mailto:ccianoboyce@wisdom.wsc) or [lshelley@wisdom.wsc.ma.edu](mailto:lshelley@wisdom.wsc.ma.edu), or call 413-572-5749.*

# What Do We Really Think? A Group Exercise to Increase Heterosexual Ally Behavior

By Tanya Smolinsky, *Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley (NY)*



Workshops to end or reduce homophobia and heterosexism are increasingly common in schools, workplaces, and communities.

The Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley (GAGV) has provided gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) sensitivity training sessions to organizations in upstate New York since 1973, offering approximately 70 sensitivity training sessions each year.

Recently we redesigned our GLBT awareness workshop to include a module based on Social Norms Theory. This workshop is offered to a variety of groups with one of the following titles: "Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price" or "Straight but Not Narrow: How to be an Ally to the GLBT Community." Berkowitz (forthcoming) and Fabiano (2001) have suggested that the social norms approach can be used to develop workshops and marketing campaigns to reduce bystander behavior and address social justice issues. The assumptions of Social Norms Theory fit well with the GAGV workshops' new focus on the development of ally behavior. In addition, the small group norms challenging exercise fosters excellent discussion and empowers participants to act on their pre-existing values of acceptance and tolerance. The module is an adaptation of the small group norms challenging model developed by Far and Miller (Far, 2001).

## Assumptions of the Workshop

Our new training model, implemented in 2001, is premised on assumptions from Social Norms Theory and Hardiman and Jackson's (1992) Model of Dominant Identity Development. The first assumption is that most people misperceive their peers' attitudes towards gay people—that is, they think that their peers are less accepting of gay people than they actually are. This misperception has been documented in two recent

research studies: in the previous article in this Working Paper by Dubuque et. al. and in a recent study by Bowen and Bourgeois (2001) documenting pluralistic ignorance about heterosexuals' attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual college students. "Pluralistic ignorance" has been defined as "a state characterized by the belief that one's private thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are different from those of others" when they are not (Miller & McFarland, 1991).

Pluralistic ignorance about peer attitudes towards GLBT individuals can cause the misperceiver to act in homophobic ways or not act as an ally when they might behave otherwise. Therefore, one goal of our training is to correct this misperception.

The second premise is derived from Jackson and Hardiman's Model of Social Identity Development (1992) for members of majority groups and has been adapted here for heterosexual development. Based on the theory, we assume that the majority of heterosexual people are informed and aware of the oppression of gay people but may feel guilty about it (Stage III), and that a significant minority work

more actively to end homophobia (Stage IV). Therefore, our sensitivity training is designed to address issues that are relevant to individuals at Stage III and Stage IV in their identity development as heterosexual allies.

## Need for a New Approach

Most sensitivity training that is currently being offered—which also describes what GAGV offered until recently—focuses on correcting the misinformation that heterosexual individuals have received about gay people and on increasing people's awareness of how homophobia hurts gay individuals (Stage I and II). Training sessions devoted considerable time to dispelling various stereotypes and misperceptions ascribed to gay people and to communicating that

## Heterosexual Ally Development Model\*

### Stage I. Innocence:

Typically until the age of four, prior to any social consciousness, a person has no assumptions about sexual orientation or about gender appropriate behaviors.

### Stage II. Ignorance:

Misinformation about gay people is learned from one's family members, peer group, faith community, school system and/or media and is accepted without question.

### Stage III. Resistance:

A person becomes aware of the oppression of gay people. This awareness may lead a person to begin to actively confront societal oppression. Or the feelings of guilt, shame and anger that often accompany this awareness may lead a person to shut down because he or she is overwhelmed.

### Stage IV. Redefinition:

A person gains a greater understanding of heterosexism and his or her privilege as a heterosexual. He or she bands together with other people to end homophobia.

### Stage V. Internalization:

A person's identity as a heterosexual ally becomes one of many self identities that co-exist with minimal tension.

\*adapted from Hardiman and Jackson's (1992) Model of Dominant Identity Development

gay men and lesbians are perfectly normal people. Additional time was devoted to sharing very moving accounts of what it feels like to be oppressed and victimized as a gay person.

The above approach to sensitivity training had been effective for many years. However, a social dynamic has occurred in the last two decades that has made this approach increasingly less effective and even counter-productive. The HIV-crisis of the early-1980s propelled the gay community into the public spotlight, initially focusing on gay men and AIDS. The media now offers a wide-range of coverage on a variety of gay issues. Television shows and movies increasingly feature more and more gay characters. Many prominent and well-respected people have and continue to come out. With increased visibility, more people in general and more youth in particular are coming out to family members, friends, colleagues, and classmates. This increased exposure to and contact with gay people in a relatively short period has resulted in heterosexual people's actual attitudes towards homosexuality changing dramatically and faster than perceived social norms.

This phenomenon is described by Miller and McFarland (1991), who state that pluralistic ignorance increases during times of social change, when "there may frequently be a relatively protracted phase in which the majority no longer holds an old view but thinks the old view is still held by the majority" (1991, p.306).

The old model of focusing on correcting misinformation about GLBT individuals may unintentionally contribute to this climate of pluralistic ignorance by reinforcing the incorrect impression that most heterosexual people are at Stage II in their identity development—that is, that they accept without question the misinformation that they have received about gay people and do not act as allies. Moreover, by highlighting painful stories of gay people's experiences of homophobia, trainers can inadvertently increase the guilt and

shame that most heterosexual people typically experience when at Stage III in their identity development, fixing them in this stage rather than helping them move out of it into ally behavior characteristic of Stage IV.

The goal of the older approach to sensitivity training was changing participants' attitudes towards gay people. The assumption of our new training model is that the majority of people now hold the "right" attitudes but may incorrectly perceive themselves to be in the minority of their group or community. Feelings of guilt and shame and the misperception of peer attitudes are two significant barriers that keep these individuals from acting as allies. These two barriers need to be addressed if we are to see an increase in ally behavior and a reduction in homophobia and heterosexism.

I feel much more hopeful about this new challenge that we face as trainers. The old goal of changing individual attitudes—specifically dispelling stereotypes and misperceptions—is a very ambitious goal for a two-hour training. After all, it has taken repeated exposure to and increased contact with gay people over the past two decades to begin to see a significant change in people's attitudes and yet some stereotypes and misperceptions are still held about gay people—even amongst gay people themselves. Changing behavior in people who already hold the "right" attitudes—that is, who believe that gay people are healthy and normal and should not be discriminated against, harassed or victimized—is a much more realistic goal for a two-hour training, and is one that fits perfectly with the social norms model.

## Goals and Content of the Workshop

Our current sensitivity training combines a small group norms challenging exercise with other activities designed to increase ally behavior. The workshop seeks to: 1) correct participants' misperception that their peers are less accepting of gay people and more homophobic than they actually are, 2) reduce the shame and guilt that keep people "stuck" and unable to act effectively as allies, 3) increase participants' awareness of how heterosexism and homophobia manifest so that they can better understand how to combat these forces, 4) create opportunities for participants to join together with others who want to reduce heterosexism and homophobia, and 5) provide participants with specific information on concrete ways in which to be an ally to the GLBT community.

The GAGV training accomplishes these goals through three exercises. The first part of the training seeks to reduce participants' guilt and shame through an interactive exercise entitled "First Thoughts." During the "First Thoughts" exercise audience members are asked to make a list of the pieces of information that they received about gay people while they were growing up. Once the lists are completed, participants are invited to read their lists aloud. After several people have had an opportunity

### Workshop Outline

1. "First Thoughts" exercise. Record and discuss information and misinformation received about GLBT individuals while growing up.
2. Understanding Homophobia and Heterosexism. Definitions and examples. Negative effects of homophobia on heterosexuals.
3. Development of Ally Behavior. Group norms challenging exercise to surface true norm of tolerance and support for GLBT individuals. Strategies for engaging in ally behavior and overcoming barriers.

A copy of the workshop outline is posted on the GSLEN Resource Center website: [www.gslen.org/templates/resources](http://www.gslen.org/templates/resources).

to read from their lists, the audience is asked how they felt when doing the exercise. As soon as three or four people communicate that they felt badly because they are uncomfortable with the negative information that they have received about gay people, the trainer makes the following points: 1) it is not people's fault for having received "negative" or "misinformation" about GLBT people, 2) people should be aware of how their feelings of guilt and discomfort keep them from being effective allies, 3) positive stereotypes are still stereotypes that keep GLBT people from being seen as unique individuals, and 4) people should be aware that many GLBT people assume that others have misinformation about them and believe this misinformation so people need to actively let GLBT people know that they don't believe this misinformation and are, in fact, supportive of them.

This exercise, which specifically addresses the needs of participants who are in Stage III in their identity development, typically establishes a very open and receptive atmosphere among participants for the remainder of the training. It also begins the process of correcting the misperception that people's peers are more homophobic than they actually are by allowing allies and potential allies who might have remained silent in the past to speak out about their discomfort with society's homophobic messages.

The second part of our training examines the dynamics of homophobia and heterosexism within our culture. First, the trainers provide participants with a number of definitions. The two definitions that the trainers spend significant time discussing are for "homophobia" and "heterosexism." The trainers give specific examples of heterosexism and allow participants to do likewise. Rather than spending much time discussing how homophobia affects GLBT people (except to note that the statement "that's so gay" is homophobic no matter what the intention is of the speaker), time is given to identifying the various

ways that homophobia negatively impacts heterosexual individuals. One crucial way that is acknowledged is how a heterosexual individual can get labeled "gay" when acting as a straight ally to the GLBT community and then become, or at least fear becoming, a victim of homophobia. This dynamic typically does not occur when people from other dominant groups act as allies (for example, when whites act to end racism). It can function as a barrier to heterosexual individuals acting as allies and, therefore, needs to be discussed. Overall, the second part of our training model specifically addresses the needs of participants who are either at the end of Stage III or in Stage IV in their identity development as a heterosexual ally.

### Group Norms Exercise

The third part of GAGV training explores how individuals can be effective allies to GLBT people. Our social norms activity is done early in this section of the training. Participants are asked to fill out an anonymous survey entitled "What Do We Really Think." The survey contains the following three statements: 1) Being gay is healthy and normal, 2) I would be accepting towards a close friend or family member who is gay or lesbian, and 3) I believe that gays and lesbians should have the same rights as heterosexuals. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement) participants indicate on the survey their level of agreement with each statement and what they perceive the level of agreement of their peers would be. The surveys are then collected, shuffled and redistributed. This is an alternative to collection of data prior to the workshop, as described by Far (2001). Then participants are asked to stand for each statement, according to the responses on the survey in their hand.

In each training we have done (with the exception of one) there has always been a discrepancy—and in many cases a significant discrepancy—between people's actual attitudes and what they per-

ceive their peers attitudes to be. The majority—and in many cases the overwhelming majority—of people agree or significantly agree with each of these three statements. The trainers process the exercise by asking the following three questions: 1) What did people observe just happened in this exercise? 2) How do you think that this misperception affects people's behavior? and 3) Now that you have different information about your peers attitudes about gay people, how might this affect your behavior?

Trainers usually find this exercise to be very effective. Participants are not only surprised by the results but express a sense of hopefulness that their peers are less homophobic than they thought and declare that they will speak up more often as allies. However, just as often, the discussion gets sidetracked or stops altogether. Someone might immediately question the validity of the survey. "Don't people often perceive themselves as being more open-minded than they actually are?" is the most frequently asked question. Or someone will raise an issue that results in participants having a dialogue as though the activity never took place and that the misperception that peers are more homophobic than they actually are still holds true. I think this happens because the outcome of the activity doesn't reflect participants' day-to-day experience and, thereby, they find the results hard to believe. As a trainer, I find it useful to keep the discussion focused on the results of the survey and to respond directly to people's questions about the survey's validity.

There are a number of ways to explain these misperceptions of attitudes towards GLBT individuals. For example, people may in fact have positive attitudes towards gay people and yet not know how to act as an effective ally or in a non-homophobic way. Or, people may be afraid to act as an ally because they will be labeled "gay" and be subjected to homophobia or because they are concerned that they will be ostracized by their peers if their peers hold a

different attitude. Another possibility is that because the media spotlights homophobia and doesn't give visibility to the many times that heterosexual people act as allies, people are left with an impression that homophobia and homophobic attitudes are pervasive in our society.

### Information on Ally Behaviors

Once the social norms activity is completed, trainers spend time providing participants with concrete ways in which they can be an ally on both the individual and organizational level. They are then given an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills just learned by breaking up into small groups to discuss how they would handle various scenarios that they might encounter. I conclude many training sessions by asking participants to each share with the group one behavior strategy that they plan to employ in order to be more supportive of GLBT people. The majority of participants are typically willing to do this. Those people who aren't either pass or are vague in their response.

### Benefits and Outcomes

Since adopting this new training approach one of the most significant changes I have observed is the type of audience participation that occurs within the training session. When the training model focused on correcting stereotypes and misperceptions, individuals who appeared to be at Stage II in their identity development spoke most frequently either by asking questions about some aspect of what it was like to be gay or by occasionally challenging the presenters. Now individuals who are at Stage III and IV are empowered to speak more frequently either by sharing their experiences of being a straight ally or asking questions about how best to be supportive of GLBT people. This shift is reflected in responses to post-workshop evaluations, where participants indicate they are more willing to act as an ally after taking the workshop.

Besides encouraging dialogue at a Stage II level of identity development, the older approach to training (focusing

on what it means to be gay) is problematic for another important reason. It implicitly reifies an essential homosexuality that is constantly evaluated against an essential heterosexuality. Each person's individual sexual orientation is far more complex than the categories "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual" and "heterosexual" can ever adequately convey. When a sensitivity training seeks to explain what being gay means, it results in simplifying the experience and, often, privileges a white, middle-class, male, able-bodied understanding. Moreover, it implicitly contextualizes homosexuality as "other"—that is it is not heterosexuality—and, therefore, needs explanation which reinforces the notion that heterosexuality is the norm with which homosexuality should be evaluated against.

The advantages to having the training focus on being a heterosexual ally is that it sidesteps the pitfalls of trying to describe "the gay experience" and, instead, communicates to participants that being an ally is an identity to which to aspire. Having heterosexual allies—that is having your audience and, hence, not your gay trainers—as the subject of the training is a social norming technique in itself, particularly when compared to the older approach that implicitly communicates that heterosexual people are too early in their identity development to act as allies.

The older approach to training almost requires the trainers to be gay and lesbian since the subject of the training is "their life experience." In the past, the rationale has been to "prove" that gay people are perfectly normal by having "perfectly normal" gay men and lesbians speak before audiences. The new training approach whose subject is about being an ally is best lead—or at least co-lead—by heterosexual individuals who strongly identify as allies. Not only does a trainer who is a straight ally function as a much-needed role model for heterosexual participants, it also implies that homophobia is not just a social problem for gay people to contend with.

As with all types of diversity training, it is crucial that the individual trainers are far along in their own identity development and self-awareness. For example, heterosexual trainers who are still in the early stages of their identity development can act out their own feelings of guilt and shame by conveying a critical attitude towards participants for having or having had homophobic and heterosexist beliefs. This results in increasing guilt and shame in participants and alienating audience members.

Similarly, trainers who are gay or lesbian can get caught up in a need to communicate that being gay is normal and, thereby, return to the older training approach of dispelling stereotypes and misperceptions rather than addressing the needs of participants who are at Stage III and IV in their identity development. Therefore, when leading a training session, I must very consciously refrain from indulging in this personal need so that I can be an effective trainer. I think that this personal need to prove that one is acceptable may keep many gay people wedded to using the older training approach.

Likewise, audience members who are gay might have a need to hear trainers either dispel stereotypes and misperceptions about gay people or express the anger and hurt that most gay people experience living in a homophobic and heterosexist society. I know of instances when gay participants have told trainers after a training session that the trainers didn't do an effective job because they were "too nice" to the audience. Also, when trainers don't fulfill this need in gay individuals to dispel stereotypes or express anger, some gay participants can monopolize the time doing so themselves. Unfortunately, this can increase guilt and shame in heterosexual participants and, thereby, silence the rest of the audience. Although there is an important place in the training for the voices of gay people, it is crucial that allies and potential allies also have ample time to express themselves. It is their participa-

tion that will ultimately correct misperceptions, create new social norms, and allow allies to recognize one another and band together to reduce homophobia and heterosexism.

Although I have almost solely referred to gays and lesbians in describing our training model, we are inclusive of bisexual and transgender people in our presentation. Trainers use the acronym "GLBT" when speaking. The terms that we provide definitions for include "bisexuality," "gender identity," "transgender," "transsexual," and "intersexed," among others. And we offer examples on how people can be specifically supportive of bisexual and transgendered people. However, from my experience in regularly leading trainings, it appears that the majority of audience members are not nearly as far along in their identity development when it comes to being an ally to bisexual and, even more so, transgender people. Therefore, the principles from Social Norms Theory and the Model of Dominant Identity Development do not apply to these two groups in the same way that they apply to gay and lesbian people. I attribute this simply to lack of exposure to and contact with openly bisexual and transgender individuals. Thus, part of increasing exposure to bisexual and transgender people is referring to these two groups in our training sessions and having bisexual and transgender individuals co-lead the trainings. I am in the process of designing a separate training that specifically provides correct information about transgender people so that information is made available to those groups who request it.

## Summary

The workshop incorporates a group norms challenging module into a larger workshop focusing on the development of ally behavior towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. The social norms component of the workshop fits well with the theory of heterosexual ally development and serves as a catalyst to bring the positive attitudes and values of participants into the open. These values are, in turn, further strengthened by the workshop experience and can be translated into specific ally behaviors. The "What do we think" exercise provides an excellent example for the use of social norms interventions to promote social justice issues and validates its use of small group norms challenging interventions as a tool to promote discussion and promote health in group settings.

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