Coming Out: Challenges and Rewards

presented by
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Chair, ACS Subdivision for Gay and Transgender Chemists and Allies
Division of Professional Relations

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Coming Out: Challenges and Rewards

com·ing-out (kmng-out) also coming out
n.
1. A social debut.
2. A revelation or acknowledgment that one is a gay man, a lesbian, a bisexual, or trans
Coming Out:
Why is it Anyone Else's Business at Work?

• workplace socializing
• two-body problem
• family leave
• emigration / immigration
Coming Out: Why is it Anyone Else's Business at Work?

- workplace socializing
- two-body problem
- family leave
- emigration / immigration
  - authenticity
Decisions Decisions

come out at work?

?
Decisions Decisions

come out at work?

No
Choosing to stay closeted

- Avoid socializing with coworkers
- Appearance to coworkers:
  - outsider, aloof, not a team player
Choosing to stay closeted

• Avoid socializing with coworkers

• Appearance to coworkers:
  – outsider, aloof, not a team player
  – hard, serious worker, overachiever
Choosing to stay closeted

• Avoid socializing with coworkers
• Appearance to coworkers:
  − outsider, aloof, not a team player
  − hard, serious worker, overachiever
• Socialize with coworkers
• Cover
• Pass
• Compartmentalize
Decisions Decisions

come out at work?

Partially
Come out partially

- to trusted colleagues
- to personnel / benefits manager only
- where it feels safe to do so
Come out partially

• to trusted colleagues
• to personnel / benefits manager only
• where it feels safe to do so

• expend energy worrying
• what will happen if _________ finds out
• will this affect my chance for promotion?
• who have I told what?
• can I trust this co-worker with my secret?
Thermodynamics Correlation

• An inefficient system will not do as much work as an efficient system
• Workplace distractions lead to inefficiency
• A person worrying about who knows what and what will happen if people find out is expending energy otherwise useable toward productivity
Thermodynamics Correlation

• An inefficient system will not do as much work as an efficient system
• Workplace distractions lead to inefficiency
• A person worrying about who knows what and what will happen if people find out is expending energy otherwise useable toward productivity
• Converse correlation: a happy worker is a productive worker
Decisions Decisions

come out at work?

Yes
The case for coming out

- Focus on work, rather than coping
- Develop workplace social network
- Partake in benefits
- Be part of the team
- Serve as/ find role models
- Be more productive
Coming Out Process Never Ends

- LGBT people are invisible
- Heteronormative culture ➞ heterosexual presumption
- Gender binary culture
Degree of Coming Out Depends on

• Comfort level
• How being out affects job stability
• How co-workers react
• How management reacts
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Made easier when there are
- Corporate non-discrimination policies
- Inclusion of LGBT in corporate diversity programs
- Domestic Partner Benefits
- Safe Space
- Employee Resource Groups
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- Made easier when there are
  - Corporate non-discrimination policies
  - Inclusion of LGBT in corporate diversity programs
  - Domestic Partner Benefits
  - Safe Space
  - Employee Resource Groups
  - A welcoming environment
Where Do ACS Members Work?

- Manufacturing: 45%
- Academia: 32%
- Non-Manufacturing: 14%
- Government: 7%
- Self-Employed: 2%

Source: ChemCensus 2010
Welcoming Environments

- Large Businesses: HRC Corporate Equality Index
- Surveys Fortune 1000 companies publicly traded
- Surveys Fortune 200 privately owned
- Any private sector firm with >500 employees may self-enroll

www.hrc.org
## Welcoming Environments?
### HRC CEI of ACS Corporation Associates

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>Air Products and Chemicals</td>
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ACS Corporation Associates with No Corporate Equality Index Rating

- Advanced Chemical Safety
- Afton Chemical Corp
- Arkema, Inc.
- Hercules, Inc.
- Idaho National Engineering & Environmental Laboratory
- Innocentive
- International Specialty Products
- Polymer Chemistry Innovations, Inc.
- Strem Chemicals

No survey results because not
- Fortune 1000 publicly held
- Fortune 200 privately held
- Self-reporting Business of >500 employees
Corporate Equality Index of Some Other Fortune 500 Chemical Firms

PPG Industries: 40
Mosaic: 30
Ashland: 30
Huntsman: 0
Sherwin-Williams: 15
Avery Dennison: 15
Ecolab: 100
Celanese: 15
Eastman Chemical: 15
Lubrizol: 15
What About the Small Businesses?

- No Corporate Equality Index for Small Businesses
- Majority of U.S. business entities are small businesses
- Majority of chemical manufacturers, R&D firms, consulting firms and testing labs have <20 employees
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• Microbusinesses likely to not have robust non-discrimination policies, diversity training programs, or extended employee benefits programs

• Not possible to hide much about oneself in a small business
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- Microbusinesses likely to not have robust non-discrimination policies, diversity training programs, or extended employee benefits programs
- Not possible to hide much about oneself in a small business
- This is where being a most excellent overachiever helps the cause
Who Are Our Role Models within ACS?

- ACS Subdivision for Gay and Transgender Chemists and Allies (38 members)
- ACS Network: LGBT Chemists and Allies (20 non-overlapping members)
- 58 surveyed. 18 responding (including 2 allies).
- All but 2 OUT at work.
- Majority employer: Academic (66.7%)
- All but 5 employers have non-discrimination policies that include LGBT
Coming Out

Personal Choice
Based on comfort level
Based on legal protections and job security

Many levels
Never Ending
Easier when other LGBT are willing to do the same
Easier when there are allies
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Rewarding, relevant, authentic