

# Chapter 16

## Developing LGBTQ Competence in Faculty: The Case of a Faculty Development Series

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### ABSTRACT

*Contemporary college campuses can be hostile and unwelcoming places for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) faculty, staff, and students. This chapter examines through the lens of structuration theory the implementation of an LGBTQ professional development series for faculty as an impetus to change such unwelcoming environments. The LGBTQ professional development series was designed to foster individual and organizational change by first increasing the LGBTQ cultural competency of faculty members, and second by providing these agents encouragement and tools to change unwelcoming structures within themselves, their organization, and their disciplinary influence.*

### INTRODUCTION

Why is it important for faculty members to be culturally competent about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues? Decades of research have shown that college campuses can be hostile and unwelcoming climates for LGBTQ people (Bilodeau, 2009; D'Augelli & Rose, 1990; Gortmaker & Brown, 2006; Nicolazzo, 2016; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld & Frazer, 2010; Rhoads, 1997; Vaccaro, 2012). Embedded within research, either implicitly or explicitly, are suggestions that heterosexism, homophobia, cissexism, and transphobia are a part of the socio-political structures of education (Nicolazzo

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& Marine, 2015; Vaccaro, 2012; Vaccaro, Russell & Koob, 2015). Other research suggests that faculty members are the perpetrators or inactive bystanders of LGBTQ oppression (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Vaccaro, August, Kennedy, 2012). Without cultural competency regarding LGBTQ issues, it is possible that faculty members will engage in exclusionary praxis that results in oppressive curriculum, discriminatory policies, and/or painful interpersonal interactions with LGBTQ students (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011; Vaccaro, August, & Kennedy, 2012). Faculty, however, can also be powerful agents of inclusion and change on college campuses (Kezar, Gallant & Lester, 2009; Ouellett, 2005). This chapter provides an overview of an LGBTQ Professional Development Series (LGBTQ Series) designed for faculty members at one research institution. After a brief presentation of the LGBTQ Series, the chapter offers rich, qualitative evidence of program impact on participants' perceived cultural competency development. The chapter also details how the LGBTQ Series inspired faculty to become agents of change at many structural levels (i.e., classroom, office, department, college, university and discipline).

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Cultural Competency**

Multicultural competence has become an essential component of many helping fields such as psychology, education, and nursing (American Psychological Association, 1993; Camphina-Bacote, 2002; Pope, Reynolds & Mueller, 2004; Sue, 2001). In fact, Camphina-Bacote (2002) argued “Cultural competence is an essential component in rendering effective and culturally responsive services to culturally and ethnically diverse clients” (p. 181). While defined differently in various fields, multicultural or cultural competency can be understood as “the awareness, knowledge and skills needed to work with others who are culturally different from self in meaningful, relevant and productive ways” (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004, p. 13). Although multicultural competence models vary by discipline, most include three components: awareness, knowledge and skills. We expanded upon each of these components in the following paragraphs.

Implicit bias and microaggression literature highlight the importance of *awareness* surrounding issues of diversity, equity, power and privilege (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Sue, 2010). Expansive bodies of literature explicate the pervasiveness of prejudice harbored and enacted by perpetrators without conscious awareness. That is, many individuals consider themselves open-minded, but subconsciously believe harmful stereotypes about minoritized social identity groups (e.g., people of color, women, LGBTQ people). Moreover, individuals act upon these hidden biases in their daily interactions with people who are different from themselves.

The second essential aspect of cultural competency relates to *knowledge* about systems of oppression, power and privilege as well as the experiences of people who are different from oneself. Scholars have argued that what educators *know* is often steeped in bias and misinformation (Hardiman & Jackson, 2007). College faculty are disciplinary experts yet rarely have pedagogical training. As such, they are often ill prepared to enact inclusive pedagogy (Tuitt, Haynes & Stewart, 2016; Vaccaro, 2018). More specifically, literature suggests that educators often lack even the most basic information about LGBTQ people and issues (Vaccaro, August, & Kennedy, 2012).

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