

Injustice Based on Sexual Orientation

FROM *When Is Inequality a Problem? Victim Contests, Injustice Frames, and the Case of the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Support Services at Indiana University*

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There are innumerable examples of inequality in the world, but only those that activists can successfully frame as unjust become perceived as social problems. Nowadays there is broad public consensus about the injustices produced by racial and gender inequalities, largely because the civil rights and feminist movements respectively worked to frame these inequalities as social problems. The same cannot be said so clearly about the unequal treatment of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Whether such inequality will someday be broadly seen as unjust as race and gender inequalities depends on the consequences of current efforts to frame this inequality as unjust. Berbrier and Pruett discuss these efforts as well as the counter-efforts of activists vying to deny gays, lesbians, and bisexuals the special protections typically given to groups victimized by injustice. The authors first discuss a local controversy during the mid-1990s over Indiana University's creation of an office to give support services to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, and then situate this controversy in relation to the broader national debate at the time concerning gay rights.

One of the biggest questions threading through American political culture is how to deal with a range of putative inequalities. A closely related question is precisely which inequalities are worthy of public concern. Activists of many political, cultural, and social movements on both the Right and Left

are fighting against some perceived injustice or another, with many fighting more specifically against certain perceived unjust inequalities—be they the treatment of poor inner-city blacks or rural white evangelicals. At the same time, across the political spectrum, there are many inequalities regarded as simply irrelevant to political life—for instance, the correlation, among males, between height and economic or political success. Without perceptions of injustice, there can ordinarily be no impetus for activism against inequality, and any social structure upon which it rests may be reproduced with little struggle by the beneficiaries of that arrangement. Therefore, our focus in this article is on those relationships that, while generally agreed to be “unequal,” arouse controversy over whether they are justifiably unequal and therefore nonproblematic, or injustices requiring corrective action.

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THE OFFICE OF GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY (IU)

Data

The data for this study were originally part of a larger study on the social construction of minority and ethnic groups. In the 1990s, while Berbrier was a graduate student in Bloomington, Indiana, he collected documents relating to a local controversy over efforts to establish an outreach and support office there for lesbian and gay students. These initial data included many newspaper articles—from *Bloomington Herald-Times* (a mainstream daily), *Bloomington Voice* (an alternative weekly), and *Indiana Daily Student* (the journalism school's student-run daily)—and 200 letters e-mailed to the president of IU, solicited from around the country by local activists. The office continues to operate, and in 2004 we acquired a variety of additional documents that had been reproduced on its Web page. These include the 1993 Final Report of the Indiana University Educational Task Force on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Concerns, many newspaper articles from both the initial period and beyond, and a series of annual reports for the office dating back to 1993. Our presentation here begins with a summary of the story “The Opening of the Office,” in order to familiarize readers with the plot and main characters. We then move into an analysis of the framing contest.

The Opening of the Office

The stage had long been set by June 1994, when the trustees of IU voted to establish an office on campus that would support and counsel gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. In 1990, the school's Code of Student Ethics had been revised to include proscriptions against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Also included there was a detailed list of students' individual rights concerning harassment on the basis of sexual orientation and one regarding the specific acts regarded as harassment. Notably, the amendment to the Code of Ethics addressed issues of harassment and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation as matters of "individual rights."

In September, responding to the IU Board of Acons and the Student Senate's recommendations for the establishment of a university-funded center for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, the Office of the Dean of Students established a task force to identify and address "the needs and concerns of the student population as well as to identify and create resources" for the IU community. The group, called the IU Educational Task Force on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Concerns, was composed of 40 members from the faculty, staff, and students.

Two and a half years later, in March 1993, the task force reported on its (several) subcommittees' inquiries and findings. One subcommittee was charged with identifying "challenges as they relate[d] to the recently adopted [revision to the] *Code of Ethics*"—a document that, again, recognized discrimination and harassment of lesbians and gays as matters of individual rights. Under the heading "Assessment of Needs," the subcommittee cited specific policies that distinguished heterosexual from homosexual couples—for example, a campus housing policy that limited family housing to legally married couples and the denial of access to a university chapel for the purpose of same-sex "blessing unions." Throughout its report, the task force deployed language clearly portraying these and other inequalities as unjust violations of rights. For example, regarding the family housing policy, it wrote, "The family housing situation is one of equity. The current family housing policy discriminates against and excludes individuals who are not traditionally married. The proposed family housing policy gives equity to all domestic partners without discriminating against any committed relationship." In June 1994, in response to the many recommendations in this report, the Board of Trustees voted to establish the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Support Services.

While the task force and its efforts had gone essentially unnoticed by the local community, upon the trustees' announcement, an assertive campaign of opposition began. This countermobilization was led by two student organi-

zations and one state legislator. The organizations were the campus branch of Young Americans for Freedom and the IU College Republicans, whose representatives were repeatedly quoted in local newspapers and engaged in ardent exchanges with office supporters via letters to editors. The legislator was Representative Woody Burton, a Republican from the district of Greenwood. Burton became the most polarizing figure in the debate when he threatened to introduce legislation to withhold \$500,000 in state funding from the university, retaliating for the \$50,000 in taxpayer money that had been earmarked by the university for the office.

Eventually, a compromise was reached. On October 19, 1994, IU's then-president Myles Brand announced that the funding for the office would come from a private donor, not taxpayer money. In addition, Brand announced that unlike the offices for established minority groups, this office would not be independent. Rather, the University's Office of Student Ethics would be renamed as the Office of Student Ethics and Anti-Harassment Programs, and would subsume the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Support Services within its structure. In return, Representative Burton agreed to withdraw his threat to cut state funding. Despite an impassioned outcry on the part of the supporters of the office who indicated that these changes would undermine the intended function of the office, the university held firm. The Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Support Services was officially opened on November 24, 1994.

The Victim Contest

Given that the task force had framed the question as one of individual (rather than group) rights, it is interesting that one of the initial issues in this victim contest was the "minority status" of lesbians and gays, from which were derived other themes for establishing the in/justice of the unequal treatment. These included (a) the relevance of behavior versus orientation, (b) the nature and degree of the discrimination and harassment, (c) the in/justice of discriminating against homosexuals, and (d) the meaning and relevance of "diversity." Since these themes are closely woven together in myriad combinations, we too weave through them in the following analysis; thus, the headings indicate emphases, but the sections are not thematically exclusive.

Opening Salvos: Behavior versus Orientation

As indicated above, the announcement of the planned office generated sustained opposition. An article in *Bloomington Voice* announced that the oppo-

nents "see no clear need for the services . . . and object to the use of the term 'minority' in reference to Gays and Lesbians." The article continued by focusing on the disagreement between proponents and opponents of the office over the specific issue of designating "minorities." Jim Holden, president of the IU Republicans, said, "I know a lot of minorities who object to the idea that there is no difference to being a minority and being homosexual. I would personally be offended if that comparison was drawn. I don't think there's a similarity between someone's behavior and the color of their skin. It's a behavior that you willfully choose to participate in." In Holden's view, then, a group's "minority" status is established by "the color of their skin." Being homosexual, on the other hand, is established by "someone's behavior." Carlos Lam, president of the local chapter of Young Americans for Freedom, expanded upon Holden's argument by directly attacking the collective character, denying the group a victim status. "The difference is that the sexual behavior of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals is wrong. . . . The way to correct the wrongs of being gay is by practicing abstinence. With a Hispanic or a white you can see the difference, but the actual gay sex act is the mark that you're gay." For Lam, it is relevant not only that homosexuality is determined by behavior but also that it is "wrong" behavior; the "wrongs of being gay" need to be corrected. Sally Green, president of the IU gay and lesbian organization OUT, responded, "It's not a behavioral choice, it's orientation. The reason they're saying that is because it's easy to pick out an African American or a Latino student, but with gays and lesbians it's a little more difficult, so that makes it harder to appreciate how we actually are a minority." Green distinguishes between "behavioral choice" and "orientation." In her argument, Green asserts that African Americans and Latinos are both minorities, and that they are visible ("they are easy to pick out"), possibly by virtue of skin color or facial features. She concedes that gays and lesbians are less easy to identify but argues that it does not preclude their minority status. Although one cannot see a person's orientation, Green contends that it is no more a behavioral choice than skin color and thus no less a criterion for minority status. That it may be more difficult to discern does nothing to remove gays and lesbians from their status as victims.

The article also indicated that IU trustee Cindy Stone claimed that the opponents' arguments "cut to the very core of diversity issues," calling the distinction between gays and other minorities "ridiculous." "You ask someone who is being harassed, whether they feel like they're in a minority because their skin is different, their gender is different, their orientation is different, they feel like they're in a minority because they're in a potential position to

be victims of hate crimes. . . . Hate crimes occur because someone is different in some way. This university is built on inclusiveness, not excluding people because of one or more characteristics that are different." In Stone's construction, minority status is conferred upon those who are "different," on the basis of the nonbehavioral and equivalent characteristics of skin color, gender, and orientation *and* on the basis of the fear of falling victim to hate crimes. This early fight about minority status, behavior, and orientation seemed to set the stage for much of the rest of the debate, which would continue for several months.

Victims versus Villains

Images of homosexuality informed claimants' alternative constructions of people as either victims or villains. . . . A former president of IU's Young Americans for Freedom named Shun Ravago is quoted claiming that there was no need for an office for gay, lesbian, and bisexual support because homosexuality is a "preference rather than something someone is born with" and, moreover, that "IU is saying that being a homosexual is like being black or Asian, but it's not the same at all. It is an immoral lifestyle. The center is going to be a place in which homosexuality is condoned. . . . The gays, lesbians, and bisexuals at IU are a minority group of the population, like pedophiles or masturbators." Here, Ravago presumes two types of minorities—immoral versus moral. He denies that gays embody the victim potential of *oppressed cultural* minorities (blacks and Asians); rather, they comprise a *numerical* minority of villainous sexual deviants. Once again, the question comes down not to inequality but to the question of why people (audiences, "society") should care. If good people are harmed and they are not at fault, our cultural feeling rules call for sympathy: people *should care*. But invoking cultural villains, such as pedophiles, elicits feelings of antipathy and vengeance. Ravago thus denies victim status to gays through an attack on their collective character. "Minorities," in this construction, may be treated unequally, but that is how things ought to be for immoral minorities.

Responding to these sorts of allegations, IU student columnist Matt Oliver asserted that gays do, indeed, constitute an unjustly oppressed group: "homosexuals are clearly a minority group, whether the state wants to officially recognize them or not. Gay bashing is a nationwide pastime. Homosexuals have been kept out of the Army, out of schools, and out of the mainstream of our society. The gay population has been forced to hide in its own bars, in its own cities, and have its own Olympics. It is by the will of the majority that

this has occurred." In Oliver's construction, gays are objectively a minority (i.e., whether "officially recognized or not"). Like others, Oliver does not use the word "inequality," choosing instead to dramatize poor treatment ("bashing," "kept out of the mainstream," "forced to hide," and segregated) in which the broader culture becomes the victimizer responsible for the harm; that is, discrimination is the "will of the majority," and harassment is a "nationwide pastime."

Similarly, another student, Raman Nagarajan, asserted that this culture keeps gays closeted. As a result, "it prevents homosexuals from enjoying the same things heterosexuals can. A heterosexual couple can take a walk on a crowded boardwalk at sunset and not have to worry about getting hit with a baseball bat. Homosexual couples can't. This persecution keeps them from the 'pursuit of happiness' that is a cherished American value." Again, without explicitly using the words, Nagarajan claims that homosexuals face both "inequality" and "injustice" because they cannot do and enjoy the same things as heterosexuals. Furthermore, the "pursuit of happiness" evokes constitutional guarantees for the "cherished" inalienable rights of each individual. By claiming that homosexuals are prevented from enjoying this basic right, Nagarajan is claiming that homosexuals suffer an unjust inequality—that it is, indeed, "persecution."

Finally, like so many others, Nagarajan seems to believe that the constitutional frame was not enough and that (at least at that time and place) civil rights framing was particularly appropriate: "if more people realize that homosexuality, like race, is not a characteristic that one can control, then they would see the fundamental similarity between the civil rights movement and the gay rights movement." Again, invoking similarities between homosexuality and race, and between the civil rights movement and the lesbian/gay rights movement, is used to allege that the inequalities homosexuals face are as unjust as those faced by blacks. Or put another way, if you believe that blacks have faced unjust inequality meriting redress, you must also believe this for lesbians and gays.

The Importance of the Minority Designation

Since the case of the Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Services at Indiana University is not particularly *about* whether gays and lesbians constitute a minority group (like African Americans), that such discourse was generated might indicate something about the potency of "minority" status and the stakes involved in establishing or recognizing a group that way. In the early 1990s, this very "minority" status of gays was being debated politically. The terms of that debate—orientation and minority status versus chosen (and

presumably immoral) behavior—were familiar to those who followed gay rights issues in those years, especially the controversy over gays in the military (which we discuss further below).

In the minority-status discourse, the opponents were not arguing about the inequality, but whether it was unjust in the same way as discrimination against blacks and Latinos, whose generally accepted status as “minorities” implied that discrimination against them was both undeserved and illegitimate—that is, emblems of their victimhood. In the context of the debate then, conceding minority status means conceding that there are inequalities that *ought to be addressed*.

The opponents went further, implying not only that the discrimination claims were exaggerated but that they were only to be expected, and even justified, by the deviance of the behaviors. The alleged victimizers were presented in the discourse as provoked by the increased visibility of homosexuality. For example, IU College Republicans’ president Jim Holden explained why he saw “no clear need for the services” in this way: “if anything, the center will cause so much tension that it will increase harassment—not that I believe there’s an incredible problem with it already.” Similarly, Representative Burton—in what some might interpret to be blame-the-victim style—would later attribute any harassment to the activists themselves when he “conceded . . . that there is discrimination,” and even that it was wrong, but that lesbians and gays could avoid it by “becoming unknown and invisible.” Burton was also quoted as saying that “when people are going to do things that aren’t mainstream American, they’re going to be discriminated against more.” The remedy to injustice was to closet the targets, since their actions (or the actions of their representatives) were responsible for the harassment and attacks. Here Burton parsimoniously illustrates three items from [a] list of counterframing strategies: first, counterattributions—Burton deflected the responsibility to the gay and lesbian activists, thus denying lesbians and gays the status of victim, as “minorities.” Second, counterprognoses—Burton’s solution is to erase the victims. And third, Burton’s attacks on their collective character—the bottom line is that these folks are “not doing the ‘mainstream American’ things.” Thus, once again, the opponents are not arguing about inequality per se, but about whether it can be justified; minority groups can be victims of others, but deviants are only victims of their own behavioral choices.

Equality from Diversity

Throughout, the data also yield frequent references to “diversity.” . . . [A] “diversity trope” has developed in our popular discourse that can be (and has

been) used in multiple ways, including being co-opted by neoliberals when seen as profitable. For some progressives, the term is invoked with regularity, used as if it were a *universally legitimate symbol mandating equality*. That is, since it is assumed that just about everyone supports diversity, all groups within that diversity who are manifestly subjugated must receive better treatment.

Those supporting the IU office engaged in similar rhetoric. During the height of the victim contest, the university's vice president, Kenneth Gros-Louis, wrote a letter to alumni defending the university's decision:

A university always has been a place where people of diverse backgrounds gather. . . . What's changed recently is a dramatic increase in . . . violence against people who are perceived as different. Over time, that has included women, African-Americans, Latinos, Jews, foreign students, and increasingly, homosexuals. . . . College campuses across the country are seeing an increase in harassment and other negative acts based on race, religion, and sexual orientation. We are no exception.

Gros-Louis's style here, as well as several other passages presented here (and many more not shown), are examples of . . . "indexical association," wherein a stigmatized group is discursively associated with culturally accepted groups by pointing to putative similarities, thereby equating them. In that article, there was an emphasis on direct comparisons across groups. In contrast, many of the associations here were made less by direct analogy and more indirectly by metaphor. That is, by putting the words side by side, and connecting them, it is implied that "sexual orientation" is akin to "race" and "religion" as a source of unacceptable forms of harassment; "homosexuals" themselves are akin to women, blacks, Latinos, Jews, and foreign students—people who are "different" or have "diverse backgrounds."

In September 1994, IU staff member Duncan Mitchel concluded that Jim Holden and Woody Burton were "unable or unwilling to grasp so simple and basic a concept as equality." This was the last part of a long letter, and the final word in the letter was Mitchel's first use of the word "equality." His conclusion regarding "equality" was built upon two foundations: claims about diversity and indexical associations. Specifically, Mitchel had opened his letter stating that this indicated that Holden had "absolutely no idea what the word 'diversity' is supposed to mean. . . . [He] can only conceive of a world where one sex, race, religion or sexual orientation reigns supreme and all others are suppressed, or at least relegated to the back of the bus." Once again,

“diversity” is used here with a metaphorical indexical association; that is, the phrase “the back of the bus” links discrimination against gays with both the oppression of African Americans and one of the civil rights movement’s most sympathetic icons, Rosa Parks. Later, Mitchel is still more explicit in turning the diagnosis of the problem from promoting a deviant immoral lifestyle to the justice of opposing discrimination. The office was not promoting anything, but merely “taking gay students, faculty, and staff members under its protection. If the law punishes someone for desecrating a synagogue, it is not ‘promoting Judaism.’ When the Armed Forces conduct anti-racist training, they are not ‘promoting Negritude.’” It is only at this point in his letter that Mitchel finally introduces the issue of “equality.”

Mitchel indicated that he had been motivated to write his letter because of a claim, attributed to Holden, that the office would promote “a certain lifestyle above others.” Such inversion of putative victims and victimizers is common in anti-gay counterrhetoric: society is presented as the victim of the gay agenda. As Young Americans for Freedom’s Carlos Lam put it, “the gay lifestyle has caused demoralization in America.” But it was also this point upon which the university bent. Instead of being independent (like recognized minority groups’ offices) the office was to be subsumed under the Office of Student Ethics and Anti-Harassment Programs. According to Vice President Gros-Louis, this was because it was intended “to provide a safe educational environment and not to advocate a lifestyle or political agenda.” In reaction, two local gay activists, Gary Pool and Daniel Soto, solicited letters from around the country via e-mail; they asked that these letters of support for the office be addressed to President Brand, who subsequently received over 200 such letters. Many of them criticized the university president for “capitulating.” A contribution from Jeffery Bass noted that “the original proposal by the Board of Acons called for a center similar to the Black Culture Center and the Latinos Center.” Eric Hinsch-Little wrote and asked President Brand, “If a group calling themselves say, The African-American Student Union formed on the IU campus, would you force them to change their name?” And Martin Meeker, a graduate student in history at the University of Southern California, wrote to the IU president, “Although ignorant and hateful people would like to deny us our identity and community, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people do form an ethnicity, as diverse as any other but also as cohesive. In face of intense discrimination (as a historian I am quite aware of the position of gays in the 1950s) we have formed our own culture, institutions, and even traditions.”

To sum up to this point, the literal terms of this debate—“behavior,” “orientation,” “victim,” “villains,” “minority,” “deviant,” “diversity,” and

"culture"—were not deployed in order to establish or deny inequality or even degrees of inequality. Rather, the claimants were directing their audiences to consider the *meaning* of relationships of power, prestige, and rights. Those relationships appear to have been understood by all parties to be unequal, with the focus on whether those inequalities reflected problematic situations in need of rectification, or not.

Thus far, our analysis has not strayed from Bloomington, Indiana. But while all discourse (like all politics) is inherently local, any discourse that is *only* local, and thus only locally meaningful, is sociologically uninteresting. Hence, we now inquire into how these events may have been related to things beyond the local setting.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE DISCOURSE

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Locally Appropriating from a National Issue: Status versus Behavior Revisited

The debate over status versus behavior that played out on the national level in 1993 was very familiar to people following the gay rights movement, so much so, we believe, that it seems implausible to suggest that it did not influence the events one year later in Bloomington. We easily found several instances of how that debate played out there. For example, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time, Colin Powell, wrote, "Skin-color is a benign, non-behavioral characteristic. Sexual orientation is perhaps the most profound of human behavioral characteristics. Comparison of the two is a convenient but invalid argument." At around the same time, in an article that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, Charles Bussey, a black veteran of World War II, was quoted as having said, "I resent people who try to compare our situation with gays. There's no similarity. Blacks couldn't hide their blackness. Gays are able to hide their sexual preference. The issues are nowhere near the same." Similarly, John Watkins wrote a letter to the *Seattle Times* in which he described how he had served in the army while it was being integrated and how, contrary to the rhetoric of those advocating integration of gays into the military, opposition to integration was the (numerical) minority opinion and most soldiers, including the top brass, supported the idea as "a matter of simple justice." He went on: "they backed integration and worked hard to make it work. And it did work. We should remember this when we discuss the homosexual problem. Blackness

is a matter of appearance, not behavior. Homosexuality is a matter of behavior, not appearance. Do we want to endorse the behavior?" These claims are remarkably consistent with those made by Jim Holden in the local case described above. Both Holden and these claimants from the national controversy held that homosexuality is distinguished by choice and "preference." "Appearance" is therefore held up as the essence of what makes for a minority group: it is an involuntary and ascribed "status."

Also as with the local Bloomington case, the gays-in-the-military discourse produced claims in which the status-behavior distinction was explained via comparisons with blacks, as in the following letter to the editor: "you can tell when someone is African-American or Asian because it is self-evident. But you know someone is gay only because they express it with words or actions. Regardless of whether its origins are genetic or social, homosexuality manifests itself by behavior—and only by behavior." In this case, the comments echo those of State Representative Burton who argued that you can know a visible "minority"—including Jews but not closeted homosexuals—when you see one.

We use these examples of the national case of gays in the military to direct attention to the fundamentally collective nature of the representations made in the Indiana victim contest. That is, the national controversy generated a public discourse that became accessible for appropriation into other disputes. Since it is unlikely that the claimants in the Indiana case had all just then become interested in or concerned about homosexuals in 1994, we believe it is reasonable to assume that most (on both sides) had keenly followed the "gays in the military" controversy the year before. The terms of that debate about the in/justice of discrimination is thus circumscribed by the prior and larger debate, which provides people in local settings with discursive resources with which to debate the meaning of inequalities.

Appropriating from and Indexically Associating with Blacks and the Civil Rights Movement

In both national and local gay rights victim contests, indexically associating with and invoking "civil rights" themes were common. Again, examples abound. Massachusetts Congressman Gary Studds (who is openly gay) argued that "the American people are just beginning to wrestle with this issue [of gay rights]. Rosa Parks wasn't asking to sit in the middle of the bus." In a separate piece, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported how Representative John Lewis of Georgia (a civil rights movement icon who was one of the leaders of the Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march in 1965) said that the claims of

opponents of gay rights were "like the words we heard in 1965." These comparisons to the civil rights movement made in the national discourse are remarkably similar to those drawn by IU staff member Duncan Mitchel and student Raman Nagarajan above. Both local- and national-level rhetors were drawing upon a broader cultural discourse that is a legacy of the African American struggle for civil rights—the "civil rights master frame." It seems, therefore, not only that the Indiana case was influenced by discourse produced in the gays-in-the-military controversy but that in both contexts people were influenced by the still broader discourse about minority rights that had developed over several decades.

The national case also resulted in a discourse comparing President Clinton's initiative to allow gays into the military to President Truman's racial integration of the military. Indeed, from the outset, gay rights advocates and supporters of Clinton's initiative made this comparison "the cornerstone of their campaign." Truman's initiative was regularly invoked when comparing the discrimination of gays in the 1990s with that of blacks under Jim Crow. By indexically associating gays and blacks, and by mirroring the discourse of the opposition to racial integration—a practice that by 1993 was widely regarded as ridiculous, if not a national embarrassment—these claimants seek to dramatize the injustice of excluding gays as something that over the decades would be recalled as similarly absurd. Moreover, it is important to note that it was precisely because racial integration was perceived as having been both traumatically difficult and notably successful that it was all the more appropriate. As expressed by Kahne Parsons, "Truman's decision recognized that cultural norms were insufficient grounds for discrimination. He did not exempt the military from standards of fairness and tolerance; instead, he placed the military in the position of racial pioneer, with the result that today the U.S. armed forces exemplify the highest standards of racial tolerance and equality. . . . Let us not kid ourselves that the stakes are not equally high for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters: Gays and lesbians are the target of physical and psychological violence every bit as cruel as that directed against racial minorities."

QUESTIONS

1. The authors discuss how the injustice frame is built on claims about minority status. Discuss the various ways that activists at Indiana University made the case that gay, lesbian, and bisexual students constitute a minority group.
2. How did these activists embrace the diversity frame in an effort to legitimize the university's giving gay, lesbian, and bisexual students special support services?
3. Discuss the counter-efforts of activists that sought to deny gays, lesbians, and bisexuals the protections typically given to groups victimized by injustice.
4. Now let's think beyond the local controversy at Indiana University and focus on the broader national debate over the status of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. How have activists drawn on the successes of the civil rights movement in making their case that gays, lesbians, and bisexuals experience injustices deserving of special protection?
5. Discuss the reasons why, prior to the civil rights movement, many non-blacks did not view the unequal treatment of blacks as an injustice. What kinds of claims were made about why this inequality was justified?
6. How is the controversy discussed in this reading concerning Indiana University's creation of an office to give support services to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students similar to the recent debate over gay marriage?