

Innovations in Teaching: How Novice Teaching Assistants Include LGBTQ Topics in the Writing Classroom

Kathryn S. Jaekel¹

Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115

Abstract

This article examines how three novice graduate teaching assistants included lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer topics in their first-year writing classrooms. Findings suggest that inclusion of these topics can be successfully done through attention to identity in the classroom, including current-day events, and structuring classroom activities that support inclusion. Further implications suggest the importance of including graduate teaching assistants in discussions about cutting-edge pedagogical practices in the classroom.

Keywords: Intergenerational attitudes, undergraduates, education, LGBTQ.

The Case for LGBTQ Inclusion

With an increase in visibility for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students on college campuses, scholars have been clear: there is an increased need to incorporate LGBTQ topics in our higher education classroom. Citing chilly campus climates for sexual minority students (Rankin, Blumenfeld, Weber, & Frazer, 2010), scholars have continued to document that college campuses continue to be unsafe. In fact, LGBTQ students continue to face discrimination, harassment, and even violence on campuses (Rankin, 2003; Rankin, 2005; Rankin et al., 2010; Sanlo, 2004).

Importantly, discrimination often extends into the classroom where, according to Connolly (1999), students often face exclusion in both course curricula as well as in pedagogical strategies. Faculty play a key role in supporting LGBTQ students (Renn, 2002). Faculty need to work to include multiple representations of LGBTQ individuals in their curriculum as well as allow space for students to make meaning of these topics. Moreover, it is important for faculty do their own research, stay up-to-date on LGBTQ topics and issues, and information collected on and off their campus (Allen, 1995; Furrow, 2012; Renn, 2000). This also includes noting language changes. For instance, the term “queer,” once considered a pejorative term, has become, in contemporary use, a celebratory word for identity as well as for a broader area of study in the academy (e.g., queer studies).

¹ Corresponding author's email: kjaekel@niu.edu

While these strategies are excellent ones, there continues to be a gap in the literature regarding how to actually include LGBTQ topics in the classroom. While many have indicated that there is a need to include these topics, there are few concrete examples of how to engage in LGBTQ inclusion within curriculum. With the recent Supreme Court ruling for marriage equality in the U.S., coupled with several state laws introducing discriminatory policies (e.g., Indiana, Louisiana), LGBTQ topics are in the nation's forefront and students are saturated with these topics. Yet, guidance for addressing these topics in the classroom is limited.

In an effort to better understand what new educators need to feel comfortable including LGBTQ topics in the classroom, I collected data from 20 new teaching assistants (TAs). From this project, I expected to get data that would help me, as an academic administrator, better understand what new educators would need in regards to their preparation. Yet, in my data collection process, I realized that some of our TAs were already including these topics successfully. Despite little attention paid in the literature regarding how to incorporate these complex topics and issues into the classroom, these "novice" educators were already successfully including the topics in their curricula. These innovations on the part of novice educators can serve as a model for many of us, both novice and experienced, who are teaching in higher education.

Thus, the primary purpose of this article is to detail how new TAs incorporated LGBTQ topics into their writing classrooms. Specifically, this article aims to add to the body of literature regarding how to incorporate LGBTQ topics by sharing both curriculum and classroom management strategies for inclusion of LGBTQ topics. Importantly, while this study focused on writing classrooms, the strategies discussed are transferable to other spaces where learning occurs. In addition, the secondary aim of this article is to discuss that TAs, while often discussed in the research as being novice educators who need help with their classroom teaching, can be innovative, inventive, and provide models for even seasoned educators. Their contributions to teaching allow new ideas, perspectives, and important information for the larger conversation about teaching and learning in higher education. Their presence in classrooms can be incredibly beneficial.

Promising Practices for Inclusion

Literature examining the inclusion of LGBTQ topics details the importance of engaging in effective classroom management. Because hurtful comments and ideas may arise, faculty must be willing to create and maintain a safe classroom atmosphere. To create and maintain this atmosphere, research recommends that faculty immediately handle instances of homophobia and discrimination when they arise (Furrow, 2012; Iconis, 2010; Lopez & Chism, 1993; Renn, 2000). Furrow (2012) writes that because faculty are modeling behavior and attitudes to students, not only must faculty deal with conflict quickly, they must also work to establish a safe context in their classrooms. Strategies that help in establishing and maintain a positive climate include setting the tone the first day of class (Furrow, 2012) and cultivate a climate that allows dialogue and respect (Iconis, 2010), or engaging in feminist pedagogical strategies (Crumpacker & Vander Haegen, 1993).

Another key recommendation of the literature is faculty knowledge. Accordingly, Iconis (2010) writes that faculty must begin by first reflecting on their own biases. This includes reflecting on conscious and unconscious biases, refraining from making homophobic and other hurtful jokes, and perhaps most importantly, not simply being passive in the classroom around LGBTQ topics (Norris, 1992; Renn, 2002). Part of not being passive is becoming more knowledgeable about LGBTQ topics as well as continuing to stay up-to-date regarding these topics and issues (Allen, 1995; Furrow, 2012; Renn, 2000).

Finally, it is important that faculty allow curricular space for LGBTQ topics and issues. Research suggests allowing students space to write about LGBTQ topics (Furrow, 2012; Iconis, 2010; Renn, 2000). Certainly, writing courses can serve this function, as can other courses that incorporate writing or discussions of identity. As Angelo (1993) holds, information that is made to be personal for students is far likelier to be retained and used.

Literature that examines the why and how to include LGBTQ topics is generalized to fit the idea of “all” faculty. To date, little literature exists that discusses how novice educators, namely TAs, can or should include it. This particular group of instructors is an important one to attend to: increasingly, these contingent faculty often teach our first-year courses (Baldwin & Wawrynzki, 2011; Jaeger, 2008). Graduate TAs are a specialized group who often face different obstacles than other faculty member types. For instance, according to Kendall and Schussler (2012), undergraduates often view TAs “as holding a status between students and academic” (p. 188). This status often affects how TAs are viewed; students often see them as having less credibility and power than tenure track faculty (Golish, 1999). Moreover, TAs are juggling gaining their own academic degree as well as teaching responsibilities, ultimately creating an uncertainty for administrators regarding TA roles and responsibilities (Flora, 2007). Given these obstacles, it is important that literature take into consideration the positionality of TAs.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning used in this article is critical pedagogy. This approach, which grounds educational philosophy in critical theory, holds that education is not neutral. Rather, educational institutions are inherently political and imbedded in systems of power that can actually serve to reproduce power inequities (Giroux, 2001). Tenets of critical pedagogy include reflecting cultural lived experiences, dialogic methods to critical examinations of society, and a transformation of society to create equity for all (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011).

Given its attention to power, positionality, and equity, critical pedagogy asks both instructors as well as students to examine systems of power and privilege in society (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). In the classroom, students and the instructor are asked to reflect about their social positionality and critically question the world around them. Ultimately, critical pedagogy helps students use what they learn in order to become social justice agents (Enns & Forrest, 2005; Fisher, 2001; Quillian, 2006). According to hooks (2003), critical pedagogy should allow for self-actualization and challenge conformity to the status quo” (p. 72). In examining power systems, attending to lived experi-

ences, and using dialogic forms of communications, critical pedagogues assert that education can be socially transformative in creating equity for all.

Methods and Setting

Research Context

The research site for this study is a Midwestern public university. The institution, which at the time enrolled over 40,000 students, boasted a rapidly increased enrollment. The institution was 88% white and most undergraduates identified as Christian. The specific department each of the participants taught for was the university's English department. This department houses the first-year writing program, a two-course sequence program that teaches introductory and advanced writing courses. The first-year writing program enrolls over 7000 undergraduate students each academic year. In order to accommodate this amount of students, the program teaches over 300 sections of first-year writing courses.

Because so many undergraduate students are enrolled in these courses, and because of the high volume of sections, these courses are predominantly taught by graduate students who have been awarded a teaching assistantship. Those awarded a teaching assistantship were required to take one 3-credit graduate course in pedagogy their first semester. Importantly, TAs took this course while teaching one or two courses their first semester. Most of the TAs had little to no teaching experience before arriving at the institution.

Participants

As mentioned previously, three graduate TAs talked about how they include LGBTQ topics in their writing classrooms. The first participant, Henry, was a second-year Masters of Fine Arts student in creative writing. He had been teaching for only three semesters and had no previous teaching experience before his graduate program. The next participant, Jasmine, a second year Master's of Arts student in Literature had been teaching in higher education for three semesters and had some informal teaching experiences before coming into her graduate program. She shared that she had some experience volunteering at a library during story hours for younger children. Beyond that, however, she had no formal experience. Finally, Emily was a first-year Masters of Fine Arts Student in creative writing. She had no teaching experience before her graduate program and had only been teaching a semester before our interview took place. Interestingly, while each of these TAs were new to teaching, each chose to incorporate LGBTQ topics into their classrooms.

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval from the University site, graduate teaching assistants who taught first-year writing were solicited for this study. Participants were sent an email invitation, asking for participation in a study that examined how novice instructors felt about including LGBTQ topics in the classroom. In total, invitations to participate went out to

eighty first-year writing graduate teaching assistants. Of the eighty that were invited, nineteen responded and agreed to participate in a one-time interview with the researcher.

Interviews with participants lasted between 30 minutes to just over an hour. Interview times varied based on if TAs had ever thought about including LGBTQ topics. Those who had thought about inclusion lasted longer than those who had never considered it. Interviews utilized Patton's (2002) open-ended, semi-structured protocol. Upon the completion of interviews, each was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

After interviews were transcribed, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) First Cycle and Second Cycle method of analysis was used when coding data. Data analysis began by using First Cycle, a process where information was identified and chunked through the use of labels. Data was assigned a label to "assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled" and serve to begin to identify chunks of data (p. 71). After First Cycle coding was done, Second Cycle coding was used. In this process, patterns of themes were established in order to identify salient and emergent findings.

While in Second Cycle coding, it became clear that while most of the participants did not include LGBTQ topics into their classroom due to a variety of factors, some of the participants had included those topics. Of the 19 interviewed, 3 TAs discussed how they included LGBTQ topics, how they incorporated the topics into their curriculum, and how they felt they had done so successfully. The other sixteen participants interviewed either did not include these topics in their classroom or did not think LGBTQ topics were appropriate in their classrooms. Thus, the three participants who did include LGBTQ topics in their classroom are outlined in this article.

Findings

In interviewing these TAs, the three who included LGBTQ topics into their classrooms did so in similar manners: each included it by talking about the importance of all forms of identity. In addition, all three sought to include LGBTQ topics through discussions of current-events with their students. Finally, all three discussed how they included these topics in part due to their own personal experiences with the LGBTQ community.

Importance of All Forms of Identity

In each of their interviews, all three TAs stressed the importance of discussing identity in their classrooms. Henry, when talking about sexuality and gender, indicated that, "gender identity...comes up very often." Henry went on to explain that because gender identity came up so often in his course, he actually changed his curriculum to accommodate students' reflections and experiences with identity. He shared, "I adjusted my curriculum and asked all students to write, with their first assignment, to write about coming to college. And their identity. Uhm, asking, how did it affect their identity and what did it mean for their identity?" In having students write about their experiences coming to college,

Henry stressed how that asked them to think about their who they were, as college students, as students who were away from home for the first time, and what that meant for them.

Henry designed an assignment that had students write a letter to someone, either expressing their feelings about coming to college or thanking someone for their support as they transitioned to college. Henry shared,

I wanted to make it [the assignment] meaningful, you know, think about who they were and about their identity because that's so important in college...and I guess to allow them [students] to reach out if they needed to... a couple of my students used that experience to come out to their parents. One student wrote that he finally felt like he could be himself, you know, be out as gay.

I asked Henry if he knew if the students actually sent the letters, and he replied, “actually, yeah. I was surprised. But they sent them. All of the students said their parents were really supportive, too. I thought that was really cool, you know?” By allowing space in his curriculum to actually think about what they needed in regards to identity, Henry's students had an opportunity to actually explore reflect on themselves and importantly, communicate with others about that identity.

Jasmine, who indicated that sexuality and LGBTQ topics “came up quite a bit, actually,” indicated she included LGBTQ topics through readings about identity. In posing questions to students about key theories about identity, she asked students to examine varying identities through different perspectives. She shared, “So, I ask them to consider, like, are we born this way, is it socialization, is identity learned?” She shared further that students are asked to read essays about gender identity, racial identity, and sexual identity and talk about arguments that construct the nature versus nurture debate. Importantly, according to Jasmine, “they don't argue about it...I don't allow that. I just ask them to analyze the arguments, what are the arguments saying? What are the implications of viewpoints?” She indicated that she thought there was danger regarding “arguing” or “debating” over identity. Instead, she had students analyze the arguments in a way that made students think about what was and was not being said, but who stood to gain from those arguments. She further shared, “I think that's the thing with identity...you don't get to argue about it. You just try to better understand what people are trying to express, you know?” Her concern with avoiding argument was clear. When asked why that was so important to her, she said, “It would be terrible, I think, to have your identity argued about right in front of you, you know? Like, just terrible. I don't want students to tell their gay classmates they are sinful.” Importantly, Jasmine was thoughtful about the larger implications of what students, particularly LGBTQ students, would feel like if the classroom erupted into a debate over if their identity was valid or, as Jasmine indicated, “sinful.”

Like Henry and Jasmine, Emily shared that in her classroom she stressed identity. Emily's approach was a bit different however, in that she had her students explore different organizations and resources available to them on campus. According to Emily, she wanted to ensure that “students explore what is out there, what's available.” For Emily, one of

the important things about going to college was finding others that had similar experiences. Emily offered, “You know, there’s lots of organizations on campus and I want to make sure students find them, so that they can find people like them.” Emily went on to share that because identity is such an important factor in their lives, she felt it was important that students find other identities like their own. She indicated that, “you know, I want them to find others that they have things in common with...you know what I mean? Others to connect with.” Emily went on to share,

Like for instance, in case students are gay, I have them look at different organizations on campus...and I include like the LGBT Center so that they know its there. Since the assignment asks them to do research, the students will know its there and they can find out more about it. And its not too high risk, either. Like, a student can say, ‘I’m doing research for a class. That’s why I’m here.’ So they have an excuse to go to these places, learn more about them, and then find out if they want to be a part of that organization.

By Emily asking students to look at various organizations or support services available to her students on campus, she is allowing students to seek out information and research that further supports their identity, while being thoughtful about providing an opportunity that is not “high risk” for her students. What is more, she indicated that even if students do not take advantage of the resources now, “at least they’ll know they’re there. Maybe the students don’t know their identity. But, in case they ever wonder, they know where they can go for more information. It’s important to me that they know there are always resources.” Emily was clear that students’ identities may not be fully realized yet, thus, it was important that part of her instruction be about preparing them for future instances or questions.

Current Events in the Classroom

Another element all three of the TAs used was incorporating discussions of current events into their classrooms. Henry, who began every class session with a brief discussion over current events, shared, “We sometimes have very open discussions that span LGBT topics, uhm, marriage, civil rights, because you know, it’s in the news. Its silly to not talk about it because it’s everywhere.” Henry shared that because the larger discussion of LGBTQ topics is constant and the media is saturated with the topic, students are already discussing it. Henry offered, “you know, they [students] are talking about it already. So we may as well talk about it in class. We are all thinking about it, so let’s talk about it.” Henry indicated that it would “almost be weird” if he did not talk about it with students because discussions about LGBTQ topics “are like, everywhere right now.” He shared that he could not imagine how he could not talk about it in the classroom.

Both Jasmine and Emily discussed that the course readers they chose for their class included current-day events and so they chose to include LGBTQ topics. Jasmine shared,

In our textbook, or at least the one I chose, there are articles about gender identity, religion, the wage gap. You know, these issues are going on, they are relevant to

the students' lives, and so the reader does a good job presenting the information. That's a big way I include it.

Similarly, Emily said that she had students read articles about marriage equality, LGBT parenting, and other current event topics. She said, "You know, by having these up-to-date readings, it makes including it easy. The students are familiar with these topics because they [the topics] are everywhere." Interestingly, all three TAs talk about how students are already talking about these topics and thus, as Henry shared, "We are all thinking about it, so let's talk about it." For all three of these TAs, it was evident that they felt the need to talk about LGBTQ topics not only because identity has a key place in the classroom, but because so much discussion about these topics was going on outside of the classroom, it would not make sense to not incorporate them in the class.

Experiences with LGBTQ Community

One of the questions I asked the TAs was how they were prepared to talk about these topics. I was particularly interested if they had formal training, pedagogy classes, or had a background in LGBTQ or Gender Studies. Interestingly, none of the TAs indicated they had any formal or pedagogical training. According to Henry,

Actually, I took it upon myself. I don't remember any readings about this in my pedagogy class. Uhm, I guess, I guess I just thought it was important. And since I didn't know anything, I thought I should. So I started doing some of the research myself.

I asked Henry why he was so passionate about including these topics into his classroom, and he said, "You know, I have friends and...and family who identify in the LGBTQ community. And, you know, I've seen what happens when they are excluded. And that's just not the teacher I want to be. I want everyone included." Henry's passion for inclusion came from his experiences of watching loved ones struggle with inclusion and acceptance.

Much like Henry, Jasmine and Emily indicated that while neither had formal training nor any pedagogical courses regarding how to include LGBTQ topics, both had family members who were a part of the LGBTQ community. Jasmine shared,

Well, I guess most of my information, and how I approach it in class comes from being an ally to my cousin. She's my best friend and...and I think that's why I include it. I see what my cousin faces. And to an extent, because I'm a [sic] ally, I guess I see what I face too.

Jasmine shared that because of her experiences as an ally and because of her close relationship to her cousin who is lesbian, she feels prepared to talk about these topics in the classroom.

Emily also identified as an ally and shared that her sister identified as lesbian. She shared a story about her sister and her sister's girlfriend,

Well, my sister is a lesbian...and...its interesting, like her girlfriend, her parents told her that if she's a lesbian they're not paying for college and so my sister's like a secret girlfriend and she feels weird about it. And my family's totally cool with it and so its sad....that parents use college as leverage against her.

This first-hand knowledge that Emily provided was in part why she felt prepared and comfortable including LGBTQ topics. She said, "You know, it's important. I mean, this is happening everywhere and I think it needs to be talked about." Because of her connection and experiences with her sister, Emily felt that these topics needed to be included in her classroom.

Discussions and Implications

From these three novice TAs, it is clear the LGBTQ inclusion is not only possible, it can be successful. What is more, these TAs were actualizing what the literature had recommended in regards to inclusion. Thus, all three offered up real examples of not only why LGBTQ students and topics should be included, they served to offer examples of how to include these topics. While these TAs did not indicate they had read any of the promising practices literature around inclusion, critical pedagogy, or any formal training on the why or the how of inclusion, each did it anyway.

Inclusion Through Identity

In their attention to identity in the classroom, all three TAs were able to design and adapt curriculum so that their students had opportunities to reflect, write, and research about topics that were meaningful to them. This aligns with the literature that indicates the importance of creating and cultivating curricular space for LGBTQ topics and issues. Henry created space in his curriculum by adapting an assignment that allowed students to write a meaningful letter to someone about their identity, creating space for students to come out. As Henry indicated, this allowed for three of his students to actually write letters home, coming out to their parents. This aligns with what research recommends in regards to creating space to write about these topics (Renn, 2000; Iconis, 2010; Furrow, 2012).

This attention to identity also supports recommendations by Angelo (1993) who expresses the importance of having curriculum make connections with students' lived experiences. It also supports critical pedagogy's larger outcome of giving a voice to the often-underrepresented groups. In allowing for this space, Henry, Emily, and Jasmine created opportunities for students to find and cultivate their voices through class related activities. When Emily had students read and analyze the larger arguments about identity, students were asked to analyze, not argue, who benefits from varying lines of logic around sexuality. Moreover, when Emily had students research resources available to students who may identify as LGBTQ, students could find the support they needed.

Bridging the Larger Discourse

Each of the TAs utilized discussions of current-day events as a means for inclusion. As Henry indicated, “We are all thinking about it, so let’s talk about it.” He shared further that it would be almost “silly” to not talk about these topics. Jasmine shared that she required students to use a reader that included up-to-date readings about marriage equality, LGBTQ parenting, and gender identity. Importantly, as the TAs brought in current-day events and included the almost-constant media attention to LGBTQ civil rights, these topics were almost normalized. Emily stated that having a reader that included current-day topics, “makes including it easy,” primarily because students already know about these issues. As Emily shared that these topics “are everywhere.”

Rather than inscribing risk to these subjects, all three included these topics in a manner that presented LGBTQ issues, topics, identities, and rights in a way that allowed students to analyze instead of react. In particular, Jasmine shared the importance of avoiding the debate trope in her classroom. Rather than having students debate LGBTQ identity or its validity, she had students explore, critically examine, and question representations. Again, this is a tenet of critical pedagogy; students critically question hegemonic representations rather than argue what is “right” or “wrong.” As she indicated, “It would be terrible, I think, to have your identity argued about right in front of you [*pause*] just terrible.” This insightful remark illustrates that Jasmine, and the two other TAs, are aware of issues in classroom management. Much attention is paid to issues of classroom management in the literature, however the TAs never really explicitly talked about classroom management. They never shared that it was a concern for them. Rather, they set up their curricula in such a way that normalized LGBTQ identity, did not allow for debate style conversations, and had students engage in thoughtful exercises about the topics.

Limited Formal Preparation

Perhaps what is so interesting about how these three individuals included LGBTQ topics is that each indicated they had little formal training on how to include the topics. Henry and Jasmine had been teaching for only three semesters and Emily for only one. Each were asked about their preparation regarding teaching, pedagogical practices, and any other event that informed their teaching. All three shared that they had taken (or were currently in) a 3-credit pedagogy class that was required for their assistantship. However, beyond that class, none had any other training or preparation. Despite their limited formal training, each engaged, perhaps unknowingly, in a critical pedagogy. Each stressed the importance of inclusion, a critical examination of larger social practices and policies, and a need for equity inside and outside of the classroom.

While all three had a somewhat limited background in pedagogical training, what all three did have in common was their connection to the LGBTQ community. Henry offered that he “took it upon myself” to learn more about the LGBTQ community, topics, and issues. He stated that he felt like he did not have enough information and so he began doing research on his own time. This behavior is a key recommendation in the LGBTQ literature base around inclusion. Faculty knowledge is key for inclusion and success. Inter-

estingly, Henry did just that: he recognized that he did not know enough and so he sought out more information.

All three TAs shared that they had some connection to the LGBTQ community. While Henry broadly mentioned he had friends and family, Jasmine shared that her cousin, who identifies as lesbian, really impacted the way she approached inclusion in her classroom. Citing that, “I see what my cousin faces” as well as her own experiences of what she faces as an ally, Jasmine was informed about how to go about inclusion based on her own lived experiences.

Similarly, Emily shared that because of her sister’s experience of being “a secret girlfriend,” due to intolerance of her sister’s girlfriend’s parents, Emily shared that she saw the importance of including these topics. Emily’s experience of watching her sister’s girlfriend face a lack of acceptance from her parents, and their subsequent threat of cutting of all monetary funding affected Emily. Seeing the direct effects of what happens when parents do not accept LGBTQ college students led Emily to include a project in her classroom that would ensure students found support that they needed. Thus, these first-hand experiences being an ally and seeing what LGBTQ students, friends, and family face cultivated these three TA’s use of critical pedagogy.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Clearly these TAs, and likely many other novice instructors, not only thought about inclusionary efforts, they have actually begun practicing them. While they are new educators, from their experiences comes some promising practices of how other educators in higher education can begin LGBTQ inclusion:

- Center key assignments, readings, or activities about students’ identities and lived experiences. This provides space for students to use their own voices and experiences to help them shape what they are learning.
- Develop meaningful writing assignments so students can engage in reflection and research about LGBTQ topics. This allows students to learn more about varying topics.
- Instead of creating an atmosphere of debate, have students discuss. In constructing certain identities, such as LGBTQ identities as “arguments,” students may feel hurt and attacked.

Moreover, these innovative and successful activities, strategies, and curriculum should be shared with other educators. Given that some of our novice educators are already successfully including these topics, it is important to allow a platform for them to share their successes with their colleagues and even experienced educators. These TAs have first-hand experiences including topics that are often deemed “risky” or “hard” in the classroom. Thus, they should be given an opportunity to share what has worked for them. It is recommended that departments hold professional development meetings, colloquiums, or other information sharing meetings so that other faculty can see what inclusion of LGBTQ topics looks like. In addition to sharing this information with other faculty, this

information should be shared with other areas on campus such as teaching centers, academic support services, and writing centers.

Perhaps most importantly, a recommendation that emerges from this study is that TAs, while novice, are innovative, talented, dedicated instructors. While much literature covers how TAs should be prepared, what TAs should be taught, and how TAs should structure their classroom, it is important to not forget that they can teach even the most seasoned educator. TAs can and should be an integral part of learning more about teaching, pedagogical practices, and cutting-edge strategies in our higher education classrooms.

References

- Aliakbari, M., & Faraji, E. (2011). Basic principles of critical pedagogy. In *2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences IPEDR* (Vol. 17, pp. 78-85).
- Allen, K. R. (1995). Opening the classroom closet: Sexual orientation and self-disclosure. *Family Relations*, 136-141.
- Angelo, T. A. (1993). A “teacher’s dozen”: Fourteen general, research-based principles for improving learning in our classrooms. *AAHE Bulletin* 45(8), 3-7.
- Baldwin, R. G., & Wawrzynski, M. R. (2011). Contingent faculty as teachers what we know; what we need to know. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(11), 1485-1509.
- Connolly, M. (1999). Issues for lesbian, gay, and bi-sexual students in traditional college classrooms. In V. Wall & N. Evans (Eds.), *Toward acceptance: Sexual orientation issues on campus* (pp. 109- 130). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Crumpacker, L., & Haegen, E. M. V. (1993). Pedagogy and prejudice: Strategies for confronting homophobia in the classroom. *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 94-106.
- Enns, C. Z., & Forrest, L. M. (2005). Toward defining and integrating multicultural and feminist pedagogies. In C. Z. Enns & A. L. Sinacore (Eds.), *Teaching and Social Justice: Integrating Multicultural and Feminist Theories in the Classroom* (pp. 3-23). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Fisher, B. M. (2001). *No angel in the classroom*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Flora, B. H. (2007). Graduate assistants: Students or staff, policy or practice? The current legal employment status of graduate assistants. *Journal of higher Education Policy and Management*, 29(3), 315-322.
- Furrow, H. (2012). LGBT students in the college composition classroom. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 6(3), 145-159
- Giroux, H. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: Towards a pedagogy for the opposition*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Golish, T. D. (1999). Students’ use of compliance gaining strategies with graduate teaching assistants: Examining the other end of the power spectrum. *Communication Quarterly*, 47(1), 12-32.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. London: Routledge
- Iconis, R. (2010). Reducing homophobia within the college community. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 3(5), 67-70.
- Jaeger, A. (2008). Contingent faculty and student outcomes. *Academe*. 94, 42–43.

- Kendall, K. D., & Schussler, E. E. (2012). Does instructor type matter? Undergraduate student perception of graduate teaching assistants and professors. *CBE-Life Sciences Education, 11*(2), 187-199.
- Kincheloe, J., McClaren, P., & Steinberg, S. (2011). Critical pedagogy and qualitative research: Moving to the bricolage. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, (4th ed), 163-177.
- Lopez, G., & Chism, N. (1993). Classroom concerns of gay and lesbian students: The invisible minority. *College Teaching, 41*(3), 97-103.
- Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*, (3rd ed). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Norris, W. P. (1992). Liberal attitudes and homophobic acts: The paradoxes of homosexual experience in a liberal institution. *Journal of Homosexuality 22*, 81-120.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Quillian, L. (2006). New approaches to understanding racial prejudice and discrimination. *Annual Review of Sociology, 299-328*.
- Rankin, S. R. (2003). *Campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people: A national perspective*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.
- Rankin, S. R. (2005). Campus climates for sexual minorities. *New Directions for Student Services, 2005*(111), 17-23.
- Rankin, S. R., Blumenfeld, W. J., Weber, G. N., & Frazer, S. J. (2010). *State of higher education for LGBT people: Campus pride 2010 national college climate survey*. Charlotte: Campus Pride.
- Renn, K. A. (2000). Including all voices in the classroom: Teaching lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. *College Teaching, 48*(4), 129-135.
- Renn, K. A. (2002). Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people in higher education. In J. J. F. Forest & K. Kinser (Eds.), *Higher Education in the United States: An encyclopedia*. (pp. 398-401). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Sanlo, R. (2004). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual college students: Risk, resiliency, and retention. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice, 6*(1), 97-110.