The curriculum policy statement of the Council on Social Work Education requires that students receive "content related to oppression and to the experiences, needs, and responses of people who have been subjected to institutionalized forms of oppression" (CSWE, 1982 standard 7.2). Gay men and lesbian women must be considered members of an oppressed group because of the social stigmatization, discrimination, and disenfranchisement they experience.

Although CSWE policy mandates curriculum content on women and ethnic minorities of color (crucial information in social work education), it merely suggests others "include(ing) but not limited to those distinguished by age, religion, disablement, sexual orientation, and culture" (CSWE, 1982, standard 7.5). CSWE expresses ideals that encourage schools of social work to include curriculum content on the gay and lesbian population, but does not mandate the inclusion of this content.

Nevertheless, the social work ethics demand responsibility toward maltreated populations and part of this responsibility is the inclusion of course content on gay and lesbian issues in the social work curriculum. This paper presents a rationale for requiring that students receive a curriculum that includes materials designed to decrease homophobic attitudes and to prepare students to provide more effective social work practice with lesbian and gay clients. Methods to incorporate this content in the core social work curriculum are also presented.

Rationale For Including Content on Lesbian and Gay Issues

Morin (1977) demonstrated that between 1967 and 1974 research about gay men and lesbian women was primarily concerned with diagnosis, cause, and cure. He recommended that research should give priority to the dynamics of gay relationships, the development of a positive gay identity, and specific problems of gay children, adolescents, and older gays men and lesbian women. To some extent, Morin's recommendations have been addressed.

Waters (1986) reviewed the research between 1979 and 1983 on lesbianism and male homosexuality and reported that the average number of studies per year had almost doubled between Morin's and his review (from 17.4 to 33.2). He reported that studies of diagnosis had dropped in number from the earlier 16 percent to one percent, while special topics such as coming out, parenting, relationships, and aging had increased from 20 to 56 percent.

Although research on lesbians was underrepresented and, as Waters points out, many research areas of value to the gay population were just beginning to be explored, the redirection of the research from an illness approach to an identity and relationship approach is promising. The development of this literature has produced excellent resources for teaching developmental, practice, and policy issues relevant to social work with gay men and lesbians. A number of social workers have made important contributions to this body of literature which can be incorporated into the social work curriculum (such as Berger, 1980, 1982b; Brooks, 1981; Gramick, 1983; Hidalgo, Peterson, & Woodman, 1985; Lewis, 1983; Moses & Hawkins, 1982; Woodman, 1989).
The existing research, however, also demonstrates the degree to which negative attitudes continue to dominate American social structures. Glenn and Weaver (1979) predicted in their early study of American adult attitudes toward homosexuality that: "there is no indication in the data that a majority of American adults are likely to consider homosexual relations to be morally acceptable in the near future. At the 1973 to 1977 rate of change, the proportion of restrictive attitudes would decline by only 67 percent by 1990." (Glenn & Weaver, 1979, p. 115).

As of 1984, 73% of a national cross-section of American adults still believed that sexual relations between same-sex adults are always wrong (Davis & Smith, 1984). Given that the majority of adults hold this belief, many social work students and practitioners are also likely to have such negative attitudes.

The few studies that have investigated social work with gay and lesbian clients suggest that biases do exist and that they have potentially detrimental effects on clients. Studies conducted during the 1970s demonstrated that few psychiatrists, psychologists, or social workers viewed gay men and lesbian women as normal (Barr & Catts, 1974; Fort, Steiner & Conrad, 1971; Morris, 1973). More recent studies of this nature reveal that negative attitudes which can affect provision of services are still prevalent among helping professionals (Edmond, cited in Brooks, 1981; Casas, Brady, & Ponterotto, 1983; Wisniewski & Toomey, 1987). Without specific preparation to work with lesbian women or gay men, social workers are likely to provide inappropriate or ineffective services.

One mechanism for preparing students is the social work curriculum. Some support exists for the effectiveness of education in developing more accepting attitudes in students toward homosexuality. The influence of an educational course in human sexuality, which included a unit on homosexuality, has been shown to increase positive attitudes toward homosexuals in two quasi-experimental studies (Larsen, Cate, & Reed, 1983; Serdahely & Ziemba, 1984). Schneider & Tremble (1986) reported that a workshop to train service providers to work with gay and lesbian adolescents produced post-test data that suggested participants developed more accurate, positive, and supportive attitudes toward homosexuals. Informal feedback suggested that the topic of homosexuality was more openly discussed in the respective workplaces and that active advice-seeking and consultation about working with gay adolescents was increased following the workshop (Schneider & Tremble, 1986).

Despite support for the influence of education to produce more accepting attitudes toward gay and lesbians, social work students are unlikely to receive educational information about this group before they begin the social work curriculum. In a survey of 103 schools, Newton (1982) found that an overwhelming majority of secondary schools reported that no mention of homosexuality was made in any sex education courses.

Wietz (1982) found, in her review of abnormal psychology and sociology college textbooks, that 56 percent of psychology textbooks and 22 percent of sociology textbooks included a section on homosexuality. The texts' treatment of the subject ranged from advocacy and acceptance to tolerance. Lesbianism received far less attention than did male homosexuality (Weitz, 1982). Thus it is unlikely that students still be exposed to adequate information about the gay and lesbian
Methods are necessary for including curriculum content that increases social work students' acceptance of lesbians and gay men as clients and colleagues. Without this part of their education, social workers are likely to be ill-informed and possibly homophobic; lesbian and gay clients, therefore, will continue to be subject to inappropriate and ineffective services.

**Methods and Resources for Including Content on Lesbian and Gay Issues**

This section illustrates how content on lesbian and gay issues could be an integral part of the social work curriculum. As such, it is not inclusive in the methods or resources suggested. It is the purpose of this section to identify sources that educators can draw upon when teaching this content and generate additional ideas and methods for fitting this topic into each of the curriculum areas of social work education.

Most introduction to social work courses are designed to introduce students to all aspects of social welfare and social work populations. It seems apparent that course content that helps students understand the issues of sexual orientation is necessary because 10% to 12% of the American population are gay men and lesbian women (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Potter and Darty, 1981; Rand, Graham, & Rawlings, 1982).

Models can be useful that demonstrate that sexual orientation is a continuum of behaviors, feelings, and preferences expressed by individuals rather than a dichotomy based only upon genital behavior (see Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Berger, 1983; Moses & Hawkins, 1982). Moses and Hawkins (1982) present a model that defines psychosexual development as a dynamic process that incorporates biological, psychological, and sociological factors.

Assignment of this reading and discussion of the factors which comprise sexual orientation can provide students with a more accurate understanding of this aspect of identity. The instructor might ask students to examine their own sexual orientation by writing down how they would respond to each of the six components that Moses and Hawkins (1982, chapter 4) consider relevant when exploring sexual orientation: Past and present partner preference for sexual activity and relationships, for affectional relationships, and for fantasizing.

Students could then discuss their reactions to this exercise and the extent to which these components seem to reflect the concept of sexual orientation. Although students should not be expected to disclose what their response are, the instructor could draw from what students feel comfortable discussing and, if necessary, describe the range and mix of responses outlined in Moses & Hawkins. The objectives of this discussion would be to help students understand that sexual orientation is multi-dimensional and not merely a product of genital activity, that it can be situational and dynamic rather than internal and permanently fixed and that homoerotic preference is a natural part of the continuum of sexual and affectional feelings and behavior.

Part of the way our society has maintained stereotypes and negative attitudes about homosexuality is by refusing to consider it as a legitimate topic for discussion in our homes or educational institutions. This has been a conspiracy of silence which allows stereotypes to be maintained because positive images that reflect the realities of gay people have been extremely
limited in all media. In addition, many gay men and women cannot comfortably disclose their sexual orientation in this atmosphere and therefore students are not exposed to the diversities of this population.

Reading assignments and class discussions that require students to consider the life experiences of gay men and lesbian women can help eliminate taboos (for example, Adair & Adair, 1978; Baetz, 1980; Brown, 1977, Crew, 1977; Fricke, 1983; Jay and Young, 1975; Jones, 1978). Readings which narrate the experiences of gay men and lesbian women have the potential to demonstrate the wide range of characteristics, behaviors, and life situations of gays and lesbians.

This experience can begin to provide students with a more realistic schema through which to form attitudes. In addition, these readings and class discussions can begin the process of helping students become more comfortable with and less judgmental about this aspect of behavior. Topics for discussion might include asking students to relate the ways they can or cannot identify with the individuals with whom they have read. Students can be encouraged to relate any of their own beliefs that were disarmed or supported by the readings. Discussions of the individuals from these readings who have experienced multiple forms of oppression because they also belong to a racial minority or because they do not conform to gender role stereotypes, can help students relate to the ways in which racist and sexist issues are relevant.

In addition to the use of fictional or personal narratives that dispel myths and stereotypes, the instructor can also present evidence from the considerable body of empirical research that contradicts stereotypes about the gay population. For example, Newton's (178) conclusion after reviewing the available research on pedophilia that no basis exists for associating child molestation with homosexual behavior could be presented to dispel the myth of homosexuals as a threat to children. Consistent research findings that demonstrate the mentally healthy status of gays can be presented in support of acceptance of gay clients and colleagues (such as Armon, 1960; Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Berger, 1980; Christie & Young, 1986; Hart, Roback, Tittler, Weitz, Walston, & Mc Kee, 1978; Hopkins, 1969; Larsen, 1981; Oberstone & Sukoneck, 1976, Saghir, Robins, Walbran & Gentry, 1970; Siegelman, 1972).

Sex roles, sexuality, and sexual orientation are so clearly developmental issues that they could be an integral part of the human behavior and social environment sequence. Along with these other components of gender, sexual orientation must be incorporated into the curriculum content that provides "knowledge of individuals as they develop over the life span and have memberships in families, groups, organizations and communities (CSWE, 1982, standard 7.8)."

The process of coming out during adolescence or young adulthood should be included as part of the developmental achievement of identity formation. Consideration of specific developmental needs of gay and lesbian adolescents can be brought into discussions of adolescent sexuality and identity formation. Instructor discussion or assignment of useful resources can facilitate student understanding in this area (such as Cates, 1987; Hetrick & Martin, 1987, Maylon, 1981). Hetrick & Martins (1987) article can be a useful vehicle for identifying the major developmental issues for gay adolescents and common needs and problems experienced by gay adolescents.

Students need to understand the resolution of tasks necessary to incorporate a healthy gay or
lesbian identity into one's self-concept. This information can be provided through assigned readings that outline models of developing a gay identity (such as Berger, 1983; Coleman, 1982; deMonteflores & Schultz, 1978; Lewis, 1983; Troiden, 1979). Instructors can present the tasks involved in integrating gay or lesbian identity into a positive self-concept followed by discussion centering on the adequacy of the models, variation by age, race, gender, culture, and individual characteristics. Facilitators and inhibitors to a healthy resolution of this developmental task should be identified from a person-in-environment perspective.

Special consideration for the gay population exist when studying middle and later adulthood. Relationships and parenting are two issues that require study because of societal factors that often impinge upon gay families. A number of resources exist to help the social work student consider adjustment, relationship, and legal issues for gay and lesbian families with children (Baptiste, 1987; Bozett, 1980; Dunne, 1987; Hall, 1978; Kirkpatrick, 1987; Lewis, 1980; Miller, Jacobsen, & Bigner, 1981; Pagelow, 1980; Polikoff, 1986). Instructors might assign one of these readings along with readings which describe these issues for other family forms, including nuclear families, single-parent families, and step-families. Students then can be asked to compare the problems, needs, and coping capacities of diverse family forms during class. This activity would students appreciate the critical components which comprise a family system and better understand the numerous forms a family can take. In addition, this can help students understand the unique and shared problems, needs, and capacities of each family form. Relationship issues could be approached in a similar way. Useful readings that identify relationship issues for gay and lesbian couples exist (see George & Behrendt, 1987; McCandlish, 1982; McWhirter & Mattison, 1982; Moses & Hawkins, 1982, chapter 9; Woodman & Lenna, 1980, chapter 7).

Berger (1982a; 1982b), Friend (1987) and Kimmel (1978) provide some of the few models for understanding gay adult development and aging and for identifying needs of gay elderly. Consideration of older gay men and lesbian women and their needs should be incorporated into the study of latter adulthood.

Study of community and societal stressors, which have the potential to affect the gay and lesbian population, is also appropriate for human behavior courses. Widespread negative societal attitudes and the unprotected status of sexual orientation lead to both overt and covert discrimination. These societal factors comprise unique external stresses that may impinge on the well-being of the gay and lesbian population, stresses that should be included in curricula that covers community and society behaviors and their impact on human functioning and adaptation.

Examples of topics that can be included when considering institutional stresses that affect the gay population are stigmatization and discrimination, denial of child custody, inappropriate treatment by mental health and health care professionals and hostility and aggression within a neighborhood or community. A number of readings exist that can be used to organize information to be presented or generate ideas for class discussion. For example, Riddle and Sang (1978) consider specific sources of interpersonal and external sources of stress from sex role violations often experienced by lesbian women. The information from this article could be juxtaposed with other readings that identify the broader issue of how gender role stereotypes impinge upon the psychological development of all men and women. Hitchens' (1980) article "Social Attitudes, Legal Standards, and Personal-Trauma in Child Custody Cases", is a resource
for generating discussion of the process and impact of the courts' hesitance to award child
custody to lesbian mothers. Brooks' (1981) study of minority lesbian women explicates the
combination of stress for this group.

Practice courses, aimed at ensuring that social work students will be capable of providing
positive interventions with lesbian and gay clients, must include a self-examination of personal
feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about sexuality (Tully & Albro, 1979), sexual orientation and sex
roles on the part of students. This can be done through discussions, role plays, and value
clarification exercises.

Exploration could be facilitated by the instructor in a number of ways. Students, could be asked
to respond individually to indexes or scales designed to measure attitudes toward sexuality,
sexual orientation, and sex roles. Although individual scores would remain private, students
could discuss their responses to specific terms. The instructor might need to take the lead in
dispelling myths or stereotypes, but the atmosphere needs to remain open enough for students to
express their real attitudes. Another technique would be to ask students to role play an interaction
in which another student "comes out" in the role play. Ideally, each student would role play both
the person disclosing a gay sexual orientation and the receiver of the information. Students then
could discuss what they observed and felt and the participants could then discuss how each of
them felt in the role play. Students who feel extremely uncomfortable in either role can be
encouraged to discuss the source of their discomfort either in class or individually with the
instructor. Although the instructor should avoid judgmental statements regarding negative
attitudes, he/she can encourage students who express negative attitudes or feelings to further
explore this issue through reading and talking to students and instructors who are knowledgeable
and comfortable with the topic.

Specific practice issues must be considered for working with gay and lesbian clients, such as
coming out, discrimination, and relationship and family issues. There are numerous practice texts
and journal articles which provide guidelines for affirmative practice with lesbians and gay men
as individuals, couples, and families.

Policies surrounding lesbians and gays exemplify principles of social welfare and some of the
subtle complexities of judicial decisions, legislative actions, and their effects. Current
discrimination against gays and lesbians that remain legally acceptable can provide rich content
in policy analysis courses as examples of societal values entering into policy formation. Jonathan
Katz's book Gay American History (1976) and John D'Emilio's Sexual Politics, Sexual
Communities (1983) provide comprehensive, historical accounts of legislation and social
activism surrounding gay rights.

Present administrative, judicial, and legislative policies regarding the rights of gays and lesbians
create legal problems in the areas of:
"equal opportunities in public and private employment; occupational licensing, family law issues
such as marriage, child custody, child visitation rights, adoption and financial support after
separation; housing, public accommodation access, immigration and naturalization, rights of
association and free speech, armed services policies, police harassment, income tax status, and
insurance coverage." (Vetri, 1980, p.25)
A number of resources exist that illustrate these issues (Bernstein, 1977; Hedgpath, 1980; Hitchens, 1980; Knutson, 1977; McCrary & Guiterrez, 1980; Polikoff, 1986; Rand, Graham, & Rawlings, 1982; Reynolds, 1980; Richards, 1980, Vetri, 1980). A consideration of these readings can help students gain an understanding of the basis of discriminatory policies in our society as well as specific ways that discrimination is imposed upon gays and lesbians. Interested students can be encouraged to study polices that affect gays and lesbians in policy analysis assignments or the instructor might feature one of these policies as an example of institutionalization of negative societal attitudes toward a group.

Past and present efforts to change legislation and polices that negatively affect gays and lesbians offer illuminating material for community organization courses. Study of the social, service, and political components of the gay community provides a unique opportunity to understand the structure and functions of one type of community. For example, the mechanisms by which members of the gay community provide a sense of belonging for otherwise stigmatized identities illustrate essential functions of the community.

The political organizations of the gay community that conduct legislative advocacy, grassroots organizing, and other types of social action illustrate principles of community organizing (such as American Civil Liberties Union Lesbian/Gay Rights project, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Human Rights Campaign Fund, NAMES Project, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and the National Gay Rights Advocates). Students could be encouraged to observe or participate in the organizing efforts of the gay community as an experiential learning assignment.

More than a decade ago, Berger (1977) suggested an advocacy model for intervention with homosexuals. The model includes encouraging agencies to employ professionals with expertise in working with gays, community organizing to form service organizations and giving active support for positive legislation, such as equal opportunity ordinances and protected status. Interested students can be introduced to these types of opportunities to take social action by being assigned activities such as monitoring and challenging discriminatory legislation and policies that affect gay clients and colleagues or conducting a needs assignment for a specific service for gay clients. A few of the professional organizations designed to facilitate advocacy by professional social workers around these issues that students can become involved with are the National Association of Social Workers Task Force On Lesbian and Gay Issues, Council on Social Work Education Commission on Lesbian and Gay Issues, and the Association of Social Workers Concerned with Lesbian and Gay Issues.

The past focus of theories and the social science investigation about homosexuality exemplify the biases that can be detrimental when applied to any minority group. Historical theories and research surrounding homosexuals, minorities of color, and women illustrate how society's and social scientists' biases and misinformation have led to the formulation of biased and poorly conceived research questions. Inaccurate conclusions drawn about these groups demonstrate the concept of sampling bias as a threat to external validity when results are overgeneralized from an underrepresentative group or when minority groups are not included as part of a population. Students must be aware of these tendencies so that they can consciously avoid them in their use of research findings and in their own research activities.
One testing approach is to have students read articles that analyze and interpret these biases. Morin’s (1977) historical and Water’s (1986) update study of research on gay and lesbian issues, Quam and Austin’s (1984) study of women’s issues in social work journals, and Billingsley’s (1970) analysis of American social science research on the black family are possible readings. Class discussion can focus on the reasons biases of the research community have affected each of these groups, the commonalities and uniqueness of the types of bias in each research area and the proactive implications of inadequate and inaccurate information about these populations.

Conclusion

Social work students, practitioners and educators must have accurate information and gay and lesbian issues. Everyone is subject to the negative socialization and social messages about gay and lesbian people. This might be part of the reason that the issue often evokes discomfort when mentioned. Increased self-awareness among educators about their own comfort level on this issue might be necessary. Faculty seminars, internal workshops and curriculum development meetings which focus upon gay and lesbian social work issues are ways that some schools of social work ensure that gay and lesbian issues are raised and included as part of the curriculum.

It is essential that accurate information about the gay and lesbian population be included in the social work curriculum. Gay and lesbian issues are relevant to human development, social work practice, social work policy and services, community organizing, and social work research. Incorporating content on these issues has the potential to better prepare students to work with lesbian and gay clients and colleagues. Moreover, the issues surrounding the gay population exemplify the core social work principles of self-determination and the basic need for full social and civil rights for all oppressed people.