



Bonner Curriculum

Homophobia: Recognizing and Addressing It

BWBR Description: Bonner Curriculum workshop guides participants through thinking about discrimination related to sexual orientation and more complex diversity issues.

Overview: Homophobia can be defined as prejudice and discriminatory attitudes toward gays and homosexuals. Homophobia is still pervasive in our society, and it is wise to prepare for the likelihood of encountering homophobic individuals in the course of your work and throughout life generally. In order to create a foundation for addressing issues and concerns relating to homophobia, this workshop leads participants through a series of discussions and exercises. These activities provide a space for participants to share ideas about ways to address homophobia in their community and society.

Category: Diversity; gender; sexual orientation; dialogue

Level: Moderate to Advanced

Recommended Bonner Sequence: This training can be used at any time during the Bonner program but is recommended for Bonner students during the sophomore year in conjunction with the diversity awareness baseline/intention.

Learning Outcomes:

- To provide participants with knowledge about the incidence and effects of homophobia on campuses and in communities
- To help participants recognize homophobia or prejudicial practices on their campuses and in their organizations and communities
- To help interested participants to create solutions to counter homophobia

Materials:

- Copies of *Homophobia Assessment Worksheet* for all participants (see copy at end)
- Flip chart paper and markers
- Index cards and pens/pencils

- Extra paper for participants

How to Prepare:

As the facilitator, your job will be to guide participants through the series of discussions and exercises. Homophobia is not the easiest topic to cover. You do not need to be an expert. However, read through the workshop and do the activities yourself. Even do further research on the topic. Try to make it applicable for the campus, community, or organization you are facilitating in. Also, have copies of the *Homophobia Assessment Worksheet* copied for all participants.

Brief Outline:

This 1-hour workshop has the following parts:

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Introduction to Homophobia | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 2) The Guidelines | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 3) The Jargon | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 4) Homophobia Assessment | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 5) Homophobia and Gay Youth | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 6) Wrap Up | suggested time 5 minutes |

Part 1) “Introduction to Homophobia.”

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Begin the workshop by explaining that homophobia is often an issue that goes unaddressed on campuses and in communities and organizations. The purpose of this workshop is to help you understand what homophobia is, ways to recognize it, how it affects individuals in our society, and then finally ways that we can work to address this issue.

Now introduce the first activity. Ask the participants to stay seated. Tell them that you will read a statement. If they agree with the statement, they should stand up. If they disagree, they can stay seated.

Read the following statements below. You can add to these statements or alter them to better fit your audience:

- 7) *Stand if you enjoy attending your school, working at your organization, or being a member of your home community.*
- 8) *Stand if you like watching tv.*
- 9) *Stand if you have seen a movie or tv show with a glbt character on it*
- 10) *Stand if you have friends who are glbt.*

11) *Stand if you have family that is glbt.*

12) *Stand up if you have ever heard someone use derogatory terms for glbt people.*

13) *Stand if you think your campus, organization, or community is a safe place for someone to openly glbt.*

14) *Stand if you think that any campus, organization, or community should be a safe place for anyone.*

15) *Stand if you are willing to work to make these environments safe for all people.*

Now ask the participants to take their seats. Stress that the last 2 statements they stood for are promises that they will be expected to be committed to after the workshop.

Continue by clarifying that the purpose of this workshop is not to debate if homosexuality is right or wrong, but rather to understand that each individual in our society has the right to be respected and not discriminated against because of sexual orientation. As humans, we are granted certain inalienable rights that are undermined by ideologies like sexism, racism, and homophobia just to name a few.

Part 2) “The Guidelines.”

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Now explain that before the workshop continues, there must be a discussion of guidelines that each participant must follow.

Ask participants to offer some rules. Get a group consensus before writing them as official group guidelines. The final guidelines should have, at least, the following basic guidelines:

- Respect each view, opinion, and experience offered any participant.
- Use “I” statements. Don’t speak in generalities.
- What is disclosed in the workshop stays in the workshop.
- Anyone who feels it is necessary may excuse themselves from the group for whatever reason.

Part 3) “The Jargon.”

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Now explain that it’s important to take the time to clarify some terms that relate to homophobia dialogue: Homophobia, Heterosexism, and Sexual Prejudice.

Go through each definition and explain them for the participants.

Homophobia

Prejudice against homosexual people and homosexuality. Moreover, an aversion or opposition to glbt people or their lifestyle or culture which leads to behavior or actions based on this aversion or opposition. Examples of homophobia include hate crimes, derogatory comments, and any other negative action, belief, or opinion towards homosexuality.

Heterosexism

Like racism or sexism, heterosexism describes a system that denies, marginalizes, and stigmatizes. Yet in this case, this system oppresses not based on race or gender, but rather on sexual orientation. Heterosexism grants privileges to those who are heterosexual and denies them to those who are not heterosexuals. Examples of heterosexism can be found in banning gay marriages, restricting gay adoptions, the existence of sodomy laws in more than one-third of states, etc (feel free to add to this list.)

Sexual Prejudice

Sexual prejudice refers to all negative attitudes based on sexual orientation, whether the target is homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. However, it is almost always directed towards glbt persons. Sexual prejudice is based on negative attitudes, beliefs, and actions aimed at a specific social group.

Now explain that for this workshop, you will use the term homophobia to identify the negative acts and attitudes of individuals in relation to glbt persons. Understanding homophobia will allow you to understand how heterosexism and sexual prejudice work as ideologies on a larger scale. However, we will refer to these concepts throughout the workshop.

Part 4) “Homophobia Assessment.”

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Explain that the group will now brainstorm derogatory phrases that they’ve heard about glbt persons. Remind them that some of them stood in the opening exercise, acknowledging that they had heard such phrases before. Write the phrases on flip chart paper for the group to see. Brainstorm until the group seems to run out of phrases (*you might have to push the group a little more to get them to brainstorm. Remind them of the guidelines. Also point out that it is important to get such phrases out in the open so that each member of the workshop can take steps to address the roots motivations of such phrases.*)

After you have a list compiled, examine the list. Ask the group how many of these phrases they’ve heard on their campus, or in their organizations or communities. Ask them was it them or someone else that made the comment. These questions are rhetorical. Only have the participants think about the questions.

Now explain that, though these phrases are often used jokingly, they still embody discriminatory attitudes towards glbt persons. Why would these “joking” comments be made in any situation unless they were some negative feelings towards glbt persons? This is an example

of homophobia and it exemplifies the work needed in the environments where such comments are made by individuals and are not challenged.

Now divide participants in to several small groups. You determine the size and number of the groups. Distribute copies of *Homophobia Assessment Worksheet*. Give the groups about 10 minutes to complete them.

After 10 minutes, have participants share their assessments with other member of their groups. This should take about 5 minutes.

Reconvene the entire group and ask a few participants to share his or her assessment.

After sharing, explain that current research argues that homophobic environments correspond to several characteristics, such as environments having a majority of people who are:

- *Men*
- *Older*
- *Less educated*
- *Living in rural areas*
- *More likely to endorse literal truth of the Bible*
- *Politically conservative*

Though these characteristics do not have to correspond exactly to more homophobic environments, researchers argue that several combinations of the above characteristics are very common.

Now pose a series of questions to the group:

- What does your assessment reveal about your campus, organization, or community in relation to these characteristics?
- Have you ever considered your environment to be homophobic?
- Finally, do you fit any of these characteristics?

Part 5) “Homophobia and Gay Youth.”

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Begin this part by writing the following statistics on flip chart paper for the entire group to see:

- 28%
- 80%
- 4x
- 7x
- 50%
- 26x
- 75%

Give the group a moment to read all of them. Then point out different statistics and ask them what they represent among gay youth. If a participant happens to guess correctly for a statistic,

circle it and point out that you will explain it later. After a few moments of guessing, go through each statistic, explaining each briefly:

28%

28% of glbt youth drop out of high school because of feeling unsafe.

80%

80% of all anti- gay violence goes unreported by the victim for fear of being “outed.”

4x

Glb youth are 4x more likely to commit suicide than heterosexual youth. Suicide is the leading cause of death among glbt youth.

7x

Glb persons are 7x more likely to be a victim of a hate crime than heterosexuals.

50%

50% of national youth servicing organizations report that they do not have the services in place to educate youth on sexual orientation or to support gay and lesbian youth.

26

Glb high school students report hearing anti-gay slurs as often as 26 times a day.

75%

75% of people committing hate crimes are under age 30; and 1 in 3 are under 18. Some of the most pervasive anti-gay violence occurs in schools.

Debrief explaining that these are only a few insights into a culture that has been affected by homophobic acts and a society that is heterosexist in nature.

Finally, pose a question for discussion for the remaining time:

What other ways does homophobia affect individuals?

Part 6) Wrap Up

Conclude the training with a summary and a reminder of the work that has been done. If there was tension/frustration/strong emotions that need to be addressed before students leave the training, address them here.



Homophobia Assessment Worksheet

Following is a series of questions. Read them carefully and briefly respond to as many as you can.

- 1) Describe your campus, organization, or community. Do you consider it diverse? What is the ratio of men to women? What are the racial demographics of it?

- 2) What is the average age of people in your environment?

- 3) What is the average level of education?

- 4) Describe the region your campus, organization, or community is in (i.e. New England, Midwest, etc.)

- 5) Do many people in your environment attend religious services frequently?

- 6) What is the ratio of those in your environment that identifies with certain political parties (i.e. Republicans, Democrats, etc.)

- 7) What are the percentages of people in your environment that identify as politically conservative, liberal, or moderate?

- 8) Are there any openly glbt persons at on your campus or in your organization or community?

(Of questions A-C, answer only the one that directly applies to your environment)

- a) If there are openly GLBT on your campus, how are they treated by the administration? Are they allowed to organize and meet as GLBT persons? Does your school provide education programs on GLBT related issues? Are there any policies protecting GLBT persons from being discriminated against?

- b) If there are openly GLBT in your organization, how are they treated by the management? Are there any policies protecting these persons from being discriminated against?

- c) If there are openly GLBT in your community, how are they treated by the other residents? Is there a GLBT community group? Are there community events or programs addressing GLBT issues?