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LIVING OPENLY
IS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Mac Edwards

When I first joined the SIECUS staff, I was invited along with two other newcomers to spend a morning with Debra Haffner, our president, getting to know each other and the organization. I quickly realized that Debra truly wanted to know who I was as a person as well as who I was as a *writer* and *editor*. I was touched by her sense of caring when she talked about her life and asked us to do the same. It was with some hesitation—but with also a sense of trust—that I spoke that day about my life as a gay person and about my 22-year relationship with my partner, Reggie.

“I wonder if you were this open about your life at your last job,” Debra said when we had finished our meeting that morning nearly three years ago. She was right. I had never sat down face-to-face with colleagues, let alone my employer, and talked with such candor about the really important things in my life. I was both amazed and nervous. Had I said too much? Would everyone understand?

I need not have worried. Ever since that day, I have lived life as a total and fulfilled individual—both at work and at home. And this openness has resulted in my feeling a sense of wholeness and self-esteem that I had wanted but never had. I am terribly lucky because I know that there are many gays and lesbians who do not have this opportunity to feel whole and respected on the job, at home, or in their communities.

As I read and edited the articles in this issue of the *SIECUS Report* on “Sexual Orientation,” I realized that I needed to write about my experience here at SIECUS. It is so important for gays and lesbians to take their rightful place in society and to live open and fulfilled lives.

ADVOCACY ARTICLES

When we began putting this issue of the *SIECUS Report* together, we realized that we had an abundance of articles focusing on the importance of gay and lesbian openness at school, at church, at work, and at home but very few providing scientific information. We decided that the *Fact Sheet* on “Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Adolescents,” the language piece on “Terms of Same-Sex Endearment,” and the editorial titled “On the Brink of Abolishing Discrimination Against Lesbians and Gays” were the perfect complement to the more advocacy-based articles.

The pieces include “A Guide to Teaching Actively About Sexual Orientation” by Beth Reis, a public health educator with the Safe Schools Coalition of Washington. In addition to writing eloquently about the need for school training about sexual orientation, she provides current and chilling statistics on Washington State’s Safe Schools Anti-Violence Documentation Projects on anti-gay sexual harassment and violence.

Next, Maureen Kelly, the director of education at Planned Parenthood of Tompkins County in Ithaca, NY, talks about the importance of being “out” at work.

We have also included two pieces about people who are accomplishing important work on behalf of gays and lesbians. One tells of Dr. Justin Richardson, a gay psychiatrist based in New York City, who is frequently called on to lead discussions on sexual orientation in the city’s private schools. The other tells about Catholic Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, who found that his gay brother’s “coming out” was a turning point in his own ministry. He now regularly speaks out on behalf of openly gay relationships and conducts retreats to help parents of lesbians and gays accept and nurture their children.

Finally, we are happy to provide excerpts from President Clinton’s recent speech to the Human Rights Campaign where he became the first sitting President to officially and publicly address a gay and lesbian group in the United States.

ABSTINENCE-ONLY UPDATE

In addition, Daniel Daley, SIECUS’s director of public policy, provides *SIECUS Report* readers with an update on the federal abstinence-only-until-marriage programs titled “Obstinence or Abstinence? The Choice Between Ideology and Public Health.”

It has been a year and a half since Congress created this half billion dollar program. During that time, SIECUS has taken the lead in letting American citizens, policymakers, educators, and media know about the problems with abstinence-only-until-marriage programs as well as the need for comprehensive sexuality education programs.

If you’d like to join us in this effort, write today and tell us to add your name to our 3,000-member Advocates Network. We need you to help in affirming that sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living.

ON THE BRINK OF ABOLISHING
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LESBIANS AND GAYS

Debra W. Haffner, M.P.H.

SIECUS President And CEO

Christopher J. Portelli, J.D.

SIECUS Director of Information

The United States today is virtually on the brink of abolishing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. During the past 35 years, our nation has made great strides in the workplace, in families, even in the military.

In the last year alone it seems almost every major television show, Broadway play, and Hollywood film has featured a lesbian or gay character, starred a lesbian or gay actor, or included a lesbian or gay subplot. This June, 29 years since the Stonewall riots, hundreds of thousands of lesbians and gay men will march openly in hundreds of Pride parades in towns and cities across the country. We predict that on all counts, matters of sexual orientation will be so woven into the national culture and fabric 20 years from now as to be a nonissue.

Meanwhile, from Maine to Alaska and on to Hawaii, legal battles rage to establish and reaffirm basic civil liberties for all, regardless of sexual orientation.

MAJOR DECISIONS, ACTIONS

In March 1998 alone, four major decisions have created a considerable stir in the lesbian and gay community. Alaska became the second court in the land to rule against a ban on same-sex marriages, joining Hawaii.¹ Both states await further action by their high courts.² Also in March, a New Jersey state appeals court held that the Boy Scouts ban on gay scouts and scoutmasters violated that state's antidiscrimination law.³ At virtually the same time, the U.S. Supreme Court extended its definition of sexual harassment in the workplace to include actions between members of the same gender, regardless of the sexual orientation of either worker.⁴ And, in what was originally seen as a serious setback, but which has now become a wake-up call for increased visibility and political action for lesbian and gay voters, Maine repealed its civil rights law protecting lesbians and gays in the workplace. The statewide referendum was championed by the Far Right.

Religious denominations are also struggling with issues related to sexual orientation. Although only a few denominations openly ordain gay and lesbian ministers, almost every major denomination has study groups looking

at such issues as commitment ceremonies, ordination, and support ministries. And, increasingly, religious leaders from Episcopal and Catholic Bishops to ministers of every denomination, are calling for the church to recognize the full religious rights of gays and lesbians. Just last week, a United Methodist minister in Nebraska was exonerated by a church-based jury of his peers for performing a lesbian commitment ceremony.⁵ And a gay Iowa pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been allowed to remain in his job while he awaits a decision by church leaders on their policy banning "practicing homosexuals."⁶

Far Right groups which oppose homosexuality often do so based on the only four verses in the Bible that explicitly address same gender sexual relations (Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, and Romans 1:26-27). Yet the New Testament contains many more admonitions against divorce. Indeed, just 20 years ago, many denominations were struggling with whether to afford full religious participation to divorced individuals. And just as religious institutions have come to accept that divorced people can serve as religious leaders, can participate in religious ceremonies, and can be active members of their congregations, so we predict that in the not so distant future gays and lesbians will be afforded these same rights. Even very conservative Christians are beginning to speak out about the need to recognize all people as deserving God's grace.⁷

Nevertheless, homosexuality remains the last accepted bastion of bigotry in the United States. Recent studies suggest that, despite a developing tolerance for racial and ethnic minorities, Middle America is still not comfortable with people of differing sexual orientations.⁸ In reporting these trends *The New York Times* received some telling responses from its readers. One individual voiced his concern by saying: "We middle class Americans are very tolerant of gay men and lesbians as individuals. What we don't tolerate is their political agenda as a group... As people, they're O.K. It's their group politics we find intolerable."⁹ Substitute "African Americans," "Jewish people," or "women" for "gay men and lesbians" in that statement and see how far we've

come on gender, race, and ethnic issues, and how far we still have to go on matters of sexual orientation.

SCIENCE BARELY KEEPS UP

Science has barely kept up with these societal changes. Amid a plethora of research into sexual identity, we have come to understand more about sexual orientation as a developmental issue. Of course, the 1973 decision by the American Psychological Association to remove *homosexuality* from its list of mental disorders¹⁰ was of significant importance. But it was more than 20 years later, in 1997, that the same body recognized and denounced the harmful and fruitless effects of so-called “conversion therapies” (i.e., therapeutic attempts to change one’s sexual orientation).¹¹ And debates about the gay gene and “nature vs. nurture” only cloud the real issues: that the fundamental right of all human beings to love and happiness and to live without fear of discrimination should not be judged by the gender of their partners.

Nor should this right be clouded by debates on the numbers of people who are members of sexual minorities. The activist community has often used more than fifty-year-old data to proclaim that one in ten Americans are gay or lesbian. In reality, the Kinsey study of American men found that 10 percent of men are more or less exclusively homosexual for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 65, and that four percent of white males are exclusively homosexual throughout their lives.¹² Kinsey did not collect similar data on women. In the most recent scientific study of America’s sexual behavior, 1.4 percent of women said they thought of themselves as homosexuals or bisexuals; 2.8 percent of men did. This finding was very similar to other recent studies in the United States, England, and France, that found that 2 to 4 percent of adults self-identified as gay or lesbian. However, in the national U.S. study, 10.1 percent of the men and 8.6 percent of the women reported feeling same-gender sexual attraction, having had sex with someone of the same sex, or self-identifying as gay or lesbian.¹³ Again, numbers are not the issue here; the issue is being able to live according to one’s sexual orientation without fear, violence, or discrimination.

Nations have gone to war on far less of an analysis of the oppressed minority’s census: witness how Saddam Hussein’s treatment of a tiny tribe of Kurds has brought us to the brink of major world conflict at least twice in the last

decade. Is it relevant how many Kurds there are in Iraq, or for that matter, the world? Of course not.

AFFIRMATION IS THE KEY

Doing the right thing in “one nation with liberty and justice for all” is not and should not be dependent on the numbers of impacted individuals. Nor does an argument about whether genetics vs. environmental factors accounts for 20 percent, 50 percent, or 100 percent of one’s sexual orientation. What counts is standing up and doing the right thing in affirming life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all Americans.

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A GUIDE TO TEACHING ACTIVELY ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Beth Reis, M.S.

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We really don't have a choice when it comes to teaching about sexual orientation in public schools. Children are already learning about it. The problem is they are often receiving inaccurate, destructive messages.

Author Katherine Whitlock said in her book *Bridges of Respect: Creating Support for Gay and Lesbian Youth* that:

In schools across the country, even very young children learn the codes, passed on in jokes and whispers: "Don't wear certain colors to school on a particular day, or you're queer." Lessons are learned each time a child discovers that one of the surest ways to deliver an insult is to accuse another of being a *lezzy*, a *faggot*, a *sissy*. Children may not always know what these words mean, but they know the pejorative power of this language. Lessons are learned each time adults speak and act as if everyone in the world is heterosexual, or should be. Adult acquiescence in homophobia places lesbian and gay youth at great emotional and sometimes physical risk.¹

All students, regardless of their sexual orientation, learn mythology and hatred in school. All are hurt by it. Teachers can educate *actively*, replacing mythology with knowledge and hatred with respect, or they can educate *passively* as they have in the past. Those are the only alternatives. Either way, they communicate important messages.

TEACHING ACTIVELY

There are a number of important reasons why teachers should teach *actively*:

- **Because it is personally important to many children.** Between 2 and 9 percent of Americans are homosexual or bisexual.² This means a high school with a student body of 1,000 probably has 20 to 90 gay, lesbian, and bisexual students (plus a few who are transgender). In addition, some students also have a brother, sister, mother, or father who is a sexual minority. At least six million children in the United States have a gay or lesbian parent.³ Every child deserves accurate information and respectful messages about himself or herself or about loved ones.
- **Because it can build self-esteem and resiliency.** Teachers need to tell gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth that they are good people and that they have faith in them. This would help reduce the likelihood that they will, as a disproportionate number of sexual minority youth do, engage in such self-destructive behaviors as dropping out of school, abusing alcohol and other drugs, becoming homeless (by choice or not), experiencing sexual abuse and exploitation, or considering suicide.⁴
- **Because it can help support and enhance relationships in all families.** Sexual minority youth are sometimes embraced and cherished by their families. More often, however, they fear rejection and hide their feelings from their families. Teachers can provide information to parents and put them in touch with other parents. They can help some students to feel confident and strong enough to confide in their families.

Not all families, of course, can accept their gay and lesbian children. Some teens who come out to their families are assaulted and/or kicked out of their homes. One study found that 8 percent of gay and 11 percent of lesbian youth were physically abused by parents or siblings because of their sexual orientation.⁵ In Seattle, 40 percent of homeless youth are gay, lesbian, or bisexual.⁶ Teachers can provide supportive resources for these youth. They can also help heterosexual students become allies for family members who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
- **Because it can counteract stereotypes and prejudice as well as reduce the likelihood of violence.** In the poignant words of one seventh grader, "God made all of us so we're all special in our own way. So stop the names because if you don't think I'm special, you're wrong...."⁷

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that homosexuals are probably the most frequent victims of hate-motivated violence in the nation.⁸ Schools are actually one of the least safe places for openly gay and gender role nonconforming youth and for those who voice support for gay and lesbian civil rights. Students are sometimes publicly humiliated, threatened, chased, followed, spit on, assaulted, and raped.⁹

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth who witness harassment of gay peers often react by hiding their orientation even more vigorously out of fear or self-hate. Some protect themselves by joining in the bullying. Heterosexuals who observe the persecution may experience guilt about their silent complicity and a sense of powerlessness similar to that experienced by their homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered peers.

Students learn early on to rigidly comply with gender roles. Students fear becoming targets of harassment... regardless of their sexual orientation. Young men may have sexual relations with girls as a way of proving their maleness. Similarly, young women may get pregnant to try to prove their femaleness.

- **Because it can provide accurate information.** Only accurate information can replace the ignorance and stereotypes that hurt all children. (See page 7.)
- **Because it can provide answers to questions that kids are asking.** Young people ask questions about homosexuality during general lessons on family life and sexual health. They are surrounded by news such as the gay/lesbian marriage debate and the ongoing struggle of gays in the military. They are not oblivious to these issues. But they do need guidance and direction. Here are some questions from young people from the fifth through the eighth grade (ages 10 to 15) in Seattle, WA*:
- "What does being gay mean?"
- "How do you know a gay man from a regular man?"
- "Do teenagers always think they're gay?"
- "What if people say you're gay?"
- "What do you do if you think a teacher is gay?"
- "If you're a gay boy, can you have wet dreams?"
- "Do homosexuals have sex?"
- "How could you tell if I'm gay? [signed] Lonely."
- "Why do guys like guys and girls like girls?"
- "Why do you become gay?"
- "Is it true that AIDS is mostly in the homosexual community?"
- "Can you get babies if you're gay?"
- "What should you do if people call your friend lezzy?"

A teacher who refuses to respond to these kinds of earnest questions communicates values just as loudly as if she

or he responded. Which values would teachers rather help a student build: that "ignorance, intolerance, and hate are acceptable" or that "people should respect one another and care about one another's feelings, regardless of differences?"

* The spelling of students' comments was corrected for this article.

The author would like to thank Linnea Nicoulin for her assistance in updating and adapting this article from a presentation made for the Association for Sexuality Education and Training (ASSET) serving the Northwest United States and neighboring Canada.

—Editor

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IMPORTANT POINTS TO MAKE TO STUDENTS WHEN DISCUSSING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Only accurate information can replace the ignorance and stereotypes that hurt all children. These are points which teachers will want to consider making when discussing sexual orientation with their students:

- **A same-sex crush, dream, or relationship is not necessarily gay or lesbian.** Students need to know that many adults who identify as heterosexual report some homosexual experiences. They also need to know that many homosexual adults report having had heterosexual experiences. Thus, a single experience has no predictive value.¹ Students must be helped not to label themselves prematurely. On the other hand, adults must understand that not all such youth are “just going through a phase.” Many may have already realized that they are much more attracted to people of their own gender. More than a few gay men and lesbians say they sensed something “different” about themselves as early as four or five years of age. Most young gay men acknowledge their sexual orientation between 14 and 16 years of age while most young lesbians acknowledge their sexual orientation between 16 and 19 years of age.² To dismiss students’ feelings is to dismiss a core part of their personalities. It can deprive them of the opportunity to support their quest for integrity and maturity.
- **Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youth sometimes believe they can change by dating a person of the other sex or by marrying and having children.** These youth need to understand that there are no scientifically valid studies that indicate people can change their sexual orientation or identity. Even therapy or religious experiences apparently cannot eliminate these feelings although some studies have documented limited success at extinguishing same-sex behavior in highly motivated bisexual individuals.³ They need to know that many gays and lesbians are happy with their orientation and do not want to change.⁴
- **The classmates of children with gay or lesbian parents sometimes mistakenly conclude that they, too, are homosexual.** They need to know that the sexual orientation of parents does not determine the sexual orientation of the child. Youth who grow up in gay or lesbian households may have a better appreciation of diversity or be more skilled at coping with prejudice. They are as likely as other youth to be heterosexual.⁵
- **Gay and lesbian youth often mistakenly believe the stereotypes that all gay men are effeminate and that all lesbian women are masculine.** As a result, they may experience cognitive dissonance. To resolve it, they may adopt new stereotyped personas which only increase their sense of alienation from self, family, and peers. Others attempt to rigidly deny their same-sex feelings and compulsively invest their energy in becoming the perfect student, the perfect son or daughter, the perfect athlete. This perfectionism often leads to defeat and self-destructive behavior. In reality, homosexual people are as diverse in their dress, their behavior, and their choice of occupations as heterosexual people.
- **Children who are sexually abused may mistakenly assume it has made them gay or lesbian, especially if the exploitative same-sex touch involved any physical pleasure.** Part of the reason that sexual abuse is so confusing to young people is that it sometimes evokes a pleasurable physical response while also evoking fear, humiliation, and hurt. Students must learn that bodies do sometimes respond that way and that means neither that the victim consented nor that she or he was wrong. Young people need to know that there is no evidence that sexual trauma influences sexual orientation.⁶
- **Gay and lesbian youth often believe the myth that homosexual relationships don’t last.** Students need to understand that there are long-term, committed same-sex relationships. One study found that 71 percent of gay men live with a partner.⁷ Another found that 82 percent of lesbians live with a partner.⁸ According to researchers from the University of Washington, “couplehood,” either as a reality or an aspiration, is as strong among gay people as among heterosexuals...even though there is much less social and institutional support for permanence and commitment.⁹
- **Heterosexual youth often believe that only gay men get AIDS.** This leads to a very dangerous false confidence. A teen who considers himself or herself heterosexual may feel no need to abstain from sexual relations or from protection while having sexual relations. Students need to understand that it is their *behavior*, not their *sexual orientation* that puts them at risk. HIV can infect anyone (male or female; homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual; married or single) who has unprotected sexual relations with, or shares a needle with a person who is infected with HIV.

- **Children with a gay or lesbian parent may unnecessarily fear that all homosexuals will contract HIV and get AIDS.** Again, *behavior (not sexual orientation)* puts an individual at risk. Children who love someone gay or lesbian need to understand this. How sad for a young person to live with the fear that they will lose their parent (sibling, grandparent, aunt, or uncle) to AIDS...especially when that loved one may actually be at less risk than the general public because they practice safe behaviors.
- **Sexual minority teens may avoid seeking health services or reporting physical or sexual assaults to school authorities or police for fear of unprofessional treatment.** Young people may lose their lives to AIDS or to "gay bashers" when they harbor the unfortunate stereotype of adults, when they fear discrimination, or when they don't trust that their confidentiality will be maintained by the professionals they approach. Teachers can't assure teens that these things won't happen. They need to acknowledge that these fears exist. They also need to help students recognize the importance of seeking help when they are in crisis. They can help students understand that some doctors, police, parents, teachers, and counselors are sensitive, respectful, and trustworthy.

—Beth Reis

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BOOK ADDRESSES SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH LESBIAN AND GAY PERSONS

Foundations of Social Work Practice with Lesbian and Gay Persons is a new book that illustrates how and why social workers and other human service professionals must get closer to the issue of sexual orientation.

Gerald P. Mallon, D.S.W., the editor, has compiled a comprehensive guide that will provide readers with valuable historical and cultural perspectives on the implications of helping individuals who possess multiple situated identities, and who live in a society that validates the compartmentalization of people, couples and groups by sex, gender, religion, race, and ethnicity.

The chapters offer methods to unlearn and reframe stereotypical and prejudicial responses to gays, lesbians, and transgendered people, while reinforcing the principle that human service interventions are value laden and predicated on the belief system of the "intervener." This aspect is particularly appreciated in this "politically correct" era where acceptance of homosexuality is espoused in the media,

workplace, and by communities, but does not always translate into true equity and equality in practice.

The section that includes definition of key terms may have been expanded a bit further to accommodate the uninformed reader, however, the bibliographic section provides helpful guidance on additional resources. Mallon provides an unusually good balance of gay male and lesbian issues as well as a good selection of the settings a practitioner will normally encounter.

This text is a must read for human service professionals, policymakers, and others interested in understanding, creating, and meeting the needs of gays, lesbians, and transgendered individuals.

Order information: The Harrington Park Press, 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580. Phone: 800/429-6784. Cost: \$49.95, hardcover; 24.95, paperback.

—Linda A. Mayo, M.S.W.,
Management Consultant, New York City.

WILL YOU BE THERE FOR EVERY CHILD? REPORTS VIOLENCE AGAINST LESBIANS AND GAYS

Will You Be There for Every Child? is the Fourth Annual Report of the Safe Schools Anti-Violence Documentation Project in Washington State to qualitatively study the phenomenon of anti-gay sexual harassment and violence in the state's kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and high schools.

The Fourth Annual Report includes 91 incidents of anti-gay harassment and violence that have come from at least 59 public schools, 30 public school districts (urban, suburban, small town, and rural), and nine counties. They have included:

- **Gang rapes** (*eight to date; one reported in the 1996-97 school year*). All involved multiple assailants. In three cases, the attackers also urinated on the victim. In two cases, they ejaculated on them. In one, they vomited on the person. In another, they broke the person's hand.
- **Physical assaults** (*19 to date; four reported in the 1996-97 school year*). Eleven of the assaults were serious beatings that involved kicking, punching, and injuring with weapons resulting in cuts, contusions, and broken bones. One led to a mental health hospitalization followed by a suicide.
- **Physical harassment and/or sexual assault, short of rape** (*14 to date; two reported in the 1996-97 school year*). In some of these incidents, students were pushed, pulled or brushed against. In others, they were spit at or hit with flying objects. In some cases, students' clothes were pulled up, down, or off.
- **Ongoing verbal and other harassment** (*34 to date; four reported in the 1996-97 school year*). These incidents involved repeated public humiliation, vandalism, rumors, and death threats. In one case, a friend of the targeted individual responded by printing a "newsletter" urging students not to harass gay or lesbian students and charging the school with failure to protect those students. The friend was disciplined more severely than the offenders.

- **One-time, climate setting incidents** (*16 to date; three reported in the 1996-97 school year*). These incidents primarily involved name-calling and offensive language. In one incident, a teacher expressed the opinion in class that "lesbians and gays are sinners" and that "people who have AIDS deserve to burn in Hell." At least one student, whose father is gay and has AIDS, was very upset by the teacher's comments. A classmate consoled her afterward.

- **Other findings.**

- Incidents serious enough to warrant possible criminal allegations: 41.
- Targeted individuals who reported the offense to the police: 6.
- Ratio of offenders to the people they targeted: 3 against 1.
- Proportion of incidents with adult witnesses, where adults stood by in silence: *half*.
- Number of youth who report having changed schools to try to escape abuse: 6.
- Number of youth who reported dropping out as a result of the harassment: 9.
- Number of reported suicide attempts: 8.
- Number of suicides: 1.

The Safe Schools Coalition is a public-private partnership of 92 offices, agencies, and organizations as well as many individuals.

The Coalition's mission is to help make Washington State schools safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

—Beth Reis

For more information, contact Beth Reis, through the Safe-Schools Coalition of Washington, FKTakamura@aol.com or call 206/632-0662, extension 201

TERMS OF SAME-SEX ENDEARMENT

Steve Bryant and Demian

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Steve Bryant and Demian, same-sex partners of 15 years, founded Partners Task Force for Gay & Lesbian Couples, which has reported on the progress of the same-sex couples movement since 1986. Here they recount language choices they have made in representing the community of couples they serve.

—Editor

We believe that the way we, as journalists, describe our community may ultimately have more impact than the facts we relate. In fact, the way the gay and lesbian community describes itself in terminology and symbols is the way the community thinks about itself and, eventually, becomes the way others perceive us. If we use the language of respect and support, the world is more likely to see us in that light.

One of the first chores for the gay liberation movement in the 1970s was convincing reporters to hear our stories and to adopt the terms we prefer to describe ourselves. At the time, most journalists described our community with terminology that was usually either clinical (i.e., “homosexual”) or derogatory (i.e., “self-avowed”). The stories often characterized us as veritable criminals whereas, in reality, being homosexual is not a crime anywhere in the United States.¹

When we began publishing a journal for gay and lesbian couples 12 years ago, we recognized our responsibility to use terminology that describes those couples in a way that is truthful, accurate, and easily understood.

There was another burden. Twelve years ago, there was little information published about same-sex couples. Both the gay and non-gay press assumed that our community was comprised primarily of singles. Yet as early as 1989, a national survey of randomly selected participants indicated that more than 60 percent of those in the gay and lesbian community were in a relationship.² Nonetheless, the community was slow to acknowledge that lovers often become couples, and couples become families.

Not surprisingly, there was very little agreement about language to respectfully describe those couples. To discover what couples called each other, and to better understand how they had constructed their families, we conducted our own survey of lesbian and gay couples in 1990. Responses from 1,266 couples revealed that most called each other “partner,” “life partner,” “lover,” or “spouse.” Lesser numbers

called themselves “roommate/friend,” “mate/life mate,” and “boyfriend/girlfriend,” among other terms. A few adventurous couples called each other “husband” or “wife”; however, we learned from interviews that they were sometimes accused of aping “straight” culture.

More recently, we have witnessed large segments of the gay and lesbian community fondly embracing the very same words that oppressors use to describe us. We are personally offended by *anyone* calling us “faggots” or “queers”; it therefore made no sense to use that kind of language in our publications.

Our survey also exposed the inordinate amount of discrimination couples faced—as a couple, not due strictly to being gay or lesbian—in insurance, taxes, housing, memberships, custody, immigration, etc. Ninety-five percent of this discrimination could be addressed with a marriage license.

That’s why we decided to support legal marriage and make it part of our editorial mission.

In America, roughly 22 same-sex couples have legally challenged laws that bar their marriage. The first lawsuit was brought in 1971, more than 27 years ago. Until Hawaii’s judiciary took one such case seriously a few years ago, very little credence was given to the possibility of same-sex marriage—even in the gay and lesbian community.

JUST PLAIN “MARRIAGE”

One of the terminology challenges with the word “marriage” is that it represents both a legal *contract* licensed by the state and a religious or social *ceremony*. Because the iconographic trappings of church ceremonies come first to mind when discussing marriage, we believe it important to spell out the difference between these two distinctly different types of marriage. We also frequently rely on the phrase “legal marriage” for clarity. Where the reference is to marrying same-sex partners, we use the term “same-sex marriage,” or simply “marriage.”

Both the gay and mainstream press have generally been less diligent. While there has been a lot of attention paid to legal marriage, the gay press has sometimes used the term “queer marriage,” which is neither accurate nor positive. It is merely shocking and, in our opinion, denigrating to the marriage partners.

We pay a lot of attention to the terminology used for

*Language has
the power to define
the dream
of equality.*

legal marriage because there is a lot at stake. Not only does the language describe the civil right, it defines what we *think* of that civil right. "Queer marriage" does not appear to take marriage seriously. It also *classifies* it as a different, rather than equal, institution.

We would also like to see the term "gay marriage" put to rest. Opposite-sex couples do not describe their relationships as "straight marriage." Using the term "gay marriage" gives the impression that something different or "special" is wanted, whereas the only demand is for treatment equal to that which opposite-sex couples receive.

Another reason to eschew the term "gay marriage" is that the denial of legal marriage is not due to one or both partners' sexual *orientation*. In fact, there are *plenty* of married gay men and lesbians—they happen to be married to opposite-sex partners. These gay men and lesbians were able to marry because their partners had different anatomy. No marriage license asks for the sexual orientation of the marriage partners.

"Same-gender marriage" is also misleading. The discrimination facing same-sex couples is based on sex, not gender. The terms are not interchangeable. "Gender" is socially constructed and denotes the assumed qualities of maleness and femaleness. "Sex" identifies the biological makeup that distinguishes between the male and the female. To put it another way: gender is the role played, sex is the plumbing.

The law currently denies marriage to two women or two men because of the physical bodies they inhabit, not because of the sex role(s) they play, whether "feminine," "masculine," "androgynous," or otherwise. Likewise, a man who assumes a female gender by dressing and acting "like a woman" can still marry a woman.

Some may have favored the term "same-gender" under the assumption that "gender" is more palatable than "sex." However, an unpublished survey of voters conducted in 1997 tested the use of "gender" and "sex" to learn which term resulted in more support of marriage for gay men and lesbians. "Gender" won only three percentage points over "sex"—not enough to prefer a term that confuses the issue.

Like many words, "sex" has multiple meanings. Because sex can refer to intimate behavior, some prefer to avoid the word "same-sex" for fear of misinterpretation. Yet, the sex *status* of gay and lesbian couples, as two males or two females, is the basis of the marriage discrimination. We believe, therefore, that the term "same-sex marriage" is the most relevant and informative.

Many people support the idea of marriage. Those who don't, seem less concerned with the language. They either don't understand the issue as one of equality, don't think marriage is a good idea for *anyone*, or simply dislike gay men and lesbians.

Those who can be persuaded to support legal marriage

for same-sex couples are more easily won over with the language of rational discourse than with the euphemistic use of "gender."

The term "same-sex marriage" makes clear what's at stake. It's not about having sex, it's about marrying someone of the same sex. Stealthy language will never succeed in slipping this issue through a legislature, voters, or the courts. Heartfelt, well-reasoned appeals stand a far greater chance of success.

Part of the problem with naming marriage stems from the fact that same-sex couples have been denied this right for so long that they never expected to legally marry and therefore had no need to name or describe the public or private, formal or informal, rituals they have long used to confirm their commitment to each other.

A WEDDING IS A WEDDING IS A WEDDING

While not providing any legal protection or responsibilities, nonlegal ceremonies can have a powerful, positive effect upon the couple and those who attend. Many gay and lesbian couples hold ceremonies or other rituals. Even more wear rings of other symbols of commitment.

Couples we interviewed sometimes were required by their church or temple to use certain terms for their rituals; these included "blessing," "commitment ceremony," or "union." The religious organizations often held in reserve for opposite-sex couples what we consider to be the appropriate, widely understood terms of "wedding" or "marriage."

Because ceremonies for same-sex and opposite-sex weddings are often identical in purpose, tone, and even text (except for signing the state marriage license at the end of the ceremony), we think they should be called the same. A license does not make or break a marriage ceremony—it only affects the legal outcome.

Q-THIS, Q-THAT

Over the years, we resisted the use of terms like "queer" that have become so popular. After posting an article on our Web site called, "Why Partners Task Force for Gay & Lesbian Couples Does Not Use 'Queer' to Define Our Community," responses from site visitors were mixed.

It took decades for *The New York Times* to adopt the word "gay," rather than "homosexual." The term "gay" transformed perceptions of the gay and lesbian community—including our own—because it was positive, nonclinical and self-selected.

These days, the names of many gay groups include the word "queer." Because the term is used so widely, the *Times* and other publications could easily begin to adopt it. Although self-selected by some in the gay and lesbian community, it is generally understood as a term of abuse.

No other subculture insists on formally and seriously

addressing itself by words that have been used traditionally as weapons of hate—"queer," "dyke," and "faggot" were crafted as taunts and insults. No other group *prefers* that others describe it by such oppressive language. Use of these terms can give the impression that the gay and lesbian community sees itself as perpetual victims.

It would be considered an affront by many African-Americans for an organizational name to include the word "nigger" in it. Jews would similarly object to "kike." Yet, several dozen gay and lesbian organizations and Web sites now include the term "queer" in their names; examples include the political group "Queer Nation" and the Internet resource "Queer Resources Directory."

The willingness to use oppressive language in our books, newspapers, and institutions reflects the widespread use of this terminology in the gay and lesbian community. We think this has been detrimental to the emotional health of gay men and lesbians. It also confuses and puts off those who would otherwise be our supporters. It also makes it more difficult to work on some political issues because inappropriate terminology can cloud understanding of the real issues at stake.

We believe it is humiliating and self-destructive to embrace and use words to describe oneself that are used in derision by someone who hates you. It can undermine one's self-esteem and it is hurtful to others when repeated. This is one method by which the oppression we face is perpetuated.

Negative names can and have been used with a sense of irony, or in a humorous context, just as African-Americans have traded pejorative insults in a cynical send-up of cultural attitudes. But some in the gay community have taken the use of "queer" far beyond humor and irony, embracing the term for everyday purposes.

They claim that using disrespectful terms like "queer," "faggot," and "pansy" somehow dilutes the terms, or "reclaims" them. (Why "claim" them in the first place?) This approach does not dissuade those who persist in using these words to attack us, nor in softening their impact upon many of us who hear them. Hateful words can be very potent and it makes no sense to encourage their use.

"Queer" is particularly nasty. Dictionaries define the word as "unusual or abnormal" and also "worthless or counterfeit." This is certainly the way the word is understood by most English speakers, including the current mayor of Montgomery, Alabama, who chairs the state governor's reelection campaign. He was recently quoted saying, "I used the word 'queer' and I'll use it again. I'm not going to call them gay. I don't approve of their lifestyle one bit."³

Gay men and lesbians as a group are not queer. We have a different orientation than the majority, and it is certainly not worthless or fake. We are part of the fabric of every cul-

ture and society, and have been present during every age of history. We have added significantly to the world's culture and sciences; indeed, many gay men and lesbians have favorably changed the course of human history.

Further, the use of "queer" by gay men and lesbians appears to be romanticized, and perpetuates the perception of the gay and lesbian community as "sexual outlaws." Holding oneself apart from the mainstream creates a condition of separateness and devalues the transformative potential of inclusion. Accentuating our difference at all costs can deter us from seeking and gaining full equality.

DESPERATELY SEEKING SYMBOLS

Graphic symbols, the visual shorthand used on logos, bumper stickers, buttons and flyers, also provide us with a community identity. One of the healthiest symbols we have seen is the rainbow flag, a colorful reminder of the diversity and scope of the gay and lesbian community.

Another symbol, the pink triangle, is most unfortunate. This was first employed by the Nazis on a clothing patch used to mark homosexual men who were later interned in work and extermination camps. It is a horrible and important reminder of the extent to which *any* right-wing, extremist political party is capable. We don't think it is a *positive* image of gay liberation.

The pink triangle has been widely adopted by gay and lesbian organizations, and is often featured on logos and political buttons. No black liberation group, in contrast, would use the symbol of the burning cross, yet the gay community celebrates the use of the pink triangle.

When we began publishing, we were stumped for something visual that would connote the social and emotional bond between same-sex partners. We tried integrating two triangles into our logo and also into some of the publication's illustrations. The results never pleased us. Looking back on it now, we'd say that our attempt was doomed—the symbol was not of our choosing in the first place, and it did not enhance our self-image and self-esteem.

Because the pink triangle was the visual language of an oppressor, we decided against using it to *represent* the gay and lesbian community. It makes sense to use the best of what describes us, not the worst.

INCLUSION REQUESTS

Over the years, Partners Task Force for Gay & Lesbian Couples has been asked to change its name to explicitly include transsexuals and bisexuals. We never felt the need to do so—our mission was serving same-sex couples, and both transsexuals and bisexuals can form same-sex relationships. Two male bisexuals, for example, would not form a bisexual relationship with each other—regardless of their attraction to both men and women, they would have formed a same-

sex relationship. However, if we had to do it over, we would probably now select the name "Partners Task Force for Same-Sex Couples" to signal inclusion to all, whether gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

DEFINING OUR COMMUNITY AND OURSELVES

While gathering information and resources, we have seen a growing awareness of couples issues. In addition to more news coverage and a profusion of books, hundreds of same-sex couples have made their appearance on the Internet with personal home pages.

This attention has been a long time coming—decades after the first appearance of gay liberation and a recognizable gay and lesbian community. This time lag is remarkable when you consider that the majority of gay men and lesbians are in relationships.

The delay must be partly attributed to societal oppression, both external and internal, aided in large part by language that both dampened the community's emerging self-esteem and denied appropriate recognition to same-sex couples.

We believe it important to address the gay and lesbian community the same way we want others to address us—not with the language of the oppressor, but with respect and dignity.

We believe it important to define ourselves as part of the worldwide culture, part of the American family, and deserving of equal treatment.

This concern for precise and positive language does not arise from an all-consuming interest in "political correct-

ness," but from the knowledge that language has the power to define the dream of equality—and the dream has the power to define the future.

It is important to plan for a future where *all* citizens are treated equally under the law, have the same opportunities, and are not penalized for being gay or lesbian. When such a future arrives, will *anyone* still insist on being called a queer? Will anyone blink an eye when two men call each other "husband" or two women call each other "wife?"

Steve Bryant and Demian, who holds a doctorate in education, operate Partners Task Force for Gay & Lesbian Couples as a national resource for same-sex couples, supporting the diverse community of committed gay and lesbian partners through a variety of media. Its Web site presents more than 140 pages of essays, surveys (including the Partners Survey), and legal information. Partners produced the video "The Right to Marry." Contact Partners, Box 9685, Seattle, WA 98109; 206/935-1206; <demian@buddybuddy.com; www.buddybuddy.com>.

This article is adapted for the SIECUS Report with permission from a copyrighted article which the authors wrote for their Web site.

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SIECUS POSITION STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation is an essential human quality. Individuals have the right to accept, acknowledge, and live in accordance with their sexual orientation, be they bisexual, heterosexual, gay, or lesbian. The legal system should guarantee the civil rights and protection of all people, regardless of sexual orientation. Prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation is unconscionable.

VIEW FROM THE FIELD OUT IN EDUCATION: WHERE THE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL COLLIDE

Maureen Kelly

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Of course *you're* out at work," a friend recently asserted over dinner. My response was not nearly as confident as her assumption. I am a woman who loves women. I also tend to be an outspoken woman. It is unfortunate but true that the two do not always meet—the outspoken part and the woman who loves women part. Similar to the adolescent struggling with the gamut of feelings between anxiety and excitement of being out as a gay teen to her peers, I wonder and worry too.

I am in fact out at work, but I am regularly confronted with people and situations where I have to choose to come out again. Sometimes it's a breeze. A comment is made, I have an opening. I mention my partner or give away some detail that nudges open the closet door. Other times it can be frustrating and painful with a colleague making assumptions about a husband or boyfriend that need to be corrected. Those are dreadful moments when worry fills me.

Will we move on after I say, "*Actually*, I have a girlfriend" or will the awkward silence kill the conversation and strain future interactions? Even worse are the situations when a colleague makes a homophobic slur in an attempt to make a joke. What then? Simply saying, "Wow, that's really homophobic" to a colleague's face can be quite a powerful and anxiety provoking experience. Making the decision to confront homophobic comments can certainly be threatening but without confronting those comments we quietly participate in the homophobia that exists in some workplaces.

Being out in the world of sexuality education in a non-profit agency has some definite advantages. I do not have to impose filters upon myself during conversations. I do not have to tiptoe around pronouns and reports of what I did last weekend. I can be honest and truthful, I can be myself, and I can spend my mental energy on my job, not on attempts to obscure the reality of my personal life.

By being out, I can be an active contributing member of a professional committee *and* gay. By being out at work, I can include my partner in work-related social functions without trying to think of ways to explain her to my coworkers. By actively being out at work, I can do my job without being consumed by the worry of being found out.

Being out at work can also be a struggle. Unfortunately, some sexuality educators turn off the edu-

cator in them when they're not in a program addressing an issue with a "target audience." I have been witness to the gap between my colleagues "talking the talk" and "walking the walk." I am amazed at the number of national and regional conferences at which sexual orientation remains an afterthought in programming rather than an integral part of each sexuality discussion. Whether we're learning strategies for talking about birth control as it relates to sexual behavior not sexual identity (yes, some lesbians and gay men participate in sexual behaviors that require birth control to prevent pregnancy) or learning that safer sex negotiations are not simply about one of two partners using a latex condom, we have a long way to go.

The world of sexuality educators is truly a microcosm of the world. I fancy it a progressive, thoughtful, and skilled world, but I am often reminded that some of us have the same biases as those outside our world. I like to think of sexuality educators as a subset of the larger population for whom understanding and acceptance come more easily. Consider, for example, holding a belief that sexual orientation is not simply a cut and dried, boy-meets-girl scenario. Being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is far more than an issue, it's an identity. Unfortunately, some of my colleagues still need to be convinced of the reality of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people.

Here are three things educators can do to build respect for sexual diversity:

- **Don't rely on stereotypes.** Some people like to assume that something obvious will make a person's orientation clear: a speech pattern, a haircut, a stance. This is foolish. Not only is it unrealistic to assume sexual orientation based on a simplistic assessment of an individual's external characteristics, it's absolutely unfair to those people who do not—regardless of sexual orientation—choose to follow the often rigid stereotypes that dictate external appearance. It's easy to make assumptions about people at meetings. But be cautious about making assumptions based on stereotypic appearances.
- **Use gender neutral language.** By not assuming the gender of an individual's partner, you are not only letting them know you are aware that there are a variety of possibilities for intimate partnerships but you are also allowing them to fill in the blanks if they choose. It's vital for lesbian, gay,

and bisexual people to do the same. It's all too easy for us to assume everyone else is straight and we're the only one, or to assume that our straight coworkers do not have a gay brother, a lesbian daughter, or a bisexual best friend. A simple shift toward using gender neutral language in conversation can have an immense positive impact and increase feelings of inclusivity.

- **Be an advocate for equal rights of lesbian, gay, and bisexual staff.** Be vocal about putting an end to homophobic comments, as well as encouraging antidiscrimination policies, equitable benefits packages that serve all employees and their families, and staff training on diversity. Encourage employers to create and adopt a policy on Advocacy for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Civil Rights to be submitted to your Board of Directors for approval. In 1993, the Board of Directors of Planned Parenthood of Tompkins County adopted such a policy with resolutions that read:

Be it resolved that Planned Parenthood of Tompkins County will:

- *advocate public policies which guarantee the full civil rights of all people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual or who are perceived to be, and*
- *continue to carry out community education to promote public understanding of human sexuality, and*
- *provide health services in a manner which is supportive of and culturally sensitive to needs of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or who are perceived to be.*

OUT TO MYSELF

I have long used the *Vivienne Cass Model of Identity Formation* in helping to determine how I accept myself and my sexual orientation. It includes six stages:

- *Stage 1: Identity Confusion.* ("I might not be heterosexual.")
- *Stage 2: Identity Comparison.* ("I might be gay, lesbian, or bisexual.")
- *Stage 3: Identity Tolerance.* ("I am probably gay, lesbian, or bisexual.")
- *Stage 4: Identity Acceptance.* ("I am lesbian, gay, or bisexual.")
- *Stage 5: Identity Pride.* ("I am proud I am lesbian, gay, or bisexual.")
- *Stage 6: Identity Synthesis.* ("I am a person for whom being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is an important aspect of my identity."¹)

When I first found the *Cass Model*, I consumed it. I remember being confused and intrigued by the fact that acceptance, pride, and synthesis were distinct stages identity formation. I couldn't quite grasp the subtle difference between accepting myself, having pride in myself, and seeing my sexual identity

as *one part* of my whole self. The stages described in the *Cass Model* provided me with a process through which I could normalize my experiences during the discovery of my sexual identity. It was comforting to have a process laid out for me that I could both fit into and grow into.

I have been fortunate to work with a local Straight and Gay Youth Alliance as an educator. I recently presented a program using the *Cass Model* in an exercise to talk about the variety of unique experiences and challenges that can exist for a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person. On my way home after going through the six stages of identity development and talking about behavioral and feeling characteristics unique to each stage, I was struck by how vital the process was for both myself as an educator and the youth in the group. More than ever, I am convinced that we have to talk about our experiences and share among ourselves and our straight peers in order to bring ourselves to a greater level of self acceptance and a more widespread cultural understanding of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people as *people*.

It has been far too easy for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people to be seen as a threat to some policymakers and some vocal anti-gay activists because many of them have no connections to gay, lesbian, and bisexual people except for the myth-based information that is often filled with hateful intentions. The choice to be actively visible as gay, lesbian, and bisexual people has potential for positive impact as well as risk. Those of us who feel we can take the risk must do so to pave the way for colleagues who cannot—for whatever reasons—be the first.

LETTING "OUT" BE IN

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual equality is one vital part of a much larger necessity for equality as it relates to the multiple dimensions of diversity. Those dimensions include race, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, age, education, religious beliefs, income, relationship status, and sexual orientation.

When people approach these dimensions with an honest intent to achieve equality, they will need to address attitudes, policies, and laws that are explicitly biased, and truly begin to dismantle many of their socially accepted beliefs. Unfortunately, such sweeping changes are difficult to achieve. Fortunately, people do not have to achieve them all at once.

Ultimately, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people who are out in the world can help achieve these goals. Coming out will then become an outdated concept and absolute respect for all the dimensions of diversity will be implicit, including an understanding, respect, and acceptance of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. Hey, a girl has to dream.

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GAY PSYCHIATRIST HELPS PARENTS UNDERSTAND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Dr. Justin Richardson is a gay 34-year-old New York City-based psychiatrist who is frequently called on to lead discussions and training sessions on sexual orientation in the city's private schools. This came as a result of increasing concern by parents and teachers about the high rate of attempted suicide of closeted adolescents and the homophobia that exists at boys schools.

Dr. Richardson recently told a group of over 200 parents in Manhattan that when they talk to their children about sexuality "it is a good idea to mention that people have sex with members of the same sex sometimes, that when they grow up they may have friends who do that, and that it may be something they themselves do." Parent reaction ranged from enthusiasm to quiet acceptance to anger.

In speaking about parental reactions to the issue of sexual orientation, Dr. Richardson said that they can hardly expect to be happy if a child says that he is gay or lesbian. "They have good reasons for this," he said. "Homosexual youths face certain hardships that heterosexual youths never will. Most parents want their children to be like themselves, or like idealized versions of themselves. Most parents are heterosexuals. And if they hear that their child is gay, they'll have a sense of loss."

Dr. Richardson said that parents often ask how they should react to same-sex experimentation. Their number one question, he says, is whether the experimentation will affect a child's later sexual orientation. "The answer is no," he said. "In fact, if this is a girl who has the genetic predisposition and early experience to grow up to be a heterosexual, then bisexual experimentation will probably only help her clarify that she is more attracted to males than to females." On the other hand, if "she started life on the path to being a lesbian, teenage experimentation might help her to develop her sense of sexual identity in a healthier way than if she were forced to ignore her true desires until adulthood."

Dr. Richardson usually talks to teachers and small groups of students. Yet, administrators at the school indicate that the reaction to his talk was excellent and that no one complained even though there was some discussion along the lines of "how much do we need to talk about this?"

Dr. Richardson assumes that parents know he is gay when they attend one of his sessions. But he does not specifically tell them. "If I go in there with a chip on my shoulder and say, 'I'm gay and I had a rough time in high

school and I'm not going to let that happen to your kids.' Well, that would be a recipe for disaster," he said. Instead, he is carefully spoken and determinedly non-threatening.

When conducting sessions for school administrators or teachers, he recommends six interventions:

- **A norm of no gay-related harassment.** Schools can establish a policy expressly prohibiting the harassment of individuals because of their sexual orientation. Teachers should challenge students' derisive use of terms.
- **Openly gay teachers.** Schools can visibly support gay or lesbian teachers coming out to the school community.
- **A gay-straight alliance.** Schools can establish an alliance to provide an accepting environment in which students can meet to discuss sexual orientation issues without having to disclose their own orientation.
- **An integrated curriculum.** Schools can integrate education about the lives of gay and lesbian people into their curricula in a subject- and age-appropriate way.
- **Parent education.** Schools can educate parents about the needs of gay youth and offer resources to parents who believe their children may be gay or lesbian.
- **Mental health referrals.** Schools can watch for gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth who may be suffering harassment or otherwise struggling to adjust to their sexual orientation. They should make referrals to an experienced mental health provider when appropriate.

He points out that these interventions are most effective when made by a school as a whole rather than by individual educators. He also urges that they lay groundwork for the interventions. "Negative reactions by surprised parents, teachers, trustees, or school boards can defeat the benefit of a well intentioned effort," he said. "It can be very political."

Dr. Richardson says that he is frequently asked about the need for a sexual orientation lecture when only 2 to 6 percent of the adult population is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. His answer: "They will all grow up to know somebody who is gay. And they need to be educated about that."

—Mac Edwards

For more information, contact Dr. Richardson at the Columbia Center for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Mental Health, 16 E. 60th Street, Suite 400, New York, NY 10022. Phone: 212/326-8441. Fax: 212/326-8590.

CATHOLIC BISHOP GUMBLETON URGES GAYS AND LESBIANS TO "COME OUT"

Mac Edwards
Editor, SIECUS Report

Over a decade ago, Catholic Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit received a "coming out" letter from his brother, Dan. He put the letter aside and didn't mention it to anyone in his family for over a year even though he knew that his mother and his other siblings had received an identical letter.

A year later, as he was leaving his 86-year-old mother's home after a short visit, Bishop Gumbleton paused as she followed him outside the front door. She seemed worried as she asked him if Dan was going to Hell. "I knew what she was talking about," he said. "She couldn't be at peace with that question on her mind." "No," I said. "God isn't going to send us to Hell because of who we are. I knew that was the truth."

That was the first time that Bishop Gumbleton had spoken to anyone about his brother's sexual orientation. But it would not be the last. From that moment, he began a journey that has resulted in his acceptance of his brother and in his becoming one of the most outspoken advocates of gay and lesbian rights in the United States and in the Catholic Church.

His public support of his brother and other gays and lesbians started when he openly told a group that he was a Catholic bishop with a gay brother. "And that's okay," he said. "He's part of our family. His partner is accepted as part of our family."

He recently told a group gathered for a "Catholic Parents Network Retreat" sponsored by New Ways Ministry that "I am blessed because of this. It is so important for us to support one another so that gay brothers and sisters will know that they are fully welcome in our church community. Our work is going to change our church for the better."

OPENNESS HELPS PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT

As he conducts and participates in workshops on sexual orientation, Bishop Gumbleton explains that his understanding, acceptance, and support of gays and lesbians has developed through the willingness of others to share their stories, feelings, and experiences.

He frequently mentions Andrew Sullivan, the openly gay former editor of *The New Republic* and author of the book *Virtually Normal*. Growing up in a Catholic family in

England, Sullivan was taught that his sexual orientation was wrong and said in an article titled "I Am Here" in *America Magazine* that:

As soon as I actually explored the possibility of human contact within my emotional and sexual makeup, in other words, as soon as I allowed myself to love someone, all that the church had taught me about the inherent disorder of homosexuality seemed so self-evidently wrong that I could no longer find it that problematic. Because of the experience of loving someone or being allowed to love someone, I felt an enormous sense of the presence of God for the first time in my life. To deny this to gay people is not merely incoherent and wrong, it is incredibly destructive of the moral quality of their lives in general. Does this make sense? You can't ask someone to suppress that which makes them whole as a human being and then to lead blameless lives. We are human beings and we need love in our lives in order to love others, in order to be good Christians.¹

"That's his experience. And I cannot deny it," Bishop Gumbleton responded to a group of parents of gays and lesbians after reading the above excerpt. "When we love and are loved, we can experience God."

He also regularly refers to a column written by Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee in the local diocesan newspaper. In it, the Archbishop said:

It seems clear to me that gay people, like all of us, fare better when they are able to develop stable relationships, or when they are loved and respected as people striving to grow humanly and spiritually. I invite all in the Catholic community to join me in showing this kind of respect as we try to work out the rightful place for [gays and lesbians] in church life.²

He also quotes Cardinal Basil Hume of London who said that

Love between two people, whether of the same sex or a different sex, is to be treasured and respected.³

He also talks of a woman named Olga who made a difference in his own understanding of homosexuals. "I met her

when I was on the Board of Francis House in Tampa,” he said. “She had become an activist for gay rights and AIDS education to honor her son, Raoul, who had died of AIDS. ‘I keep the spirit of Raoul alive through the work that I do,’ she told me. ‘He was a proud man, and I am proud, too.’ She is an example of how we can share our experiences with each other and how we can be of strength to each other.”

Such openness, he says, will bring the issue of homosexuality to all Catholics and will, he feels, eventually result in acceptance of all gays and lesbians.

During the talk, he answered these questions from the parents:

Q: How has your coming out [to support your gay brother] helped other bishops to join in the conversation?

A: It has not [yet] helped. Bishops don’t seem to want to talk about this subject.

Q: How can people approach the bishops about sexual orientation?

A: It depends on the diocese. I think there are many bishops who are not approachable. Their attitude is that homosexuality is wrong. They think you should be compassionate to the person but condemn the sin. But that isn’t helpful. In fact, it is hurtful. What we need to do is to draw homosexuals and their experiences into the church. That’s the way questions are answered. People change their thinking when they are able to draw on people’s real life experiences. That’s what has to happen with this issue.

All of the moral theology that I learned in the seminary was written by people who were probably very homophobic because they had gone through seminary training similar to mine. We had a very narrow understanding of the issue. The teaching we have today does not reflect the real life experiences of people who are gay and lesbian.

As the church begins to draw those experiences into herself and reflect on them, she will then teach in a way that is much more in touch with the real situation of gay and lesbian people. The more that people come out—both gays and lesbians as well as their families—the better off the church is going to be. Through our own actions, we have to encourage other people to be much more open and ready to share their experiences.

Q: How can we reach teachers?

A: If bishops aren’t willing to deal with the question [of

sexual orientation], then parishes and schools certainly aren’t going to deal with the questions either. Most Catholic schools don’t. Neither do public schools. It is a “hit and miss” situation. Some schools are more open than others. That’s part of what we have to change.

Q: How does the church feel about your work?

A: I make certain that what I say is within the framework of Catholic teaching. But I push it to the edge to make certain people see that this issue is not a completed Catholic teaching. We have to keep discovering what is right and what is wrong. I keep pushing to bring about the change that I think is necessary. I want to force this topic into the open so that the bishops will talk about it. The church will change when it experiences the lives of homosexual people.

Q: Would you officiate at a same-sex marriage?

A: I could not confer the sacrament of holy matrimony on two people of the same gender for the same reason that I could not ordain a woman as a priest. But God does not act just through sacraments. A sacrament is a ritualization. God can bless a union without the sacrament of marriage. I would bless a gay couple. And I would pray for them. I support the idea that two people involved in a loving relationship need the blessings and the prayers of the church.

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2. “Who Is Our Neighbor?” *Milwaukee Catholic Herald*, July 19, 1980, p. 2.
3. “Some Observations on the Teaching of the Catholic Church Concerning Homosexual People,” a pastoral letter from Cardinal Basil Hume, July 22, 1993.

This article was based on a talk which Bishop Gumbleton made at a “Catholic Parents Network Retreat” in Stamford, CT, sponsored by New Ways Ministry, an organization founded in 1977 by Father Robert Nugent, S.D.S., and Sister Jeannine Gramick, S.S.N.D., as an educational and bridge-building ministry of reconciliation between the Catholic lesbian and gay community and institutional structures in the Roman Catholic Church.

For more information, write to New Ways Ministry, 4012 29th Street, Mt. Ranier, MD 20712 or call 301/277-5674. The group’s Web site address is <<http://www.wam/umd.edu/~francisd>> —**Editor**

EXCERPTS FROM PRESIDENT CLINTON'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON GAYS AND LESBIANS TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

This is excerpted from the official White House transcript of President Clinton's keynote address to the Human Rights Campaign dinner on October 8, 1997, in Washington, DC. It marked the first time that a sitting President had officially and publicly addressed a gay and lesbian group in the United States. It is reprinted with permission of the Human Rights Campaign.

—Editor

I want this to be a country where every child and every person who is responsible enough to work for it can live the American Dream. I want this country to embrace the wider world and continue to be the strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity, and I want us to come together across all our lines of difference into one America.

That is my vision. It drives me every day. I think if we really could create a society where there is opportunity for all and responsibility from all and we believed in a community of all Americans, we could truly meet every problem we have and seize every opportunity we have.

For more than two centuries now, our country has had to meet challenge after challenge after challenge. We have had to continue to lift ourselves beyond what we thought America meant. Our ideals were never meant to be frozen in stone or time. Keep in mind, when we started out with Thomas Jefferson's credo that all of us are created equal by God, what that really meant in civic political terms was that you had to be white, you had to be male, and that wasn't enough—you had to own property, which would have left my crowd out when I was a boy.

Over time, we have had to redefine the words that we started with, not because there was anything wrong with them and their universal power and strength of liberty and justice, but because we were limited in our imaginations about how we could live and what we were capable of and how we should live. Indeed, the story of how we kept going higher and higher and higher to new and higher definitions—of equality and dignity and freedom is in its essence the fundamental story of our country.

Fifty years ago, President Truman stood at a new frontier in our defining struggle on civil rights. Slavery had

ended a long time before, but segregation remained. Harry Truman stood before the Lincoln Memorial and said, "It is more important today than ever to ensure that all Americans enjoy the rights [of freedom and equality]. When I say all Americans, I mean all Americans."

Well, my friends, all Americans still means all Americans. We all know that it is an ideal and not perfectly real now. We all know that some of the old kinds of discrimination we have sought to rid ourselves of by law and purge our spirits of still exist in America today. We all know that there is continuing discrimination against gays and lesbians. But we also know that if we're ever going to build one America, then all Americans—including you and those whom you represent—have got to be part of it.

To be sure, no President can grant rights. Our ideals and our history hold that they are inalienable, embedded in our Constitution, amplified over time by our courts and legislature. I cannot grant them—but I am bound by my oath of office and the burden of history to reaffirm them.

All America loses if we let prejudice and discrimination stifle the hopes or deny the potential of a single American. All America loses when any person is denied or forced out of a job because of sexual orientation. Being gay, the last time I thought about it, seemed to have nothing to do with the ability to read a balance book, fix a broken bone, or

change a spark plug.

For generations, the American Dream has represented a fundamental compact among our people. If you take responsibility and work hard, you have the right to achieve a better life for yourself and a better future for your family. Equal opportunity for all, special privileges for none—a fate shared by Americans regardless of political views. We believe—or we all say we believe—that all citizens should have the chance to rise as far as their God-given talents will take them. What counts is energy and honesty and talent. No arbitrary distinctions should bar the way.

So when we deny opportunity because of ancestry or religion, race or gender, disability or sexual orientation, we break the compact. It is wrong. And it should be illegal. Once again, I call upon Congress to honor our most cher-

*Walt Whitman said
that our greatest strength
was that we are
an embracing nation.
In his words, "a Union,
holding all, fusing,
absorbing, tolerating all."*

ished principles and make the Employment Non-Discrimination Act the law of the land.

I also come here tonight to ask you for another favor. Protecting the civil rights of all Americans. Let me say, I thank you very much for your support of my nominee for the Office of Civil Rights, Bill Lee. I thank you for that. But he, too, comes from a family that has known discrimination and now he is being discriminated against, not because there is anything wrong with his qualifications, not because anybody believes he is not even-tempered, but because some members of the Senate disagree with his views on affirmative action.

Now, if I have to appoint a head of the Office of Civil Rights who is against affirmative action, it's going to be vacant a long time. That office is not there primarily to advocate or promote the policies of the government when it comes to affirmative action. It is there to enforce the existing laws against discrimination. You hope someday you will have one of those existing laws. We need somebody to enforce the laws, and Bill Lee should be confirmed, and I ask you to help me to get him confirmed.

I'd just like to say one more word. There are some people who aren't in this room tonight who aren't comfortable yet with you and won't be comfortable with me for being here. On issue after issue involving gays and lesbians, survey after survey shows that the most important determinant of people's attitudes is whether they are aware—whether they knowingly have had a family or a friendship or a work relation with a gay person.

Now, I hope that we will embrace good people who are trying to overcome their fears. After all, all of us can look back in history and see what the right thing to do was. It is quite another thing to look ahead and light the way. Most people are preoccupied with the burdens of daily living.

Most of us, as we grow older, become—whether we like it or not—somewhat more limited in our imaginations. So I think one of the greatest things we have to do still is just to increase the ability of Americans who do not yet know that gays and lesbians are their fellow Americans in every sense of the word to feel that way. I think it's very important.

When I say, "I believe all Americans means all Americans," I see the faces of the friends of 35 years. When I say, "all Americans means all Americans," I see the faces of the people who stood up when I asked the people who are part of our Administration to stand tonight. When I say, "all Americans means all Americans," I see kind, unbelievably generous, giving people back in my home state who helped my family and my friends when they were in need. It is a different story when you know what you are seeing.

So I say to you tonight, should we change the law? You bet. Should we keep fighting discrimination? Absolutely. Is this Hate Crimes Conference important? It is *terribly* important. But we have to broaden the imagination of America. We are redefining, in practical terms, the immutable ideals that have guided us from the beginning. Again I say, we have to make sure that for every single person in our country, all Americans means all Americans.

After experiencing the horrors of the Civil War and witnessing the transformation of the previous century, Walt Whitman said that our greatest strength was that we are an embracing nation. In his words, a "Union, holding all, fusing, absorbing, tolerating all." Let us move forward in the spirit of that one America. Let us realize that this is a good obligation that has been imposed upon our generation, and a grand opportunity once again to lift America to a higher level of unity, once again to redefine and to strengthen and to ensure one America for a new century and a new generation of our precious children. Thank you and God bless you.

SIECUS PUBLICATIONS ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

SIECUS publishes several publications related to sexual orientation.

- ***Bibliography on Gay and Lesbian Sexuality*** presents a cross section of available resources on gay and lesbian sexuality and related issues. Cost: \$2.00 each.
- ***Fact Sheet on Sexual Orientation and Identity*** provides current and accurate information including definitions, origins and characteristics, civil liberties, and discrimination issues. Cost: \$1.00 each.
- ***Now What Do I Do?*** is a guide for parents when they are talking to their pre-teens about sexuality

issues. It includes a section titled "How Do I Know If I'm Gay?" Cost: \$2.00 each

- ***Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten through 12th Grade*** includes age-appropriate information on sexual orientation. Cost: \$7.95 each.

Order information: SIECUS Publications, 130 West 42nd Street, Suite 350, New York, NY 10036-7802. Phone 212/819-9770. Fax: 212/819-9776. All orders must be prepaid with a check or credit card.

O B S T I N E N C E O R A B S T I N E N C E ? T H E C H O I C E B E T W E E N I D E O L O G Y A N D P U B L I C H E A L T H

.....
Daniel Daley

SIECUS Director of Public Policy

It has been a year and a half since Congress created the new half billion dollar abstinence-only-until-marriage education entitlement program. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have applied for their portion of funds. It is only now that the picture of the state programs is taking shape.

It appears that there may be a silver lining for supporters of sexuality education—many states appear to be doing their best to avoid medically inaccurate, fear-based abstinence-only-until-marriage education. However, the dark cloud surrounding this silver lining is that antisexuality education forces are exerting full-scale political pressure to bring states' efforts in line with their ultraconservative political ideology.

S N A P S H O T O F S T A T E P L A N S

In early November 1997, the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services gave the go-ahead to states to implement the abstinence-only education programs outlined in their applications. At press time, SIECUS has collected the abstinence-only-until-marriage education applications from 48 states (all except Georgia, Oregon, and the District of Columbia).

It is common practice that the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau will ask states to make modifications in their plans as a condition of application approval. At this time, SIECUS has been unable to obtain any information about revisions requested of the states by the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, so those modifications are not reflected in SIECUS's preliminary review of state plans in this article. (SIECUS will publish revised accountings when it obtains the information.)

State target audience. States are targeting youth—especially those under 14 years of age—rather than all unmarried people and many are letting local agencies determine the target audience. (See “States’ Target Ages for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs” on page 23.) Other states are targeting “early” or “young adolescents” and others will “encourage” or “give special attention” to this group.

Program components. Some states plan to partner with other in-state teen pregnancy, health/education, and

youth agencies, and most plan to employ multiple approaches such as media campaigns; grants to youth-serving organizations, local school districts/health departments; and supplements to existing efforts. Specifically:

- 32 states plan to implement a media campaign—from billboards to public service announcements. (See Map 1.)
- 40 states plan to make grants to entities such as youth and community-based organizations. (See Map 2.)
- 34 states plan to make grants to schools/school districts, which include after-school programs and mentoring programs. (See Map 3.)
- 21 states plan to make grants to local health departments. (See Map 4.)
- 27 states plan to partner with other entities, agencies, and organizations including state education agencies, and statewide task forces on teen pregnancy. (See Map 5.)

Evaluation. Forty-three states indicated they will evaluate the abstinence education program. (See Map 6.) However, it is unclear whether these “evaluations” will simply be statistical outcomes reporting or scientifically rigorous program evaluations. Only 11 states indicated they would contract out the evaluation to a university-affiliated research center.

S I L V E R L I N I N G :

S I E C U S A D V I C E I S H E A R D

It appears that the program planning decisions of many state public health officials parallel the recommendations that SIECUS made in its April/May 1997 *SIECUS Report*: “We urge these states to use their creativity in designing programs to increase young people’s likelihood of abstaining from sexual relations. These might include programs that focus on mentoring; remedial education; child sexual abuse prevention; better communication between parents, physicians, and children about sexuality; mental health services; and career planning for young women. All of these might increase the age of first intercourse if targeted to young people prior to sexual relations. These programs must, however, be developed and evaluated carefully.”

NCAE ATTACKS STATE PLANS

While some youth advocates are pleased that states have worked to develop the best possible public health programs in light of the restrictions on program content, a newly formed coalition of Far Right antisexuality education organizations views the situation differently. The National Coalition for Abstinence Education (NCAE), under the aegis of Focus on the Family, is a small coalition of 45 organizations, almost exclusively state-level groups and a few national organizations such as the Family Research Council, the Traditional Values Coalition, Focus on the Family, and Project Reality.

NCAE has developed a *National Report Card* for state plans, wherein states are graded on their adherence to the political ideology of the federal abstinence-only program language rather than on sound public health strategies to promote abstinent behavior among young people. For example, if a state targets young people 9 to 14 years old (to reach them before they become sexually active), its grade is “F.” If a state uses terms like “fact-based,” “not fear-based,” “nonjudgmental,” “respectful,” or “culturally relevant,” it gets an “E.” If a state focuses on media campaigns or after-school programs—rather than classroom programs that didactically teach the eight components of the federal legislation—NCAE gives the state an “F.” If the state MCH department develops the abstinence education plan, NCAE gives the state an “E.”

According to the *National Report Card* three states received an “A,” 11 states received a “C,” 16 states received a “D” and 14 states failed. (Three states did not receive a grade. The report did not identify which states got which grades. It also did not give any accounting of the number of states receiving a grade of “B.”)¹

NCAE has sent its *Report Card* to the states’ governors, states’ MCH directors, states’ Congressional delegations, the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, the U.S. House Commerce Committee, and the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

MORE NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNS

Focus on the Family also placed a full-page advertisement in state newspapers criticizing state plans. These ads inaccurately claim that the so-called “Safe Sex Cartel” of SIECUS, Planned Parenthood, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have “received more than \$3 billion of federal tax money” for sexuality education. (It should be noted that there has never been *any* federal money allocated for the direct provision of comprehensive sexuality education by *any* organization or government agency.) It also claims that calls for sound evaluation of the abstinence-only approach are “totally inconsistent with the scope and schedule of the program” and that “abstinence education is being

set up to fail before it is even given a fair chance.”²

Moreover, some conservative groups are pressuring governors to have state officials and professionals involved in the development and implementation of the abstinence-only-until-marriage program to sign pledges to uphold the restrictive provisions of the federal legislation. There have also been reports that some Far Right organizations are attempting to collect the resumés and public statements of professionals involved in the states’ programs to determine if those professionals have been involved with organizations—such as Planned Parenthood and SIECUS—that abstinence-only proponents mistakenly view as “anti-abstinence education.”

In the coming months, such campaigns by NCAE and other Far Right groups may put pressure on state legislatures to become involved in dictating the content and contractual arrangements of the state program.

HARBINGERS OF DARK TIMES AHEAD

A variety of actions on the state level are of serious concern for advocates of comprehensive sexuality education.

Louisiana. The governor has taken the abstinence-only-until-marriage education program away from the jurisdiction of the state public health department and placed it in his office under the direction of an individual with ties to conservative Christian activists. The original plan focused on after-school programs such as tutoring and skills training. According to the *Baton Rouge Advocate*, the governor’s decision to take control of the program means funds are being used to establish the administrative elements of the program.

Arizona. The legislature passed a bill appropriating the funds for the abstinence-only-until-marriage program despite figures showing that 80 percent of Arizonans disagreed with it—once they learned about it. Figures also show that only 20 percent knew of this program or its restrictive policy.

Georgia, Mississippi, Oklahoma. These states have already enacted laws that incorporate the restrictive federal definition of abstinence education into welfare programs.

Georgia. This state has specified that all funds appropriated for teen pregnancy prevention must fit the federal definition.

Florida. This state has amended its education code to say that all public school health education staff teach “an awareness of the benefits of sexual abstinence as the expected standard.”

Washington. This state has established a specific oversight committee to monitor the abstinence-only-until-marriage program.

Massachusetts. A state public health official is being investigated by antisexuality education forces for off-the-record comments that the abstinence-only-until-marriage

funds were “not a disaster” because media campaigns could absorb much of the money. Proponents of the federal abstinence-only-until-marriage definition charge these comments represent intent to “waste” money.

ON THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT

On February 5, 1998, U.S. Rep. Tom Bliley (R-VA), chairman of the House Commerce Committee, sent a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala asking her for information about the agency’s approval process for the abstinence-only-until-marriage education program created in welfare reform. Bliley is concerned by media reports that state plans may not be consistent with the vision of the program’s architects. Among other items, Bliley has requested of Shalala:

- copies of all state abstinence education program applications received by the Department
- an explanation of the guidelines used to review each state’s abstinence education program application along with copies of all the guidelines
- records relating to the review, consideration, and evaluation of all applications, including but not limited to, documents reflecting whether an application ultimately was approved or rejected and the reasons associated with such decisions
- all records between the Department and each state, individual state programs, and sexual health-related organizations on federal funding of abstinence education programs under the Act.
- explanations of how a state’s matching funds may be used under the Act, and the Department’s position with respect to funding programs with information about birth control.

This request seems to set the stage for some kind of congressional oversight process—most likely in the form of an oversight hearing. At this point, it appears that actions on the federal level are more pleasing to advocates of abstinence-only than advocates of comprehensive sexuality education. Clearly, some Members of Congress are interested in ensuring enforcement of the most restrictive interpretation of the welfare statute.

WHAT NEXT?

More details about the program are becoming available as this issue of the *SIECUS Report* goes to press. By that time, states will have made their contractual agreements with providers at the local level. It is in that portion of the process that SIECUS will learn the true nature of the program. The perspective and intent of those providers on the local level will determine whether young people will participate in fear-based education programs or ones that are medically accurate and actually encourage sexually abstinent behaviors.

[In February 1998, NAEC filed a freedom of information request with all 50 states asking for the same information as Rep. Bliley. It also requested all correspondence between the states, SIECUS, and Planned Parenthood.—*Editor*]

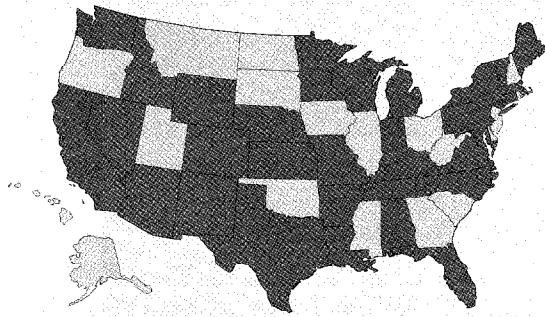
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1. *Report Card of the National Coalition for Abstinence Education* (Colorado Springs, CO: National Coalition for Abstinence Education, 1997).
2. Paid advertisements from Focus on the Family (Colorado Springs, CO) published in numerous newspapers nationwide in 1997 include “Safe Sex Education Is a Great Idea And So Was the Titanic” and “Safe Sex Made Them What They Are Today. Parents.”

STATES’ TARGET AGES FOR ABSTINENCE-ONLY-UNTIL-MARRIAGE PROGRAMS

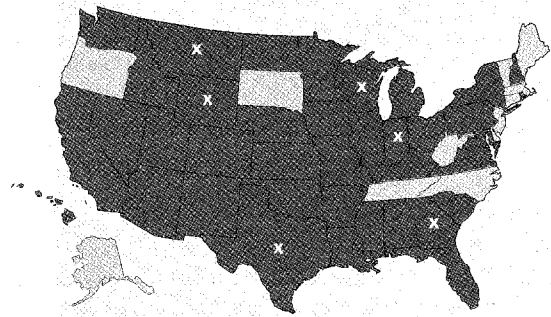
Below 14	Nevada	Below 19	South Dakota	Indiana (youth)
Colorado	Wyoming	Arkansas	Vermont	Maine
Delaware		Arizona	Washington	Massachusetts
Florida	Below 17	Alabama	Wisconsin	Montana
Hawaii	California	Georgia	Ages 20 to 24	(youth/community)
Illinois	Connecticut	Illinois	Massachusetts	New Hampshire
Maine	Idaho	Iowa	South Carolina	(youth/community)
Maryland	Kentucky	Kansas	Ages 20 to 45	North Dakota
Massachusetts	Louisiana	Missouri	Arizona	Oregon
Missouri	Oklahoma	North Carolina	Other	Texas (special population/adults)
Minnesota	Pennsylvania	New Mexico	Arkansas	Vermont
Nebraska	Tennessee	Ohio	Alaska (youth)	Virginia
New Jersey	Virginia	Oklahoma		Wyoming
New York		South Carolina		

*States appear in more than one column when they have multiple target audiences.



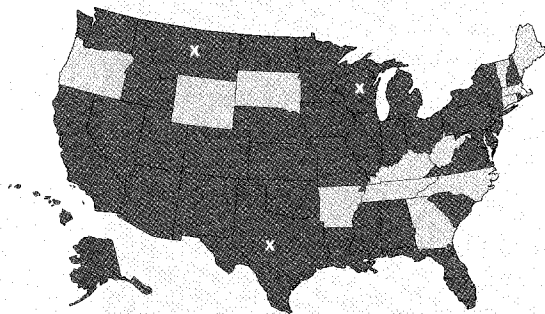
**MAP 1
MEDIA CAMPAIGNS**

The dark shaded states will use the funds for media campaigns.



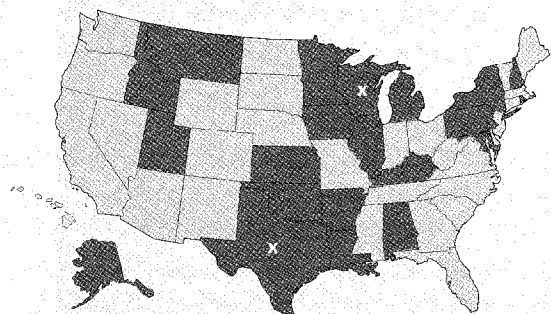
**MAP 2
GRANTS TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

The dark shaded states will use the funds to make grants to youth and community-based organizations. The states marked with an "x" will issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs).



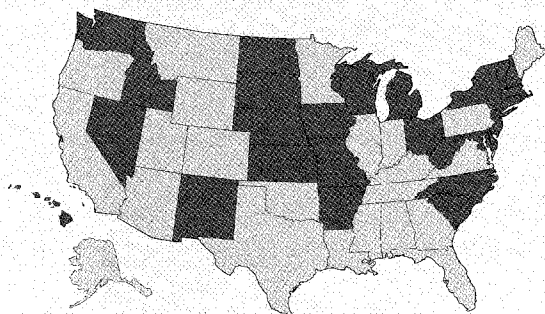
**MAP 3
GRANTS TO SCHOOLS**

The dark shaded states will use the funds to make grants to schools. The states marked with an "x" will issue RFPs.



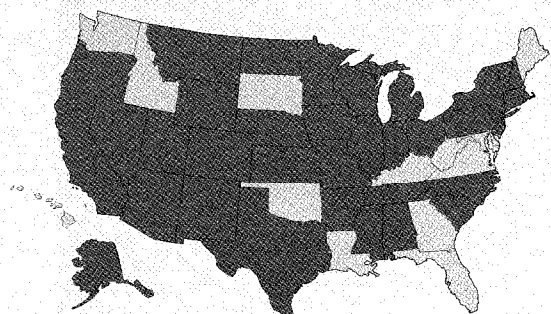
**MAP 4
GRANTS TO HEALTH DEPARTMENTS**

The dark shaded states will use the funds to make grants to local health departments. The states marked with an "x" will issue RFPs.



**MAP 5
PARTNERING WITH OTHER ENTITIES**

The dark shaded states will use the funds to partner with other agencies and organizations including state education agencies and state task forces on teen pregnancy.



**MAP 6
PROGRAM EVALUATIONS**

The dark shaded states will use the funds to evaluate their programs.

GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL ADOLESCENTS

During adolescence, young people form their sexual identity. This Fact Sheet reviews research on sexual orientation during adolescence, presents the available statistics of gay and lesbian students, and reviews school policies and practices.

SEXUAL SELF-CONCEPT, ORIENTATION, AND IDENTITY

- Sexual self-concept, which develops during adolescence, is an individual's evaluation of his or her sexual feelings and actions.¹
- Forming a sexual identity is a key developmental task of adolescence.²
- Sexual orientation describes one's erotic, romantic, and affectional attraction to the same gender, the opposite gender, or to both.³
- Gender identification includes understanding that one is male or female and the roles, values, duties, and responsibilities of being a man or a woman.⁴

SEXUAL ORIENTATION DURING ADOLESCENCE

- In a large-scale study of Minnesota junior and senior high school students, 88.2 percent described themselves as predominately heterosexual, 1.1 percent said they were either bisexual or predominately homosexual, and 10.7 percent were unsure of their sexual orientation.⁵
- Uncertainty about sexual orientation declined with age, from 25.9 percent of 12-year-old students to 5 percent of 17-year-old students.⁶
- 20 percent of self-identified gay and bisexual men surveyed on college campuses knew that they were gay or bisexual in junior high school and 17 percent said they knew in grade school.⁷
- 6 percent of self-identified gay or bisexual women surveyed on college campuses knew that they were gay or bisexual in junior high school, while 11 percent knew in grade school.⁸

GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL STUDENTS

- One in five high school health teachers surveyed said that students in their classes often used abusive language when describing homosexuals.⁹
- A national study of secondary school counselors' perceptions of adolescent homosexuals found that 25 percent perceived that teachers exhibited significant prejudice toward homosexual students, and 41 percent believed that schools were not doing enough to help gay and lesbian students adjust to their school environments.¹⁰
- One third of high school health teachers perceived the schools were not doing enough to help homosexual adolescents.¹¹
- In a study of gay and lesbian adolescents 14 to 21 years old, 23 percent of females and 25 percent of males reported that they were able to talk with their school counselors about their sexual orientation.¹²

SUPPORT FOR GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL ADOLESCENTS

- A 1988 national survey of heterosexual male youths 15 to 19 years old found that only 12 percent felt that they could have a gay person as a friend.¹³
- In a 14-city survey, nearly three-fourths of lesbian and gay youth first disclosed their sexual identity to friends: 46 percent lost a friend after coming out to her or him.¹⁴
- Less than one in five gay and lesbian adolescent students surveyed could identify someone who was very supportive of them.¹⁵

TEACHING ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- 46 percent of a random sample of high school health teachers formally taught about homosexuality. Among those teachers, 48 percent spent less than one class period teaching about homosexuality.¹⁶
- 37 percent of high school health teachers reported that they would feel very comfortable teaching about homo-

sexuality, 20 percent believed that they also would be very competent.¹⁷

- 66 percent of high school health teachers identified mass media as the most commonly used source of information regarding homosexuality.¹⁸
- In a self-reported study, 62 percent of health and education professionals stated that they needed to update their knowledge or skills to discuss or teach homosexuality and bisexuality.¹⁹
- Sexual identity and orientation are included in 13 state curricula on sexuality education.²⁰
- In one study of gay and lesbian adolescents 14 to 21 years old, half of the students said that homosexuality had been discussed in their classes, and 50 percent of the females and 37 percent of the males said it was handled negatively.²¹

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NEW BOOK ON SCHOOL EXPERIENCES OF GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH

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Brian McNaught
St. Martin's Press
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**Dancing
Around the Volcano
Freeing Our Erotic Lives:
Decoding the Enigma
of Gay Men & Sex**

Guy Kettelhack
Three Rivers Press
New York, NY
1996, 178 pp.
\$12.00/ paperback ed.

At first glance, these two books may appear to have nothing much in common. But, in fact, they have many common elements. Both address coming-out issues. Both McNaught and Kettelhack are health and sexuality educators. Both are openly gay men. Both recount personal stories of coming out. Both speak as seasoned denizens of gay neighborhoods of major urban areas. Both are white, middle class (by their own admission) and educated. Both have written books and addressed a wide array of audiences on gay life. Both tell of great personal loss in the first decade of the HIV epidemic, and both acknowledge that this loss continues to have a profound effect on their world view. And finally, both books focus on each author's search for a "healthy sexuality" as a gay person.

And, yet, despite all of these similarities, these books offer very different perspectives and views on just what this means.

McNaught's book starts with personal anecdotes about coming out and his experiences as an Irish Catholic "choir boy" discovering his sexuality. He explains the difficulty he has had throughout his life understanding how to develop a healthy sexuality. "What is

sexuality?" and "How does a sexually healthy gay person behave?" he asks. McNaught turns to SIECUS for some of his answers, quoting the *SIECUS Position Statement on Sexuality Issues* (1995), and basing his conclusions on some of the definitions found there. "The components of sexuality are the same for us all," he states, regardless of sexual orientation. He says SIECUS's definition of "sexually healthy" is "the ideal" and "a status to strive toward." He identifies the "enormous obstacles"—including secrecy, trauma, and ignorance—that stand in the way of people becoming sexually healthy. He provides illustrations and addresses ways of overcoming each, which, he says, "is a lifelong trek, but one we need to make."

McNaught talks about the first time he went public when, as a young columnist in his twenties for a prominent Catholic newspaper, he tells a reporter from *The Detroit News* what it is like to be Catholic and gay. Much of the remainder of his book contains gay men's stories that give insight into how to overcome obstacles to being out and sexually healthy. He writes about the freedom a person experiences when being gay is no longer a "dirty little secret." He tells us about his allies and friends in the straight community who have helped him along the way, and gently challenges the gay person to come out and begin forging a path to health, happiness, and equality. He argues strongly for legally recognized gay and lesbian marriages, and allows that, once secured, this may not be a choice exercised by all gay people.

Kettelhack also begins his book with personal anecdotes of coming out. But he begins his story much later in life. He only starts awakening to the fullness of his gay sexuality in his forties. He describes a revelation he had during a sexual experience with a stranger while visiting a New York safe-sex club in 1990. He explains that, at that moment, he realized for the first time that he could enjoy being gay and being sexual without secrecy, emotional pain, needless guilt or the use of drugs and alcohol.

Both McNaught and Kettelhack tell of "coming out." But for Kettelhack this "coming out" is a spiritual awakening to his sexual

self that occurs years after he identifies with being gay. For McNaught, this "coming out" is a spiritual journey from the start: finding his true self as a spiritual, sexual, emotional, and political being.

Kettelhack uses many references to contemporary and classical scholarship in human sexuality to reflect on his own and his friends' development as gay men and as healthy sexual beings. His basic assumptions are provocative. Kettelhack argues that gay men see themselves initially as "Jekylls and Hydes": "Jekyll, the sensitive, caring, responsible, aboveboard public me; Hyde, the dark, sexual, amoral beast." Kettelhack calls on gay men to free themselves of this duality. "We are stained and fallible and full of contradictions: The components of our sexual and emotional and mental lives, of our backgrounds, of the effects on us of genetics and hormones and culture, all stud us with fruits and nuts that are, in the end, irreconcilable."

Urban gay white men will probably see themselves in one or another of these two life experiences. For some of us, the long journey to becoming a healthy, happy gay man began the day we took that first step out of the closet and found a somewhat supportive environment in our neighborhoods or among our friends and families. For the rest of us, the journey may have taken years before we addressed the secrecy, shame, the substance abuse, and trauma that often surrounded our experience of growing up different. It may have taken even longer before we were then able to fully express our sexual selves, by enjoying sex, embracing our sexuality, and considering ourselves on the road to being sexually healthy.

I recommend both books. They provide thought-provoking questions into the nature of sexuality and the particular expression urban gay white men in the twentieth century have given to it. Each brings a different and valuable perspective.

Reviewed by Christopher J. Portelli, J.D., SIECUS's director of information. Prior to joining SIECUS, Portelli was executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Health Association (NLGHA).