

Improving the Climate for LGBT+ Physicists

Ad Hoc Committee on LGBT+ Issues

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Organization of this Session

- Introduction of initiatives of LGBT+physicists and formation of C-LGBT (25 minutes)
- Discussion on mentoring of younger physicists (25 minutes)
- Discussion on the regional aspects of being 'out in the South' (25 minutes)
- Overall, a focus on allowing for input from the APS membership on the activities of C-LGBT

Sexual and Gender Identity

- Gender (≠ biological sex at birth): the collection of socially constructed ideas of how a particular sex is expected to act
- Sexual orientation: pattern of attraction to a gender
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual
- Gender identity: gender a person identifies as
 - Male, female, transgender (trans male, trans female)
- Gender expression
 - How one chooses to act, independent of sex at birth
- Identity politics
 - Varying interpretations of different categories (e.g. queer)

Why Does this Matter?

- We pride ourselves on being objective, rational, data-driven physicists, not influenced by emotions or biases
 - “Can’t we just focus on the science and get on with it?”
- Just as with women and other underrepresented minorities in physics we appear to have an unwelcoming environment for LGBT+ physicists
 - APS has created CSWP and COM to improve climate for women and minorities, with great results

Climate and Diversity for Students

- Clear connection between climate and attrition for underrepresented groups (ethnic, gender)
 - hostile climate leads to higher attrition (Hurtado 2005, Guiffrida 2008)
 - students educated on more inclusive campuses feel more equipped for multicultural society (Gurin 2002)
 - healthy campus climate fosters democratic skills and positive learning (Hurtado 2005)
 - gender discrimination has a negative impact on women faculty (Settles 2006)

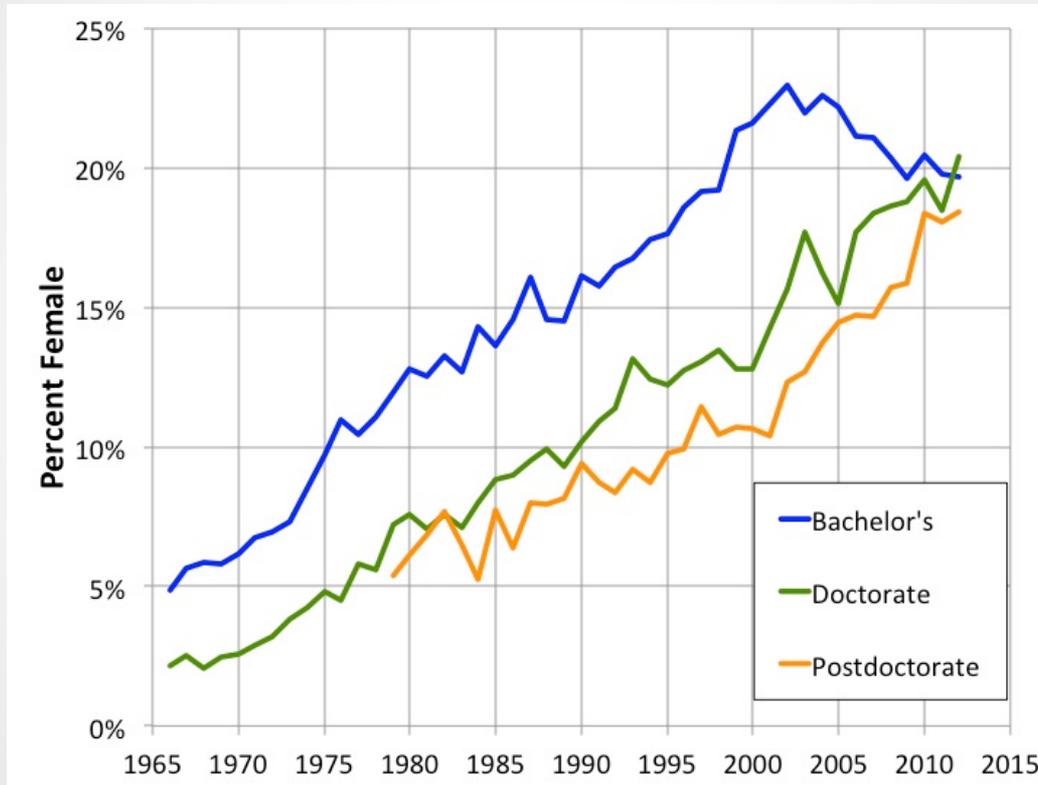
Climate and Diversity for Students

- **Effects on students:**
 - acceptance by peers and department, safety, substance abuse, identity development, education, name on degree, ...
 - student recruiting, performance, retention!
- **Effects on faculty:**
 - productivity, sense of community, partner benefits, dual-career issues, recognition of international marriage and partner visas,...
 - faculty recruiting, performance, retention!

Activities CSWP and COM

- **Mentorship**
 - Provide role models through online profiles, colloquium speakers list
 - Networking events (lunch) at annual meetings
- **Career development**
 - Focus on variety of career paths, not merely academic
 - APS Minority Bridge program
 - APS Minority scholarships, travel grants
- **Changes to procedures and institutions**
 - COM and CSWP site visits

Gender in the Physical Sciences



Sexual and Gender Diversity

- Similar effects due to climate for other minorities:
 - LGBT+ physicists in sexual/gender minorities
 - physicists with other invisible conditions that affect their participation but not their quality as physicists
- Similar challenges
 - Solo status, feeling of not belonging, absence of recognizable role models
 - From feeling ‘outside the norm’ and micro-agressions (“that’s so gay”) to hostile climate (gossip, discrimination)

Sexual and Gender Diversity

- Thought experiment:
 - Gay postdoc is hired in your department; what will be his experience?
 - Is his partner invited to social functions?
 - Is his partner eligible for health benefits?
 - Will colleagues talk behind his back? Or explicitly avoid any mention of partners in talking with him?
 - Will there be open hostility (active or passive)?
 - Can you answer these questions when the postdoc is interviewing for a tenure track position in your dept?

Sexual and Gender Diversity

- Thought experiment:
 - A transgender graduate student transitions from visibly representing as female to male.
 - Will faculty stubbornly keep using 'she' and 'her'?
 - Is he now allowed to use the male bathrooms? Are there single-stall bathrooms?
 - Can he change the name on his degree to reflect his gender identity and expression?

Nature: “Diversity: Pride in Science”

- Importance is realized by international science media
- Two recent articles highlighting status of LGBT+ scientists in *Nature* magazine



Need for Climate/Demographic Data

- Very little data available on representation of LGBT+ physicists, mainly anecdotal
- Studies exist for faculty in all STEM fields, and small statistics on physics grad students through APS FGSA survey
- This will be a focus of APS efforts in the near term through C-LGBT (main language in charge)

“State of Higher Ed for LGBT People”

- S. Rankin et al (2010), CampusPride.
- Survey of 279 LGB faculty in STEM fields:
 - 47% observed exclusionary behavior (60% all fields)
 - 21% experienced exclusionary behavior (21% all fields)
 - 53% considered leaving institution (45% all fields)
- Outness of STEM faculty & department comfort:
 - Of those “comfortable” 79% are “not out”
 - Of those “not comfortable” 69% are “out”
- Newer data from “Queer in STEM” (2013/2014)

American Physical Society

- Current initiatives underway through APS
 - lobbying with NSF to include LGBT status as an optional demographic category on grant reporting
 - member-wide survey on campus climate for LGBT people but generally applicable (every 5 years)
 - longitudinal studies from undergrad through grad school into academia and industry through American Institute of Physics's Statistical Research Center
 - connections with Society of Physics Students (SPS), American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT)

American Physical Society

- Ad hoc Committee on LGBT+ Issues (C-LGBT)
 - 9 members, 12-18 month duration
 - Both CSWP and COM started as ad hoc committee
- Charge
 - investigate representation, assess educational and professional climate
 - recommend changes in policy and procedures to APS
- Announcement with more details
 - CSWP & COM Gazette Fall 2014

Initiative: EEO/Benefits at National Lab

Case study: Jefferson Lab (2009–2010)

- HR receptive but unsure how to proceed, legal framework unclear (govt contractor)
- Several iterations over language and policy
- Since 2010 EEO policy includes “sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression”
- Health benefits extended to same-sex domestic partners using Canadian common law model

Initiative: lgbt+physicists.org

- Organization formed by (then) Kent State grad student Ellie Long at Jefferson Lab
- Currently a national community of ~20 active organizing members, ~150 community members
- Organization of conference sessions, outlist, workshops, networking events, best practices
- De-facto interface between APS, LGBT+ physicists, and national STEM mentoring groups

Panel on Sexual Diversity in Physics

- 2012 APS March meeting, 6 invited speakers
- “First-ever session on sexual and gender diversity at a major physics conference”
- 120+ attendees: 49% sexual/gender minority; 60% students, 40% post-graduate (20% faculty)
 - “I think showing successful academics who are out is an important way to dispel the notion that being out precludes or limits one’s professional opportunities.”
- Mentoring came out as crucial issue to address

Networking Workshop at APS Meetings

- Each year workshops at the annual national APS meetings in March and April: ~50 to ~100 people attend, discussion of how to improve climate, advice to new institutions/administrators
- Roundtable sessions to give physics community input in the society's decision-making process: attendance from president, executive officers, leadership figures

Initiative: Out/Ally List of Physicists

- Growing list of ~80 physicists at various stages in their careers (from grad students to deans)
- Position, geographic location, contact info
- Valuable resource for students seeking informal mentors outside their institution
- Limited representation from southeastern states: perhaps reflective of current political climate and the fear for appearing supportive (discussion...)

Initiative: Best Practices Guide

- Aimed at physics departments
 - co-developed with American Astronomical Society Working Group on LGBTIQ Equality
- Built up around actions that you can implement
 - today: no preparation necessary, anyone can do this now
 - tomorrow: requires some legwork inside the department
 - personnel and recruiting practices: policy changes
 - university level advocacy: benefits, dual career situations
- Distribution to all physics department chairs

What can you do?

- Language (nothing specific to physics)
 - gender-neutral, inclusive (for example, singular “they”)
 - do not tolerate offensive language, speak up
 - pay attention to climate in courses
 - explicitly discuss climate with advisees, with TAs, and with other faculty (diversity training at faculty meeting)
 - more in Best Practices Guide
- SafeZone training, and display of symbol
- Locate gender-neutral bathrooms

What can you do?

- Invite LGBT+ scientists to campus (role models)
- Non-discrimination statement when recruiting
- Be added to the Out/Ally List
- Reach out to existing broader initiatives
 - oSTEM (“out in STEM”): national organization with undergraduate chapters at many universities
 - “Out to Innovate” conference (NOGLSTP): national conference for LGBT scientists, last week in Atlanta

Summary

- Physics is becoming a more inclusive place for LGBT people, through various initiatives inspired by experience in broadening participation of women and other underrepresented minorities
- There are concrete actions you can take to create a more welcoming climate in your department

Thank you

Discussion Questions (1)

- Mentoring opportunities
 - Which local resources are available at your institution?
 - Which national resources are available already?
 - How can APS provide useful mentoring opportunities?
 - Online networking: LinkedIn, Facebook
 - APS meetings: national, regional, divisions
- Role models
 - Allies can be role models for LGBT+ physicists!

Discussion Questions (1)

- Different mentoring challenges
 - undergraduate students
 - graduate students
 - postdocs
- National organization inside and outside of APS
 - How can oSTEM/NOGLSTP and APS/AAPT/SPS work together?

Discussion Questions (2)

- What are specific regional challenges in the Southeast?
 - Legal restrictions on same-sex partner benefits
 - Avoiding restrictions with private funds
- Is the South the correct geographic distinction to make, or is rural/urban more salient?