

Session 5: Setting the Structure for Your Work

Learning Objectives:

- To establish the structure for the project that lies ahead.
- To integrate the previous sessions for use in the upcoming project.

Session Summary:

This session will use the concept of history to help inform the participants about the topic they have chosen—regardless of what the topic is. Through conversation and exercises the group will explore their history and record as much of it as they can to begin the next phase of the project.

Background:

Knowing history will allow people to experience the past for what it is and learn from it. Denial does not help. Guilt and shame promote inaction. Knowledge and decision to improve create change.

Materials:

1. Newsprint
2. Markers
3. Paper
4. Writing materials

Preparation:

- Have newsprint and materials ready for distribution
- Have guidelines up for everyone to see.

Workshop Plan

Opening Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

(You are invited to pick a reading and/or an opening hymn. Singing The Living Tradition is an excellent resource. Other options are a moment of silence, a prayer, or a brief check-in. You are encouraged to also begin with a chalice lighting. Please submit any readings and/or hymn choices that you have used successfully to the OBGLTC as feedback for possible inclusion in future editions of LWC.)

Activities:

Follow-up from last week (10 minutes)

Ask the group to reflect on the question of last time: When working on issues of homophobia and heterosexism, who is likely to know more about it? How will this affect the way the work is done?

Invite a general discussion and decide on some general agreements about ways in which to work. In particular, this should involve acknowledging that one person can not speak for an entire group of people, and to trust the oppressed group when they speak of their experiences.

The Area of Focus (30 minutes)

Remind participants of the topic on which they have decided to focus. Create a list, regardless of the topic, of what the participants believe they already know about the topic and then a second list of questions they have and would like to know. Keep these lists posted throughout your time.

History (60 minutes)

Again, regardless of your topic, this piece on history is very important. Write on a sheet of newsprint, “If we don’t know the past, we are condemned to repeat it.”

Ask the group if they have any reflections on this quote. Explain, if necessary, that history allows us to see patterns that continually repeat *if* we have the right analysis. This is where our use of multiple lenses from the last session is helpful.

Tell the participants that the next step is to tell the history as we know it. Depending on which area you are doing, you will do one of the following:

For Individual/ Personal ~ Path A ~

Regardless of the topic (as an example, let’s say that it is bisexuality), ask participants on individual sheets of paper, to create a timeline of their life. The purpose of this timeline will be to create their own personal history of this topic. Encourage people to think of events that may have set up their thinking about the topic and add them to the timeline. (For example, if bisexuality is the topic, ask people to think about when they learned about being attracted to people or having friends of a different gender, etc.). Have them include important political/social events as well that have shaped their history and knowledge. Give people 30 minutes to push themselves as much as they can to create this document. Tell them they will share this with one other person in the group when they are done.

After the 30 minutes, ask participants to find a partner and have about five to ten minutes to share their histories. Tell them that they will have more than this opportunity for story telling if they do not get it all in.

Spend the last ten minutes having people share what this experience was like for them and tell them that they will have more opportunities to explore this over the next several weeks.

For a Congregation/Community ~ Paths B& C~

Regardless of the topic (as an example, let’s say that the path is congregation and the topic is religious education), ask participants on one sheet of newsprint, to create a timeline of what they know of this topic and how it has related to them in their – in this case, congregation -- for as long as they can remember. (If the topic was public schools in your community, you could do a timeline of the public school system) The purpose of this timeline is to create a history of this topic—what they know and what they do not know. Both are important. Encourage people to think of as many events as they can.

They may wish to divide this timeline into an upper and lower half. The upper half would be events that happened in their congregation/community. The lower half would be other events and thoughts that made them think of this topic. (For example, if religious education is the topic, people may want to think about when the first time the About Your Sexuality curriculum was used and when the first gay/lesbian person came out in the congregation). Have them include important political/social events as well that happened that shaped their history and knowledge. An example of this would be when a gay-straight alliance formed at school. Give people 30 minutes to push themselves as much as they can to create this document. Discuss the timeline after 30 minutes. What is it they do not know on this timeline and need to find out? What have they learned from this?

Take some time to look at the unanswered questions. Find a volunteer(s) to obtain information about these questions if it is available to bring to the class next week. Once all the questions have been assigned, ask the participants to spend the last part of class brainstorming their hopes about outcomes for this particular topic. Record on newsprint and remind the participants, brainstorming means allowing any and all ideas on the board. Prioritization and conversation will happen next time. Encourage all people to share.

Closing Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

(You are encouraged to find a suitable one. The difference between the Opening and Closing is that we suggest that one reading and/or one hymn is selected to be used as the closing for all sessions. The Opening may vary from session to session.)

Suggested Hymns

Suggested Readings

Add Your Suggestion

Ask participants to hold hands as they are willing, able, and comfortable.