



CATHERINE JUNG

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Catherine is a teacher for a psychology class. She has given her class a semester-long assignment to work in groups to develop a program proposal. This assignment was chosen to give the students more opportunity to learn the skills necessary to work effectively in a group with other students. The group assignments were made within the first few weeks of the class and were based on information collected by her from the students. She had asked the students each to give her a few ideas of topics that they would be interested in learning more about. Based on these requests, she divided the class into groups of four students. Their task was to research the topic in depth, and then develop a comprehensive report with a program proposal. The group assignments were made with few complaints from the students. Almost all the students got their first or second choice of what topic to explore. At first Catherine was a little anxious about how the groups might work out. However, to this point there have been no problems and they seem to be going well.

It is now halfway through the semester. By this point, Catherine expects that the groups have completed their literature review and should have begun to explore the topic in more depth to develop their proposals. During office hours, one of Catherine's students, John, visits her to discuss some problems he's been having in his group. John says that he is uncomfortable working in his group because one of the group members is "homosexual." John continues by explaining that the other members are also uncomfortable with this individual. He says that these dynamics have created a situation in which the group cannot function effectively—the work of the group has come to a standstill. John requests that the groups be changed. He feels that it would be best to remove Chris, the gay student in the group. However, if this cannot be done, then John asks if he could be switched to another group of his choice.

John explains the details of his problem. Chris is an openly gay member of their small group. He is very "out" about his sexual orientation—as John says, he "advertises" and "flaunts" his sexuality. Chris does this by wearing buttons indicating "Gay Pride" and sometime wearing T-shirts that say "Queer Nation" or something similar. Furthermore, John's religion condemns homosexuality. He is personally and morally offended by Chris because of how open Chris is about his sexuality. John feels uncomfortable working in the group with Chris and believes that Chris has become disruptive to the group.

Catherine considers what John has said, but she is reluctant to change the group assignments at this point in the semester. She decides to talk to Chris. Catherine asks him if things are going well in his group. While she is talking to him, she notices the Gay Pride buttons that John referred to. Chris explains that he has been working very hard in the group, but that he

often has disagreements with the other group members about the assignment. Although he has not talked about his sexual orientation to the others, Chris believes that they are homophobic and cannot deal with the fact that he is gay. He often feels alienated from the other group members and is convinced that they talk about him behind his back. They have not made any outright homophobic comments to him, but he feels marginalized by the others in more subtle ways. (For example, they have scheduled several meetings at times which conflict with his Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Alliance meetings.) Chris is reluctant to change groups because of the extra work this would create. However, he is worried that the group will not be able to complete their assignment if the situation does not change. He wants his group members to “get over” their homophobia so that they can get their work done together. Chris believes that most of the disagreements in his group are a result of the others’ intolerant attitudes.

Questions About Jung Case

1. What could Catherine do to handle this situation?
2. Should Chris be moved to another group because the other members feel uncomfortable with the fact that Chris is gay? Should John be moved to another group instead?
3. What would happen if Catherine forced the students to stay in their group? How might Chris feel about this? How might the other group members feel about this?
4. What is the cause of this conflict? Could the disagreement simply stem from personality differences? How can you tell if homophobia is the problem?
5. Is there anything that Catherine could do next time to minimize the risk of this happening again?