

Using Self-disclosure to Manage Student Misconceptions in a Human Sexuality Classroom

Michelle M. Murray, Mary R. Nedela, Sarah M. Steelman

NCFR 2017



VIRGINIA TECH™

Misconceptions & Disclosure

- Human sexuality courses include topics of a personal nature
- Students have preconceived notions about course topics
- Students also hold misconceptions about course material (Flowers-Coulson, Kushner, & Bankowski, 2000).
- Disclosure of an instructor's sexual orientation could help address these misconceptions
- Disclosure comes with risks (Foster & Perry, 2009), but could be beneficial for both students and instructors (Adams & Emery, 1994; Allen, 2011)



Purpose

- To explore methods of addressing misconceptions in human sexuality classrooms, including disclosure of sexual orientation
- To assist instructors in making decisions addressing misconceptions using disclosure or other methods



Pedagogical Approaches

- Culturally responsive pedagogy
 - Requires instructors to be aware of students' backgrounds and appreciate diversity, while exploring their own background and biases (Jackson, 1993; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007).
- Experiential Learning Theory
 - Learning is grounded in experiences, and that there are two modes of grasping experience and of transforming experience: apprehension and comprehension (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2009).
- Queer Pedagogy
 - Disrupts educational structures that privilege some identities over others (Britzman, 1998)



Questions

- How do you believe your students perceive you?
- How do you personally want to respond to the student?
- What is your connection to the stereotype or misconception in question?
- What social, cultural, or societal factors could be influencing the way the student thinks about this topic?
- What is your philosophy of learning and teaching?



Questions

- How does your pedagogical approach inform how you might respond?
- What is the classroom environment like?
- What is the diversity climate of your institution?
- What is the climate of the city or town in which your institution is embedded?



Discussion

- Misconceptions can be addressed in a variety of ways
- Instructors can create an environment in which misconceptions can be addressed by:
 - Getting to know students (Jackson, 1993)
 - Creating a safe classroom environment (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015)
 - Building a trusting relationship with students (Brockenbrough, 2014)



Discussion

- Inform students that they will be asked to think critically and prepare them to do so
- Instructors can avoid reinforcing misconceptions by:
 - Using relatable examples (Villegas & Lucas, 2002)
 - Creating activities to illustrate course concepts (Kolb & Kolb, 2009)
 - Choose course materials carefully (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Jackson, 1993)
 - Critique heteronormative or problematic statements found in course materials (Britzman, 1998)



Questions?

Michelle Murray

murraymm@vt.edu

Mary Nedela

mnedela@vt.edu



VIRGINIA TECH™

References

- Adams, K., & Emery, K. (1994). Classroom coming out stories: Practical strategies for productive self-disclosure. In L. Garber (Ed.), *Tilting the tower: Lesbians teaching queer subjects* (pp. 25-34). New York: Routledge.
- Allen, L. (2011). "Undoing" the self: Should heterosexual teachers "come out" in the university classroom? *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 19(1), 79–95. doi:10.1080/14681366.2011.548990
- Britzman, D. P. (1998). Is there a queer pedagogy? Or, stop reading straight. *Curriculum: Toward New Identities*, 12, 211-227. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-5446.1995.00151.x
- Brockenbrough, E. (2014). Culturally responsive pedagogy for black and Latino urban queer youth. *Urban Education*, 51, 170-196. doi: 10.1177/0042085914549261
- Flowers-Coulson, P. A., Kushner, M. A., & Bankowski, S. (2000). The information is out there, but is anyone getting it? Adolescent misconceptions about sexuality education and reproductive health and the use of the Internet to get answers. *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy*, 25(2-3), 178-188. doi: 10.1016/s0968-8080(00)90251- 9
- Foster, D., & Perry, K. (2009). Out of the closet into the classroom? *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, 10(1), 27-31.
- Jackson, F. R.. (1993). Seven Strategies to Support a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. *Journal of Reading*, 37(4), 298–303. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40017437>
- Kisfalvi, V., & Oliver, D. (2015). Creating and maintaining a safe space in experiential learning. *Journal of Management Education*, 39(6), 713-740. doi:10.1177/1052562915574724
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2009). Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development. In Armstrong, S. J.(Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Management, Learning, Education and Development*. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857021038.n3>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: PTR Prentice Hall.
- Richards, H. V., Brown, A. F., & Forde, T. B. (2007). Addressing diversity in schools: Culturally responsive pedagogy. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 39(3), 64. doi:10.1177/004005990703900310
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of teacher education*, 53(1), 20-32. doi:10.1177/0022487102053001003

