Toward a Consistent Stance in Teaching for Equity: Learning to Advocate for Lesbian- and Gay-Identified Youth

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Toward a consistent stance in teaching for equity: learning to advocate for Lesbian- and Gay-identified youth

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Abstract

Three education classes of mostly prospective teachers provided instruction on issues related to Lesbian- and Gay-identified (LG) youth in schools, including readings, a video, a guest speaker, discussion, and writings. Written responses of 97 students, of whom more than a third were students of color, revealed lack of knowledge of LG youth prior to instruction and strong appreciation for new knowledge. Some students voiced resistance and reconciliation related to religiosity, and many raised questions regarding classroom application. The dominant stance, however, was appreciation for challenges facing LG youth and reports of plans to advocate for them in schools. Students made many links to broader social justice issues. Enabling classroom processes appear to have included an equity framework, cultural insider perspectives, and a safe discussion space—design principles for teacher education and development related to advocating for all youth.

Keywords: Educational equity; Gay and lesbian; Teacher education; Social justice

How do we understand heterosexism? Why is it so deeply seated within our various cultures and civilizations? I think it fundamentally has to do with the tendency human beings have to associate persons who are different with degradation, to associate those who have been cast as marginal with subordination and devaluation. So in order to be both morally consistent and politically consistent, I think democrats have to focus on particular forms of unjustified suffering across the board. … (Cornel West, 1996, p. 357)

Denial and silence shroud the reality of lesbian- and gay-identified (LG) youth in schools.[1] Worse, educators and community members continue to resist and prohibit attention to concerns of LG youth, often punishing educators who dare to address these issues. In recent years in California

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[1] Our focus on lesbian- and gay-identified youth is not meant to discount experiences of bisexual-, transgender- or queer-identified youth in schools. We have chosen to use the LG acronym to reflect more accurately the content we present. At the time this study was conducted, the research, available resources, and instructors' and guest speaker's expertise were stronger in LG issues. In this way we do not falsely claim, by using the more inclusive acronym LGBTQ or the politically empowering term "queer", that equal time was spent on issues challenging bisexual-, transgender- and queer-identified youth, although we occasionally use these more inclusive labels as relevant.

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alone, site of the study we report here, teachers have been fired for serving as faculty sponsors of GSAs (gay-straight alliances), for leading class discussions about LG related issues in the media, for using curricular materials that include LG-identified people, and for openly identifying as gay men. Anti-gay legislation in the state continues to be proposed, and one community group organized a Take Back the Schools campaign to eliminate from schools, among other things, references to homosexuality as anything other than sick or sinful. Acts such as these by adults in countless communities, in addition to often-cruel adolescent behaviors, reinforce the self-hatred, risk behaviors, and isolation many LG-identified youth experience.

About such acts, colleges of education, and teacher education programs in particular, have been relatively silent. When attention to LG-identified youth occurs at all in teacher education, it generally arises not in response to standard setting or as an articulated program feature but in grassroots fashion, as an individual teacher educator or guest introduces LG issues. Anecdotal reports testify that such work helps students feel better prepared to address homophobia (the irrational fear of non-heterosexually identified people and/or of feelings of same-sex attractions) in schools, and to develop interest in learning more about the impact of an antigay climate on students (e.g., Walters & Hayes, 1998). However, several factors have impeded systematic efforts to address LG issues for new teachers.

First, only recently have teacher education programs articulated guidelines for explicitly teaching about social and educational inequities of any kind and ways that teachers can use this knowledge to support youth who have been marginalized. Often such work remains confined to "the diversity course" rather than permeating a program, and many concerns vie for space in these brief courses. Also, educators have noted how a multicultural agenda often gets reduced to cultural tourism such as basket making (Cochran-Smith, 1995), losing sight of social issues and their impact on youth, including race and racism (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1999) and language diversity and linguicism (Nieto, 2000). Heterosexism is neglected even more. By heterosexism, we refer to the social construction of heterosexuality as normal and superior to other sexual identities. Just as racism is both ideological (a matter of beliefs, attitudes, doctrines, and discourse) and a structural phenomenon (tied to economic stratification, geographical segregation, and institutionalized forms of inequality) (Omi & Winant, 1994), heterosexism is both ideological and structural in mutually reinforcing ways. Attitudes and discourse about non-heterosexual identities as sick and sinful shape unequal access to legal rights, social privileges, and safety; and these structural inequities help perpetuate heterosexist attitudes. Despite this similarity, heterosexism rarely gets linked to other concerns of equity and social justice, in part because LG identity, particularly in majority White Western societies, often gets cast as a White phenomenon, with ethnic minority and non-heterosexual identities assumed to be mutually exclusive. Although these varied dimensions of identity get constructed in different ways and often have quite different impact on individual lives, same-sex attraction and orientation are cross-cultural phenomena, and for LG-identified youth of color in majority White societies, the oppressions are often compounded and warrant serious attention.

However, political and schooling contexts thwart attempts to address LG concerns in schools worldwide. In the UK, for example, debates persist over repeal of Section 28 which states "a local authority shall not (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality; (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Waites, 2001). Section 28 may have different effects on schooling across the UK. The legislation specifically addresses "local authorities" who govern schools in Scotland, but in England and Wales schools are managed by independent school governing bodies. In response to Section 28, the Scottish Executive adopted a replacement phrase to identify "the value of stable family life in a child's development", incorporating it into Ethical Standards in Public Life in 2000 (Waites, 2001). The ongoing debate leaves many teachers in limbo; while it is not illegal to discuss

sexuality or to intervene in harassment, teachers' rights and responsibilities in addressing these issues remain poorly defined. Many teachers therefore remain silent when facing LG issues (Wallace, 2000).

In Australia and Canada, Berrill and Martino (2002) found that male teacher candidates, especially those preparing to be elementary school teachers, "regardless of their sexual orientation …place themselves under a particular kind of self-surveillance to avoid the attributions of pedophile and deviant". At least a few teacher educators in Australia have addressed inequities experienced by LG youth (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1999; Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001). Similar to practices reported in the present study, these Australian teacher educators interwove equity issues related to sexuality, race, ethnicity and gender, and found resistance based in religion. In Toronto, an out Chicana lesbian teacher educator who presented her girlfriend in the first week of class used her queer body, in Doc Martin boots, jeans, men's dress shirts, blazers and a "clean-cut boy haircut", as classroom text to help her combat homophobia (Jiménez, 2002). Her students reported having little or no relevant knowledge beforehand and welcomed the opportunity to learn; however, queer teacher candidates expressed particular concern about how fighting homophobia might expose their sexuality, even though sexual orientation is a protected class in Ontario. Against a backdrop of homophobia, undergraduate social work students in Israel reported a reduction in homophobia as a result of a class that exposed them to theoretical and experiential material focusing on LG issues, as well as to the personal experiences and stories of a gay man and his mother (Ben-Ari, 1998).

Despite some recent attempts to address such issues, many educators continue to resist attention to concerns of LG youth. In doing so, they fail to recognize the need for what West calls the "morally consistent" act of addressing all forms of unjustified suffering, including that of LG youth growing up in a heterosexist society. For some faculty, this requires confronting personal biases and homophobia. For others, it means developing the courage to address a potentially volatile issue that can meet with resistance, often on religious grounds. For still others, it means developing new knowledge and skills about heterosexism and its impact and about relevant resources available to educators. Unfortunately, little if any published research has investigated the impact of attention to LG-identified youth in teacher education in order to understand how prospective teachers respond to such work. Nor has there been a theorizing of a knowledge base for effectively preparing teachers to advocate for LG-identified youth. This article responds to these needs, reporting from a study that examined students' responses to instruction in LG issues in courses on cultural diversity in education serving primarily prospective teachers. Instruction included readings, a video, a guest presentation, discussion, and writings. The study asked two questions: (1) How do education students respond to instruction regarding LG issues in schools? (2) What instructional features appear to promote the development of an advocacy stance toward LG youth in schools?

1. Challenges many LG-identified students face

Gays and Lesbians comprise an estimated 4–10 percent of the total population (Bailey & Pillard, 1991). For many, LGBTQ identity development begins in school-aged years and, in some cases, at a very young age (Nesmith, Burton, & Cosgrove, 1999; Savin-Williams, 1994; Telljohann & Price, 1993). Many LG youth develop integrated lives in which their gender/sexual identity is supported by loved ones. In recent years in Western societies, media images of LG-identified people have become increasingly present and positive, out LG people have assumed more positions of political power, and debates over legal issues related to LG status have entered the public discourse. However, for many youth, these advances do not mitigate the challenges of LG identity in a heterosexist society. In this article, we feature these challenges and ways that educators can learn to help students overcome them.

Many LG-identified youth and those perceived to be LG face a range of problems, including social, emotional, and cognitive isolation (Martin & Hetrick, 1988). In their work, Hershberger and

D'Augelli (1995) found that the vast majority of LG-identified youth experienced insults or threats of attack, many reported having personal property damaged or objects thrown at them, and several reported having been physically and/or sexually assaulted. A study of data from the recent National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (ADD Health Study) found strong evidence that youth reporting same-sex or both-sex romantic attraction are at greater risk for experiencing, witnessing, and perpetrating violence (Russell, Franz, & Driscoll, 2001). With a justifiable fear of identifying as lesbian or gay, these youth are deterred from forming alliances with other LG-identified students. Such isolation and harassment interfere with students' ability to focus on schoolwork, increases the likelihood of dropping out of school (Elia, 1993/1994), and for lesbian-identified youth, yields less positive attitudes about school and more school troubles (Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001).

Worse, such conditions may lead to suicide (Harry, 1989; Hershberger, Pilkington, & D'Augelli, 1997). Another analysis of the ADD Health Study found that youth with same-sex attractions are more than two times more likely than their same-sex peers to attempt suicide and reported significantly more alcohol abuse and depression (Russell & Joyner, 2001). Many make multiple suicide attempts (Remafedi, Farrow, & Deisher, 1991; Savin-Williams, 1994), with those younger having more difficulty accepting a new sexual identity and therefore being at greater risk (Harry, 1989; Remafedi et al., 1991). Challenges compound for LG-identified youth of color who often suffer multiple oppressions (Kumashiro, 2001; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) and for multiracial LG-identified youth forging complex identities (Chen-Hayes, 2001).

Also, many students who do not identify as LG nonetheless have a range of same-sex feelings and experiences, including same-gender fantasies, anticipation of future same-gender experience, or same-gender sexual experiences. Still others who entertain few, if any, such feelings or experiences report name-calling and abusive behaviors because of perceived LG identity (Reis & Saewyc, 1999). Additionally, more children are growing up with openly LG-identified parents and other family members and loved ones. These children also face challenges, particularly in a climate of intolerance that schools and society perpetuate (e.g., Casper, Schultz, & Wickens, 1992). While a recent study found that college students were unlikely to stigmatize children of Lesbian-identified mothers (King & Black, 1999), in the younger years peers are less prone to such acceptance—at least in part through lack of exposure.

The most obvious school allies for LG youth and children of LG parents are counselors, LG educators, and other caring teachers. However, few counselors offer these youth the support they need, perpetuating their isolated and potentially dangerous situation (Sears, 1992). Teachers, counselors and administrators tend to be ignorant of issues facing LG-identified students, and/or are biased against them (Elia, 1993/1994; Harbeck, 1994; Rienzo, Button, & Wald, 1997; Robinson, 1994). Through their silence about even homophobic talk and graffiti, schools are complicit in the everyday cruelty of heterosexist/homophobic hegemony (Jiménez, 2002; Smith & Smith, 1998). With the support of institutional work on homophobia, an instructor's coming out may positively affect students' attitudes toward LG-identified people (Rensenbrink, 1996; Waldo & Kemp, 1997). However, for LG teachers, a range of fears and challenges persist, constraining their abilities to support or serve as role models for LG youth. Among these are threats to safety and job security, stress related to concealment of personal identity, and frustration regarding a lack of models of successful openly LG educators (Evans, 1999; Jennings, 1994; Jiménez, 2002; Kissen, 1996). The safety and rights of LG-identified educators have been threatened in numerous ways since the 1950s and the situation persists (Harbeck, 1997). This reality also poses difficulties for LG administrators in leading schools effectively while leading open lives regarding their own identities, much less addressing the ways that assumptions of heteronormativity (the practice of assuming all people identify as heterosexual and the refusal to consider the possibilities of other sexual identities) abound in schools and impact the lives of LG educators, staff, and students (Capper, 1999). Given the

myriad challenges that face LG educators and a pervasive lack of support for LG youth in schools, how might teacher education respond?

2. Conceptual framework: teaching advocacy for LG youth

Different goals require distinct frameworks for instruction related to LG issues and education. These goals might include, for example, developing a broad social awareness and critique, or learning about ways heterosexism gets infused throughout work and social settings. A third goal, however, more specifically shaped this study: development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support advocacy for youth who may face academic or social inequities. With this goal in focus, two related bodies of literatures inform a conceptual framework for this study. The first, from psychology, concerns homophobia and attitude change among adults, particularly college students. The second concerns educating teachers about cultural diversity. We know from this second literature base how many prospective teachers who are middle class, White, and heterosexual-identified often are ignorant of ways society and schools structure inequities, of their own social privileges, and of a need to advocate for all youth, particularly those at the academic and social margins (e.g., Sleeter, 1992). At times, this lack of knowledge results in resistance to instruction about diversity and equity. In learning about LG youth, other issues arise.

Among college students, homophobia rooted in religiosity has been significantly correlated with more biased beliefs about origins of LG identities, greater affective discomfort around LG people, less endorsement of human rights for LG people, and greater homophobia (Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997). College students may be questioning their own sexual identity or may feel discomfort about attending to sexuality issues in any form in schools. A conservative local or political climate likewise can deter prospective teachers from adopting a positive stance toward LG issues. Among prospective teachers in the Southern US in the late 1980s, Sears (1992) found knowledge of LG people and issues minimal, attitudes negative, and feelings overwhelmingly homophobic. Resistance ran high to ideas of seeking adult assistance to support LG youth and of proactively making schools safer for non-heterosexually identified students. Given the potential for resistance to instruction in LG issues, how might teacher educators conduct the work of developing advocates for the academic and social equity of these often marginalized people? The following three areas inform this study.

2.1. An equity framework: learning to advocate for all youth

Central to the knowledge base for effective teaching is knowledge of learners—an understanding of cognitive and social development and how they inform instruction (Shulman, 1987). This includes attention to diversity of learners (e.g., Hollins & Oliver, 1999), to ways culture shapes learning, and to ways one can tailor instruction to meet needs of all youth. Such work aligns with research-informed multicultural education and social reconstructionist theories of teachers as change agents who promote equity and justice in school and society (Cochran-Smith, 1999; Nieto, 2000; Schubert, 1986; Zeichner et al., 1998). Transformative teaching and teacher education also examine cross-cutting themes related to discrimination and social inequality, linking racism and heterosexism, sexism and homophobia (West, 1996). Connecting multicultural education and LG youth concerns may help improve the school and social lives of those who remain the "invisible minority" (Koerner & Hulsebosch, 1996; Mathison, 1998; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1999; Snider, 1996). In this way, new teachers learn how schools can promote safety, rights, and privileges for all, including those who are not heterosexually identified, who have LG-identified family members, or who are perceived to be LG. Regardless of personal history and biases, one must prepare to teach and support diverse students, including LG youth.

Adopting a disposition toward caring (Noddings, 1984) includes helping all youth feel challenged, guided and supported, and safe in the

classroom and on school grounds. Caring teachers address both the scholastic and social well-being of students (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992), echoing Dewey's proposal that curriculum must address students' personal as well as intellectual and social growth. These concerns are interconnected. Steele (1997), for example, has shown the impact of negative stereotyping on women and African Americans in school achievement. For LG youth, self-acceptance is the best predictor of mental health, and "a general sense of personal worth, coupled with a positive view of their sexual orientation, appears to be critical for the youths' mental health" (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995, p. 72). Schools that provide positive views of people who identify as LG may go a long way towards ensuring the mental health of its LG students and may alleviate their isolation. Establishing and enforcing policies that prohibit harassment of LG youth is the least controversial but most fundamental action needed to make schools conducive to learning for LG-identified students (Rienzo et al., 1997).

2.2. *Material and human resources that support and model advocacy*

Research on attitude change regarding members of culturally diverse groups has pointed to, among other factors, the power of diverse resources in sensitizing individuals to difference (e.g., Athanases, 1998; Ramsey, 1987; Spears-Bunton, 1990). While individuals are complex and belong to multiple groups and communities, and while any cultural group is composed of vastly varied individuals, the notion of cultural insider status has played an important role in work on curriculum and instruction. Researchers repeatedly have documented, for example, how cultural accuracy is found more often in writings by cultural insiders. Such accuracy can be discerned through, among other things, richness of cultural details, authentic dialogues and relationships, and in-depth treatment of cultural issues (Yokota, 1993). In the case of texts dealing with LG experiences, Athanases (1996) found that ethnically diverse high school students deepened their understanding of LG issues and embraced a stance of equity, due in part to the use of an essay by a gay-identified man that was rich in reflections drawn from autobiographical experiences.

The potential of the *human* resource of a guest presenter plays a role in this framework, as well (see Herek, 1984 for a review of research related to the impact of personal encounters with LG-identified people on attitudes). Campuses are rife with documented homophobic incidents, and students (gay- and straight-identified) report regularly hearing homophobic remarks. Relatively few role models of out LG faculty exist. Against this backdrop, studies have been conducted at colleges in the past two decades to examine the impact of interventions on attitudes toward LG people, often using guest presenters. Most interventions have been short-term (e.g., a lecture–discussion, film, sexuality workshop), yet attitude change, generally measured through pre- and post-tests, has been documented. Anderson (1981) found that female nursing students increased their tolerance for gay-identified people (short-term and 4 months later) as a result of a workshop that included a lecture, film, discussion, and dialogue with LG-identified health professionals. Other studies have found that students' attitudes toward LG people became more positive as a result of experiences with them (Ben-Ari, 1998; Geller, 1991; Herek, 1988). Nelson and Krieger (1997) found that when designed as an interactive encounter, supported by audience participation and feedback afterward, a panel of LG peers as good role models can significantly increase college students' positive attitudes toward LG people.

An equity framework that includes attention to material and human resources representing diverse "insider" perspectives, however, requires scrutiny and critique. Authors, characters, and speakers representing a group cast as "other" can, on one hand, get viewed as *far more than* their individual selves with particular perspectives, cast as "true representatives" of extremely diverse groups of people. On the other hand, they may get essentialized as being *no more than*, in the case of LGBTQ people, their queer selves, reducing complexities of their identities. Such problems need to be mitigated. From a queer theory perspective, study of

"the group" is ultimately far less powerful and effective than study of ways that heterosexual identities get perpetuated as the norm in social discourse (Britzman, 1995; Nelson, 1999). Nonetheless, in the context of brief university courses for primarily prospective teachers, attention to issues of heteronormativity may not be enough to satisfy the goal of developing advocates for LG youth. With this particular goal in mind, there may be an important role for direct instruction in relevant issues, history, and terminology, as well as exposure to diverse personal narratives of challenge and success in negotiating LG identities.

2.3. A safe discussion space

In courses on cultural diversity in education, volatile issues can explode, and lessons can fail if they do not relate to school realities and teachers' roles and responsibilities. Instructors of such courses also are scrutinized for sensitivity to issues. As a student of color, am I being heard, allowed space to voice anger and frustration? As a White person, am I merely being told I am biased, privileged, and wrong? Opportunities for talk scaffold any learning (Vygotsky, 1962; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). In the contact zone (Pratt, 1991) where diverse individuals meet, talk is important for additional reasons. Multicultural understanding can be promoted through group dialogue that occasions varieties of perspectives on textual materials (Roberts, Jensen, & Hadjiyianni, 1997). In classrooms with students who have felt marginalized, when discussions concern issues of oppression, anger is often unavoidable, necessitating a forum in which it can be expressed. In studying LG concerns, space is also needed for airing backlash so it can be addressed and does not merely go underground and reinforce resistance to issues explored. Students need to know they can raise difficult issues respectfully in a safe environment. Guided by this three-pronged framework of equity and social justice, cultural insider resources, and open discussion, the present study examined instruction on LG youth and education.

3. Method

3.1. The context for instruction

The study was conducted in three education classes at a large California public state university. The university enrolls fairly large numbers of students of color, mostly Asian American, with smaller numbers of Latinos/as and African Americans, and few Native Americans. The campus newspaper periodically prints editorials regarding a need for greater cultural awareness, sensitivity, and representation on campus. In a recent year of this study, inter-group tensions arose several times on campus, and hate crimes were reported. After a fight broke out between two groups of students, one White and one Asian, a White student was charged with attack and a hate crime, allegedly having shouted racist taunts at the Asian students. A Jewish student center was damaged from arson, and race-based biases were alleged during student elections. A small but active LGBTQ group exists on campus, providing resources, services, and social opportunities for the LGBTQ campus community. Nonetheless, several faculty members on campus have reported fear of coming out to colleagues and students, and several incidents occurred on and off campus in which homophobic posters and graffiti appeared on buildings. At the close of the year, students and faculty gathered for a forum on improving campus climate.

The three classes in which the study occurred were sections of a course entitled Cultural Diversity and Education. The course met once weekly for 2 hours, over a 10 week academic quarter, totaling approximately 20 h of instructional time. Topics included sociological perspectives on how individuals experience unequal distribution of economic, legal, and social resources; the impact of this inequity on personal lives; and ways institutions, including schools, perpetuate these inequities. Also explored were ways teachers can use knowledge of inequities and the power to address these, as well as knowledge in several other relevant areas. These included content integration, or infusion of cultural content into curricula (Banks, 1993); culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1996); and the use of

multiple modes of instruction and assessment that enable all students to discover and display what they learn. Two undergraduate sections of the course enrolled students earning credits for an education minor or fulfilling a prerequisite for a teacher credential program. The core text for these sections was *Affirming Diversity* (Nieto, 2000). The third section was a required course in the secondary schools teacher credential program and used *Uprooting Racism* (Kivel, 1996). All classes used supplemental readings by a range of authors, small and large group discussions of issues, and graded work and non-graded reflections on course topics. All classes included guest speakers, including both a gay-identified speaker and a panel of ethnically diverse teachers reporting ways they affirm diversity and advocate for equity at a highly diverse middle school.

3.2. Participants

Participants were two instructors, a guest presenter, and 97 students enrolled in about equal numbers across the three classes. Undergraduates were mostly seniors, most of whom identified teaching as their intended career. The credential program class enrolled students with Bachelors degrees now earning single subject teaching credentials in about equal numbers in the subject areas of math, science, and English. Across the three cohorts, 78% of students were female, and 36% identified as people of color. One identified as African American, one African American/Mexican, one Native American/Chicano, and the remainder as Latino or Asian American in about equal numbers. Although students in these last two groups were of varying and multiple ethnic origins, the largest number identified as either Mexican American or Chinese American. The instructor of the undergraduate classes was a White male who is an openly gay-identified assistant professor and first author of this article. Much of his research concerns issues of cultural diversity in education. The credential class instructor, a reading specialist at a nearby middle school, was a White Jewish woman married to a Latino. Her school is highly diverse, both culturally and linguistically. She is a teacher leader in a local chapter of SEED (seeking educational equity and diversity), a program that supports teachers' efforts to affirm diversity and to advocate for equity. The guest presenter was a White, openly gay-identified science teacher at the same middle school as the credential class instructor, he, too, leads a SEED seminar and has presented to teacher groups on concerns of LG-identified youth. He was also a graduate student at the time of this study and is second author of this article.

3.3. Lesson overview

Both instructors asked students to read articles by LG authors about their experiences as LG-identified people. The articles provided a range of topics and perspectives: an overview of challenges faced by LG youth (Whitlock, 1998); reflections on the challenges of being black and gay in Leicester (Steve, 1987); perspectives of adults, including a lesbian teacher, reflecting back on the challenges of coming out (Williams, Nielsen, & Bystrom, 1998); the challenge of being an elementary school music teacher virtually outed by a 12 year old student (White, 1998); and an open letter by a devout Irish Catholic gay man written to Anita Bryant regarding her historic attempt in Florida to deny LG adults the right to teach (McNaught, 1988). The instructors invited the same guest speaker to talk in class about his experiences in education as an openly gay-identified middle school science teacher. The undergraduate instructor also showed a portion of the video "Out of the Past", a documentary of important LG figures in US history woven through the story of Kelli Peterson, the young woman in Salt Lake City who, in the 1990s, fought for the right for a GSA to convene at her school. The video episode shown featured a story of Bayard Rustin, the gay-identified African American who was the architect for the largest Civil Rights march on Washington, DC but who suffered from homophobic responses in the African American community and in the larger US society. Students wrote anonymous questions prior to the speaker's arrival. Also, students submitted their weekly written reflections focused this time, in part, on the readings regarding LG issues.

The speaker made similar presentations to all three classes. He began with a disclaimer that he could not represent all LG-identified people and spoke from only his experiences and those he had learned while researching issues challenging LG youth. He described himself as a gay middle school teacher who was out to students, staff, and administration. The speaker shared his experiences as a gay-identified youth in middle and senior high school and in college. To facilitate discussions using a common vocabulary, and to educate students about various aspects of LGBTQ communities, the speaker defined relevant terminology, such as sexual preference and orientation; transsexual, transvestite and transgender; and heterosexism and homophobia. Supported by handouts, he documented statistics of the presence of LG-identified people, and presented challenges LG youth face at home and in schools, including harassment and verbal and physical abuse. He discussed development of a gay identity, citing revelant work (e.g., Hetrick & Martin, 1987; Reis & Saewyc, 1999; Sears, 1991, 1992; Treadway & Yoakum, 1992).

To highlight intersections of LG youth and the educational system, the speaker discussed the work he has done to assist his school district's adoption of policies and practices that will better meet the needs of these students. This work has involved the inclusion of sexual orientation as a protected class in students' code of conduct books distributed to all new students in the district, the inclusion of incidents of same-sex harassment in sexual harassment staff trainings, and the inclusion of heterosexism and homophobia in diversity training seminars conducted throughout the district. The remainder of the time was spent responding to students' questions, some of which had been written anonymously prior to the speaker's arrival, and some of which were asked orally during and after the presentation. Students asked questions regarding, among other topics, ways to address LG issues in schools, the age at which discussion of such issues is appropriate and acceptable, how to handle students seeking advice or help regarding sexuality identity development, and questions regarding the speaker's and other teachers' experiences of coming out and being out as educators. Following the discussion, students submitted written reflections on the guest presentation, with the opportunity to reflect again on the relevant course readings and resources.

3.4. Roles of the researchers

Our research bears elements of interested self-study and disinterested scientific inquiry. As Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) note, "Who a researcher is, is central to what the researcher does" (p. 14). Many have argued this claim, drawing on, for example, Foucault's ideas of how interests drive and frame projects, or on Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions and how paradigms drive methods. (See, for example, Grant, 1999, for a collection of essays by education researchers who trace ways in which their life experiences have shaped how they conduct their research related to race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.) Nonetheless, we want to foreground this issue of the researchers' selves and involvement because of two concerns: we are both out gay educators, and we were both researchers of and participants in this study.

As out gay educators, we share particular interest in understanding problems that many LG-identified youth and teachers face, and we seek to investigate potential solutions. This project is part of a larger set of projects in which we are both involved in various ways, projects related to diversity, equity, and social justice. We want a better world and better schooling for all youth and particularly for those who have experienced inequities. That said, however, we do not desire to tell a victory narrative of how successful our practices, and those of the other instructor in this study, were. Nor do we want, for even a moment, to make claims of positive stances of education students toward advocating for LG youth if these claims are not well founded. Such efforts ultimately would undermine social justice work by leading to beliefs that things are fine so we need not make strides toward change. As it turns out, the responses we received from education students were, in fact, ones we view as overall quite positive and promising, moreso than we would have predicted, given the state of attention to LG issues

in teacher education and the countless incidents of backlash in public life due to recent advances in many nations in visibility and rights for LGBTQ people. Therefore, we found it even more imperative to subject our work to rigorous cross-examination, thorough data analysis that included careful attention to outlier responses, and deep reflection.

We account for our own participation in the development of classroom culture and practices in two of the classes and in the guest presentations. However, our work departs from autobiographical self-study inquiry in teacher education because our primary concerns are not with our own developing understandings and stances as teachers of teachers (e.g., Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), but with understanding mostly prospective teachers' responses to stimuli regarding LG-identified youth and education. Our gaze, then, is less on ourselves as educators, not even on the intersection of ourselves and the objects of study–but more on the expressed thoughts and feelings of just under 100 education students as they reported reactions. As we explain in the following section, we used several data collection methods and analytic procedures to provide documented records and triangulation. For example, when Timothy (Author #2) gave his guest presentation, Steven (Author #1 and undergraduate course instructor) recorded observation field notes of Timothy's behaviors and words as presenter, and of the students' verbal and non-verbal responses. In order to interrogate instructors' purposes for classroom methods, we developed and carefully revised an interview schedule that Timothy used for interviewing both course instructors. We determined that it was essential to formalize the interview questions and process, particularly since Steven was one of the instructors; therefore, interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed.

Of utmost importance in eliciting student responses was inviting candor. As indicated, Steven as instructor of the undergraduate classes was gay-identified. Several measures were taken to encourage honesty in students' responses. First, questions for Timothy as guest presenter and some sets of student responses to the guest presentation were submitted anonymously and were not graded. Second, students were encouraged to be candid in responses; this prompt followed many in the classes in which students were reminded that raising difficult issues was encouraged and that controversial opinions were not penalized. In fact, directions for these reflective writings stated explicitly that these were opportunities to engage with course materials through personal lenses, making associations and reacting with opinions. Anonymous writing excerpts had been read aloud in the undergraduate classes almost weekly, with explicit attention to ways that students confidently challenged and critiqued class texts, activities, and peers' remarks. By late in the course when explicit LG instruction occurred, challenges to course content and pedagogy had been highlighted as central to reflective writing. Finally, in our analyses, we noted that students appeared to have felt safe in articulating resistance to the presentation on LG youth concerns, as such responses occurred in all three classes, regardless of the instructor's stated sexual orientation. In these ways, we attempted to mitigate confounding factors as fully as possible.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Data included 97 students' written responses to instruction on LG-identified youth. These included responses to the guest presenter, questions on education related concerns of LG youth, and reflections on LG related readings, resources, and issues. For the two undergraduate classes, students' anonymous course evaluations also were reviewed after course completion for reflections on class climate and relevant instruction. In order to tap into instructors' reflections on the instruction under investigation, we developed an interview schedule. Timothy (Author #2) conducted and audiotaped interviews with both instructors about a range of issues that included the following: the nature of the class culture and how it evolved, perceptions of students' receptivity to LG issues, the range of students' responses to LG concerns, the use of supplementary resources, and changes the instructors might make in future LG-inclusive lessons. Instructor reflections also were tapped through a second interview with one and through ongoing conversations with the other. Audiotaped interviews were transcribed and reviewed for key

themes. We independently conducted transcript reviews, noting emerging themes, then shared reflections with each other. Through conversation and collaborative writing and critique, we built a composite analysis of the classroom contexts.

We conducted several different reviews and analyses of students' reflections on LG related instruction and their written questions for the speaker and for future reflection. First, in order to gain a sense of the overall picture of responses within three different classes, we conducted a review of all full responses to readings, responses to the guest presentation, and questions for the guest speaker. In this review, we sought preliminary analysis about variance across classes and about emerging patterns and themes in students' writings. We noted little difference across the three groups. Second, we examined the full database and developed categories that captured recurring cross-cutting patterns or themes (Merriam, 1998). Students' responses generally included several different themes. Categories were recast after subsequent critical review. In each case, after one of us developed or refined a set of categories, the second reader reviewed emergent categories with a critical eye for consistency and coherence within categories. Categories then were refined using sub-categories or sub-themes, until a model was constructed to capture all of the relevant ideas expressed in all of the student writings. Because we both were actively involved in the study as instructor and speaker, particular care was taken in various ways to ensure validity of claims in results. We also conducted inter-rater reliability checks on categorization of themes, refining categories and processes until we reached at least 90% agreement. Instructor reports regarding class culture were triangulated with anonymous student course evaluations on file and with other class observation notes.

4. Results: content themes in students' reflections

4.1. Value on developing knowledge of issues about LG people

Table 1 shows that the dominant theme in students' remarks was a positive value placed on new learning about LG people. Most of the 3/4 of all students who reported this value on such learning identified it as entirely new, reporting prior ignorance about such knowledge. Both instructors reported surprise at this fact, more than 30 years after the start of the US modern gay rights movement, and with so much recent media attention on related issues. Moreover, they assumed a greater familiarity with LG people among their students at a university in California—a state often identified with greater LG visibility. Nonetheless, students reported very little exposure to out LG people, limited in some cases to media depictions such as episodes of MTV's "The Real World", in which a cast member was gay. Only five students from all three classes reported that they had LG-identified friends or relatives, and for at least two of them the class session was the first time they were able to discuss LG issues openly. These two stated:

(1) I have had two close gay friends in my life; one is a Black man, and the other a Mexican man. Neither one of them was very willing to discuss the issues that they were faced with. And while I feel that we are close friends, I have only met their boyfriends twice. They make an effort to keep their personal life personal.

(2) I had a gay uncle who I hardly knew because I didn't have the right questions and it was a topic my family didn't want to know about. My uncle passed away about six years ago and the speaker answered many questions I wanted to ask my uncle.

Other students commented that they had never before had the opportunity to candidly discuss LG issues, particularly with an openly LG-identified person. Several reported that the topic was not discussed in their families or in any other courses they had taken in preparation for becoming educators. Repeatedly students expressed appreciation for having an openly gay-identified person facilitate the discussion. One student's remark that "I have never heard a homosexual speak publicly about their sexual orientation" was echoed across the classes.

Table 1
Themes in students' responses to instruction regarding lesbian/gay (LG) issues and education

Theme	Number (and percentage) of students citing ($N = 97$)
Value on developing knowledge of issues about LG people	74 (76.3)
Knowledge about LG people broadly cast	67 (69.1)
Knowledge about LG youth in schools	21 (21.7)
Knowledge about LG educators	12 (12.4)
Beginning to wear the mantle of advocate for LG youth	60 (61.9)
Developing appreciation for challenges LG people face	46 (47.4)
Developing strategies for advocating for LG youth	46 (47.4)
Linking LG concerns with race/ethnicity/gender issues	28 (28.9)
Questions, resistance, reconciliation related to LG issues and education	49 (50.5)
Questions of appropriateness of addressing LG issues in schools	30 (30.9)
Resistance and reconciliation related to religiosity	24 (24.7)
Stances toward LG educators	30 (30.9)
Appreciation for guest speaker's positions and disposition	19 (19.6)
Developing empathy for challenges of LG educators	12 (12.4)

While many students commented generally about their new knowledge and exposure to new perspectives regarding sexual orientation, specific aspects of the lesson were more pertinent for some. For example, terminology and symbols proved especially enlightening, with many mentions of how the terms helped clarify confusion many students had had. Several students reported appreciation for historical perspective on queer culture, with particular attention to how the stories of LG people killed during the Holocaust had been erased from history, as well as to the stories of LG-identified historical figures depicted in the video. Three students remarked that they had never heard of Bayard Rustin, the gay African American civil rights leader, and two noted the political implications of this historical omission. The speaker's account of sexual orientation as a continuum and having some biological basis struck a resonant chord with many students, and two reported (without specifying particulars) how this helped them understand some of their own same-gender feelings that had confused them.

As Table 1 shows, 21 students reported a value on new knowledge specifically about LG youth in schools. A few remarked that they found it valuable to learn about the challenges many LG youth experience, and that they found it disturbing to hear about the dropout rates, threats to physical safety, and feelings of isolation that many LG youth experience. Some also were encouraged to learn of the passage of the California Student Safety and Violence Protection Act of 2000 that protects LG-identified students and those perceived to be LG from harassment and discrimination. Several reported that this new knowledge from the speaker, the readings, and the video was effective in moving them to see beyond mainstream media stereotypes. As Table 1 shows, 12 students reported appreciation for the challenges faced by LG educators, also. In particular, students noted the difficulty that LG educators face in being out on the job.

Significantly, the discussions ignited interest and concern with LG issues, and students across the classes expressed a desire to learn more. Some acknowledged the limits of their new knowledge with comments such as, "I still feel like there's more to know" and "We should have more presentations that deal with this issue in other courses". Others reported desire for information about specific topics. Underscoring the students'

appreciation for the variety of perspectives held within LG communities, one remarked, "It would have been interesting to have heard from a Lesbian panel member". Yet other students requested information on current LG issues of concern and curriculum ideas.

4.2. Beginning to wear the mantle of advocate for LG youth

While knowledge is essential, teacher stance toward a controversial topic is equally important. Students' dispositions toward LG youth and issues fell on a continuum from resistance to confusion to support and advocacy. Table 1 shows that despite this range, 60 students (or 61.9%) reported ways that they were beginning to wear the mantle of advocate for LG youth.

4.2.1. A developing appreciation for the challenges many LG people face

As Table 1 shows, nearly half of all students reported after the instruction some understanding and appreciation of challenges presented to many LG people and to LG youth, in particular. Students repeatedly reported being emotionally moved by challenges facing many LG people. There was a tension between a stance of "Gay people deserve our understanding because they are just like us and deserve our respect" and one of recognizing peculiar challenges of identifying as LG. Several students reported being disturbed by the video episode of Bayard Rustin. One reported being "deeply moved", saying, "I can't imagine what it was like not to be appreciated for your dedication and effort to the movement simply because of your sexual orientation. I seriously had chills in my body". Students focused on challenges facing LG youth, citing statistics on drug abuse, harassment, dropout rates, and lack of training for educators. Several spoke with new understanding of how sexual "preference" connotes a choice that results in misunderstandings of the nature of sexual orientation. One student remarked that the piece she took with her was that "Once you understand that being gay is not about preference or a choice, the moral issue just evaporated. It's not about right or wrong, it just is". Several also reported a new appreciation for fears related to coming out and the challenges of being closeted, some noting that LG people face both external challenges and internal turmoil as they balance public and private lives.

4.2.2. Developing strategies for advocating for LG youth

As students re-examined their roles as future educators, many reported that regardless of their personal beliefs, it was their duty as educators to treat all of their future students with respect, inclusive of LG-identified youth. Illustrative of the inclusive nature of many students' reflections, one commented, "If we respect each other in all aspects of society, we might create a safer environment for our students and future generations". Many shared a belief that LG concerns should be included in multicultural education and classroom discussions. (The exceptions were comments from those who felt these issues would not be relevant in their classrooms.) These findings reinforce prior research that found that students who attend presentations by LG people tend to break down stereotypes, and are more affirming of LG people and issues (e.g., Burkholder & Dineen, 1996; Geasler, Croteau, Heineman, & Edlund, 1995; Nelson & Krieger, 1997). However, no published reports have documented students' expression of intent to become active advocates for LG people. Across the classes in this study, students outlined specific strategies they anticipated employing when they became teachers, and several reported a desire to learn strategies that would assist them in combating homophobia in their future classrooms. In all, 46 students (see Table 1) reported strategies they would use to address LG issues in schools.

Of those who felt they currently lacked requisite skills, concerns were divided among methodologies for incorporating LG issues in the elementary grades or specific content areas at the secondary level, and initiating conversations with individuals or classes. A few anticipated recruiting human resources such as a counselor or guest speaker to aid in facilitating discussions inclusive of LG issues. The majority of student comments that addressed advocacy for LG youth outlined specific actions students intended to take when they

became teachers. Most plans included strategies for interrupting derogatory comments that would likely be uttered in classrooms. One student likened "that's so gay" to a racial slur which "should not be tolerated, especially in the classroom". The following quote reflects the content of several students' comments:

> I am glad that (the speaker) provided "catch phrases" to use to broach the topic of discussion when a student comments "that's gay" or the like. I do not know how I would've responded, but after today I feel more confident and better prepared to address such issues to stop continuous harassment kids are subjected to.

A few students extended this plan by stating that they would likewise interrupt homophobic remarks stated by other teachers. A few also made the point that they would more closely monitor their own talk for assumptions that all students and their family members are straight, thereby recognizing the pervasive assumption of heteronormativity.

Other students reflected on past experiences as they suggested classroom methods. This young woman as well as others proposed making written resources available to their students and providing for anonymous questions:

> I think I may have the honor of teaching first year sex-ed to my fifth graders. I liked (the speaker's) policy of answering all questions honestly and encouraging children to put anonymous questions in a box. As a sixth grader, I know I never used the box, but it provided an outlet for kids who did. I think I will also begin putting together a resource binder for everything available in the (geographic) area.

Yet other students planned to use the resource packet distributed by the speaker:

> I think I would definitely want to address the many stereotypes that are associated with homosexuality in society. Once students share their thoughts/feelings from their own experiences, I would like to present the hard facts that (the speaker) provided in the packet and show students the discrimination and oppression the homosexual community has endured for way too long. I think the vocabulary terms are also very important because students aren't really aware of what the words they say actually mean.

Student responses to the lessons presented in the classes provide reports of ways the lessons may have raised awareness of LG issues. The majority of responses also suggested that, presented in the context of an equity framework, such knowledge could support adopting an equity stance toward LG youth, as would be expected from previous studies of LG panel presentations. For those who had not before consciously linked LG youth with the classroom, many reported that these discussions and the class resources alerted them to the daily challenges LG-identified students face and that they, as teachers, might use to shape actions in the classroom.

4.2.3. Linking LG concerns with race/ethnicity/gender issues

A third sub-theme helps explain how some students may have been able to begin to adopt an equity stance toward LG youth. Table 1 shows that 28 students reported ways they linked LG issues to other social justice concerns. Discrimination of any kind is wrong, students argued. Some reported discomfort with those who discriminate and, as one woman stated, "I don't understand intentional cruelty". Several acknowledged previously held heterosexist views and change in those perspectives. A young man recalled with embarrassment the derogatory words he used about LG people during adolescence. Repeatedly students explicitly linked negative treatment of LG people with other forms of injustice. Some invoked sexism as related, and many linked the issue to Civil Rights and racial justice. Students repeatedly invoked issues of discrimination and equity as class themes that enabled them to assume a supportive stance toward LG youth. One stated:

> As a person of color I know how it feels to be marginalized by the dominant society.... I know what it is to live in fear and to be a target

> because of one's skin color, physical appearance, language and mannerism that one cannot change. I can only empathize with people who identified as LGBT and shared our experiences as "oppressed people".

She went on to argue the need to include LG-related issues in multicultural education. Students of varying ethnicity and both genders made this link and explicitly argued that LG perspectives and related curriculum need to be included in multicultural education.

For many women, gender served as an important link. One noted how society's pressure to look a certain way as a girl helped her to imagine the social pressure related to identifying as LG. Another stated:

> It really hit home when (the guest speaker) discussed why gay men face more social aversion/disrespect because they espouse "feminine" traits/attributes. The social forces are so negative and entrenched in seeing women as inferior that even gay men are judged by this standard. Damn.

A third woman reported the condemnation she repeatedly felt recently for being in a relationship with a man 30 years her senior: "So, I can only imagine how much worse it is for a homosexual person to come out". Clearly internalizing links between LG issues and the broader course framework of diversity and equity, one student stated simply, "Democracy does not exist for students/people of 'other' sexual preferences". Others spoke with urgency:

(1) Each of the articles shows that multicultural acceptance is not a choice, but a necessity. If a teacher wants to be successful in obtaining a curriculum that really teaches his/her students, then he/she needs to be willing to accept them as humans who may have cultural differences and, as McNaught explains, sexual differences.

(2) I think the only solution is through multicultural education that we, as a society, will learn to accept, understand, acknowledge, and praise the enormous diversity that confronts each and every one of us everyday. Regardless may it be one's sexual orientation or the color of one's skin, society must understand and accept it, otherwise we are heading for self-destruction.

Clearly students found countless occasions to link LG issues to the broader framework of diversity and equity and argued repeatedly for a space for LG concerns in the curriculum. A few students noted, however, an inequity regarding open discourse. As one stated,

> While it seems like racial, cultural, and ethnic issues can be discussed fairly in our society, these issues are not. While doing the reading for today and listening today, it has become even more clear to me how much they should be.

Several students reflected on their own "heterosexual privilege" (a term never explicitly introduced in any of the classes), appropriating this notion from earlier work each class had done on White privilege, spawned by Peggy McIntosh's (1989) widely read essay.

4.3. Questions, resistance, and reconciliation related to LG issues and education

4.3.1. Questions of appropriateness of addressing LG issues in schools

Table 1 shows that 30 students raised questions about addressing LG issues particularly related to the school context. These concerns fell into three main categories. First, several prospective elementary school teachers wondered about age appropriateness of discussing LG related issues. A few wondered what sense young children could make of these realities and were therefore unsure if they would support inclusion of such concerns in class. One student remarked, "I think having a presenter who openly shares everything may confuse them even more about their identity". Another asked, "If I had third graders, isn't there some sort of guidelines as to what can be discussed?" Beyond the issue of age, several students raised a second concern—a discomfort due to lack of sufficient knowledge. Such discomfort might arise, students noted, if a conversation among students of any age wandered into issues highly personal, related to

sex, or related to families with LG members. A third area of question involved fear of negative parental response. One student explained:

> I don't think my students will have a hard time understanding that we should accept each other regardless of skin color, but sexual preference (sic) is a whole different playing field. It's a touchy subject. If I bring it up in class, who will I be offending, and who will go home and tell their parents about it? What happens if I receive complaints that I'm teaching my students immorality?

Such questions and concerns point to thorny issues worthy of specific attention.

4.3.2. Resistance and reconciliation related to religiosity

Table 1 shows that 24 students reported reflections on links between LG issues and religion. Not surprisingly, attention to LG issues met with resistance from some students, all of whom reported difficulty handling these issues because of religious exposure to equating homosexuality with sin. Notably, only five students (spread across the classes) remained resistant. The resistance was more pronounced in the credential students' class with three men voicing concerns and showing few signs of changing their minds. One refused to attend the class meeting with the gay-identified guest speaker even though the instructor emphasized that he would not have to participate in any discussion but merely listen to the speaker's point of view. Written remarks from these three men and one undergraduate woman indicated fairly firm resistance, referring to homosexuality as a disease and as a sin likened to stealing and adultery. The young woman stated:

> I do not believe that God intended for men and women to be gay or lesbian….God did not intend for this kind of behavior….I cannot change the way I feel. I have a strong opinion about this subject and there is not much that can be done to change it.

Nonetheless, this woman and a second undergraduate woman voiced ambivalence—valuing the new knowledge of LG issues while struggling to assimilate it. The second woman explained:

> Regardless of race, class, gender, disability, or sexuality, God's love extends to all. Therefore, I try to have a loving character that is the same. However, as a Christian, I also know that the Bible does not condone "men sleeping with men or women sleeping with women"…it is sin. As a result, I think I am supposed to unconditionally love homosexuals, and treat them as any other person…but not be acceptant of their behavior. What does that mean? I am still unsure. Do I not vote for their benefits, not support their cause? I don't know.

Of particular note here is the fact that the first of these women identified as half Latina and was engaged to be married to a Latino, and the second was African American. Their identification with ethnic/racial groups often on the social margins in the US may explain, in part, their efforts toward reconciling ambivalent feelings on these issues. Also, their gender may have played a part, since women at the college level are more predisposed to supportive stances toward LG-identified people (Geasler et al., 1995).

Far more students reported an easier process of reconciling similar ambivalent feelings. Several reported that while they met the lessons not predisposed to a favorable stance, they reconciled church affinity with appreciation for challenges presented to many LG people, aided by the Golden Rule and a moral stance of what is right and just. One remarked,

> I am Catholic and I was brought up to believe that homosexuality is not normal because it says so in the Bible. I consider myself lucky in that I have been surrounded by others that have taught me to open my mind and let go of racism and to not oppress other groups.

Another student articulated a questioning of literal interpretations of the Bible: "We don't throw stones at women caught in adultery anymore. Stories written in the Bible should be taken within the context of the time". Another student noted that church resistance to acceptance of LG

people forced a questioning of the individual's role in religion itself:

> I didn't understand how the church could promote love, acceptance, and unity but at the same time contradict themselves and say that homosexuality is wrong. I'm still to this day trying to understand so that I can find my niche in religion.

These remarks support work on how religiosity is not invariably linked to homophobia. When religious principles are internalized (rather than used as justification for the existing social order) individuals in fact display less prejudice (Batson, Flink, Schoenrade, Fultz, & Pych, 1986).

4.4. Stances toward LG educators

Table 1 shows that nearly a third of all students reported responses that directly concerned issues of LG educators. These responses reported either appreciation for the guest speaker's positions and dispositions, or a developing empathy for challenges of LG educators in general. With the exception of the few students who expressed resistance to discussing LG issues, including the one who refused to listen to the speaker, response to the speaker was enormously positive—and much of the response hinged on appreciation for the speaker's insider perspective. The students appreciated hearing of his personal experiences as a gay youth as it made the statistics and terminology much more tangible, and students reported a strong appreciation for having an opportunity to have their questions about LG people answered from this insider's perspective, even if it was only partial and particular. Some students in the credential class shared that it was the most valuable portion of the entire course, and students in all three classes remarked that this was the first time they had an opportunity to hear from and talk to an openly gay-identified person. Many expressed gratitude to their teachers for providing a voice of experience that encouraged them to think about the impact of heterosexism on their students in addition to all the other "isms" linked together under the umbrella of diversity.

The speaker was in fact a cultural insider in this context in three different ways. He was an openly gay-identified man. He had a track record as advocate for educational equity (particularly important in the context of these classes). And finally, he was a veteran middle school teacher attempting advocacy for all youth in the challenging world of pre-adolescence. This last feature was particularly salient. Observation field notes report that students laughed repeatedly at the speaker's "real world" anecdotes, clearly admiring his ability to persist with an equity agenda while maintaining a sense of humor about youth. A final point on the speaker's insider status deserves note. A theme in the multicultural education literature is that in representing people from marginalized groups, textbook editors and teachers need to provide images of strong and complex individuals—beyond victim status. The guest speaker's courage as an openly gay-identified educator was repeatedly identified as significant in making him a credible and persuasive source. Three students noted a contrast between the speaker's courage and the fears that a teacher reported in one of the readings. One student noted that the latter

> could learn a lot from our guest, learn that people can be more understanding than you might think. That people respond out of fear, misunderstanding, and confusion in hateful ways. Educate them, and they could surprise you. They could be allies.

Beyond the guest speaker himself, students reported understanding how LG educators in general often hide personal lives, fear being outed, fear losing jobs, all themes explored in Kissen's (1996) study of LG educators. Most of these students reported a social justice stance regarding this issue, such as this student stated: "They are not to be judged on how they spend their leisure time, they should be judged on their quality as a teacher". Nonetheless, a reality check permeated responses. As one student stated, "Maybe one day we will live in an open-minded world. Until that happens, it looks like our gay teachers will have to continue hiding".

5. Discussion

This study provides evidence that supported by an equity framework, cultural insider perspectives, and an open and safe discussion space, education students can begin to explore openly the knowledge, dispositions, and skills necessary to advocate for LG-identified students. While prior research demonstrated reduction in university students' homophobia levels due to exposure to guest panel presentations, such work has been of limited use for teacher education for two reasons. First, such studies have not included prospective teachers who hold the power to influence generations of youth. Second, these studies have relied on a homophobia assessment and Likert scales as indicators of attitude and attitude change. While we owe a debt to this work, we have needed a study of education students, using qualitative analyses to complement what scale measures have yielded. The present study has examined the needed context, analyzing the richly textured written and spoken responses of nearly a hundred university education students.

Our analyses make clear that knowledge about LG-identified youth among prospective teachers is needed and welcome. Despite the resistance of some, if certain conditions are met in the intervention, a developing sense of equity can begin to emerge. More important, the stance of advocate for LG-identified youth among prospective teachers may be possible. Many of the students who participated in the classes in our study named and elaborated strategies they would be willing to use in their classrooms and at their school sites. They identified ways to interrupt homophobia wherever it is expressed, whether it occurs with social peers, colleagues, or future students. They also began to explore human resources they would tap for support at school, reading materials they might add to their classroom libraries, strategies for dealing with harassment, and the inclusion of LG perspectives in curriculum in an open and honest manner.

This study is limited, of course, by its short-term nature and by its reliance on students' self-reports. Longitudinal studies are needed to investigate longer-term effects of teacher preparation in an area so charged with social controversy and institutional constraints. Nonetheless, the present study, reporting from a short-term intervention with three classes of mostly prospective teachers, articulates themes regarding how education students, mostly prospective teachers, respond to instruction about LG-identified youth. Our study invites parallel work at other universities, particularly large teaching institutions and in states other than California and in nations other than the US. While the instructors in our study voiced surprise at a lack of student awareness of LG issues and exposure to LG-identified people, studies set in even more socially conservative environments might strengthen understanding of how to shape the knowledge base for advocating for LG youth and how best to provide relevant instruction for diverse populations of future teachers who will work in diverse school and community contexts.

Such instruction might be informed by elements of the framework we articulated for this study. For example, given the frequency in student responses of linking LG concerns with a broader framework of cultural diversity and advocacy for educational equity, it appears evident that LG concerns fit well within the context of education on diversity and equity. Also, both instructors brought insider perspectives into their classes—a core tenet of multicultural education. Both instructors selected articles written by LG authors about their experiences, and students consistently responded positively to these. As one student noted, "The way (the author) wrote so openly and honestly struck me". The hostility experienced by both LG students and teachers as reported in the readings was identified by several students as particularly disturbing and persuasive. Many expressed appreciation that the materials were education-related, reporting that the information would be helpful to them when they had their own classrooms.

Whether intentionally or not, instructors shape classroom cultures early on. In what ways and to what degree did the instructors in this study shape a safe and open discussion space, and to what degree did students engage that space? Both faculty members have worked in public schools and have been actively involved in education on diversity and anti-racist work. Both emphasized to students that all youth need to be valued and

supported. Both instructors engaged in a role of reflective practitioner by examining their own biases and privileges, their cultural selves and perspectives, in a continuous process of self-inquiry. Both thought a lot about how to present themselves to class, as White instructors and, in the case of the undergraduate instructor, as a gay-identified man. The credential class instructor was wary of introducing LG issues to her students. In her review of syllabi from previous instructors, she noted that there was no indication that LG issues had been addressed before. She was concerned that LG issues would continue to be excluded from this course on multicultural education if there was too much resistance or conflict from the students, so she counted on discussion and writing as vehicles for productive communication. Both also participated in ongoing reflections on the degree to which program goals were being met. This included a three-day teacher education faculty retreat where both instructors actively engaged in conversations in which they reflected on the degree to which their instruction fostered development of the role of advocate for educational equity.

In line with this reflective process, both instructors appear to have created a safe space for others to do it as well. Students repeatedly reported appreciation for class writing and speaking opportunities inviting this kind of reflection, rather than a regurgitation of facts. Both instructors' classes included the option of submitting questions and remarks anonymously as prompts for class dialogue, to ensure a greater degree of honesty in responses. In both teachers' classes, students had an opportunity to express their views orally and in writing. Space was made for students who were not comfortable speaking in front of the class or guest speakers: all students were asked to submit anonymous questions for guests prior to their arrival. All students also wrote personal reflections in journals in response to readings and guest speakers where, again, they could share their true feelings without fear of reproach from students or the instructor. Students wrote freely and openly. In one undergraduate class, for example, over the course of a few weeks several students freely disclosed many things in writings read aloud anonymously by the teacher. These included students' feelings of living outside the mainstream as people of color, as hearing impaired, as the daughter of Latino/a migrant farm workers. The instructor remarked that it was as if each week another student was "coming out" in written and spoken reflections about some feature of social marginalization prompted by the week's readings and resources.

Students also wrote openly of nagging questions and concerns related to diversity, revealing resistance and, at times, voicing impatience and anger. That students engaged the discussion space in these ways was particularly important for exploration of LG issues in the undergraduate classes, since students knew their instructor was gay-identified. Signs of resistance in both of these classes (discussed earlier) indicate that students felt they could honestly share their points of view without fear of reproach or of their course grades being affected. Finally, several of the few students with LG-identified family members or friends noted the freedom they felt in asking the guest speaker questions about LG experiences that they could not ask their more personal relations.

Our analysis also points to problems and issues that need further examination. Several students were concerned that, after only one presentation, several readings, and a video, they still lacked the breadth of knowledge and skill necessary to competently handle discussions inclusive of LG concerns. Some questions concerned appropriateness of addressing LG issues with students in the elementary grades. In part, this is due to general questions about what young children understand regarding LG concerns. This concern also points to an area that future work might address. Rensenbrink (1996) offers this: "People at my school *get it* that you start teaching people to care for each other as soon as you get them in your class. You don't wait till they're fourteen or fifteen" (p. 265). Even in early childhood education, attention needs to be paid to sensitizing teachers to LG concerns, particularly in relation to LG-identified parents (Casper, Cuffaro, Schultz, Silin, & Wickens, 1996). Debra Chasnoff has shown in her documentary "It's Elementary" how teachers and young students can engage in LG affirming class activities.

It became clear in this study that there is an interchange between knowledge and disposition. For many students, the knowledge they gained from instruction in LG issues may have contributed to a shift in their dispositions toward LG-identified youth in schools. However, one student's pre-disposition prevented him from attending the speaker's presentation, and thereby reduced the amount of knowledge he could gain from the instruction. While this was an isolated incident over three classes, it still deserves attention. Future instructors of similar courses must be prepared when students express extreme resistance to segments of course content. Upon reflection, the credential class instructor noted that next time she would not allow a student to miss a presentation without requiring some sort of follow-up or alternative assignment that exposed the student to the viewpoints presented by the guest speaker.

This study's approach to challenging homophobia by providing information and insider voices has been criticized by some queer theorists for its focus on securing civil rights and safety rather than on problematizing all sexualities (Nelson, 1999, Watney, 1993). Britzman (1995) noted that such an approach "shuts out an examination of how the very term homophobia as a discourse centers heterosexuality as normal" (p. 158). While examination of the social construction of LG identities may further students' conceptual understanding of limitations binding all of us by a cultural insistence on heteronormativity, the focus of such a discussion may not provide future teachers with practical skills they will need in the classroom. Currently, and in the foreseeable future, students will continue to use homophobic terminology as a weapon even as that performance simultaneously locks the perpetrator into a repetition of prescribed acts. Students will continue to identify as LGBTQ, to assume a place and temporarily resolve desire (Butler, 1993), even though such an act may reinforce their own exclusivity. Students will continue to come out to teachers and peers even though their lives may continue to be shaped by the presence of the closet (Sedgwick, 1993). If, before they enter their own classrooms, teachers have some understanding of how pervasive these acts are, and if they have had an opportunity to think about the ways each of these acts may impact students' lives, teachers may be more likely to react thoughtfully when homophobic acts are performed or when students openly identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered.

The study also points to features of intervention and professional development that can serve as design principles for such work with pre-service and in-service teachers. The study does not permit us to disentangle the instructional variables of an equity framework, cultural insider resources, and a safe discussion space. Nonetheless, while we cannot discern which of these three elements is most essential to enabling exploration of an advocacy stance toward LG youth in schools, we can claim with confidence that these three elements of curriculum and instruction, taken together, supported development of students' knowledge, dispositions, and skills related to advocating for LG-identified youth. This reinforces much of the work on multicultural education and education for equity in both university classrooms of future teachers and school classrooms of youth. Of particular note is how strongly students responded to the cultural insider perspectives. That students were moved by biographical episodes in the historical documentary "Out of the Past" reinforces author Paula Gunn Allen's (1988) reminder that "the root of oppression is loss of memory" (p. 18), that we must uncover lost stories of Native Americans from vastly different tribes and from other oppressed groups to understand the truth of what has often been denied in the history students learn in school. Students in our study reported being shocked to learn of even the few episodes of LG history to which they were exposed. As we have noted, however, the human resource was particularly salient. Although a causal link is not always possible, studies repeatedly have found that having accurate information correlates with less homophobia, and familiarity with an LG-identified person yields less negative attitudes regarding homosexuality (e.g., Herek, 1984; Sears, 1992). The use of the cultural insider, coupled with accurate information, enables learners to open themselves to textual and personal encounters that help us move beyond "defining ourselves against

some unknown, some darkness, some 'otherness' we chose to thrust away, to master, not to understand" (Greene, 1993, p. 15).

Other variables that warrant consideration are the gender, race, and sexual orientation of authors, speakers, instructors, and students. As stated earlier, "insider" voices may lead to a belief that all LG people are like those presented. We attempted to mitigate this problem by including in instruction voices of women and men, Whites and people of color, people of various ages, reinforcing the concept of diversity among LG people. Also, the speaker emphasized that his perspective was partial, that he could not fully represent the entire LG world any more than a straight member of the class could represent the entire heterosexual world. Still, presentations likely will be strengthened by diversity of perspectives, perhaps in the form of a panel. Gender and ethnicity ought to be considered in selection of texts and guests, to feature diversity within diversity and to counter a stereotype that gay equals male and White. This stereotype perpetuates false divides, ignoring the cross-gendered and cross-cultural nature of same-sex attractions, and undermines efforts toward equity and change. While one instructor in our study was openly gay-identified, we did not find substantive differences between ways students responded in his classes versus the credential class. However, the three White males who most fully resisted instruction in LG concerns were in fact students in the credential class. Does this suggest that students in the undergraduate classes may have repressed resistance for fear of reprisals? As addressed earlier, based on albeit less intense but nonetheless fully articulated resistance in the undergraduate classes, we believe the integrity of the safe discussion space trumped fear of reprisal and minimized the effect of the instructor's sexual identity. Finally, as in most cohorts of prospective teachers, most students were women. Future studies might pay particular attention to male prospective teachers and their stances toward advocating for LG youth.

This study contributes to a growing body of work that provides documentation of promising results in strengthening teachers' knowledge and attitudes about diverse learners (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2001; LaFramboise & Griffith, 1997; Olmedo, 1997; Troutman, Pankratius, & Gallavan, 1999). Once in the classroom, of course, new teachers find that school cultures can support or constrain their efforts to advocate for all youth (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000). Therefore, work on diversity and equity must be ongoing for teachers in service, and certainly attention to LG youth will require such professional development. Increasingly, states in the US are introducing legislation that protects students from sexual harassment and, in the future, similar laws will protect students from harassment based on sexual identity. Lawsuits will be filed, and teachers need to know their responsibilities in protecting their LG students. Despite such legislation in California, school districts have been slow to provide the training teachers need to identify and deal with bias regarding sexual identity. Such work is needed since, with relevant awareness and training, supportive teachers can help prevent school troubles of non-heterosexually identified youth (Russell et al., 2001).

Meanwhile, teacher education needs to take seriously its charge to prepare teachers for diversity, for addressing the needs of all youth, including those who identify as LG, who are perceived as LG, or who come from families with LG-identified members and friends. The time has come to institutionalize within teacher education programs instruction in ways to advocate for LGBTQ youth. Beyond the resources identified from our study, many other print and video resources are available. Spurlin's (2000) collection of essays, for example, supports English/language arts educators' efforts to address LG concerns and offers some international perspectives. GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) offers countless relevant resources for educators and community members, including a document clarifying the legal issues related to advocating for LG-identified youth in schools (Bonauto, 2001). For the teacher educator, in particular, Mathison (1998) offers a helpful catalogue of questions to ask of oneself, as well as a set of actions to address LG inclusiveness.

For many of our youth, the situation is urgent. One student in our study voiced the concern well:

> I was shocked to learn that I could be leaving this classroom today with more training in gay and lesbian issues than 80% of school counselors. That is a really sad statistic, especially considering that the insightful information presented today really only skims the surface. I hope that training in gay and lesbian issues will become a requirement for educators so that we can better meet the needs of our students.

Helping education students learn to teach for equity is a pressing concern for the 21st century. Consistent with that stance, learning to advocate for LG youth, while challenging, is necessary, timely and, as this study has shown, quite possible and promising.

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