

UNIT on Heterosexism

Unit Outline

Session #

1. Introduction and photos

After an overview on heterosexism, students discuss two photos depicting heterosexism and strategies of resistance and/or alliance.

2. Don't ask, don't tell

Students explore the conditioning of all young people to be "straight": what role is prescribed, what conditioning can cost them, and what privileges accrue to people identified as straight

3. What is heterosexism

This session defines some basic concepts and vocabulary for discussion of heterosexism; explores institutional forms of heterosexism; and produces recommendations for stopping heterosexism at school.

4. Gay and Straight Together

The session examines how students can resist and be allies against heterosexism. Students develop short-term interventions to incidents of heterosexism.

Session 1. Introduction

Aims

- To introduce the unit on heterosexism
- To define homophobia
- To discuss two situations among young people involving heterosexism

Skills

Students will:

- Identify the factor of gender-role conditioning in producing fear of lesbian and gay people
- Understand the concept of homophobia
- Examine two situations of heterosexism, identifying possible actions of resistance and alliance

Preparation

You will need the appropriate photographs, including available uncaptioned and captioned versions.

Session Description

After an overview on gender-role conditioning and homophobia, students discuss three photos depicting heterosexism and strategies of resistance and/or alliance

Session Outline

1. To Begin	15 minutes
2. You're so gay	10 minutes
3. The photographs	20 minutes
4. Closure/Conclusion	5 minutes

Agenda

1. To Begin

15 minutes

Introduce the unit on heterosexism: stereotypes, violence and institutional oppression of people who are identified as other than heterosexual. Write the words “heterosexual,” “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual” and “transgender” on the board. (Be prepared to give working definitions of these terms if asked, adapting them from the definitions given in the next session.)

Ask students to think for a moment about any feelings they have, seeing these words on the board, hearing them pronounced, and hearing about the overall focus of the unit. Ask for responses. Distinguish between feelings and judgments they might wish to deliver, inviting them just to use feeling-words.

(For example:

judgments: it's wrong, it's unnatural; it's sick

feelings: fear, confusion, uncertainty, makes me feel scared)

Acknowledge that this subject is controversial, evoking strong feelings among many people. Some, for religious or other reasons, may have strong objections to discussing lesbian/gay issues

at all. Point out that part of the way this “ism” happens is the extreme forms of immediate violence that can be done to people identified as lesbian or gay, whether they are or not. Any one of us, at any time, can be identified as gay and called a name or otherwise hurt. Invite students to agree (by raising their hands), however they feel about the issue, that no one deserves to be hurt or mistreated in this way, regardless of sexual orientation. Finally, remind them of the agreement to try on the process.

Remind students that sometimes people deal with uncomfortable feelings by telling jokes, laughing, and so forth. When talking about this issue, people may for example make jokes about each other’s sexual orientation. Invite students to

- continue to notice uncomfortable feelings;
- honor each other by using the agreements to refrain from such remarks
- think about where in their own experience discomfort might be coming from
- take pride in taking on this difficult subject

Explain that as part of the agreements you will not allow anyone on any side of the issue to be disrespected or isolated.

Close by taking a few moments for students to write privately about how it feels right now to be thinking about these issues. For students who may privately have strong objections, invite them to write about how they can commit to try on the process.

2. You’re so gay¹

10 minutes

Explain that you will begin by looking at the uncomfortable feelings directly, exploring why they may arise.

Reminding students of the “Act Like a Lady/Man boxes from the unit on sexism, draw the outlines of two boxes on the board, labeling one ”Man“ and the other ”Lady.“ Ask them to remember the names they listed on the one side of the boxes--the names that people were called when they attempted to step out of either box. For the following questions, write their responses along the outside walls of the appropriate boxes.

- Which names that boys get called suggest that they are “too feminine”?
- Which names suggest that they are gay?
- Which names that girls get called suggest that they are too “masculine”?
- Which names suggest that they are lesbian?

Referring to the list, ask the following:

- What does a voice sound like when it says those names?
- If you were called those names in that tone of voice, what do you think your first feeling would be?
- What kinds of things get done to people who are called those names?
- How do these names affect how men interact with each other and how women interact with each other?

Ask students to:

¹ Adapted from Vasquez, Myhand, Creighton, *Making Allies, Making Friends*

- raise your hands if you have ever said any of the names on the board, or heard other students saying them.
- raise your hands if you think you would ever feel afraid if someone called you any of these names.

Close with the question

- What might you be afraid of? Why?

Write the word “homophobia” on the board. Explain that “homophobia” means the fear (“phobia”) of people of your own gender (“homo”), specifically people of your own gender who are or could be in same-sex relationships.

Question:

- Is this fear, of same-sex relationships, the same as the feeling of being afraid you just talked about? What is the difference? (Invite students to notice the difference between this fear and the fear they have just discussed--fear of other people calling them names or attacking them.)
- When you think about the boxes, what is the effect of both homophobia and the fear of being called names or attacked? What does this force boys to do about the box? Girls? (Answer: to stay in the boxes)

Explain that homophobia is often used to justify violence against lesbians and gays. But the effect of homophobia is actually to keep us in our boxes. To step out of the boxes we will have to confront homophobia and begin to look at the violence that is done to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual--or are just stepping out of the box.

Finally, acknowledging the risk involved with being identified as lesbian or gay, ask students to take on, as a challenge, not assuming they know the sexual orientation of other students, and not assuming they have to know. If students happen to be lesbian, bisexual or gay, they get to decide whether to reveal this; if students are heterosexual, they get to not have to tell each other they are or “prove” they are out of fear of being identified as homosexual.

3. The photographs

20 minutes

For each of the following incidents, issue the uncaptioned form of the photograph (if one is available) first, having students surmise what is being depicted; then distribute the captioned version (if one is available) for the fuller discussion.

a. Incident #23: “Queer Assumption”

(uncaptioned)

- What’s happening in this scene?
- What differences can you see between the two students to the left and the two students to the right?
- What do the expressions on the faces of the two students on the left seem to suggest? What about the expressions of the two students on the right?
- What might the male student be saying?
- Notice how the male student is touching the female student on the left. What does this say about their relationship?

- Why especially might he have his arm around her and between her and the other two female students?
- What assumptions might the students on the left be making about the students on the right?
- Which assumptions might actually be stereotypes?
- Why might they make these assumptions?
- Who is being targeted in this scene? Who is doing the targeting?
- What other kinds of things could happen to the students on the right?
- Would the same things happen to the students on the left if they walked down the hall arm in arm?
- If this scene were happening in your school, how would the students on the left be treated? How might students on the right be treated?
- If you were the best friend of the two female students on the right, how could you intervene here? What might you risk by intervening?

b. Incident #24: “Gay = AIDS

(uncaptioned)

- What’s happening in this scene?

What differences can you see between the two students to the left and the two students to the right?

(with captions)

What’s happening in this scene?

- How does the young woman feel about what the adult man is saying?
- Are the young woman and the young man being treated the same, or differently? If differently, what is the “double standard” here? What does “double standard” mean?
- How do the young men feel about what the adult man is saying?
- Describe the emotion and body language of the adult man. How might this make the young woman feel? The young men?
- What is the young woman being told about women and men’s roles? How about the young men?
- How is the young woman already resisting the mistreatment of the adult man? What else could she do?
- How could the young men act as allies to her?
- Who is the “target group,” and who is the “nontarget group”?

c. Incident #25: “NO GAY PDA” (public display of affection)

[uncaptioned]

Questions:

- What is happening here?
- What kinds of intimate relationships are being shown? How can you tell that they’re intimate?
- What do you think the man on the wall is saying? Why?

[with caption]

Questions:

- What does the man on the wall mean by what he says?

- What might the two women with him feel?
- Would the students' reactions be different if the male couple were kissing like the female/male couple? How?
- What might happen outside your school if two young men were in a relationship, holding hands?
- Have you experienced or seen a situation similar to this?
- If you were best friends with one of the two men in the relationship, what might be hard about supporting or defending him? What might people say about you?
- What would you want to tell the other students?

4. Closure/Conclusion

5 minutes

Close the session with appreciations of students for their work. Invite students to think about these issues and the photo scenes between now and the next session, and notice any references to gayness that show up at school, home, and in any forms of media. For each, note what the reference is and what message it implies about gayness.

Session 2: Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Aims

- To examine the heterosexual “conditioning” process affecting all young people regardless of sexual identity
- To identify privileges shared by people identified as heterosexual

Skills

Students will:

- Identify pressures brought to bear on young people to identify as heterosexual
- Identify costs to themselves of conditioning
- Explore privileges they secure by being identified as heterosexual

Preparation

Bring “post-it” notes or slips of paper with tape for students’ use in the “straight sculpture” exercise.

Session Description

Students explore the conditioning of all young people to be “straight”: what role is prescribed, what conditioning can cost them, and what privileges accrue to people identified as straight

Session Outline

1. To Begin	5 minutes
2. Straight sculptures	20 minutes
3. Living in the straight world: privileges	25 minutes
4. Closure/Conclusion	5 minutes

Session Agenda

1. To Begin

5 minutes

Remind students of agreements and the overall cautions about feelings from the last session. Have students report any references to gayness they noticed at school, home, and on TV, radio, CDS, magazines, the internet and so forth since last session.

Review the concepts of the boxes, homophobia, and the fear of being identified as gay from the last sessions. Ask students to report anything they have noticed at school, home, their neighborhood, or on TV since the last session that they think might have involved homophobia.

Explain that in this session the class will continue to look at how homophobia works—how everyone is a potential target for discrimination, and how this affects all of us.

2. Straight sculptures

20 minutes

Ask for two volunteers to come to the front of the classroom. One volunteer will play a 10-year-old girl, the other a 10-year-old boy. Distribute post-it labels to the rest of the class. Instruct the rest of the class that they are now responsible for “training” the children to act in their appropriate gender roles, and especially to handle themselves so that they will never be

suspected of being lesbian (the girl) or gay (the boy). Students can act the part of older brothers/sisters, parents, coaches, teachers, and so forth. The task is for the male students to write their instructions on post-it paper for the “boy,” and for the female students to do so for the “girl.” When they have prepared their paper, they take turns, one at a time, in affixing their notes to the appropriate character’s arms, sleeves, or shoulders, explaining the instruction in the tone of voice appropriate to the part they’re playing (“parental voice” for parent, for example). Instructions can include any of the following, and other things students can think of:

- Colors of clothing you wear
- Type of clothing you wear
- Hair color/arrangement you choose
- How to sit in a chair
- How to walk
- Voice you use to talk
- Things you talk about
- Jewelry you wear
- Appropriate athletic activities
- Appropriate subjects to do well in
- Kind of car to be seen driving
- Appropriate jobs/careers to train for
- How you greet other people of your gender
- How you show affection to other people of your gender

Have students complete the exercise. Then, have each of the two volunteers take turns walking into the room, pulling up a chair, sitting down, and saying hello to the class, doing their best to enact and obey all of the instructions that have been attached to them. Encourage them to have fun, exaggerating their roles if they wish.

At the close of their performance, stop the action and have each actor say how it felt to act out this role—funny, odd, uncomfortable, “normal,” &c.

Have students applaud the actors. Have students break into mixed-gender triads or groups of four. Have students take turns answering the following questions:

- What ways do I act or dress, or avoid acting or dressing, in order to keep from being called “gay,” “fag,” “butch,” or any other names that might identify me, even in fun, as lesbian or gay?
- What ways am I limited, or what does it cost me, to have to do these actions?

Return students’ attention to the full class. Have a few students share what they notice in their own experience regarding these questions: what does it cost students to protect themselves from being identified as gay/lesbian? What is the fear about being so identified? Who are they most likely to be afraid of? Remind students to speak for themselves, not referring to what other people in their small group said.

3. Living in the straight world: privileges

25 minutes

Explain that the class has been considering the costs of growing up in a society where being identified as gay can penalize people—a cost affecting everyone in the room, whatever their sexual orientations are. Now the class is to look at privileges: what heterosexual people can simply assume about their own lives, and how to live, without being challenged or penalized.

Invite students to sit quietly in their chairs for a few moments for a visualization. Ask them to visualize the following subjects by turn, looking at men and women figures in each of the subjects: what they're doing, how they relate to each other, how they look, &c.

- The typical models used in commercials, ads, billboards
- The typical men's clothes, the typical women's clothes in the ads
- The typical "date" movie
- The typical love song: who is singing, whom are they singing to?
- The typical romantic partner
- Who gets married to whom
- The typical "family"
- The typical way to have and build a family
- The typical couple growing old together
- The typical "eyewitness news team"
- The typical televised football game players and cheerleaders
- The typical U.S. president and president's spouse

Have students consider these images silently for a few moments. What do they show about how it is assumed that women and men will be in relationships with their own genders and each other's—what will be taken for granted, what will seem normal? Have them write for 3-5 minutes about what they visualize.

Return students to their small groups for a final set of questions. Invite them for a moment to think consciously of themselves as heterosexual young people, regardless of whether they are heterosexual, or are questioning their identities, or are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Read out the following list of questions; then have students take a minute or two each to think out loud

What are the things they can take for granted about their lives, regarding:

- who they'll be in relationships with
- who they can have sex with, how they can have and build families
- where it is safe for them to walk in the street
- how they can show affection publicly to their girlfriends/boyfriends
- how they relate to and get along with other members of their family
- how they can carry and show photographs of their girlfriends/boyfriends
- how they can expect to be accepted in their religious communities
- what it is like to never be concerned about having to identify, or conceal, or decide whether and when to identify or conceal, their sexual identities publicly

Reconvene class for a final process: have a few students call out what "privileges" they noticed that people identified as heterosexual enjoy. Start a poster with their responses, listing these

privileges and leaving space for others to be added as they occur to students throughout the upcoming days.

4. Closure/Conclusion

5 minutes

Close with students volunteering one thing they learned or one thing they're thinking about as a result of this session's discussions.

Session 3: Heterosexism

Aims

- To establish a shared vocabulary of terms and concepts regarding sexual orientation and gender identity
- To define and explore heterosexism, the institutionalized mistreatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people

Skills

Students will:

- Understand and use basic terms regarding sexual orientation and gender identity
- Understand the concept of heterosexism as an oppression
- Identify features of institutionalized heterosexism affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people nationally, locally and in their school
- Make recommendations to interrupt heterosexism at their school

Preparation

Provide notebook paper as needed for small-group work. You may wish to prepare “some definitions” in part 2 as a handout or poster for easy reference.

Session Description

This session defines some basic concepts and vocabulary for discussion of heterosexism; explores institutional forms of heterosexism; and produces recommendations for stopping heterosexism at school.

Session Outline

1. To Begin	5 minutes
2. Some definitions	10 minutes
3. Heterosexism	30 minutes
4. Closure/Conclusion	10 minutes

Session Agenda

1. To Begin

5 minutes

Have students volunteer to review, briefly, the last two sessions. Remind them of agreements, and introduce this session on heterosexism.

2. Some definitions²

10 minutes

For the following sessions, present these definitions of terms with help from students, writing terms on the board:

sexual orientation refers to how we identify ourselves in sexual relationships--being with people of our own gender, or with people of the opposite gender. Sometimes the phrase “sexual preference” is used. But studies show that some of us feel like we’re “born” with our orientation and have always known it—it’s not a “choice” or “preference”—, while some of us feel like we

² adapted from Vasquez, Myhand, Creighton, *Making Allies, Making Friends*

“decide” at a certain age what our orientation is, and others of us change over the course of our lives.

heterosexual applies to people who are or could be in sexual relationships with people of the “other” gender--women with men, men with women

lesbian applies to women who are or could be in sexual relationships with other women

gay applies to men who are or could be in sexual relationships with other men, and sometimes is used to apply to women who are or could be in sexual relationships with other women.

bisexual applies to people who are or could be in sexual relationships with people of either gender

queer is a word that has been used in the past as a slur against gay people; however, now it is a name for themselves that many lesbians, gays and bisexuals have begun to use, “taking it back” from being used as a slur.

Introduce a new term: *transgendered*. “Transgendered” applies to a person who decides to live in, and see her/himself as a member of, a gender different from the gender s/he was assigned at birth: a woman who lives as a man, or a man who lives as a woman. Transgendered people cover a spectrum, from those who choose simply to live their lives differently to those who choose surgical treatment to change genders.

Finally, acknowledge that it is normal in everyone’s life to have moments when s/he might wonder about her/his sexual identity, regardless of eventual sexual orientation, *questioning* sexual identity.

Point out that in fact there are many other ways to be. For example, some people may not be interested in sexual relationships at all, or might make commitments for religious or other reasons not to be in relationships. Many people “experiment” at some point in their lives with different relationships. Others may not be sure, or may not be sure at different times in their lives. There are many ways to be, and all of them are *natural*: they occur in every culture across the world, and have always been part of every culture, even if they have been sometimes stigmatized as “unnatural.”

3. Heterosexism

30 minutes

For the following discussion you will work from the handout on heterosexism, and then have students in small groups work from the handout.

a. Write the formula from the foundation sessions on the board:

$$\text{prejudice} + \text{power} = \text{ism}$$

Apply the formula to this ism:

prejudice toward l/g/b/t/q/q (*lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer/questioning people*)

and

power to use prejudice against this group

Give the following example:

Belief that l/g/b/t/q/q people are sick, evil, abnormal (prejudice)

and

l/g/b/t/q/q people can be fired, discharged from military, prohibited from leading young people’s gatherings such as scout troops, harassed as teachers, and so forth, because they are “unfit” (power)

b. Place the target/nontarget pair on the board:

target	nontarget
lesbian/gay/bisexual /questioning/queer	heterosexual

State this form of the oppression: mistreatment of lesbian/gay/bisexual people

Add the line:

transgendered	people living in gender-role conformity
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Point out the slightly different form of this oppression: the people who are targeted are transgendered people; those who escape being targeted are people who are identified as “male” or “female” by birth.

Explain that you use the word “heterosexism” to mean the oppression of lesbian, gay and bisexual and transgendered people, living in a society in which there are presumed to be two “natural” genders and “natural” heterosexual relationships.

Pick the institution “family” from the list of institutions in question 1 of the handout. Ask students to call out examples of kinds of mistreatment that happen to lesbians, gays, bisexuals and/or transgendered people in the institution of the family in each of the columns below.

Across the country?	In your local community?	In your school?
<i>Ans:</i> *No family leave for lgbt parents *No custody rights for lgbt parents *Lgbtqq people who “come out” expelled from family *Lgbtqq marriages are illegal	<i>Ans:</i> *Invisibility of lgbtqq parents *Ostracism or harassment of lgbt parents in public *lgbtqq children kicked out by parents *lgbtqq children forced into therapy or other treatments by parents	<i>Ans:</i> *Few or no lgbt parents visible in PTA *Assumptions about sexual orientation of children of lgbtqq parents *explicit teaching or informal assumption that heterosexual-couple family is the only real family

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Then break into small groups to continue the exercise: each group continues brainstorming examples of different kinds of oppression in the various institutions, writing answers on standard notebook paper. After 8-10 minutes of the brainstorm, halt the brainstorm. Have students take one minute to answer the second handout question, circling examples on their lists. Then have students, from where they are sitting in groups, volunteer examples of mistreatment than stand out for them.

Have groups turn to consider the closing questions on the handout: recommendations to achieve equal treatment at school. Invite them in particular to consider the examples of mistreatment that show up in the third column. Any recommendation to be made has to be agreed to by all members of the group.

4. Closure/Conclusion **10 minutes**

Reconvene groups. Have each student read one of the recommendations aloud, or have each group present its recommendations.

Handout: Heterosexism³

1. Write down examples of how lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people are attacked, mistreated or discriminated against in any of these institutions:

religion family real estate/housing Business/jobs police/prison/courts sports
military banks health/medical systems government/laws history books
media (TV, music, books, video games, magazines, etc.)

Across the country?	In your local community?	In your school?

2. Circle the kinds of violence above that can affect everyone, forcing them “back into the box.”

3. What should happen in your school to allow each of the following groups to have the same respect and safety as everyone else in your school community?

- lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgendered people of any age
- people of any age who may be unsure their orientation
- people of any age who are stepping out of the box
- all of us, whatever our sexual orientation may be

a. We recommend that

b. We recommend that

c. We recommend that

d. We recommend that

³ adapted from Vasquez, Myhand and Creighton, *Making Allies, Making Friends*

Session 4. Gay and Straight Together

Aims

- To apply the concepts of resistance and alliance to the analysis of heterosexism in the United States

Skills

Students will:

- Apply the concepts of resistance and alliance to heterosexism
- Develop practical interventions to everyday situations of heterosexism

Preparation

You will need lists of the scenarios for each of the small groups for the intervention roleplays.

Session Description

The session examines how students can resist and be allies against heterosexism. Students develop short-term interventions to incidents of heterosexism.

Session Outline

1. To Begin	5 minutes
2. Resistance and Alliance	20 minutes
3. Intervention roleplays	25 minutes
4. Closure/Conclusion	5 minutes

Session Agenda

1. To Begin 5 minutes

Review agreements and have students review previous sessions. Explain that in this session the class will be turning to *resistance and alliance*: how gay and straight people together can act as allies against heterosexism.

2. Resistance and Alliance 20 minutes

a. Review the concept of resistance with students: when target people act directly against mistreatment by the nontarget group.

Questions:

- How have activists for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning and/or queer people fought back against homophobia and heterosexism in the last ten-twenty years in the United States?
- Think silently of someone you know personally—someone in your family, a close friend, in your school or church or temple or larger community—who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer or transgendered. (If you can't think of someone you know personally, think of a public figure you have heard about in the last year.) Think of any way you know that they resisted homophobia or heterosexism, even if only saying "no" to it silently. Think of a word or phrase that describes what they did. Call out the word or phrase.

b. Review of the concept of alliance with students—an ally is someone who steps in the way of mistreatment happening to someone. In the case of heterosexism, straight people can be allies to queer people, stepping in the way of mistreatment; and queer people can be allies to each other, stepping in the way of mistreatment.

Questions:

- What is useful from a heterosexual ally to interrupt heterosexism?
- What is *not* useful from an ally?

b. Coming-Out interactive roleplay⁴

Have three volunteers and female volunteer, or two female volunteers, stand in front of the class facing each other. Explain that two of the volunteers will play a mother and father: the third will play their high-school-age daughter or son. The scene of the roleplay is at home after school, in the living room of the family home. The young person is lesbian or gay, has known it for years, and has supportive friends outside the home. She/he has decided she/he is ready to tell the parents.

Instruct both the roleplayers and the class that you will be asking the roleplayers to *play roles*; that is, they will be acting not as themselves, but as characters in this roleplay. Students playing the parents may or may not want to play up stereotypes of the “typical” parents, humorous or not, but have students try to play out how parents might really react to this “coming out.” Specifically instruct students playing the gay young person not to act out that part stereotypically, reminding students of the harmful and mistaken stereotypes that are always applied to targeted groups by nontargeted groups.

Explain that this is an “interactive” roleplay. After it goes on for a minute or two, students may volunteer to take the place of any of the roleplayers and continue the scene. Volunteers should come up to the front of the class and, when you give them permission, tap the shoulder of the student they want to replace and take their place. A student who is replaced should retake her/his seat. If a person replacing the young person is a different gender than the character he’s replacing (e.g. a male student replacing a female student who, in role, is a lesbian youth), the new actor should play (non-stereotypically, of course) as if the character were the actor’s own gender (e.g., the new (male) actor plays a gay male youth).

Commence the roleplay, giving initial role-players 2-3 minutes to play out the scene. Then signal for and invite volunteers to replace the roleplayers and continue. Try to ensure that all the roles are replaced.

After 5 minutes, halt roleplay and have the role-players take their seats for the following discussion. Ask questions of the performers first, then of the class:

- How is the young person feeling in this scene? What pressure is she/he feeling?
- What are any ways you can identify that the young person is resisting mistreatment?
- What did you notice about how the parents reacted? How else might they have reacted?
- In what ways was the young person mistreated?
- What reactions of the parents, if any, counted as acts of alliance with the young person?

⁴ Adapted from Creighton, Allan with Paul Kivel, *Helping Teens Stop Violence*, 1992.

- If you were that young person’s best friend, how could you act as an ally in this situation?

You may choose, with answers to the last question, to continue the roleplay for a few more moments, adding a new fourth character to the scene: the best friend of the young person, who will act as an ally to her/him in talking to the parents.

3. Intervention roleplays

25 minutes

Divide students into small groups. The task of each group is to develop a two-minute scene depicting an intervention against heterosexism, using one of the following scenarios; you will give them ten minutes to prepare the roleplay. Distribute list of scenarios to each group.

Scenarios

- The men’s team coach harasses one of his athletes, calling him “gay.” The athlete is not gay, but one of his friends on the team is gay, and in the closet. It’s obviously not safe for anyone on the team to be known to be gay. How can the athlete, with other athletes’ help, intervene with the coach without trying to prove he is not gay, or putting down gay people, or disclosing his teammate is gay?
- A female student is questioning her sexual orientation, but is afraid to tell anyone. She decides to confide in one student friend, and the next day the whole class knows. She has been ostracized, teased, called names or ignored. She is becoming depressed, possibly dangerously so, and is trying to forget that she questioned her orientation at all. Two or three students, at least one of the female, want to support her.
- A teacher is teaching this unit in class; parents of one of the students call a meeting with the teacher and the principal after school, angrily accusing the teacher of trying to turn their child into a homosexual. A student and another teacher are best friends with the teacher and want to help.
- An “out” student is getting death threats taped on her/his locker; when the student approaches the administration about the threats, they downplay it, obviously uncomfortable about the student’s open gayness.
- A male student is seriously questioning the sexual identity that has been assigned to him, and tells his two friends he is considering changing that identity to being a woman after he gets out of school. He wants to go ahead but is very afraid that he’ll lose all of his friends. One friend is shocked and can’t handle it; the other is supportive.
- A local student religious group believes homosexuality is immoral and unnatural, and has been hassling the gay-straight alliance at school, disrupting its after-school meeting. Two members of the alliance talk to two members of the religious group. They want an agreement from the religious group to stop disrupting the meeting.

Students can pick another scenario if it is a real-life scenario that at least one of them has witnessed, and if the scenario does not involve students at the school that other students in the class know. If they choose this possibility, instruct them to make sure not to reveal the identities of the real-life people involved.

The roleplay includes

- An introducer, who explains the scene
- Roleplayers who are in the position of enacting the discrimination or mistreatment

- An action in which other roleplayers intervene in the mistreatment, acting as allies to the person or people being mistreated
- A closing line that all players agree to, to show that the roleplay has ended
- A brief discussion period that the introducer facilitates after the roleplay, asking classmates a) what they saw happen, b) what the elements of resistance and alliance were, and c) what other ways they can think of that resistance and alliance could *realistically* happen

Encourage students to develop as interventions that are *realistic*—actions that could really happen—and *nonviolent*, so more likely to be effective in the long run (rather than bringing about a violent backlash). Actions should support the leadership of the people being most hurt in the scenario, not “rescuing” them but enabling them to define what should happen

Conduct small-group preparations, checking in with each group as it progresses.

At the end of ten minutes, stop the process. In remaining class time, allow as many groups as possible to conduct their roleplays and follow-up discussions.

4. Closure/Conclusion

5 minutes

Return students to their seats for closing. Acknowledge the difficulty and danger in addressing gayness at all on many school campuses, and appreciate students for their work. Close with student appreciations of each other and highlights that stand out to them from this and the last several sessions.

5. Follow up Sessions/Activities

Implementing recommendations from session 3

Assessment/Evaluation