What Influences the Experience of Lesbian and Gay Faculty?

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Abstract: Interviews with lesbian and gay faculty illustrate the influence of interpersonal interactions and institutional policy on their perceptions of the workplace climate. Participants were particularly influenced by interactions in their department including experience with prejudicial comments, the valuation of LGBT-related cultures and scholarship, and the level of social inclusion. Job satisfaction was influenced at the institutional level chiefly through the institutional stance on LGBT-related issues and explicit inclusion in policies and procedures. While departmental interactions most influenced the job satisfaction of lesbian and gay faculty, influencing individual behavior is particularly challenging in the work setting. This study suggests that institutional signaling including crafting LGBT-inclusive policies and taking public stances on relevant issues could foster an inclusive climate, potentially "trickling down" to influence departmental and interpersonal interaction.

Keywords: Campus Climate, Sexual Orientation, Lesbian and Gay Faculty

Introduction

Many universities craft policies and procedures designed to foster diversity among faculty, staff, and students. A diverse faculty is believed to better serve an increasingly diverse student body (Turner, González, and Wood 2008) and create an environment that attracts high-quality employees. Evidence suggests that a multicultural workforce attracts the “right” kind of employee—individuals interested in innovation, equity, and making a difference (Backhaus, Stone, and Heiner 2002; Day and Greene 2008; Joo and McClean 2006). In higher education, this may be particularly important as faculty must often look beyond monetary compensation for their motivations and rewards (Bozeman and Gaughan 2011). In addition to attracting high-quality workers, workplaces that promote diversity are more highly rated by women and racial/ethnic minorities—individuals who are often part of affirmative action plans and diversity initiatives (Backhaus, Stone, and Heiner 2002). A positive climate for LGB1 faculty, then, can benefit the university by helping to attract, and potentially retain, a talented and diverse workforce.

The retention of faculty is a challenge for many higher education institutions as academics often seek to improve their position in the higher education hierarchy by moving between institutions. LGBQ2 faculty are more likely to have seriously considered leaving their institution relative to heterosexual colleagues (Rankin et al. 2010) while racial/ethnic minorities are also more likely to report intentions to leave (Jayakumar et al. 2009). While attrition is a common and expensive challenge for higher education institutions, the inability to retain minority faculty is particularly concerning because it can affect the diversity of the workforce (Johnsrud and Rosser 2002; August and Waltman 2004).

A faculty member’s intention to leave their current institution is strongly related to their satisfaction with their position (Johnsrud and Rosser 2002; Seifert and Umbach 2008). Relatively little research examines job satisfaction among faculty generally, and almost none addresses the perspectives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual faculty (for exceptions see Bilmoria and Stewart 2009; Rankin 2005; Rankin et al. 2010). Understanding factors that influence job satisfaction among minority faculty can help foster a more stable, diverse workforce.

1 LGB is an acronym for lesbian, gay, and bisexual and LGBT is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.
2 LGBQ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer.
Lesbian and Gay Individuals at Work

Lesbian and gay individuals hold a unique position in the workplace as they have no federal protection against discrimination, yet have a history of experiencing discriminatory labor practices (Badgett et al. 2009). In addition, they are typically located in work environments where they are a small minority—they may be the only one or one of a few at their workplace or within their work unit (Waldo 1999).

Lesbian and gay individuals, if they are not gender nonconforming, may largely be invisible, unlike many racial and ethnic minority group members (Day and Greene 2008). Their invisibility leads to an increased risk of exposure to discriminatory comments from unwitting individuals, meaning that a workplace climate that is inclusive and intolerant of bias might be especially important. Climate also influences whether an individual chooses to divulge sexual orientation or gender identity. The need to decide whether and when to “come out” about sexual orientation can be stressful for lesbian and gay employees, leading to a lower likelihood of satisfaction on the job while being “out” on the job is linked to higher satisfaction and greater commitment to the job (Bell et al. 2011; Day and Schoenrade 1997; Huffman, Watrous-Rodriguez, and King 2008; Waldo 1999).

Due to the potential invisibility of their minority status, organizational climate may be particularly important to lesbian and gay employees because it both signals the safety of the environment and sets the tone for conduct in the workplace (Bell et al. 2011; Day and Greene 2008). Evidence suggests that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals who work in places that are viewed as supportive of LGB individuals (e.g., have anti-discrimination policies and employer-supported LGB employee groups) report less harassment and discrimination, leading to higher job satisfaction and fewer intentions to leave the job (Waldo 1999). Some of the strongest predictors of job satisfaction for lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees include having a supportive supervisor, being “out” at work, experiencing a culture of inclusion, and perceiving the organization as supportive of LGB individuals via policies such as same-sex partner benefits and the existence of LGB employee groups (Bell et al. 2011; Bozeman and Gaughan 2011; Day and Greene 2008; Huffman, Watrous-Rodriguez, and King 2008; Ragins and Cornwell 2001).

Creating a Positive Campus Climate for Sexual Orientation Minorities

The relatively few studies and personal narratives regarding lesbian and gay faculty suggest ongoing encounters with prejudice and discrimination, especially subtler forms such as invisibility, exclusion, and heightened scrutiny (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; LaSala et al., 2008). Many universities have initiated assessments of their campus climates, especially addressing the perceptions of minority students, faculty, and staff (e.g., University of California 2014). Rankin et al. (2010) surveyed multiple campus communities to assess the climate for LGBQ individuals, finding that LGBQ faculty experience a more negative climate than heterosexual faculty.

The perceived climate for minority group members is generally influenced by both institutional practices and exposure to prejudicial interactions (Piercy et al. 2005). While a positive climate improves the experience of LGB individuals on campus, a negative climate can increase intentions to leave (Tetreault et al. 2013). While perception of the campus climate is negatively influenced by prejudicial interactions, it is difficult to change the behavior of individual actors. Some organizations attempt to change behavior through diversity or “sensitivity” training, yet there is little evidence that this strategy is effective (Kalev, Kelly, and Dobbin 2006; Kidder et al. 2004). Institutions may be more successful in influencing climate by signaling their stance on LGBT equity and inclusion with the hope that institutional norms will “trickle down” to individual interaction.

Signaling theory was originally developed to describe how job seekers signal their skills and worth to employers (Spence 1973). The theory has been extended to describe how employers
might signal certain aspects of their organization to prospective employees who use observable characteristics to draw conclusions about the work climate and the intentions of the organization (Backes-Gellner and Tuor 2010; Backhaus, Stone, and Heiner 2002). Evidence suggests that diversity initiatives are important in signaling quality workplaces to prospective employees (Joyce 2003). In addition, human resource practices are often used to draw conclusions about the general climate and working conditions of an organization (Jackson, Schuler, and Rivero 1989; Joo and McClean 2006). The above studies suggest that higher education institutions might be able to use signaling to broadly disseminate the institution’s commitment to an inclusive and welcoming environment and, as a result, positively influence the campus climate for sexual orientation minorities. This study first describes the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay faculty then discusses the possibility of using institutional signaling to improve the campus climate for LGB faculty.

Sample and Data Collection

This article draws on data collected from lesbian and gay faculty at a Master’s granting, state university in the Western United States with approximately 15,000 students. The primary criteria for inclusion were a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity and a position or former position as a tenure-track or tenured professor at the institution. The data for this study was collected via semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to broadly examine the experiences of lesbian and gay faculty on campus and in the community. The interview schedule includes a number of broad, open-ended questions seeking descriptions of experiences, both negative and positive, while working at the University. Interviews took approximately one hour and were conducted in the office of the interviewer or the respondent, or in a public space such as a University coffee shop. For individuals no longer working at the University, interviews were conducted by phone. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by a transcriber with no ties to the institution in order to encourage participants to speak freely about their views and experiences.

I developed a list of 22 potential interviewees through personal contacts, asking for recommendations, and employing snowball sampling (Browne 2005). Of these, two declined to be interviewed, one did not respond to scheduling attempts, and 19 completed interviews. This approach to garnering contacts from multiple sources and offering personal invitations to interview created a highly representative sample. It was not biased by relying upon self-referral or response to a general request via listserv, and the personal invitations resulted in an 88% response rate.

Of the 19 respondents, 15 were tenured and 2 were tenure-track faculty members, and 2 were former faculty members. Interviewees came from a limited number of LGBT identities—none identified as transgender and only one identified as bisexual. Ten of the interviewees were male and nine were female; all of the males identified as gay, seven females identified as lesbian, one as queer, and one as bisexual. The majority of respondents were white (84% of the sample) with only 3 racial/ethnic minority respondents among the 17 current employees. Respondents had worked an average of 14 years at the University and represented a variety of academic disciplines and colleges.

The sample for this study has several weaknesses, most importantly, the lack of diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity; it did not include any transgender faculty and only one bisexual individual. In addition, the sample only included those who are “out” at the University; individuals who are closeted may have substantially different experiences and views that are not included. Finally, the participants discuss experiences at only one university and faculty experiences may differ based on region, location in larger cities or smaller towns, size, diversity of students and faculty, or type of institution.

3 One interviewee identified as bisexual.
Findings

The great majority of interviewees reported being generally satisfied with their position at the University. When asked what they liked about their position, respondents pointed to factors typically associated with satisfaction such as opportunities for advancement and collegiality as well as factors unique to minorities such as inclusiveness and tolerance:

It says something that I don’t even have a small list of what I think people could do…. No one bats an eye with LGBT content and if students even get a whiff of homophobia, they are on it. I don’t think this is typical to other parts of the country.

I’ve found quite a few people on the campus who are pretty open and accepting. I served on the [LGBT-related committee]. There are some really good people, many of them allies, who served on the committee over the years. I always kind of liked that.

A few interviewees were mindful of the fact that their success was due, in part, to their relatively mainstream social position. They acknowledged that LGBT individuals who are less typical (e.g., transgender or gender nonconforming), have additional minority statuses (e.g., racial and ethnic minorities), or are more politically or academically radical might experience the institution differently. One interviewee noted that she and two lesbian colleagues had been treated fairly, “but sometimes that’s a reflection of the people and not of the institution…. We are not people who make waves. We didn’t push buttons…. We just did our work and, in most cases, did it pretty well, so nobody cares.” Other participants were mindful that their positive experience was influenced by their privileged social position. “I’m pretty middle of the road, middle class, and I fell in love with a woman….We have two kids, two cars, two cats, a house, I grow a garden …. I am assimilatable…”

When lesbian and gay faculty were satisfied in their positions, then, not only was it due to typical factors such as opportunities for advancement and respect for their work, but also because they encountered low levels of discrimination and perceived the campus community and institution as supportive of LGB individuals.

Interactions and Prejudice

While the majority of interviewees reported positive feelings about the institution, they often followed with stories about prejudicial interactions. The following comments demonstrate some of the types of discrimination experienced by faculty in interactions with a variety of others:

I did have an incident in my office...I said, “Please excuse the mess in my office.” And the [staff] person said, “Oh, it’s fine,” but said it in a lisp back to me….I said, “You know, I really need you to just do your job and then you can go.” ... I felt that it was personal, that I was being teased.

Every now and then when I'm in class as a guest lecturer, I just have this sense that some people, usually males, are looking at me with derision. It's nothing I can put my finger on, but we know when it happens and it's uncomfortable. I don't care how old I get, it's still uncomfortable and I recoil, I retreat.

There have been times, and I'm thinking of one person in particular with whom I work in fairly close physical proximity—I think she's crossed the boundaries. She's taken liberties in terms of sexual banter that have made me feel uncomfortable.
Interestingly, interviewees tended to separate unpleasant interactions that were “ignorant” or inappropriate from the experience of discrimination. It was notable that most lesbian and gay faculty believed prejudicial interactions were inevitable at the institution due to their small numbers. As one interviewee put it, “I do feel an extra burden here at [the University]…, but as a whole I feel I am being treated fairly.”

Although this type of informal discrimination does not qualify as discrimination or even harassment under policy designed to protect lesbian and gay individuals, it creates an unwelcoming climate for lesbian and gay faculty members. Experiences of being stereotyped, sexualized via gay jokes and overly-familiar behavior, and being made to feel self-conscious about mannerisms and dress made for a negative work climate.

It is important to note that female faculty were far more likely to report being satisfied than male faculty members. Among participants, gay men had more negative experiences, both personally and institutionally. One faculty member noted, “I'm being cautious because I think it's too easy to say that lesbians are less threatening than gay men. And at the same time it seems like there are fewer out gay men among the faculty.” The great majority of gay men were exposed to sexually explicit comments or stereotyped assumptions related to their sexual orientation. One man described it as: “The adolescent things…like the faculty member saying, ‘I know what you're doing in the men's bathroom…’” Another man described the overfamiliarity assumed by some females (this was common and often included sexual banter) as the “Hey, girlfriend” thing.

**Heteronormative Assumptions**

In addition to uncomfortable and, sometimes, prejudicial interactions, lesbian and gay faculty also experienced exclusion and a lack of differentiation from other lesbian and gay individuals, sometimes termed heteronormativity. Heteronormativity can be conceptualized as cultural assumptions and practices grounded in the belief that heterosexuality is the norm and that individuals’ sex, gender, sexual orientation, and gendered social roles all naturally align. As a result of naturalizing heterosexual lives and cultures, heteronormativity ignores, denies, or stigmatizes any identity, behavior, community, or culture outside of the perceived heterosexual norm (Warner 1991). Some interviewees mentioned the pressure they felt to conform to gendered expectations:

> I think the gender conformity rules are much stricter here than I’ve experienced other places…. I think there is a visibility with me here that I haven’t experienced other places, and so I don’t know if I may be just a little bit gayer than some people or if the numbers are just lower here than at other institutions.

Gendered expectations were also evident with one participant’s account of several incidents of what I would term “gender policing.” After describing one experience where his gender atypical behavior was noted by a colleague in a joking way, he reflected, “So, pointing it out just reminds me there are certain gender expectations of me that I have to meet.”

Another aspect of heteronormativity is a lack of recognition that LGB individuals may have different cultures and lifestyles informed by their gender and/or sexual orientation. One longtime faculty member believed that while the general climate had become more accepting, she still experienced “either a cold climate or an ignorance about who I am and how I live.” Heteronormativity can result in a lack of visibility for lesbian and gay individuals including a lack of acknowledgement of relationships and family structures, an inability to distinguish between members of a sexual orientation minority group, and a resistance to seeing sexual identities as possessing unique histories and cultures. One participant recounted an experience in a faculty meeting:
I said something about GLBT culture and a colleague turned to me and said, “What is GLBT culture?” I could see she didn't know the acronym, so I explained it to her and she said, “Oh, gay people have a culture?” …. And nobody said anything to her! Nobody took her to task. It made me feel like I didn't belong in the department.

Being culturally invisible, monitoring the safety of being out in particular situations, and policing behavior and dress for signs of gender non-conformity can take a toll on lesbian and gay faculty, contributing to their sense of isolation and, possibly, job dissatisfaction. The interviews also suggest that lesbian and gay faculty who are more gender atypical and/or have queer rather than lesbian or gay identities are more likely to experience discomfort, encounter mistreatment, and have unsatisfying experiences on the job, potentially limiting the diversity of the LGBT population on campus. A multi-campus study supports the finding that gender non-conforming individuals face greater discrimination and harassment than other LGBT individuals (Rankin et al. 2010).

Departmental Influence on the Experiences of Lesbian and Gay Faculty

Satisfaction at the University was highly influenced by departmental experiences. This was particularly notable among individuals who were extremely dissatisfied. Extremely dissatisfied individuals had very difficult experiences within their departments including overt discrimination—unequal pay, sustained or egregious harassment, profound isolation, and hostile attempts to block tenure and promotion. One faculty member who left the University after a much-publicized harassment case spanning ten years, reported:

In the middle of a hallway of students, he called me a stupid faggot. And then professionally, he started referring to me as “Precious,” to where the nickname started to follow me in my professional circles. And literally 10 years after the first offense, he re-offended with a student and was finally dismissed…. And I left [the University] without another teaching job, I just had enough. I never felt like I was an important member of a family…. I wasn't important enough to protect.

In this instance, the participant not only faced egregious harassment, but the lack of response from the department and university was an additional burden. Other departmental actions also led to dissatisfaction among faculty. For example, two participants believed their departments assumed that newly-hired lesbian and gay faculty would teach LGB-themed courses even when it was not their specialty. In addition, one department appeared not to distinguish between its lesbian or gay faculty members:

So, it seems like she's “the other one.” We get lumped together and it seems like it's more about being lesbians than anything else. In fact, we are as dissimilar [in specialty] as we could be…. [Also] when there are presentations of work in the department, we get lumped together and our work is completely different.

Some participants felt socially and culturally isolated in their departments relative to heterosexual colleagues. One participant explained, “We were invited to some parties early on, and it's a very heterosexual department, they are all married to each other…So I don't know if it's just that I don't have a partner in the department, and that's why I don't get invited. We initially did, but that fell away.”

When faculty members recounted either negative or positive experiences, they were most often at the department level. Faculty members who were very satisfied tended to speak about positive departmental experiences including support during times of personal crisis, inclusion in
department members’ social events, a general feeling of being accepted and fully integrated into the department, and opportunities for advancement. Lesbian and gay participants also believed diversity in the department was especially helpful in creating a positive work environment.

**Institutional Influences on the Experience of Lesbian and Gay Faculty**

In addition to the impact of interactional and department-level experiences, institutional policies and procedures also influenced job satisfaction among lesbian and gay faculty. Interviewees who described the campus climate as positive cited both LGB-relevant policy and the explicit acknowledgement of the value of LGB individuals. Policies mentioned included the availability of benefits for domestic partners and the University’s adherence to the state’s anti-discrimination laws. The perceived value of LGB individuals was influenced by administration “taking a stand” on LGBT-relevant issues, the existence of an LGB-focused minor, and the inclusion of LGB individuals within the concept of campus diversity.

**Inclusion in Diversity**

Being acknowledged as an aspect of diversity was important to interviewees, and a few mentioned feeling excluded in the University’s diversity initiatives. “Whenever there was talk of diversity, to this very day, usually what comes to mind with most people...is racial and cultural. Gay people are rarely mentioned.” In addition, because LGB students and employees are not “counted” in an effort to gauge the success of campus diversity efforts, there was an impression that they weren’t a vital aspect of diversity. “I feel like we have more of a “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy for [LGBT] faculty. I have never seen a brag sheet that says, 'Good news- we have this...high number of LGBT faculty.' We are not a celebrated part of diversity.”

Interviewees pointed to the lack of targeted recruitment and retention efforts for LGB students, the lack of documentation that explicitly includes reference to LGB individuals, and the lack of action on recommendations previously made in committees or meetings (e.g., focus groups or conversations with administration) that were intended to address the needs of LGB employees. Two respondents described a diversity-related committee sponsored by upper administration where committee members prioritized the issues to address by voting. Since lesbian and gay committee members had less representation on the committee, none of their needs or concerns was prioritized. Another faculty member mentioned the invisibility of lesbian and gay individuals in marketing efforts:

Outside of University Relations they had all these very glossy posters and one was emphasizing how green the campus was. This faculty member and his wife had bought near the campus so they could bicycle to work…. There was something about it that irritated me. Again, the straight couple serves as a symbol of the University.

**Validation of LGBT Scholarship**

The University has a small, LGBT-focused minor that provides an opportunity for some lesbian and gay faculty to teach content that might not be possible in their home department, visibly demonstrates the University’s commitment to LGBT communities and cultures, and offers institutional legitimacy to LGBT-themed scholarship. Faculty who teach in the Minor reported that it was very important to their job satisfaction. Yet participants who discussed the Minor generally viewed the program as “on the fringe,” with few resources invested in its success. It’s important to note that similar minors focusing on racial and ethnic minorities and the Women’s Studies program also suffer from a lack of resources.

While an LGBT-focused minor can signal a welcoming climate for LGBT students, faculty and staff, a lack of resources, planning, and expertise implies that the discipline is not taken
seriously and that LGBT-themed scholarship is not important to the University’s educational offerings. Faculty felt strongly that devoting resources to the LGBT-focused minor could improve the climate for LGBT students, faculty, and staff:

If [a major] exists, I think it is something that will necessarily generate more respect. It will be harder for people to say little ugly things if it’s a program that’s recognized and validated by the University. We will have more students taking those classes. There will be less ignorance, and we’ll probably have queer people who…come to [the University] because they think, “Oh, I’m a queer person. I’ll probably be comfortable here because they have a queer studies department or program.”

**Policies, Procedures, and Equal Treatment**

While interviewees sometimes felt devalued due to their absence in diversity considerations and the lack of resources devoted to the LGBT-focused minor, they had mixed views about whether they had experienced institutional discrimination. When asked whether they had experienced institutional discrimination, participants most often referenced being taxed on partner health benefits—a practice derived from federal legislation rather than University policy. In addition to taxation on benefits, participants mentioned unequal treatment with regard to dual career assistance (i.e., spousal hires) and the distribution of internal research funding.

When asked if they experienced discrimination, several faculty members mentioned the federal taxation of their partners’ health insurance. Although they acknowledged that “it’s a federal issue [that the University] doesn’t have control over,” faculty described it as a regular reminder of their unequal status. When asked about recommendations to improve the climate for LGB faculty at the University, several faculty members suggested a rebate for the cost of this federal taxation:

If the University were to acknowledge that this is unfair, it would go a long way with me. It would signify to heterosexuals who have no idea that I am having to pay an economic penalty because of my sexual orientation. I think some heterosexuals would be very surprised and saddened by that. They would probably support me.  

Several participants mentioned inequity in dual career assistance, reporting that a lack of career opportunities for their partners made the University a difficult place to stay because of the weak local job market. Some believed this was also an issue for heterosexual couples while others believed that LGB individuals have unique challenges. “In some ways it’s true of anybody who takes a faculty position in a small town—the issue of partner hire and work is salient, but I think in some ways it is differently salient for us as queer people.”

Interestingly, the University has a dual career policy that, although not explicit, appears to include same sex couples (the policy refers to spouse/partner). Still, interviewees voiced concern about equitable distribution of dual career assistance. “In my department, there are many, many spousal hires. They are all heterosexuals who are married.... I’ve never seen any indication that it would be acceptable for a homosexual couple.”

Several participants expressed concern about the equity of internal research funding. In a competitive process, grants are available to support faculty research during the summer months. Although allocation is decided by committee, there was a widely-held belief that discriminatory attitudes held by a key leader influenced funding allocation. It is important to note that both dual career assistance and internal research funding had policies and processes in place, but the lack of transparency led faculty to wonder whether the process was discriminatory. Transparency may be

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4 At the time of the interviews, there was no federal recognition of same-sex marriage.
particularly important to minority individuals with a history of institutional discrimination because it can both insure that the process is free from bias and acknowledge historical mistreatment (August and Waltman 2004). Without this assurance, minorities are left wondering whether a variety of experiences (e.g. differential pay, undesirable course allocations or load) are due to discrimination or are unrelated to their minority status.

Institutional Signaling

This study suggests that negative experiences are often at the departmental and/or interpersonal level—a discriminatory chair, a homophobic colleague, or biased behavior during meetings can profoundly change the job experience and satisfaction of lesbian and gay faculty members. When considering how to improve climate, changing discriminatory interactions within the department is critical, yet may be difficult to implement at the institutional level. It may be more effective for institutions to influence climate by signaling their stance on LGBT equity and inclusion with the hope that institutional norms will “trickle down” to individual interaction.

Policies are an important aspect of institutional signaling. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals experience less discrimination and harassment in organizations with sexual orientation anti-discrimination policies (Waldo 1999). While policies can protect individuals from discrimination and are useful in legal action, they are “more often used as symbols of institutional commitment to equality” (Zemsky 2005, 11). The participants in this study confirm this assertion by stating that they believe explicit, protective policies send a strong message to the campus community regarding the value of LGB individuals at the University.

Developing policy that explicitly addresses LGB faculty provides two potential benefits. First, it addresses shortcomings in the treatment of LGB faculty and, second, it serves as a powerful form of signaling at the institutional level, broadly influencing the climate and culture of the university. By explicitly stating that a policy applies to same-sex couples and making the modification widely available, not only are sexual orientation minorities assured that the university values them, but faculty, staff, and students are reminded that the university strives for inclusion and values community members. Using policy revision as an opportunity to communicate the institutional stance widely via press releases, email announcements, and articles in appropriate institutional communications furthers an inclusive campus climate by widely disseminating institutional values.

In addition to policy, senior administration has myriad opportunities to signal institutional regard for LGB individuals on campus. When senior administration calls attention to issues regarding equity and clarifies the institution’s (and their personal) stance on B inclusion, they foster a positive climate for faculty, one that can potentially “trickle down” to departmental business and individual interaction. Several individuals pointed to key signaling efforts undertaken by the University’s current president as influencing their evaluation of the climate and their satisfaction at work. For example, the president wrote a campus-wide email discussing anti-gay violence at another institution, reminding students, staff, and faculty of the value of all members of the campus community without exception. In addition, the University disinvited a school that discriminated against lesbian and gay individuals from a graduate school fair; the president followed up with a blog considering his personal views on the harm of a hostile learning environment. One interviewee commented:

I was moved and wrote back to him both times and he wrote back to me. I felt it was such a change from the previous administration and I remember getting tears in my eyes when I read the one about the gay bashing. I couldn’t even believe I was reading the president of my university supporting me and my students. Honestly, I think that was part of why I didn’t go on the job market. I think he is changing things and I feel really excited about that.
Conclusion

Creating an inclusive environment is good for faculty, staff, and students and potentially for other minority groups. While diversity efforts often rely on tallying the numbers of a certain underrepresented group in order to gauge the success or failure of diversity initiatives, inclusion sends a decidedly different message—that all are welcome regardless of status, identity, and affiliation. A climate of inclusion better addresses the needs of individuals—often invisible minorities, but also better responds to demographic shifts in the United States, especially with the continual process of negotiation and renegotiation of statuses, language, and identities across race/ethnicities, religion, sexual and gender identities, abilities, and subcultural alliances. Efforts to create an explicitly inclusive climate can contribute to the job satisfaction of lesbian and gay faculty in addition to attracting high-quality faculty generally, leading to an intellectually stimulating and engaging campus environment.

REFERENCES


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Organizational Cultures: An International Journal is one of four thematically focused journals in the collection of journals that support The Organization knowledge community—its journals, book series, conference and online community.

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