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Challenges of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) Students in Higher Education

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Caitlin M. Kay

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Abstract

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by

Caitlin M. Kay

MS, Walden University, 2014

BS, Rhode Island College, 2012

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Abstract

The challenges of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) students in higher education are present in all aspects of the student experience including academic, residential, and social structures. For LGBTQIA students to have a successful and fulfilled educational journey, they often must endure restrictive policies, unsupportive staff, gender and orientation bias, and bullying. These factors can be detrimental to LGBTQIA students, both personally and academically, to include long-term effects on their mental health, and failure to succeed academically. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to determine the academic, residential, and social challenges LGBTQIA students face and how they affected their educational experience. The research questions explored LGBTQIA students' lived academic experiences. Chih-Rou and D'Augelli's queer theory informed the research. Coding and thematic analysis of semi structured interviews with 11 LGBTQIA undergraduates identified the five major themes: (a) impacts of intersectionality, (b) challenges within the LGBTQIA Center, (c) challenges with the LGBTQIA clubs, (d) nonacceptance and (e) institutional disconnect. Three minor themes were also identified: (a) precollege challenges, (b) domestic versus international, and (c) academic inclusion. A three-day professional development workshop has been created to address the needs of the LGBTQIA students by engaging stakeholders in a continuing education process. This study will help fill a gap in practice related to the development of LGBTQIA students in higher education and informs to positive social changes in support, curriculum, and policies within college and university structures.

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“Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.” – Albus Dumbledore

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

In Connecticut and across the United States, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) students face challenges on personal and national levels. On May 13, 2016, the Department of Education and Department of Justice published a joint white paper to support the Title IX policy stating that no person can discriminate against a student based on sex, including transgender students (US Department of Education, 2019). On September 22, 2017, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos rescinded the approved guidelines, which allowed more considerable ambiguity for colleges and universities when working with Title IX (Kreighbaum, 2017). In Connecticut, where I conducted this study, Governor Dannel P. Malloy released a statement regarding transgender students and Title IX (Malloy, 2017, p. 1). Governor Malloy stated, “Indeed, in rescinding the previously mentioned guidance, the administration has acknowledged that states have the authority and obligation to protect students from discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation” (2017, p. 1). Changes such as these can leave LGBTQIA students vulnerable to discrimination and do not afford the same protections that institutions provide to heteronormative classmates.

While there is an upward trend in support for LGBTQIA students, areas within the community still need more help (Allen, 2015). Governor Malloy acknowledged the gap in support for LGBTQIA students, especially transgender students (United States Department of Education, 2017). This lack of support for LGBTQIA students is evident not only in Connecticut but across the country. Historically there has been a pattern of

discrimination towards LGBTQIA students in education, and many higher education institutions seek to align policies to match societal expectations of equity and inclusion (Golom, 2015).

Before the 1970s, homosexuality was considered a deviant, contagious, dangerous, and untreatable disease for which a diagnosis most often led to an expulsion from the institution (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). With the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and the 1969 Stonewall Riots, college campuses began to form various LGBTQIA groups to create a voice for their underrepresented community (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). While many student affairs professionals began to take notice of the need to recognize and support these students, college policies continually failed to support the needs of the LGBTQIA population, and this gap in practice persists today (Allen & Rasmussen, 2015). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to determine the challenges LGBTQIA students face residentially, academically, and socially and how these challenges affected their educational experience.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem in Professional Literature

In today's higher education setting, the LGBTQIA population is one of the most underrepresented and underresearched groups (Sarno et al., 2015). There continues to be documentation of discrimination in school policy and a lack of resources, which leads to LGBTQIA students not having the voice to positively effect change (Allen, 2015). Researching within the LGBTQIA population of students in academia can be a challenge due to a reluctance by the students to participate because of possible ramifications such as

bullying and discrimination (Burnes & Singh, 2016). There is a need to understand the LGBTQIA student experience to inform what these students need to succeed in higher education.

Students' perception of their campus climate can directly correlate to their likeliness to confront anti LGBTQIA acts (Dessel et al., 2017). However, many LGBTQIA students experience conflict in various ways and from a variety of different sources (Dessel et al., 2017). More than half of LGBTQIA students reported experiencing unfair treatment from other students and, 65% hid their identity from their peers (Dessel et al., 2017). Greek life, athletics, and residential life are the most identified foci of negativity towards LGBTQIA individuals who experience discrimination and forms of isolation (Evans et al., 2017).

Isolation can include cognitive loneliness related to LGBTQIA information and emotional isolation due to negative messages from peers, family, and staff (Evans et al., 2017). The most impactful form of isolation for LGBTQIA students is social isolation. Students do not feel they can openly be themselves or feel rejected and isolated by others (Evans et al., 2017). These various forms of isolation can result in internalized homophobia. Students internalize negative remarks and then may lash out against the LGBTQIA community, further harming the LGBTQIA students (Evans et al., 2017).

Students often must find ways to deal with the alienation of isolation, including acquiescence, invulnerability, verbal action, and resistance (Munyuki & Vincent, 2018). Acquiescence forces the student to find ways to fit into the heteronormative expectations so that heteronormative individuals do not identify LGBTQIA students as "other"

(Munyuki & Vincent, 2018). Invulnerability is the attempt to distance oneself from the other individuals in the environment, such as roommates and classmates, to create a lack of interpersonal connection (Munyuki & Vincent, 2018). Verbal action allows students to stand for themselves and push back against harmful behavior that may affect them, such as outing or stereotyping. Resistance involves the recognition of the dimensions of institutional culture and the identification that no space is truly neutral, and there is a need to adapt (Munyuki & Vincent, 2018). All these coping mechanisms typically occur in a silo where students must determine their own best way to survive these hardships, which is why they need to be supported.

Providing the “correct” support for LGBTQIA students can be challenging to identify. Several studies showed that resources are on campus, but they are not visible enough, do not supply adequate information, or are outdated (Allen, 2015; Dessel et al., 2017; Preston & Hoffman, 2015). Additionally, these resources face stigma within the LGBTQIA community itself. Sixty percent of students did not participate in an LGBTQIA event due to the desire to not be “labeled” by their own identity (Dessel et al., 2017). There is a cycle of negative reinforcement from fellow students that pushes many LGBTQIA students away from their community due to the desire to “fit in” (Preston & Hoffman, 2015). Because of this negative experience, at least 25% of these students considered leaving their institution, as they perceived an ongoing tradition of heteronormative support (Dessel et al., 2017).

There is a need for faculty and staff to recognize the vast diversity within the LGBTQIA community to begin to create a welcoming campus climate. While the

institution may provide basic LGBTQIA information to faculty and staff, it is often only informational, such as definitions of terms and explaining what an ally is (Ostrove & Brown, 2018). There has been a demonstrated positive effect of workshops and training for educators and staff regarding LGBTQIA related topics (Kull et al., 2017). Instead of providing only basic information, there needs to be a shift towards more inclusive student programs to encourage involvement, particularly with LGBTQIA students who do not attend such programs due to concerns over labels and stigma (Kull et al., 2017).

Additionally, there needs to be increased education for faculty and staff to learn more about their role as an ally and how to create safe spaces for students in need (Ostrove & Brown, 2018).

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Connecticut has been more progressive in terms of legal protection for LGBTQIA individuals when compared to other states, as evidenced by the introduction of a bill banning conversion therapy (Pazniokas, 2017). However, there are still challenges that the students face, as demonstrated by the hate crime reports. In 2019 6,104 institutions with 11,010 campuses across the United States reported 2437 hate crimes on and off campus, in residential housing, and on public property (Department of Education, 2019). This report demonstrates the need for further research into what academic, residential, and social challenges LGBTQIA students face and what resources they need to address them (Lange et al., 2019).

In Connecticut, several state laws protect the rights of LGBTQIA individuals. In 2013 the Connecticut governor signed into law legislation barring discrimination based

on gender identity or expression in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit, and all other laws under the jurisdiction of the state's Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (Connecticut Hate Crimes Laws, 2017). This legislation supports legal consequences for those found guilty of violating this policy. Additionally, hate crimes in Connecticut include those based on gender identity and sexual orientation, which inherently protects LGBTQIA individuals (Connecticut Hate Crimes Laws, 2017).

Despite Connecticut being ahead of many states regarding LGBTQIA legal protection, much goes unreported or continues to be a challenge for LGBTQIA individuals. In 2018, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) published its yearly hate crime statistics for each state. A hate crime is “a criminal offense that manifests evidence that the victim was intentionally selected because of the perpetrator’s bias against the victim” (Department of Education, 2019). Connecticut reported 81 hate crimes, with 13% of that number relating to sexual orientation (FBI, 2018).

In 2019, the US Department of Education received 20 hate crime reports from colleges and universities in Connecticut, and 3 of those reported incidents involved sexual orientation (Department of Education, 2019). The university where my study took place is one of the colleges and universities that contributed to these statistics. These incidents are not always public, as there is a policy of confidentiality at the institution. However, there is a demonstrated history of incidents involving sexual orientation and gender in their yearly reports.

Definition of Terms

Identified in this section are terms that are relevant and critical for the understanding of this study. Provided below are the definitions of these terms.

Ally: An individual who works to end prejudice and relinquish social privileges conferred by the group status through the support of nondominant groups (Ostrove & Brown, 2018).

Asexual: An individual who does not experience sexual attraction towards anyone (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Cisgender: People whose gender identity or gender expression matches the sex assigned at birth (Gregoire & Jungers, 2007).

Demisexual: Demisexuality and demiromanticism are subsets of asexuality and describe a person who does not experience attraction to an individual until a significant emotional bond has formed (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Gender Nonconforming: People who do not follow other people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look, or act based on the female or male sex assigned at birth (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Heteronormativity: An ideology that promotes gender conventionality, heterosexuality, and family traditionalism as the correct way for people to be (Oswald et al., 2005).

Homophobia: Fear, discomfort, or hatred of LGBTQIA people caused by internalizing negative perspectives on homosexuality (Adams et al., 2016).

Lived experience: Refers to representing a given person's experiences and choices and the knowledge gained from these experiences and choices (Given, 2008).

Misgender: To identify the gender of a person, (such as a transgender person) incorrectly (as by using an incorrect label or pronoun) (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Outing: Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity to others without permission (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Queer: An encompassing term that can refer to the whole or part of the LGBTQIA community and as "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant" (Halperin, 2003, Introduction).

Queer theory: This theory stems from queer studies and women's studies and looks to analyze and develop what queerness is and what it entails (Jagose, 1996).

Safe space: Spaces designated as a welcoming and inclusive space for LGBTQIA students (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the sex assigned at birth (Altilio & Otis-Green, 2011).

Transphobia: Emotional disgust, fear, violence, anger, or discomfort felt or expressed towards people who do not conform to society's gender expectations (Chakraborti & Garland, 2009).

Significance of the Study

To be academically successful, a student requires a safe and supportive environment. Chowen (2016) found that "78% of responding students said they would not know who to go to at their learning institution if they experienced [harassment or]

bullying” (p. 42). Policies that specifically focus on anti-bullying at an institution may not be enough to support LGBTQIA students psychologically and educationally in the same way their heterosexual and cisgender peers are supported. There is already a system of inequality in place (Duran, 2018).

LGBTQIA students are the subject of this study, but they are not the only individuals involved in the academic, residential, and social lived experience. My study benefits the faculty, staff, and administration involved in the support and education of the student (Kull et al., 2017). There needs to be a continuing education practice for professional staff to support the LGBTQIA students and work to be a resource for them to create positive social change.

For LGBTQIA students, the necessary support and resources are often absent in many higher education institutions or do not support all students. Those institutions that have an intentional and inclusive curriculum report fewer incidents of harassment, higher attendance rates, and a more incredible feeling of community and connection to the institution (Austin et al., 2019). An inclusive curriculum has the potential to foster an opportunity for social change in which challenges for LGBTQIA students decrease. Austin et al. stated that there are a low number of institutions that fully provide resources needed for LGBTQIA students to succeed. This deficit leads to researchers calling for continued improvement to policies and help to bridge the gap.

Research Question

In higher education, there is a demonstrated need for further research into the experience of LGBTQIA students (Allen & Rasmussen, 2015) who experience academic,

residential, and social challenges (Allen, 2015). The following question guided my study to determine the academic, residential, and social difficulties LGBTQIA students face and how these challenges affect their educational experience.

For LGBTQIA students in higher education, what is their lived experience academically, residentially, and socially at the institution, and how does their experience inform them as students?

Review of the Literature

The literature reviewed for my study focused on many different factors that can affect an LGBTQIA student's academic and lived experience at their institution. The literature demonstrated the problem and the gap in practice related to the challenges of LGBTQIA students in higher education and their need for increased support. The literature review focused on critical areas of LGBTQIA students' lived experience and explicitly identified gaps in research and practice, how intersecting identities play a role, the impact of the LGBTQIA student's lived experience, and the avenues of support for professional staff can provide.

Lange et al. (2019) noted that while there has been a continuing increase in the study of LGBTQIA students' experiences in the last ten years, the field itself is still relatively new when compared to similar fields of study. There are studies into the lived experience of the queer identity, yet when looking specifically at higher education and the academic implications, there are gaps in the literature. Several prominent researchers that focused on queer studies, including Renn (2010), Allen (2015), and Duran et al. (2020), continued to indicate that while they focused on LGBTQIA students, there is

much more to explore. These researchers, and others included in the review, showed that the LGBTQIA lived experience is evolving rapidly, and with new developments comes the need for further research. Over the past several decades, only 75% of queer spectrum students and 65% of trans spectrum students reported feeling a sense of belonging on campus (Rankin et al., 2019).

Many subgroups exist within the realm of LGBTQIA students, and the representation of various identities within the research is inequitable. Much of the identity representation reflects in the societal expressions of privilege – cisgender White males are represented strongly in the data, while transgender women of color are seldom mentioned (Duran et al., 2020). Such disparities within LGBTQIA students drive the need to research a more significant number of diverse voices in higher education.

Literature Search Process

LGBTQIA students in higher education are a relatively new field of study, and gaps in the research are evident. Due to this factor, I used many databases and terms to locate information on the topic to include EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Dissertations and Theses at Walden University, LGBTQ+ Source, PsycINFO, ERIC, SAGE, Academic Search Complete, LGBT Life, and Education Source. The multitude of databases resulted in a more significant amount of data from different lenses to develop a more meaningful and precise picture of the LGBTQIA student experience. The initial search included no year delimits in all the databases to understand the full scope of what data were available regarding the topic. I assessed the data further only allowed literature from 2016 to the present in the search results.

The LGBTQIA community uses many different terms, so a single topic identifies by one of many combinations of phrases such as “LGBT,” “GLBT,” “LGBTQIA,” “LGBTQ,” “LGBTQ+,” “gay,” and “queer.” Literature regarding LGBTQIA students in higher education I found using LGBTQIA terminology and combining phrases in different ways. Terms such as “queer theory,” “higher education,” “students,” “lived experience,” “LGBTQIA challenges,” “LGBTQIA higher education,” “LGBTQIA students,” and “educational impact”. Further cross-referencing searches look at the subgroups, including “race,” “ethnicity,” “religion,” “sex,” “gender identity,” “immigrant,” and “international” to ensure diversity and inclusion.

Conceptual Framework

For this study, I used two conceptual frameworks to align the lived experience of LGBTQIA students in higher education. The use of two frameworks allowed for a complete vision of LGBTQIA students’ lived experiences.

The first framework is the concept of queer identity development (Chih-Rou Huang, 2017), demonstrating that LGBTQIA students undergo a distinct identity development separate from their heteronormative peers. Zamani and Choudhuri (2016) noted that LGBTQIA students are a marginalized and oppressed population which informs how they process their identity development.

Chih-Rou Huang (2017) based the LGBTQIA students' experience of identity development on Marcia's (1966) identity development in four components: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. While Marcia's identity development is the foundation of developing the queer identity

development, Chih-Rou Huang stated that most original identity development models focus on “homogenous populations of students with dominant identities, specifically cisgender straight White men” (p.87). This refocusing of the identity model allows more diverse and inclusive formatting for the LGBTQIA individual. While everyone may not experience all four components, most would experience at least two that contribute significantly to their identity development (Marcia, 1966).

In the identity diffusion component, the individual has little to no commitment to identity and may be reluctant to engage in identifying. For LGBTQIA individuals, this may be due to home, cultural, or societal ideals of the queer identity, which may not be accepted or viewed as wrong or immoral (Chih-Rou Huang, 2017). This lack of willingness to engage in their own identity allows the individuals to live passively but may hold them back from fully engaging in other aspects of their life, such as socially or academically.

Identity foreclosure demonstrated LGBTQIA individuals’ willingness to step forward and commit to specific roles, whether they align with the self or not (Chih-Rou Huang, 2017). The individuals work to conform to society, which is safer than engaging in their queer identity or challenging societal ideals of queerness. While this may help individuals fit in and avoid social outcasting, it inhibits their ability to entirely explore who they are within their queer identity.

Identity moratorium is the moment of “identity crisis” in which individuals begin to truly explore their identity and push back against their current preconceived roles (Chih-Rou Huang, 2017). These individuals may question the faith they were brought up

in or challenge a cultural expectation that their household upholds, which does not align with their newly developing sense of queer identity. While they may not have solidified their values and beliefs, they would look to understand why these preestablished structures exist.

Identity achievement is the most advanced stage in which an “identity crisis” is experienced and has solidified itself within the queer identity to include creating values, beliefs, and ideas around it (Chih-Rou Huang, 2017). The individuals explore different types of identity and are secure and positive in their defined queer identity.

While these four components may seem like a flow or a cycle, it is essential to note that not all individuals experience their queer identity development in this order. Therefore, these are components to a whole rather than a stepbased model. LGBTQIA students may have experienced some or all these components and may have to revisit specific points as they grow into their identity (McGuigan, 2018).

Many LGBTQIA students are just beginning to explore their identity as they start college and may experience multiple theory components during their educational process. The LGBTQIA students must address the added layer of their sexual orientation or gender identity, which calls for further development beyond their general identity. Through Marcia's queer identity development lens, there must be an analysis of how the LGBTQIA students react and respond to societal conflicts about their queer identity (McGuigan, 2018).

Throughout the research, a continuing theme of “othering” sets LGBTQIA students apart from the rest of the higher education population (Jourian, 2018). While it is

important to note that there are instances when analyzing LGBTQIA students that must be separate, there is also the question of how to include them in the general population. Fraser and Lamble (2015) took a queer approach to pedagogic techniques that focused on queering the higher education system and introduced queer theory into all facets of education and development.

By adding the concept queer theory to the academic curriculum, there is an inherent inclusion provided to LGBTQIA students. Fraser and Lamble's (2015) analysis called for taking steps outside the individual's education and looked to the teaching of the whole in normalizing queer practices. Fraser and Lamble also stated that the current state of higher education is at varying conditions of progress, depending on the institution. They called for a full review and assessment of each institution to determine how queer theory can apply throughout the curriculum.

The second conceptual framework that works directly with Chih-Rou Huang's (2017) queer identity model is D'Augelli's (1994) lesbian-gay-bisexual human development model. D'Augelli includes factors that inform an individuals' identity and how the human development model leads to the development of their LGBTQIA identity. Fraser and Lamble (2015) and D'Augelli (1994) discussed the basis of LGBTQIA identity, the development of LGBTQIA identity, and the use of queer theory to inform individual learning. D'Augelli's model focuses on the queer identity transition and works in a more detailed form than Chih-Rou Huang's theory.

D'Augelli (1994) stated that there is a process to develop an individual's LGBTQIA identity that links to each person's social and historical contexts, personal

actions, and interactive intimacies. Like Chih-Rou Huang (2017), D'Augelli's process allows for fluidity of development. The identity process includes exiting heterosexual identity, developing a personal LGB identity status, developing an LGB social identity, becoming an LGB offspring, developing an LGB intimacy status, and entering an LGB community. Because D'Augelli published in 1994, the terms used now include the transgender identity and the use of queer as an encompassing term.

Exiting heterosexual identity refers to the concept of a societal assumption of straightness causing individuals to have to "come out" to themselves and those around them, including friends, family, and colleagues (D'Augelli, 1994). Coming out or disclosing the queer identity would occur throughout the individual's life as it is not a visible identity factor (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019). In developing a personal LGB or queer identity status, the individual interacts with others who identify as queer and may challenge societal concepts of what queer is (D'Augelli, 1994). While this second process includes interaction with other queer identified individuals, the third process of developing an LGB or queer social identity is where the individual builds on these new connections to create a network of support. D'Augelli explained that social developments and network building components are critical to accepting the self (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019).

The fourth and fifth processes are closely tied together with the relationship building that the third process established. In the third process, the LGBTQIA individual shared their identity with others who also identify as queer in some form. This process may be viewed as "safer" and allows the individual to explore before moving forward. In

the fourth process of becoming an LGB or queer offspring, the individual shares their queer identity with the parents and adapts to how this information is received. This step is one of the most varied outcomes as cultural, religious, or societal factors may affect the parental reaction and reception to the queer identity (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019). In the fifth process of developing an LGB or queer intimacy status, the individual faces the challenge of creating an intimate relationship which may be difficult due to society favoring and supporting heteronormative relationships.

The sixth process of entering an LGB or queer community involves a commitment to political and social action and changing social barriers, but this is a process that some would never reach, and others reach only to varying degrees (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019). This part of the process may be too challenging to address, or out of the comfort level for the individual, so they may never achieve it.

Like in Chih-Rou Huang's model, D'Augelli's acknowledged that an LGBTQIA individual might experience all or just some of these processes. Many variables inform identity development, and many of these variables can influence how the individual chooses to engage and to what degree. Both Chih-Rou Huang and D'Augelli's framework provided a reoccurring message that there is a gap in the current research supporting queer identity development and the student's education.

The research question for this study helped explore the challenges of LGBTQIA students in their academic careers, residential life, and social interactions. Both D'Augelli's (1994) and Chih-Rou Huang's (2017) theories align with the research question as they aim to identify the processes of LGBTQIA identity development. The

LGBTQIA experience researched aligns with these conceptual frameworks. The call for research allowed for a distinct and robust message for a greater understanding of the needs of the LGBTQIA students as they progress in their identity and what can meet those needs in higher education.

Review of the Broader Problem

Six themes emerged through the literature review for both the conceptual framework and the review of the broader problem. In the conceptual framework, the two major themes are the process of LGBTQIA identity development and the societal implications and influence of queer identity development. The review of the broader problem presents four themes:

1. Gaps in research and practices in LGBTQIA related topics in higher education.
2. Intersections of identity that coincide with the LGBTQIA identity include gender, social class, race, etc.
3. The impact of the LGBTQIA lived experience in various climates.
4. Ways individuals can provide support to LGBTQIA students and support for specific subgroups within the LGBTQIA community.

The literature that supports these four themes directly aligns with the conceptual framework and provided insight into exploring the research question through my research.

Gaps in Research and Practices

Because the research regarding LGBTQIA students in higher education is just emerging, there are prevalent gaps in the data that require further investigation. Allen

(2015), Bazarsky et al. (2020), and Marston (2015) provided various demonstrations of the gap in research and practice regarding LGBTQIA related topics in higher education upon which Jourian (2018), Lange et al. (2019), and others were able to build.

Lange et al. (2019) explained that while there is a small amount of research on LGBTQIA students, many subgroups within the LGBTQIA community have not received research. As stated in the conceptual framework, many studies follow societal privilege structures and focus on the straight White male and never look towards the transgender woman of color (Duran et al., 2020). Jourian (2018) contended that there is a focus on the LGBTQIA community from a macro perspective, which can be harmful in the long term, as many identities do not feel visible or supported.

By only recognizing the LGBTQIA community as one large group, many issues do not receive the research needed to support them. Shkul (2018) stated that there could not be an effective pedagogy in higher education if the data does not support LGBTQIA students. Both Lange et al. (2019) and Jourian (2018) expressed a desire to see more specified forms of research that study these subgroups, such queer students of color or students transitioning while in college. Shkul explained that the increase in research – particularly in these underrepresented subgroups, can provide a more well-rounded educational structure.

Allen (2015) spoke on the reluctance to define “queer” as it is a fluid concept and encouraged queer theory in which we remove preconceived structures to build a better framework. Bazarsky et al. (2020) also discussed the lack of collection of demographic data regarding queer students, which has led to misinformation, and a lack of support for

both students and staff. Marston (2015) supported Allen and Bazarsky et al. in their position and demonstrated the effects a lack of research could have on the institution and the LGBTQIA students. By failing to provide adequate research and data, queer identities are not given visibility or proper support.

An institution's failure to equip itself with substantial knowledge and education regarding the LGBTQIA population can cause LGBTQIA students to experience various challenges throughout their college experience. The current research demonstrated that LGBTQIA students are being discriminated against or bullied in the classroom, on the field, in their residence halls, and across the campus (Human Rights Campaign, 2019). This discrimination includes misgendering, outing a student's identity, exclusion from groups or activities, and a general lack of representation (Dessel et al., 2017). Providing the students, faculty, and staff with new and expansive research, helps in addressing and correcting the issues that LGBTQIA students experience.

Allen's (2015) literature regarding the lack of queer theory connects directly to Fraser and Lamble's (2015) concept of how one can work to incorporate queer theory into higher education. Marine (2017) furthered this concept when they explained how LGBTQIA youth had been systematically prevented from full participation in higher education practices by a lack of queering within the institution. Marine noted the lack of research specifically for transgender students where "genderist norms" (p.1) can be barriers to college access. Rankin et al. (2019) demonstrated this clearly with their retrospective study of LGBT issues on US college campuses from 1990-2020. They

explained that while the data is increasing, there is not enough to support the many facets of the queer identity properly.

Intersections of Identity

Research gaps have long term effects such as failure to complete course work, withdrawal from the institution, and failure to complete identity development (Fraser & Lambie, 2015). Burnes and Singh (2016), Drazdowski et al. (2016), Falconer and Taylor (2017), Misawa (2015), and Sarno et al. (2015) offered different perspectives of the intersections of identity that can coincide with the LGBTQIA identity, such as social class, gender, race, and religious/spiritual belief. They and other researchers demonstrated that the LGBTQIA experience does not exist in a silo and instead finds influences in the different identities that an individual may hold.

Burnes and Singh (2016) focused on the intersection of LGBTQIA people and social class and the impact of a lower social standing on an LGBTQIA individual. Such a concept comes directly into focus with the way students interact and how varying parts of their identity may contribute to their educational and formative experience (Burnes & Singh, 2016). Those of different social classes at times have more or fewer resources available than those around them. The more affluent LGBTQIA students have better access to counseling, medical professionals, and other support networks that help them develop their identity (Gorman & Oyarvide, 2018). Additional considerations for those LGBTQIA students who may be homeless become a critical component that may lead to further delays in their education (Gonzalez, 2017). These differences in privilege affect

how LGBTQIA students of different socioeconomic levels experience and develop their identity (Gorman & Oyarvide, 2018).

Dirks (2016) and Baams et al. (2015), Seelman (2016), and Niccolazzo and Marine (2015) spoke on challenges of transgender and gender nonconforming students specifically within higher education and how they are a minority within a minority. Transgender and gender nonconforming students have much less research and data than the general LGBTQIA student population (Goldberg et al., 2019). Transgender and gender nonconforming students often lack necessary resources such as proper bathrooms and housing and inclusive policy protections, leading to severe psychological outcomes (Marsh, 2018). The literature showed the need for changes and growth in policies at higher education institutions that specifically support transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. The lack of support is in the absence of inclusive policy and policy enforcement, leading to transgender and gender nonconforming students challenging points of mental instability (Marsh, 2018).

Both Drazdowski et al. (2016) and Misawa (2015) discussed the intersection of LGBTQIA and race. Often these are marginalized identities, and the intersection of race and orientation in a queer person of color (QPOC) adds more significant barriers to success. Students of color already face various societal difficulties of discrimination and privilege disparities, and to possess a queer identity can increase their challenges. As Coleman et al. (2019) stated, there may be a rejection of the LGBTQIA identity within their racial community leading to further alienation. Many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) lack any visibility of queer representation or designated safe

spaces (Coleman, 2016). Erney and Weber (2018) explained that queer students of color are more likely to face homelessness or lack familial support than their White counterparts. Like transgender and gender nonconforming students, homelessness can lead to academic instability and may fail to complete their education (Erney & Weber, 2018).

Falconer and Taylor (2017) explained how the higher education space is a critical time for students to develop not only their queer identity but also their religious identity. When students are creating both their spiritual and queer identities, these may conflict. There may be pushback from either community, as ideologies may not align. This exclusion has long term impacts as the students struggle to deal with their queer and religious identity (Rockenbach & Crandall, 2016). Rockenbach et al. (2017) also explored the added level of difficulty at Christian universities. They may not acknowledge the LGBTQIA identity and therefore may not have policies protecting LGBTQIA students in their queer identity, which leaves them vulnerable to discrimination. This misalignment of values and beliefs within the individuals and the conflict of their religious identity may delay or stop the development of their queer identity (Brim, 2020).

The literature demonstrated how the challenges of many LGBTQIA students are multifaceted, how their many identities can often conflict, and that there is not always an easy solution (Duran, 2018). Rankin et al. (2019) demonstrated that many individuals exist within multiple identities, such as queer transgender students of color, which add more significant burdens and need for support. However, many do not receive this

support which can further their lack of belonging at their institution (Duran, 2018). This literature supports D'Augelli's Lifespan Model of LGB Identity Development as it explained that the process for such development is not linear. Processing through their LGBTQIA identity can be difficult on its own. Still, the process can become more challenging when adding other identity factors and finding support at the institution becomes more difficult. Some students never receive the help and support they need (Drazdowski et al., 2016).

Impact of the LGBTQIA lived experience.

Just as the intersection of identities can be a factor in queer identity development, the outside impact on an LGBTQIA student's lived experience in various climates can contribute to overall academic and personal growth. Evans et al. (2017), Golom (2015), Kull et al. (2017), Austin et al. (2019), Munyuki and Vincent (2018), and Dessel et al. (2017) demonstrated several aspects of how the campus and higher education culture can influence the LGBTQIA student. Evans et al. and Dessel et al. indicated that various climates depend on the institution, implying that the LGBTQIA student at one campus might have a better or worse experience than another at a different institution. The varying lived experiences of LGBTQIA students in higher education impact the institution (Dessel et al., 2017). Golom and Munyuki and Vincent asserted that the institutions in which the climate was not supportive or welcoming would need to shift focus towards the concept of systematic change and an established resistance of heteronormativity. They stated that colleges that do not visibly demonstrate their support

and work to reach out to those LGBTQIA students who need help are doing a disservice to their lived experience (Munyuki & Vincent, 2018).

While the most significant focus should be on the student's academic work, obstacles are often present to successfully achieving this goal. Baams et al. (2015), Chowen (2016), Formby (2015), Formby (2017), Johnson et al. (2013), Bazarsky et al. (2020), Niccolazzo and Marine (2015), Seelman (2016), Singh (2013), Sutter and Perrin (2016), and Oliver (2016) provided extensive insight through their research into the numerous risks and challenges faced by members of the LGBTQIA community with specific relations to academic work. Two of the most prominent common themes within these studies were mental health and suicidal ideation in LGBTQIA youth and discrimination and bullying (Formby, 2017).

LGBTQIA students who experience victimization and discrimination at school have worse educational outcomes and poorer psychological well-being (GLSEN, 2018). Formby (2017) stated that while the initial entrance into higher education can be a positive and exciting experience, LGBTQIA students quickly begin to experience challenges based on their sexual orientation or gender identities, such as unsupportive environments and a lack of belonging (Formby, 2017). Students entering higher education are often beginning their identity development and seek to find a sense of belonging. Those who do not find that sense and see their heteronormative counterparts receive better treatment may not wish to remain at the institution. They could then seek other institutions that are more inclusive (Windmeyer, 2016).

Formby (2017), Oliver (2016), and Chowen (2016) explained how discrimination occurs in the systems with education as well as in educational policy. LGBTQIA students do not always receive protection from discrimination in institutional policy, allowing for inequity with no repercussions for those creating the disparity. They also discussed bullying in its many forms, verbal, physical, and digital, which is not always directly addressed in clear and direct policy (Chowen, 2016; Formby, 2015; Oliver, 2016). Such lack of support has long-term and lasting damage, leading to mental health issues and suicidal ideation, as detailed by Sutter and Perrin (2016) and Johnson et al. (2013).

Kull et al. (2017) and Austin et al. (2019) identified specific aspects of higher education, including counseling and curriculum development, and how their need for direct LGBTQIA support contributes to the climate and the student's identity development. Conclusion: there are both short- and long-term effects on LGBTQIA students' identity development and physical, emotional, academic, and psychological well-being when their educational environment does not have the proper support in place (Mathies et al., 2019). The cultivation of the campus climate is highly impactful to the development and success of LGBTQIA students as they progress through their higher education lived experience.

Avenues of support for LGBTQIA students.

Many of the themes identified call for some support to ensure the LGBTQIA student's success. Allen and Rasmussen (2015), Ostrove and Brown (2018), Gamarel et al. (2014), Newhouse (2013), Perrin et al. (2014), Preston and Hoffman (2015), Robinson and Espelage (2012), and others discussed the ways for individuals to provide support to

LGBTQIA students as well as support for specific subgroups within the LGBTQIA community. Within the literature, there are varying forms of support. One of the most common is the concept of institutional support and policy change within institutions that protect the rights and safety of LGBTQIA students (Stegmeir, 2018). Marzetti (2018) explained that the institution should be proactive and use time and resources to improve policy and visibly demonstrate support for LGBTQIA students. While institutions might have policies to support their LGBTQIA students, there might not be a visible show of support by the institution that the LGBTQIA students need to see to know they are supported.

Robinson and Espelage (2012), Gamarel et al. (2014), and Preston and Hoffman (2015) investigated how far support has come and what needs to change, such as inclusive policies, institutionalized support networks, and more robust educational programming. Institutions across higher education have significant variances in policies, networks, and programming. Linder (2019) and Marzetti (2018) both encouraged institutions to benchmark other institutions in terms of student support. The institutions should identify their areas of need and work directly with the LGBTQIA students to better understand how they can support them.

Allen and Rasmussen (2015) discussed the need for broader queer education across all curriculum levels to better awareness for both students and educators. Perrin et al. (2014) also encouraged an added layer of assessment that ensures that current institutional structures and policies best support LGBTQIA students. Ostrove and Brown (2018) complimented the topic of support in discussing both the concept of allyship and

what an ally's role is in the process of supporting the LGBTQIA community. DeVita and Anders (2018) stated that being an ally means actively working with the LGBTQIA community and promoting the queer pedagogy. It is crucial to include all facets of support to demonstrate the need for a continuing momentum of growth and development for LGBTQIA students.

It is critical to look at the institution at the macro level and specifically at how faculty and staff educate themselves on the LGBTQIA community. DeVita and Anders (2018) explained that LGBTQIA students could receive care properly if the faculty and staff knew what was needed. LGBTQIA students facing bullying, discrimination, or microaggressions may experience these from professional staff and therefore not feel supported or safe.

While this body of literature paints a broad but distinct picture of the current state of LGBTQIA students in higher education, it is evident that further research and support are needed. The literature demonstrated that discrimination and bullying are still occurring and have lasting implications in mental health and academic wellness due to the lack of support in policies, staff and faculty training, and awareness. There is a need for further accounts from LGBTQIA students to contribute to the current research. These accounts provide critical data of what is essential throughout the higher education system to support LGBTQIA students.

Implications

Based on the local problem, the reviewed literature, and the current state of higher education regarding LGBTQIA students, several possible interventions might affect

positive social change. The professional staff and faculty training would move the institution towards a greater level of awareness of the needs of the LGBTQIA students informed by the findings of my study. The best avenue for supporting the students would be through institutional development to realize what is most desirable. By hosting a professional development workshop where all member types of the college community – faculty, staff, and students- could gather to continue their education and expand awareness it would meet the needs identified in the literature. The needs are evident at this institution and a professional development workshop may prove integral to developing inclusive and support policy and foundational structures via the stakeholders.

Perrin et al. (2014) noted a strong recommendation for continuing assessment of college standards. This recommendation supports a policy recommendation project to assess the resources and level of support provided for LGBTQIA students at the institution. The policy recommendation focuses on mission statements, learning outcomes, faculty and staff training, policy handbooks, and other facets that may identify local needs. This report would investigate the conditions of LGBTQIA students to identify the gaps in practice and how to address those needs.

Another distinct area of need is creating proper support for LGBTQIA students via faculty and professional staff education. While policy changes are essential, they are ineffective if staff and faculty are not understood and enacted. Allen and Rasmussen (2015) and DeVita and Anders (2018) encouraged the institution to provide training or workshops to provide the professional staff and faculty a framework for LGBTQIA education. Having the experienced staff and faculty educated on the LGBTQIA

experience can give better support to LGBTQIA students and focus on improving their work with LGBTQIA students.

There needs to be an improved institutional policy or the enhancement of the current institutional policies related to LGBTQIA students, which Preston and Hoffman (2015) and Robinson and Espelage (2012) recommended. While many institutions have begun to add policies or amend ones in place, they are often too general and not focused enough to be effective. A project that focuses on policy recommendation would look at what policies are currently in place, if they are practical and applicable for the LGBTQIA students, and what disparities there may be between policy and practice.

Summary

The challenges of the LGBTQIA student population are well documented and supported. The underrepresented LGBTQIA students have a demonstrated historical progression of bullying and discrimination. For LGBTQIA students to survive and succeed, there must be a safe and supportive environment. Policy reformation and training for faculty and staff could be effective methods to institute change to achieve LGBTQIA success. The purpose of my study was to identify what specific challenges LGBTQIA students face and what they feel would optimize their educational experience.

The following section focuses on the qualitative approach to identifying the challenges and needs of LGBTQIA students. The qualitative methodology allowed for a greater understanding of the gaps in practice described in the research above. In Section 2, I reviewed qualitative research to ascertain the participants' experiences and the themes that emerged from this process.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

Qualitative research guides the researcher to “understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p.13). The reviewed literature demonstrated the typical challenges in the LGBTQIA student experience and the need for support and resources. This account of the LGBTQIA students' issues provided a solid foundation to analyze the identified problem further. A more interpersonal and highly detailed approach was needed to understand the experience of the LGBTQIA student better.

Qualitative Design

As seen in both the local and global problems, there is a need to research the LGBTQIA lived experience. There must be individual accounts of the lived experience to demonstrate the consistency of issues faced, hate crimes, discrimination, and the lack of critical resources. As much of the literature has described, this area is under-researched. Still, the need for a more intimate understanding of the LGBTQIA student is necessary to identify the need to create substantial change.

To achieve a more in-depth assessment of these students, I used a basic qualitative research approach. Lodico et al. (2010) stated that qualitative research attempts to capture the essence of the human experience by describing the participant's personal experiences in the study with great precision. Welton (1999) explained the idea of epoché, meaning freedom from suppositions which allows the researcher to understand the individual's experience. This qualitative approach does not aim for factual data but rather the lived

experiences from the individual's perspective which reduces the experience to patterns and themes (Giorgi, 2009). This approach detailed the individual's experience and contributed to emerging themes and how they carry LGBTQIA students in higher education.

The acquired data in a qualitative study can demonstrate a lived experience. The lived experiences of several individuals can produce commonalities and help identify major and minor themes. Qualitative research seeks to gather the lived experience through interviews and descriptions and then deconstructs these accounts to identify the core themes and issues discussed throughout each interview (Adams & van Manen, 2017). The collected data comes from structured interviews to create as complete a picture of the individual's lived experience of an LGBTQIA student as possible. I used bracketing to conduct the study, which means that I set aside my preconceived notions of the topic to study the participants from a clearer perspective to gain a greater understanding (Merriam, 2009).

Choice of Research Design

The qualitative study is a direct and comprehensive format that allowed me to build more detailed profiles of each participant. This study also permitted me to understand a more in-depth perspective of the individual's lived experience. Other possible qualitative methods such as grounded theory or a case study were considered, but I would have difficulty obtaining the slightly larger populations needed for these formats. These more extensive studies also tend to focus on the macro of the topic. In contrast, the general basic qualitative design enables me to provide a more detailed set of

accurate findings to that specific group (Lodico et al., 2010). A qualitative approach allowed for precise details regarding the LGBTQIA students' experience and to explain that experience instead of using quantitative data that would limit me to only what is generated by numbers. This qualitative approach provided a more realized and detailed response to the research question.

Participants

This study took place at the local institution after Walden University IRB and the study site IRB approvals. The Division of Institutional Equity and Inclusion oversees the Gender and Sexuality Programs which includes the LGBTQIA Center. The LGBTQIA Center stated serves the unique needs of LGBTQIA students by providing a supportive space, resource library, social events, and educational programming. They are committed to increasing awareness and understanding of how homophobia and heterosexism interlink with sexism, racism, and classism to perpetuate oppression. The LGBTQIA Center also served as a resource for the entire college community to learn about issues related to gender and sexuality. Through the LGBTQIA Center office, the professional staff emailed the students to explain the study and ask if anyone was interested in participating. In that email the student were instructed to email me directly to express their interest. I then arranged interviews with the LGBTQIA students that confirmed that they would participate.

The participants were enrolled students who identified within the LGBTQIA community. I extracted a more detailed identity through the interview process, including gender identity and sexual orientation, informing their LGBTQIA lived experience at the

institution. They did not need to be members of the LGBTQIA club on the campus to participate.

Participant Criteria

I conducted semi-structured interviews until I achieved saturation with eleven enrolled undergraduate LGBTQIA students who elected to voluntarily participate in the interview process. The participants were required to electronically sign a consent form to participate in a virtual interview. I explained this consent form to them at the start of the interview session, where they reviewed, electronically signed, and returned it before we began the interview. A smaller group of participants in the study allowed for a more in-depth investigation into each student's experience that identified the student's needs and the institution from the student's perspective.

Access to Participants

I contacted potential participants through the institution's LGBTQIA Center via email. The use of professional staff connections reaching out for volunteers helped identify willing participants for the study. I provided the professional staff with a description of the study and its purpose. They emailed the entire group of students with my contact information to reach out to me directly if they were interested in participating. Once the students contacted me regarding their interest in participating, I communicated with them directly.

Participant Relationship

Interviews were in a one-on-one format and were confidential since I coded real names in the data to protect the students' identities. The individual interviews had a

strictly set time limit of one hour per interview to respect participants' time. The interviews, consisting of a specific set of questions, were conducted in an online virtual meeting format due to restrictions of in-person meetings because of Covid-19 restrictions. Information disclosed in the interviews was recorded in an audio recording format and converted into written audio transcripts. I allotted time for any questions or clarification the participants needed to feel comfortable working in the setting.

Participant Protection

As there are often many contributing factors with LGBTQIA students regarding safety and confidentiality, a smaller participant pool is more likely to cultivate and build trust successfully. The interviews can give the student the means to build a working relationship and be open and honest. This trust can lead to better, more in-depth data to answer the research question in the study. The LGBTQIA students are not in a vulnerable population category, but I ensured their understanding of the research and how I processed their data. There were mental health and counseling resources available with the institution and the department to refer to if students needed psychological care or to report criminal activity.

Data Collection

The collected data in the individual interviews focused on the challenges the students faced in their academics and their lived experience. The interview questions (see Appendix C) were open ended so that the participants had the autonomy to answer how they elected and become comfortable with the process. As the interview progressed, the questions focused on specific aspects of their challenges or lived experiences, such as

professor relationships, residence life, and working with peers. This format promoted the qualitative goal of identifying participants' lived experience.

I maintained all contact with the institution and participants virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. After the initial contact through email, I scheduled interviews in a Google Meet online video meeting. The Google Meet online video program allowed for an audio recording of the session. Participants were aware of the recording during the session. I was fully trained from all Walden courses and received the CITI program certification to collect all data. The LGBTQIA students are not a vulnerable population, and I required no additional training.

Data Collection Instrument and Research Question

The data collection instrument was a series of directed questions for each of the interviews. These questions were predetermined and asked the same way in the same order to ensure consistency in the interview process. The questions continually referred to the research question throughout the interview. Some sub-questions allowed me to narrow the focus of the interview to a set of issues that I had the participant discuss (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Several subquestions were within one question section in the interview to elicit a detailed account of the student's lived experience.

Interview protocols ensured the alignment of the questions with the research questions, which allowed for inquiry-based conversation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). This designed interview protocol aligned the questions and ensured that my questions successfully gathered the data needed to determine the LGBTQIA students' challenges and yielded their lived experience in those challenges.

I produced the interview as the data collection instrument. I tailored the questions specifically to the institution where the study was taking place. If there were a generic interview template, there would be a risk of data not being about the topic and an inability to determine what specific questions I needed to ask. There was a broader first round of questions in the interview and then the potential for a second interview that could allow for more tailored subquestions if needed to get data that answers the research question. The second interview was unnecessary as the data in the first round amply answered the research question. This process facilitated the discussion to stay on topic and kept the student from feeling limited by the questions.

Data Tracking

Once I completed an interview, I used computer software to transcribe the audio recordings into text. I successfully used the application transcribing option in my prior research. I then completed the data entry and the tagging process. The participants each had their own set of documents with transcribed interviews and any notes taken in the process. Each interview and note sheet were color-coded and tagged with the various identified themes. Each paragraph has coding within the transcribed interviews, which allows me to identify themes within the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). These tags allowed for all notes and interviews to be cross-referenced and easily accessed.

I developed these tags by creating categories identified in the interview process and further developed them during data analysis. While in the interviews and reviewing the transcripts, I identified the major and minor themes throughout the data (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). Common categories include setting/context, personal characteristics,

activities/actions, experiences, perspectives, emotions, issues, relationships, and cultural context (Lodico et al., 2010). These common categories allowed me to review the different interviews and better understand how they all connected. I used a master spreadsheet to track the completed interviews and the identified themes in that interview. This system for monitoring the data allowed for easy access that I could reference during the analysis process.

All recorded and transcribed data are password protected documents and stored on an external hard drive that safeguarded in a locked office. For privacy, I would only share the raw interview data between the participant and myself, and only the participant and I reviewed it. The information in the final report is non-specific to an individual to ensure that all data shared within the final report does not directly identify a student. To ensure confidentiality and privacy, I did not identify any names and locations referred to in the study. All data and materials will be stored for the required five years.

Participant Procedures

I scheduled the hour-long interviews with the eleven participants. The questions were given in an auditory format. I recorded the participants' responses on a software program and backed it up to a database. These steps created a fully documented data collection process that enabled me to focus on what the students said or to repeat questions as needed. Once the interview was complete, I used the software to digitally transcribe the interview to have a written copy of the account.

Role of the Researcher

I am employed at the institution as the assistant director for residential education but in no way directly work with the LGBTQIA Center. This separation allowed me to have a more neutral approach, limiting my preconceived notions regarding the students. I worked at LGBTQIA Centers at other institutions, so I had familiarity with the general structure of those departments and the students that participate in them. While there is the presence of implicit bias given my own experience, I continued to confront any notions of bias I encountered while working with the participants and reviewing their data. As I created the interview questions, interacted with the students, and analyzed the data, I continued to question myself and ensured that my implicit bias did not affect the research (Lodico et al., 2010).

Data Analysis

I used coding and thematic analysis in my study to process the data. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) stated that a thematic analysis moves away from the factual data and shifts towards the individual's perception and interpretation. I transcribed the data and analyzed it after each interview until all interviews were complete. Merriam (2009) stated that the researcher should analyze and review each participant interview individually to identify themes.

After the interviews and member checking, the next step was to code the data to identify major and minor themes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique for exploring the credibility of results (Birt et al., 2016). Data or results are returned to participants to check for

accuracy and resonance with their experiences. I coded the transcribed interview and notes with common themes as they arose. As I reviewed the data, I needed to consider several components, including the setting, context, perspectives of participants, and relationship and social structure, as these could all impact themes that arise (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I maintained the codes for the data in the spreadsheet, which allowed me to identify which coded themes were consistent through the interviews and identify any outliers. Once I concluded the interviews, I analyzed the major and minor themes present in the data and how they aligned with the research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The data analysis is an ongoing process, and it is essential to have a continued review of the data throughout the coding process to ensure accuracy (Merriam, 2009). These major and minor themes were the basis for not only the outcomes and conclusion but for the project as well.

Accuracy and Credibility

When analyzing the high volume of data from the interview process, there was a repeated review to guarantee the data were carefully detailed and sound. To ensure that all data analysis was accurate and credible, I used member checking and asked all participants to review the transcripts to confirm the accuracy of their accounts (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I shared a copy of the participants' transcript to ensure they had time to review the materials. I asked them to return their responses within a week, and all participants did comply. The only changes that the participants sent back were clarifications on the spelling of proper nouns or grammar, which I changed to make the transcripts as accurate as possible.

Discrepant Cases

Throughout the data analysis, I found that a few parts of the interviews had outliers that did not align with the major themes. While these discrepant cases may occur, it is important not to discount them but to analyze further why data may vary from the other participants. I always considered the implicit bias to determine whether the analysis of the student's account is accurate. If it is not biased, there should be an examination of why there is an outlying perspective. The participants' background, identity, or specific experience may affect their view and, therefore, account for their lived experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The interviews and the subsequent data analysis created a systematic method of inquiry that provided the information needed to identify and address the challenges of LGBTQIA students regarding the challenges faced and the necessary research to determine the best ways to support them. The interviews allowed me to address the problem of the study and provided a confidential and safe format for the participants to share their lived experiences. I built a sense of trust with the students. This trust was critical to identifying the specific themes extracted from the interviews. This produced an in-depth look into the challenges they experience and the needs they have as LGBTQIA students.

Data Analysis Results

Data Collection Process

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a change in how data was generated, gathered, and recorded. Initially, there was a plan to meet with the director of gender and

sexuality programs (GSP) to discuss the study and then attend in-person meetings with potential participants to announce the study and gather the interested participants.

However, due to Covid-19, the campus switched to operating remotely. There were shifts to the data collection process from in-person to virtual. The entire process became digital, and all communications took place online.

Working with the director of GSP, I crafted an email to all participants in GSP clubs and organizations that explained my study and the participant inclusion criteria. I communicated with participants via email. The participants emailed me directly to set up a virtual call to conduct the interview one-on-one in a private and confidential setting. Each interview was voice recorded for transcription later. I notified the participant of the recording in the consent for the interview. Each student virtually signed the consent form before the meeting, and all documents were saved and secured in an external hard drive that only I have access to.

In the interview, I introduced myself to each participant, restated the study focus, and explained that I would be asking a series of preset questions. I then proceeded with a predetermined list of interview questions (Appendix C) and noted any initial impressions, themes or concepts, or outliers as they spoke. After each interview, I ensured that they understood the process and reminded them that it was confidential and secure. I then explained that I would follow up via email after transcribing the audio from the interview to ensure accuracy. I used software to transcribe the audio to Word documents and labeled each account with pseudonyms to protect the participants. Identifying names and locations in the interview were changed as well to maintain confidentiality.

After completing the transcripts, I emailed the document to the participants for them to review. This process of reviewing allowed the participants to clarify any incorrectly transcribed wording so that the data could be analyzed appropriately. After all participants confirmed the transcripts were correct within a week of being sent to them, all data were stored in my locked external hard drive to protect the data.

Problem and Research Question

Based on the literature review and the local study, the problem identified was systemic neglect of LGBTQIA students experiencing bullying and discrimination (Burnes & Singh, 2016) and isolation from peer groups (Evans et al., 2017). Dessel et al. (2017) and other researchers demonstrated the need for further research regarding LGBTQIA issues and more significant support for LGBTQIA students academically, residentially, and socially. This data led to the research question that focused on: LGBTQIA students in higher education, their lived experience academically, residentially, and socially at the institution, and how their lived experience informed them as students.

The interview questions aimed to create a picture of the participant's lived experience in the college community related to queer identity. The interview questions aligned with the literature and local problem, focused on the participants' history, and lived experience in their queer identity before starting college, and asked about how that evolved once in the college experience. The questions of their precollege experience aimed to understand the development of their queer identity and how social and environmental factors such as family, culture, education, friends, and other forms of

identity created an impact. The questions of their college experience tracked their initial impressions of the institution related to queer support and their personal experience as an LGBTQIA student. I then looked to identify areas of challenge and support throughout the experience and pinpoint areas of needed change or gaps in practice.

Data Findings

Intersectional Identity Relationships

When I asked participants about their lived experience as an LGBTQIA-identified person, they identified various intersections of identity. These aspects of identity included culture, religion, race, gender, socioeconomic status, mental health, employment, geographic location, and neurodiversity. These intersections added challenges to the LGBTQIA students' experience as their queer identity developed and informed how their lived experience in college progressed.

Religion. Jian, a cisgender gay Muslim male, explained that he is from a country that not only condemns LGBTQIA people but due to morality laws, he could face hard labor, fines, and physical harm or death. He stated that he continues to practice his Islamic faith but meets many challenges at home. He cannot be open about his gay identity to his family or friends in fear of his safety. Jian stated, "I shared once with my mom and with my sister that I'm gay, and they were fine in terms of like I know that they love me, but at the same time they were in denial." Jian also explained that there is an expectation that he would continue to be a devout Muslim and marry a woman despite his mother and sister knowing, but denying, the queer aspect of his identity.

Several other participants faced challenges from the intersection of their queer and religious identities. Julian, a cisgender gay male, stated, “As a Latino and as someone who is a devout Roman Catholic, I found [discrimination] that was a lot more prominent, and I honestly think it was... history with like religion and sexual orientation, never mixed.” Julian explained that instead of his religion challenging his queer identity, it was the other way around. During a queer student group meeting about his religious upbringing, when he shared with other students that he continues to practice, he stated that students became “passive-aggressive” and would not acknowledge him following his disclosure.

Nina, a cisgender lesbian woman, and Alina, a cisgender queer/bisexual woman, both spoke about their Catholic families and how the participant’s faith tied to their action of coming out as queer. Alina explained:

Growing up Catholic and going to church, I feel like I had sort of this like cognitive dissonance - I felt like the church was telling me one way, and I still felt connected to the church, but then my identity was in contrast with that...I think that ended up with me sort of rejecting religion a bit more than like accepting it the way I used to.

Both had come out to their families and received pushback in the forms of denial or disappointment. They both described their families as religiously conservative, and that religious identity was the salient identity for the family unit. Rana, a cisgender pansexual demisexual woman, also explained that her parents were not accepting. It was a cross-section of both their parent’s religious upbringing, but it was more specifically based on

the Hispanic culture. In the cross-sections of religion and queerness, there was a range of which participants still practiced and who had stopped practicing due to challenges of their queer identity.

Race. The intersection of race and queer identities was discussed by several participants and included both positive and negative perspectives. All persons of color in the study identified their race as playing a significant role in their queer identity and lived experience. As race is a visible identity and queerness can be invisible, Gill, a transgender male, explained that race often plays a more prominent role in some experiences.

Gill explained a shift in his privilege when he transitioned from a Black female to a Black male. Gill explained that the gender identity was where he believed most of his privilege was held but stated there was still a more substantial privilege presenting as a Black male than as a Black female within the Black community itself. Gill noted that there is still heavy discrimination and racism as a Black man, as evidenced in his statement, “Like why is this person, you know, walking to the other side of the street when I’m approaching?”

When entering the college community, all Black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) participants spoke about the LGBTQIA Center and the perceptions of the queer community. Dannie, a cisgender bisexual woman, stated, “I don’t interact too much with the White spaces. Like, I feel like I’m mostly [residing] in POC circles... it feels safer.” Dannie stated that she did try and join in at the LGBTQIA Center but found comfort in the Queer & Trans People of Color (QTPOC) organization, where both of her identities

could be better supported. Rana also voiced that the LGBTQIA Center is too White and that she did not feel welcomed when she went to meet with other queer students:

And so I was, ‘Oh yeah, we can definitely go into like the queer, like LGBTQ center, like mixing queer friends and everything like that but then as soon as we saw who was there, we saw the Whiteness and were like ‘Ooh, we are not going to go back in there.

Rana and Julian both said that they felt that there were no attempts made by the students in the Center to introduce the new visitors to the groups or be included.

Gender. Gender played a very direct role in many of the accounts of the LGBTQIA students’ experience as sexual orientation and gender identity are key components of the queer community. Gender distinctly affected participants’ queer identity development with transgender and nonbinary individuals. Jaci, a trans nonbinary person, stated that “Someone told me when I was talking about like queer issues that like sexuality and gender isn't that hard like you just supposed to know.” For Jaci, this was difficult as they did not know how they identified and trying to find acceptance as nonbinary while being dismissed by friends was challenging.

Gill explained that his gender and sexual orientation process evolved rather than “switching” from one identity to another. He explained that he initially just identified as a female and was gay but then identified as a female lesbian. After further development, he moved to identify as a transgender male. He noted that his peers accepted him with each development and could comfortably share who he was. Gill also discussed the concept of “passing” in which a transgender person is perceived to be the cisgender identity that they

identify as. Gill stated that he has privilege in the ability to “pass” as male and is fortunate not to face challenges of people realizing he is transgender based on his appearance.

Socioeconomic Status. Ivy, a queer woman, explained that when she came out to her family, there was not much reaction one way or another due to her family being:

...working class, poor family. So I feel like that has influenced like how my family has sort of responded in the sense that, like, they never really seemed to care that much. Like they always had like bigger fish to fry. I mean, I have...five siblings... people were so concerned about like getting food on the table.

Ivy also explained that she had to work early on in life and that earning money tended to have more focus than her queer identity.

Gill spoke on the limiting effects that his low-income status had on his gender transition process.

I needed access to doctors that can help me with hormones and just continued care also. And so with that, jumping through hoops of insurance coming from a low-income background, I didn't really have access to who I should be speaking to in regards to like, ‘What's next, what are my next steps’.

Gil explained the need for consistent care when on hormones was critical to his transition, but that getting information and support on low-income insurance can be limiting. Often, many transgender individuals cannot obtain what they need to transition.

Employment. Several participants noted that while they were out in their queer identity at home, school, or with friends, they might not be out at work or comfortable.

Ivy stated there was a large contingency of conservative Christian women at home where she worked; she did not feel comfortable around them when hearing their conservative viewpoints. Ivy explained that while she was comfortable in her identity, she chose not to disclose her queer identity to avoid animosity. Ivy stated:

I was working mainly with a bunch of like older women, like sort of from what I could gather, like older working class, conservative women and I do think that they like suspected me just because of the way I present but no I wouldn't feel comfortable probably like being openly queer in that environment.

Rana explained that in working at a summer program, there was plenty of queer people but that they were almost entirely gay males, to which she did not feel any sense of belonging to the program and continued to feel “othered”. Rana stated that while these men were also part of the queer community, there was not much she could connect to, which was isolating.

Neuro-Diversity and Mental Health. Several participants noted that their mental well-being and non-neurotypical identity often affected how they operated within the queer community. Martha, a cisgender asexual lesbian, stated that being nonneurotypical can affect communication and social development “I would say that probably being nonneurotypical would, would be definitely a big part of [socialization], but I think that that's actually a pretty common thing in the queer community.” There could be a barrier in delayed communication when identifying within the queer community and socializing with other queer students.

Jaci spoke about the mental process when dealing with their transgender identity and needing sound mental health to advocate for themselves in the transition process, where much of the process can be a sizeable mental undertaking. Jaci stated, “When I was in the Catholic schooling and I was showing symptoms of mental health concerns, my teachers would tell me I was being sinful because I wasn't trusting in God enough.” Finding proper counseling with professionals trained to support and guide LGBTQIA individuals' well-being can be critical. Trey stated that few mental health professionals specifically choose to train to work with transgender and non-binary individuals.

Marci, a cisgender bisexual woman, is still in the early stages of the identity process and is identifying what she is to herself. Marci is slowly coming out to her friends as she continues to develop within her LGBTQIA identity. Marci stated, “... in my mind, it's someone who I can talk about gay things, as women sort of we identify very similarly, my mentor and I, and so it's like I'm building a community in that sense with this person”. The use of the Queer Peer program, where queer students pair as mentor and mentee, allows Marci to talk through what she is feeling and ensure that she is taking care of her mental health while navigating the process of self-identifying.

Major Themes

Throughout the 11 interviews, I identified several major themes or trends through the participants' accounts. These included impacts of intersectionality, challenges within the LGBTQIA Center, challenges with the LGBTQIA clubs, non-acceptance, and institutional disconnect. While each participant brought up some or all these themes, each experience had differing perspectives due to their various identities.

LGBTQIA Center. The LGBTQIA Center is an office of the college that serves as a communal space and welcomes people of any identity. It provides a supportive space, resource library, social events, and educational programming for LGBTQIA individuals and serves as a meeting space for several student run clubs. While the participants described the space as welcoming, most participants did not have a welcoming experience.

When Ivy spoke on her experience with initially exploring the LGBTQIA Center, she stated that she felt “not queer enough.” Ivy explained that she and other queer students constantly felt that they needed to meet specific criteria, including knowledge of the LGBTQIA community or precisely how they identify. Ivy, Martha, Julian, Jaci, and Ivy all stated that there was a reputation of the LGBTQIA Center that an individual had to be of a particular sexual orientation, have certain viewpoints, or act a specific way to be accepted.

Martha and Ivy both noted that many asexual and bisexual students did not feel that their identities were supported in the space. Martha stated, “...you get into more detailed conversations, and one of the clubs on campus has a huge issue with being biphobic and being acephobic and not being welcoming to people who identify as those”. Julian and Jaci explained that for those whose queer identity is not a significant factor in their lived experience, the LGBTQIA Center could be overwhelming. There is an expectation that queer identity is the most important for everyone. These participants also directly describe the collective personality “vibe” of many who attend the LGBTQIA Center as “loud”, “intense”, “direct”, and “judgy or unwelcoming”. Julian explained, “I

had negative experiences with the other LGBTQ students, and I found that I thought that the whole community was super one dimensional.”

Due to these different expectations and experiences, some queer students avoid the LGBTQIA Center and the Center's events. As noted, the intersection of identity can play a significant role in a queer student's lived experience. One of the most common and firmly documented was the intersection of race and ethnicity related to queer BIPOC students. Dannie stated that before she went to check out the LGBTQIA Center, she had already heard from other queer BIPOC peers that the Center is a “White space.” Dannie confirmed that she did attempt to visit the LGBTQIA Center but very quickly noticed that the space was often entirely White students “because I feel like most of the representation of LGBTQ communities here is White.” She explained that she feels more comfortable with other queer BIPOC students as they are more understanding and accepting and can identify with them better.

Jian and Gill both explained they had difficulty finding a place to belong in the LGBTQIA due to their culture, race, or ethnicity not fitting in with most White cisgender American students. Rana spoke on the concept of White privilege within queerness, asserting that while everyone in the community may be under the queer umbrella, there were different levels of privilege afforded to those of other races and that this was evident at the LGBTQIA where BIPOC students did not tend to gather:

I've definitely had some times where a student would say something like, ‘Oh, I'm queer, but that's why I don't have White privilege’ or something like that. [They are still White regardless of queerness]. That's why like White privilege is nexus

for me – something like ‘I’m poor so White privilege doesn't exist for me.’ And it's like, okay, well, that doesn't make it any safer for queer BIPOC people.

Another common trend identified at the LGBTQIA Center was the idea of cliques. Many participants stated that when someone is entering the space for the first time or trying to join in at an event, pre-established friend groups do not reach out to others. As mentioned, some students may not include other students if they do not have a more liberal leaning opinion. Rana noted a “hook up culture” witnessed at orientation when students were sharing phone numbers. Students created a group chat where it quickly became evident that the group's purpose was to meet for romantic interests. Rana and Martha noted that this “hook up culture” also carries into the LGBTQIA community where queer students, especially those asexual or demisexual, may feel excluded as they do not want to participate in this process.

Finally, there were several notes about the challenges the LGBTQIA Center faces, including the physical location of the LGBTQIA Center, the lack of institutional support, the need for more significant funding, and the challenge of visibility. Nina explained the physical space of the Center is not heavily trafficked and is set out of the way, decreasing awareness. Martha and Nina both noted the need for institutional support for the LGBTQIA Center in the form of faculty and staff coming to show support and the institution making the LGBTQIA a bigger financial priority.

LGBTQIA Clubs. Three LGBTQIA-specific clubs are student run on campus: Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC), Connecticut College Queer and Questioning (CQ2), and Prism. According to the college website, QTPOC “aims to provide a safe

space to celebrate the intersection between queerness and POC identities.” CQ2 is “a student run discussion group that aims to build a supportive community for LGBTQIA students.” Prism “is an LGBTQIA+ advocacy group on campus that works to educate and raise awareness of issues related to sexuality, gender, and intersectional identities such as race, ethnicity, and class” (College of Study, 2020).

According to the participants, QTPOC is a safe and welcoming space for queer BIPOC students. It is often the only space in which most queer BIPOC students have an opportunity to participate with anything related to the LGBTQIA Center. Participants such as Dannie, Alina, and Rana stated that this was the only queer space they felt comfortable or could be themselves in. Dannie said, “I felt like being in that kind of space definitely helped me to see how being bisexual, gay, or other part of it of the LGBTQ and Latina community was pretty cool.” QTPOC was spoken very positively of as a whole and is known as a place with little to no conflict.

When discussing both CQ2 and Prism, there were almost all entirely negative descriptions of both clubs. Marci said that what happened in the club meetings did not match the descriptions of the clubs. Martha supported this account when she explained that the discussion tended to be very sex focused when she attended Prism meetings. It was isolating to her and others that identified as asexual. Ivy and Martha also experienced other students discriminating against bisexual students, with a student saying bisexuality was just a “steppingstone” to being gay or lesbian. Martha explained, “

It was difficult because coming to terms with asexuality was much more difficult than coming out as a lesbian because there's a lot more backlash in the community and a lot more people kind of claiming that that isn't a valid identity.”

Not only were the clubs cited as exclusionary in sexual orientation, but Julian and Dannie also noted that almost entirely White students populated these two clubs. Gill felt that as a transgender man, there was not much of a place for him to be, or there were no discussion topics offered that connected to his identity as a transgender male. Overall, the perception of the clubs was that they were divisive, segregated, and exclusionary. Most who had participated in either a Prism or CQ2 meeting chose to stop attending the meetings and tried to find a community elsewhere.

Nonacceptance. When discussing their LGBTQIA identity with others and being “out”, participants experienced various reactions. Martha and Ivy were the only two participants that stated they had a positive and accepting reception from their family. Ivy stated:

I come from a working class, poor family, so I feel like that has influenced like how my family has sort of responded in the sense that they never really seemed to care that much - they always had bigger fish to fry.

While most participants stated that their friends accepted their identities, some participants met challenges in how it was received, or they have not told their friends due to fear of rejection or for their safety.

When coming out to their families, many of the participants referenced religious or cultural backgrounds such as Catholic, Christian, Muslim, and conservative as reasons

why the family was not open to the LGBTQIA identity. Several dealt with their family denying their identity, refusing to acknowledge it, or stopping communication entirely. Some have not yet come out to their families or may never come out for fear of the risk of safety and security, including eviction from the home, physical assault, and being jailed.

While most participants found their friends accepting and welcoming of their queer identity, some dealt with challenges. Jian explained that many of his friends are very homophobic, and it would be a risk to tell them as he would not want them to tell his family. Dannie stated that in her home country, queer women are often fetishized, and it can be uncomfortable with the inappropriate comments made about queer women. Nina and Jaci spoke about the college athletic teams and how many athletes are closeted as there is an expectation of “straightness” in some sports. Jaci explained that they quickly became the token “queer friend” and dealt with various verbal microaggressions. “Someone told me when I was talking about like queer issues that like sexuality and gender isn't that hard like you're just supposed to know.” Several participants mentioned that these challenges with their friends might be due to a lack of education and awareness around the queer community. Much of it is ignorance of what they are saying or doing.

In the LGBTQIA clubs, participants noted there were challenges amongst queer friends. Martha explained that fellow students told her and other asexual friends that asexuality is not a ‘valid identity’. Ivy and Julian experienced times when queer friends tried to top each other, proving that they are a better queer person due to queer

knowledge or being more 'woke'. These attempts to 'out queer' were said to feel uncomfortable and pushed the participant away as a friend.

Institutional Disconnect. When asked about the institution's challenges related to LGBTQIA students, the most common response was the concept of the 'Bubble'. The 'Bubble' refers to the idea that the institution is often disconnected or isolated from "the real world". Many students use this term to describe when a student attending the institution would stay within the campus community and not connect with the local community or have little to no awareness of what is happening nationally or globally. This concept is referenced with the LGBTQIA students as this holds for queerness as well. The participants said that the college could be too sheltering, and the complex realities that many LGBTQIA individuals face are not discussed or challenged within the institution. Rana explains that her experience before college as a queer person was very different from what she experienced on campus. Both Rana and Martha asserted that many LGBTQIA students are unaware of challenges in the queer community or do not put any effort into educating themselves.

Minor Themes

Through the interviews, several minor themes developed. A smaller number of participants mentioned these minor themes but provided critical data towards answering the research question. The minor themes included precollege challenges, domestic versus international student experience, and academic inclusion.

Precollege Challenges. While participants had a significantly varied upbringing culturally, racially, economically, religiously, and socially, there were often many

overlaps in their queer lived experiences before attending college. Many participants did not come out until the end of high school or were already in college. The reasons for doing so varied and included unsafe family life or discrimination, feeling unsafe at school, school policy discrimination, the fetishization of queer women, and lack of queer representation and education. These factors contributed to many participants either delaying coming out to others or a delay in their self-development.

Domestic versus International. Nine of the eleven participants are American citizens, while two are international students. Both international students spoke heavily on how their experience growing up in low income countries and not accepting LGBTQIA people informed how they shared their LGBTQIA identity. They discussed the privilege afforded most queer Americans who have certain rights on state and national levels. In addition to policy protection, there is also cultural support in large parts of America, particularly in the college's region. They do not have to be as concerned about facing discrimination or legal issues for being open about who they are.

Academic Inclusion. When asked about the institution's educational experience for LGBTQIA students, many participants found the classroom lacking in LGBTQIA education and support. Martha stated that while it may be challenging to include queer rhetoric in some of her Science, Technology, Economics, and Mathematics (STEM) courses, there was plenty of space within many liberal arts courses, yet queer representation is not present. Jian explained that students have never been educated on the queer lived experience and could benefit from having that incorporated into parts of the curriculum. While the general curriculum may need work, Jaci noted that they

appreciated how easy it was to change their name in the system. Changing their name allowed the professor to address them by their new name instead of reading their birth name and misgendering them. In general, participants found the institution talked about inclusion in theory but did not see it in practice in the classroom.

Resources

When asked about who they saw as resources as an LGBTQIA student on campus, they cited various professional staff, faculty, and student leaders. Mentioned by all and strongly supported was the Director of Gender and Sexuality Programs, who oversees both the LGBTQIA and Women's Centers. The participants described the Director as the staff member they considered most often dedicated support to queer issues. The Director is a confidential advocate, meaning they are not required to report specific information about incidents involving students, allowing for a safe space to share concerns.

The LGBTQIA student leaders are employed and trained by the Director and are also a place of support to many participants as they are students who are able to offer help on a peer level. Another peer support that participants discussed was the Queer Peer Mentors, QTPOC, and general affinity groups. Participants also mentioned various staff including the Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy, the Assistant Director of Program in Community Action, the Assistant Director of Residential Education and Living, and the Counseling Staff. All these staff members were cited as having some training and connection with the LGBTQIA students on campus and were known to be resources that queer students could go and speak with privately. The

participants only mentioned one professor, the Assistant Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Intersectionality Studies, who teaches classes focusing on gender and sexuality. Aside from this professor, the participants explained that they did not know most of the faculty's stance on LGBTQIA people and had not seen any queer education in their classrooms.

Discrepancies

While these outliers may differ from most of the accounts shared, they provide notable data to be considered when answering the research question. Jian spoke specifically about language barriers as English is not his first language, and he has a “thick accent that can be challenging to communicate through.” He stated that the language and accent barrier caused the conversation to be slow or trying at times which he believes made it challenging to try and socialize when he attended LGBTQIA Center club meetings.

A few participants were not entirely out at home, school, or both and may never be fully out. It is not safe for all participants to be out, or their upbringing slowed the coming out process considerably. Marci stated that she did not yet know what she identified as and was not sure if she would ever fully come out as she did not really focus on working towards her identity development at this time.

Participants described the many challenges throughout the interviews, but they also noted some positive experiences. These included the ease in the name change process, access to resources in staff, counseling, information, and QTPOC as a safe space

for queer BIPOC students. Participants described several outliers in the interviews, but there were no conflicts or discrepancies between the eleven interviews.

Evidence of Quality

Before I conducted the interviews, I explained to each participant the steps of the interview process and, how I would perform and record the interview and the follow up that would occur. The participants knew that the interview would be audio recorded, and I would process the audio into a written transcript. Once the program generated the transcript, I reviewed the document to remove words such as 'uh", "um," and other unnecessary filler sounds. I also corrected any pronoun spellings to ensure names, locations, and offices described were all accurate.

When the editing stage was complete, I emailed the participant a copy of their transcript to review. This portion was an optional component for the participant, but all participants involved chose to review their transcripts. Most of the participants made minor adjustments in spelling or grammar that did not change the information in the provided data. Several of the participants did choose to clarify one or two concepts or ideas that they were attempting to convey. They wanted to ensure that not only was their account accurate but that they were also providing a complete picture of what happened in the experience.

In this process of member checking, I reviewed the data to ensure grammar and spelling accuracy and the accuracy of the context. The same procedures and steps needed to be taken with each participant to ensure they represented themselves accurately. Birt et al. (2016) stated:

Member checking should not be considered merely as a simple technical step in any study; rather, it is an intellectual process which presents distinct epistemological, ethical, and resource challenges. If researchers engage with these concepts and involve participants in the interpretation of data, they can enhance the trustworthiness of their results (p.1810).

This trustworthiness provides evidence of quality as both the researcher and participant reviewed the account. This quality continued as I reviewed the data repeatedly as I documented the experiences and worked to identify the patterns, relationships, and themes that emerged from the data.

Summary of Outcomes

Problem

When identifying the problem, I determined that LGBTQIA students experience higher rates of bullying and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender. These individuals face a higher rate of isolation from peer groups (Duran, 2018). The literature also demonstrated a gap in the research regarding the queer experience but an even more significant gap for LGBTQIA in higher education (Bazarsky et al., 2020).

In the data provided, there was critical evidence that the problems identified were present at the institution and continue to be a challenge for LGBTQIA students. In the literature review conducted for this study, there was a strong demonstration of the additional challenges when considering the intersection of identity. Each participant spoke on how religion, race, socioeconomic status, and other forms of identity hindered their experience. These challenges included lack of support from friends or family, access

to health care and resources, mental health issues, and personal safety. While there were challenges within their queer identity, their other identities could shift how their privilege and power functioned within society. There was a continued demonstration of the difficulties of the lived experience of the LGBTQIA student, especially those who held other identities that can create conflict.

The research problem and the literature review both detailed the impact of the LGBTQIA student's lived experience. The research focused on the LGBTQIA individual and how they experience the majority cisgender heteronormative society. Much of the research does not look inward to the dynamics between members of the LGBTQIA community.

The data presented the concept that much of the discrimination and bullying experienced stemmed from members of the queer community. The challenges of "not being queer enough" or qualifying orientations or gender constructs as "valid" led many participants to feel isolated or rejected from their peer group. These isolated individuals then struggled to find a community within the spaces provided and often could not find a place of belonging.

The final concept that the literature identified is the avenues of support for LGBTQIA students, both - what was provided and what was needed. The participants noted that while the college generally was seen as supportive, they experienced ongoing issues with the LGBTQIA Center and the LGBTQIA clubs in terms of support. When asked to name resources for LGBTQIA students on campus, the majority stated various professional staff members. At the same time, many student leaders run the LGBTQIA

Center and oversee the student run clubs in tandem with a professional staff advisor, which most participants identified as a hindrance to support. Participants labeled these student leaders as exclusionary or unsupportive to specific identities, including students of color, international students, bisexual students, asexual students, and transgender or nonbinary students. I determined that the LGBTQIA campus community required more resources than the college community, as the literature demonstrated.

Research Question and Conceptual Framework

The research question sought to identify the LGBTQIA student's lived experience in residential, academic, and social settings and how it informs them as a student. While much of the literature provided insight into the educational and residential impacts, the participants' accounts demonstrated that societal impact was the most significant area. The participants identified areas of need, particularly in the curriculum and the inclusion of queer theory in the classroom; however, much of the responses centered on societal concepts.

Both Chih-Rou's Queer Identity Development (2017) and D'Augelli's Queer Identity Model (1994) correlated to the findings of a societal focus. In these conceptual frameworks, there is the idea of the LGBTQIA person beginning to learn of the LGBTQIA identity, working to self-identify, sharing the identity with others, and building and solidifying their queer identity. Each step of both Chih-Rou and D'Augelli's models is present within the participant group. Each participant was at different stages in their development, and all were continuing to experience these stages. As Chih-Rou (2017) explained, these development processes are not linear, and the individual would

continue to share, question, and identify throughout their lived experience. The participants detailed coming out processes, societal responses to their identity, and self-affirming moments in their LGBTQIA journey.

While these participants are continuing their lived experience and developing in their LGBTQIA identity, both the literature and data provided substantial evidence to answer the problem and research question. The participants demonstrated that discrimination and bullying, social isolation, and lack of support occurred at the institution. There is a need for changes in support so that the institution community provides LGBTQIA students a safer and more supportive environment to obtain their education.

Through basic qualitative research design, interviews, coding, and thematic analysis, I sought to determine the LGBTQIA student's lived experience and how it informs their educational experience. Adams and van Manen (2017) explained that the researcher could better understand the themes relevant to the individual subject and the community through the qualitative process. The interview and data analysis allowed for a more detailed account of the LGBTQIA experience and the gaps in practice.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In the data analysis process, the major and minor themes provided a well-rounded depiction of the current lived experience of the LGBTQIA students at the institution. The participants described challenges within their LGBTQIA Center, the LGBTQIA student clubs and organizations, the intersectional identity relationships, nonacceptance, and the institutional disconnect. These challenges involved all members of the institution, including faculty, staff, student, and administration. There is a need for change and growth in these different groups, and there must be a way to connect through interpersonal dialogue and education.

The project to best address these challenges is a professional development workshop that invites all campus members who are interested to learn about the LGBTQIA experience, address local challenges, and learn how their role, identity, and positionality play a role in supporting LGBTQIA students. The professional development workshop would work towards the goals of building opportunities for difficult discussions and reflection on issues of LGBTQIA needs; involve participants in more high impact, high quality, and applied learning activities; develop programs and services around healing processes, such as restorative justice, conflict resolution, early intervention, and mediation; and learn about policies and procedures that support and protect LGBTQIA students and work to change the policies that may need improvements to better support.

Rationale

When looking at the benefits of professional development sessions, which includes small local professional development workshops, Lynn et al. (2020) stated, “the promotion of education, research, and outreach in applying evolutionary education, which is a discipline that comes with additional challenges and isolating mechanisms. Despite these obstacles, our experiences suggest that it is well worth the work” (p.8). The space can include all participants in a focused and engaging way by having a professional development workshop.

While it is a voluntary professional development workshop, there is an opportunity to network throughout the institution to find ways to invite in as many campus members as possible. As the major and minor themes demonstrated, all stakeholders of the institution can address the LGBTQIA students' needs. A professional development workshop allows educational, interactive, and immersive dialogue where all involved can hear about the LGBTQIA challenges and work towards solutions as a community.

Within the data analysis, the participants of the interviews repeatedly stated that the most significant challenges were social interactions and finding a sense of belonging. The sessions within a professional development workshop space allow attendees to hear the study results and potentially hear directly from the LGBTQIA students and continue the dialogue.

Review of the Literature

Before the research process, the initial literature review demonstrated several key themes when using the conceptual framework of identity development. D'Augelli (1994) and Chih Rou (2017) both stated that the LGBTQIA students' experience in defining their identity could cause many challenges including a constant reexamining of their identity and role in society. Through the higher education experience, the LGBTQIA student is not solely focused on their academics but is also working to define who they are and how they fit within the campus community. The initial literature review demonstrated a significant gap in research of the LGBTQIA student experience and that the support of the LGBTQIA student in higher education was significantly lacking. The research findings from the participant interviews supported the demonstrated themes and introduced several new concepts that warrant further investigation.

Research Findings and Presenting Themes

When discussing their lived experience at the institution, I found most interview participants to have several common themes. While they came from various backgrounds and identities, the participants all attend the same institution and carry an LGBTQIA identity. The LGBTQIA identity informs their social interactions with their peers, professors, and staff. These interactions were found to range from positive to negative, but there were many common impacts.

The interviews shifted the themes from a macro focus of the LGBTQIA experience at the institution to the specific lived experience within the LGBTQIA community at the institution. The most prevalent themes that called for further review

were the inclusion of LGBTQIA students, discrimination, and challenges within the LGBTQIA community, the role of leadership in the LGBTQIA student community, the balance of multiple identities within the self, and the overall dynamics of the LGBTQIA lived experience.

Inclusion

When inclusivity is in the framework of equity and inclusion at a higher education institution, it means “having a valued voice, seeing others like you represented around you and in the curriculum, and knowing that you belong and matter based on how you experience the environment and your interactions with others” (Benson Clayton, 2021, Introduction). Benson Clayton (2021) also noted that with the Covid-19 pandemic, higher education shifted to ensure that they provide every identity an opportunity for higher education. Many institutions began to undergo systematic reviews of their equity and inclusion practices. As the data demonstrated, there were challenges of inclusion within the microcosms of the LGBTQIA campus community.

In participant Dannie’s interview, she explained that she sat in multiple identities that were important to her, including her queer identity and being a woman of color. However, Dannie also noted that when she was in spaces of support for her identity as a woman of color, she felt a much greater level of inclusion. Gill also described his experience as a person of color having the racial identity being the more supportive community and that the LGBTQIA community on campus did not practice the same level of inclusion. Windmeyer (2017) explained that smaller identity groups often must create an inclusive environment while lacking resources and institutional support.

Inclusion can mean different expectations for different individuals involved within that community. Within the LGBTQIA community, there are many subsets of the community which can lead to various conflicts. Participant Martha explained that while students openly included lesbians and gay men in the dialogue, bisexual and transgender individuals were not welcomed or had their identities questioned. These discussions often occurred at the student run LGBTQIA clubs, which Windmeyer (2017) explained can present a challenge when there is not a professional staff presence to intervene. While this institution has a dedicated Gender and Sexuality Programs director, many institutions lack a dedicated professional staff member specifically available to support LGBTQIA students (Windmeyer, 2017).

Often the desired experience that LGBTQIA students will seek are areas of comfort or likeness. When individuals do not fit within the predetermined norms, they find it challenging to find that sense of belonging (Guerin & McMenamin, 2019). Donahue and Wise (2020) explained, “As students negotiated their LGBTQ identities... they saw and experienced their LGBTQ identity as an asset and, at times, an object of structural barriers” (p. 1429). Students found some structural barriers early on when students visited the LGBTQIA Center and did not feel welcomed, as participant Julian described. Four participants stated that they were still working to determine their sexual orientation or gender. They looked to the LGBTQIA Center and the clubs available as a potential resource, but there was a mixed reception. Depending on the individual’s identity, they had a welcoming experience or a potentially challenging experience. This

challenge led to these clubs' reputation to only include certain subsets of the LGBTQIA identity, leaving some who do not fit into those subsets without a sense of belonging.

The ideal LGBTQIA experience is a campus climate where all students feel welcomed; however, that is not always the case. Rios and Eaton (2016, Introduction) stated that “individuals with multiple stigmatized identities often face unique challenges and stresses although there is evidence they can develop enhanced coping skills and resilience due to pervasive discrimination.” These varying LGBTQIA participants noted that most could find it elsewhere if they did not find the inclusion they were seeking within the LGBTQIA clubs. As noted, the participants of color in this study turned towards the race and ethnicity aspect of their identity to find a greater community. Others like Ivy, Julian, and Rana intentionally found employment within the LGBTQIA Center to make the changes they wanted to see towards inclusion. While it is not ideal that the LGBTQIA student bears the load in creating the inclusive space, they often do this work not to burden those who come after them (Windmeyer, 2017).

Internal Challenges

As detailed throughout the study of the LGBTQIA experience, LGBTQIA individuals can face many forms of discrimination, harassment, bullying, exclusion, and other challenges (Dessel et al., 2017). Researchers talked explicitly about those outside the LGBTQIA community having an impact on members of the LGBTQIA community. Many of the participants in the study noted outside impacts and challenges from members of the LGBTQIA community itself. While both internal and external discrimination and

bullying exist, the participants demonstrated that the negative interactions could often come from within the community.

Garvey et al. (2017) stated that LGBTQIA students who other members of the LGBTQIA community supported had a more positive experience at the institution. In contrast, those who did not have supportive peers generally had a more negative experience. When Rana detailed her experience with the LGBTQIA students, she explained a negative early on within her orientation. Many LGBTQIA students focused on the “hook up culture,” which was not the type of connection she was seeking. Gill stated that it did not feel like there was a space for him or others in these groups with the clubs and organizations available. Martha noted a similar experience to Gill’s. She explained that if you were not the desired identity, such as gay male or lesbian female, you could be “othered” or excluded entirely.

When asked about institutional policy and faculty and staff support, there were several responses by participants that described the campus as continuing the status quo. Most offices were seen as generally a nonissue but also were not involved in supporting in any way. A factor to be considered is the presence or lack thereof of LGBTQIA identifying faculty and staff at the institution. Several participants noted that one or two staff members were openly members of the queer community and supported the LGBTQIA students.

Aside from the mentioned staff, most of the participants noted that the makeup of the professional staff on campus did not reflect their own identities, and they did not see a lot of active support. Broadhurst et al. (2018) explained that often faculty and staff find

challenges when trying to enact change and support. These challenges include a “true lack of knowledge” about the LGBTQIA community, finding other professional staff to get involved, conflicts of cultural or religious beliefs, institutional barriers, and a lack of trust from the LGBTQIA student community. While there may be those in the faculty and staff aiming to support the LGBTQIA students, they might face a myriad of challenges even to begin to make a change (Bowling et al. 2020). The consequence of such barriers can be present in a study by Greathouse et al. (2018, p. 16) that stated, “Both queer spectrum students (84.7%) and heterosexual students (89.0%) indicated that they had never reported an incident of discrimination to a campus authority.” While there may be those who aim to support LGBTQIA students, many do not see professional staff as resources or support.

Many of the participants in the interviews spoke on their experience of carrying the weight of their LGBTQIA identity. Ivy said about the LGBTQIA Center and the students there, making her feel like she wasn’t “queer enough” or that fellow students did not welcome her within their “cliques”. As mentioned, several of the participants joined the Center and were employed there to make changes to better these negative impacts on their experience. Linder et al. (2019) describe the concept of student activism as labor – a concept in which students work to better their knowledge for themselves and their community and face detriments to their well-being in the process.

While there is a positive and good intention to better the LGBTQIA campus community, the level of activism engagement can lead to isolation from peers, decreased academic performance, and reduced physical and emotional well-being (Linder et al.,

2019). Participants such as Jaci noted how it was challenging when they were the “one queer friend” in the group and often had to represent an entire community. Not only was that a challenge to represent the whole LGBTQIA community, but Roo would then also feel like they would have to be the one always to speak up and address incidents of LGBTQIA macroaggressions. Martinez-Rubio et al. (2020, Introduction) stated, “The burnout syndrome is the consequence of chronic stress that overwhelms an individual’s resources to cope with occupational or academic demands.” Essentially, the push to internally better the LGBTQIA community comes at a cost to the student. This burnout can then become part of the ongoing systemic failure of the institution and, specifically, the LGBTQIA Center to address internal conflict and prevent further incidents of discrimination and bullying.

While the goal of increasing LGBTQIA support by faculty, staff, students, and the LGBTQIA community continues to be needed, there are clear challenges to this goal. Exclusion and discrimination within the LGBTQIA student population leave some LGBTQIA students without a place to belong. When these students look to faculty and staff as resources or to recognize LGBTQIA issues, the availability of actively engaged staff is limited. Those of the faculty and staff who are actively attempting to make change hit many barriers along the way. These barriers often lead to many LGBTQIA students bearing the weight of their challenges, leading to burnout in their activism. While LGBTQIA students can address many challenges over time, a student’s four year experience provides a limited time window. An institution can shore up support and visibly make the changes needed to address the varied internal challenges.

Leadership

When reviewing the internal challenges that LGBTQIA students were facing at the institution, most participants noted that the LGBTQIA clubs and organizations were problematic in several ways. Martha stated that they were biphobic and acephobic and only accepted certain types of queer people. Rana noted that the clubs operated in a “bubble” and often felt disconnected from the queer community outside the institution. Others such as Julian, Dannie, and Alina noted the clique dynamic of these clubs and that many did not feel like they could join or be who they are.

These two student groups were both student run organizations and met privately without staff supervision. Pryor (2020) explained that an effective leader is willing to engage in their learning. With so many participants stating the ongoing problematic behavior of these clubs and organizations, there is a need to review current practices and a possible shift in leadership structure. Pryor explained that the student's voice is often the most powerful at the institution to make a change; however, the student leaders involved must recognize that change is needed.

When looking at the structure of queer leadership, Pryor (2021) stated that there needs to be a centering of the queer experience through the leadership practice. Regarding the LGBTQIA clubs and organizations, this means a more significant consideration for all aspects of the queer identity rather than a select few. While the LGBTQIA identity does tend to be a minority identity in the macrocosm of the institution, there are many minorities within the LGBTQIA community itself. These varying identities need their considerations and voice in the clubs for the leadership to be

inclusive indeed. By restructuring the current practices and recognizing a greater variety of queer viewpoints, there is a possibility to shift the problematic power dynamics into a more open lens (Jourian & Simmons, 2017).

Framing Multiple Identities

Everyone contains multiple identities of the self; however, some identities may be more important than others. For each LGBTQIA person, their LGBTQIA identity has a different level of importance and meaning to them. How the LGBTQIA identity interacts with other facets of their identity may affect their lived experience. “Intersectionality focuses on the axes of power and oppression that differently affect those with multiple marginalized identities” (Duran, 2021, p. 219). This intersectionality allows for each LGBTQIA individual to operate within the LGBTQIA community from differing perspectives. However, there are times when these intersecting identities can present challenges within the self and within the different communities.

When speaking on being both a person of color and a queer woman, Rana felt challenged when much of the LGBTQIA Center student population was White and did not recognize their White privilege and how it could be exclusionary to queer students of color. Every participant of color in the study mentioned some degree of conflict between their race and LGBTQIA identities. Jian, Gill, and Dannie stated that they did not feel like a space created for non-White voices and were not welcomed or understood. Dews (2018) explained that while both populations are historically underserved, there is a trend towards more significant community support for race and ethnicity than queer groups. All

three participants also noted that they found more community acceptance within the clubs and organizations based on their racial identity.

A significant underlying factor to these queer students of color is that the institution is predominantly White (PWI), with over 70% White population. Duran and Jones (2020) explained that students often feel the weight of the power systems at institutions where White heteronormative cisgender culture is the majority population that continues to uphold systemic oppression. Participants felt that due to the White student culture, underfunded clubs and organizations, lack of representation of varying identities, and the absence of queer People of Color (QPOC) identities in curriculum and programming.

Another aspect of identity is the community within athletics at the institution. Nina explained that many queer students she knew were athletes chose to remain closeted as there was an “expectation of straightness.” Atteberry-Ash et al. (2018) described the athletic community as a potentially hostile environment for queer students often facing discrimination, harassment, and bullying. The sense of belonging and acceptance can carry more weight than being open about their queer identity. Jaci also highlighted in their interview the difficulty of being the only LGBTQIA person who was out on a team. Jaci stated that while their teammates accepted them, that aspect of their identity was not discussed or acknowledged at all. This type of erasure of identity can be just as harmful as the deliberate discrimination and targeting of an athlete due to their LGBTQIA identity (Renn, 2019).

Another identity intersection that multiple participants mentioned was religious belief. Julian stated that he felt ostracized in the LGBTQIA club after talking about prayer and church. He said that he did not think that the group members welcomed his Christian religion, which he is proud of. LGBTQIA students must often negotiate faith and the LGBTQIA identity, depending on their faith's stance on their queer identity. Rockenbach et al. (2017) concluded that LGBTQIA students often face even more significant challenges within their religious community if they choose to be open about their identity. In Jian's interview, he stated that he met conflict on both sides. His heterosexual religious friends could not know about his queer identity as it would put his life at risk, and his queer community was highly judgmental of his faith. LGBTQIA students of religion often have to work to balance their two identities, and some may not reconcile the two at once.

Finding the balance of many intersecting identities can present many challenges to the LGBTQIA student. Continuing to seek that sense of belonging, each aspect of their identity may increase the ability to find acceptance. While higher education has shifted towards an intentional celebration of intersectionality, it is demonstrated in both the interviews and the literature that LGBTQIA students will continue to face various barriers when sitting in these different identities.

The LGBTQIA Student Wellbeing

While the specific aspects of the LGBTQIA experience, such as inclusion, internal conflicts, intersectionality, and others, are essential to the narrative, it is also

necessary to look at a more macro view of the LGBTQIA student. The day-to-day involvement of the LGBTQIA student is a significant factor that developed within the participant interviews. The holistic perspective of the LGBTQIA student provides a more distinct view of how the LGBTQIA student operates within the institution.

Part of the LGBTQIA student's lived experience that participants discussed was well-being and self-care. The participants talked explicitly about mental health and the resources available, stating that there was a very supportive Counseling Center on campus. Many of them mentioned the counselor that specifically specialized in LGBTQIA needs. LGBTQIA students were found to use mental health services at higher rates than heterosexual peers but have high rates of unmet treatment need (Dunbar et al., 2017). Both Martha and Marci noted that while there is a designated counselor on campus specializing, many students want to book with them, and it can be challenging to get an appointment. Martha also noted that some students might not find a good relationship with that counselor. Dunbar (2017) emphasized that LGBTQIA students often need more mental health support than their heteronormative peers. The need for more significant mental health support in higher education is evident.

The other concept of wellbeing that participants discussed was the feeling of community and where they were finding connections. All participants found community in some form, but not all saw it with the LGBTQIA community. Pitcher et al. (2020) stated that LGBTQIA students often have to seek their sense of community. These students have a long history of surviving and thriving in these same institutions. Still, the onus is on higher education professionals and administrators to step up and collaborate

with LGBTQIA students, faculty, and staff to continue cultivating inclusive and equitable institutions. Morris (2018) also noted an upward trend in higher education to support LGBTQIA students by non-LGBTQIA individuals. This trend aims to find new and more productive ways to focus on inclusion and equity for LGBTQIA students. This inclusion and changes to systemic inequity at the institution aims to improve the mental and emotional well-being of the LGBTQIA student.

Search Process

The search for the literature spanned two higher education institutional libraries that both hold dozens of databases to search within. I used two different institution libraries as each contained databases that the other did not, making a more extensive range of literature available. When searching both libraries, the search terms included “LGBTQIA student,” “LGBTQIA student higher education,” “LGBTQIA lived experience,” “LGBTQIA intersectionality,” “LGBTQIA student inclusion,” “LGBTQIA student wellbeing,” “LGBTQIA student support,” “LGBTQIA student interpersonal dynamics,” and “LGBTQIA student challenges.” As there are several descriptors of LGBTQIA, I also searched the terms by adding “LGBT,” “LGBTQ,” “LGBTQIA+,” and “GLBT” instead of LGBTQIA. While there has been a slight increase in the availability of literature regarding the LGBTQIA student lived experience, I checked through all the cited sources in each piece of literature I reviewed to find other literature that may have been relevant to the study. There was a notable increase in literature in 2020 and 2021, making the search more accessible than the initial research in the review of the broader problem.

Project Description

The professional development workshop will be a three-day voluntary workshop. The committee invites the students, faculty, and staff to commit to creating a dialogue around the LGBTQIA experience in higher education. The professional development workshop would take place on campus in various large event spaces, lecture halls, and conference rooms. Participants would be in smaller groups for certain activities and would be assigned a session leader to go the break out rooms. The professional development workshop objectives would include:

1. Build opportunities for difficult discussions and reflection on issues of LGBTQIA needs and LGBTQIA inclusion to become part of daily practice, in which there is an acceptance for continuous learning
2. Involve participants in more high-impact, high-quality, and applied-to-learn activities that involve real-world problems, progressive issues, and big questions. Provide all participants with hands-on, experiential learning in challenging environments, including leadership roles within the sessions.
3. Develop programs and services around healing processes, such as restorative justice, conflict resolution, early intervention, and mediation
4. Learn about policies and procedures that support and protect LGBTQIA students and work to change the policies that may need improvements to better support.

These goals will be measured through an assessment post-session and post-professional development workshop. Through these professional development workshop goals, there will be a variety of lectures, group discussions, activities, and social

engagements that allow the participants to consider their identity, the role they play, and how they contribute to the LGBTQIA experience.

Resources

Planning a three-day professional development workshop with approximately a 30 participant involvement requires a lot of resources. Similar professional development workshops and structure have been run at the same capacity successfully at the institution so there is some basis to work up from. Initially, the most prominent focus would be on funding the event as costs can include printing for advertising, activities, professional development workshop design, food, speaker fees, and session supplies. Funding could not solely come from the LGBTQIA Center as they work with a limited budget. However, as this would be a college-wide level of engagement, working with the Division of Institutional Equity and Inclusion, Student Life Division, Student Government Association, and the Office of the President to get the funding needed would be appropriate. As these various groups hold some of the most sizable budgets on campus, reaching out to them could provide enough to cover the costs.

In addition to funding, we would need several other significant resources to successfully hold this professional development workshop, including event space, technology set up, staffing, and advertising. As this would be an event that members of the institution execute, the Events Office does not charge for booking the various rooms needed. Still, it would need to be planned out well enough in advance that all the rooms required would be available for booking. Most event spaces already come equipped with audio/visual equipment, including speakers, projectors, and various adaptors to connect

to most technology. If any other technology is needed, they can book it through the Events Office in coordination with the Information Technology (IT) Department at no additional cost.

Staffing the event can depend on how many are involved in planning and executing the professional development workshop. When major professional development workshops like this occur at this institution, a planning committee typically forms so that tasks can be delegated and managed in smaller groups. Having students, faculty, and staff involved in the planning and executing rather than just attending can provide a higher rate of “buy-in” and increase attendance. Typically, a committee chair would oversee all operations and connect with and ensure that various committee members execute their delegated tasks without issue. Once planning is underway, there would need to be further recruitment for staffing on the professional development workshop weekend (Friday-Sunday) so that the sessions and activities can be facilitated and supported with ease.

Advertising and engagement will be critical to the success of the professional development workshop. The committee needs to plan the timeline intentionally regarding when they announce the event and how they advertise. Given that the population varies in age and background, there should be various ways that the committee notifies the event participants, including emails, flyers, community meetings, information tables at the Student Center, and creating incentives for participation. These incentives could be credit for a student in a class if approved by the academic chair or could fulfill the community engagement expected of the faculty and staff. It is essential to investigate what

advertising methods are receiving the most attention and continue to focus on those areas to ensure the highest level of awareness.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

With a large professional development workshop comes several potential challenges, but additional barriers can arise when specifically focusing on a topic such as the LGBTQIA student experience. In most professional development workshops, challenges with planning the time and date, the length, and the engagement and interest can be challenging to navigate. Having the LGBTQIA focus can also create issues of potential discrimination or bias.

When looking to book the event, it can be challenging to find a time on campus when minimal other events occur that would not conflict with the dates selected. Ideally, as it is a three-day professional development workshop, it would be a Friday through a Sunday to minimally conflict with classes. Most classes occur Monday through Thursday at this institution, so having students and faculty voluntarily attend on a Friday would not be as much of a challenge. Additionally, the committee would need to announce the professional development workshop far enough that participants could hold it on their calendars to avoid booking things during that weekend.

While the professional development workshop length could be challenging to attend fully, the described incentives could aid in attendance. Also, creating a raffle or prize for those who attend the events using a professional development workshop passport that they can get stamped at each session could incentivize maximum attendance—making the buy-in critical. Working to have students, faculty, and staff

understand that the professional development workshop is an opportunity not just for them to learn but also to create positive change should focus on driving engagement.

Networking in the planning committee can be beneficial when addressing engagement and garnering interest for the professional development workshop. As the committee would include students, faculty, and staff, this creates an opportunity to connect with the institutional population at every level. The use of social media is constructive not only to advertise and make people aware of the event but to get people talking about the professional development workshop. The students and faculty on the committee can use their classes to find ways to get involved in attending or even volunteering to build the professional development workshop. An incentive plan, could be small giveaways to classrooms with the most sign-ups and attendees, or bonus credit to classes professors ask them to attend. Having knowledge of the campus community and thinking creatively how to connect and engage will be essential throughout the planning and executing of the professional development workshop.

Having the topic of LGBTQIA students on campus can be a potentially difficult topic for some parties involved. For those members of the LGBTQIA community, some of the session topics such as sexual assault, bullying, and discrimination can potentially trigger them. It will be important in planning the event that the committee connects with the resources on campus such as the Division of Institutional Equity and Inclusion, Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy, Student Health and Counseling Services, and the Office of Wellbeing. They can ensure that the offices are participating at the professional development workshop and that these resources are posted throughout the

event spaces to reach out to those who may need them. On the other side of this topic, some students, faculty, and staff may be uncomfortable or against engaging with the LGBTQIA community. While advertising and speaking with the campus community, it should be made clear that this is a voluntary event welcoming to all. However, it should also be made clear that the institution has several anti-discrimination policies listed in the student and employee handbooks that hold all campus members accountable.

Proposal of Implementation: Timeline

To give enough time to plan and fully execute the professional development workshop, planning will ideally begin in the summer and continue until the event occurs in the middle of the spring semester. The planning would start in August as that is when students, faculty, and staff return. This timeline would allow the committee ample time to plan, advertise and garner interest to maximize attendance. The professional development workshop would occur in the middle of the spring semester allowing approximately six months to organize but have it early enough to not conflict with the end of year events.

Approximate Timeline:

August:

- Committee Formation
 - o Creation and Delegation of Major Tasks
- Design of Learning Goals and Outcomes
- Funding Planning

September:

- Session planning

- Booking event spaces, technology, guest speakers
- Committee meeting and reports on progress

October:

- Session planning and supplies orders
- Committee meeting and reports on progress

November:

- Session presentation and review
- Campus Engagement Plan development
- Announcement of professional development workshop
- Committee meeting and reports on progress

December:

- Sessions finalized and schedule created
- Committee meeting and reports on progress
- Begin advertisements and carry through Winter Break

January (Return from Winter Break):

- Submit lunch orders to Catering
- Order flyers and supplies for advertising
- Account for all required session supplies
- Open sign-ups for professional development workshop participants
- Open sign-ups for professional development workshop volunteers
- Communication to guest speakers
- Continue various advertising

- Committee meeting and reports on progress

February:

- Confirm event spaces, food orders, supplies orders
- The final push of advertising and engagement for sign-ups
- Committee meeting and reports on progress and conclude with entire professional development workshop run through
- Meet with professional development workshop volunteers and delegate day-of tasks

March (Professional development workshop ideally on the first weekend):

- Days before:
 - o Confirmation of attendees
 - o Reminders of tasks to committee and volunteers
 - o Close attendance sign-ups
 - o Check-in with Events, Catering, and IT to ensure all requests are confirmed
 - o Conclude advertising and send a welcome email to participants with all instructions, schedules, and guides
- Days of:
 - o Ensure each committee delegation is in regular communication
 - o Pre-check readiness of each session space
 - o Attendance checks at each session
 - o Manage any unexpected conflicts or challenges as they arise

- Distribute in-session assessments
- Continued check-ins with volunteers and participants
- Post- Professional development workshop
 - Send out thank-you notes to all involved
 - Send out post-professional development workshop assessments
 - Committee meets for debrief, assessment review, and potential plans for future events

Roles and Responsibilities

The professional development workshop committee will be responsible for most of the roles and responsibilities leading up to the professional development workshop. As the professional development workshop committee includes students, faculty, and staff, each group will voice its position and share concerns and issues that may arise. Having a variety of roles, identities, and perspectives will allow for a more enriching and inclusive professional development workshop. While the committee is meeting, there should be an expectation of equity in all voices involved. There should not be a hierarchy based on roles.

Having a solid base of expectations from the start of the committee can help all involved understand the importance of their commitment and what they need to do to contribute successfully. A significant expectation throughout should be open communication as it is vital to know how things are progressing, what needs the committee needs to address, and where support is required. If conflicts between committee members arise, they should address them as professionally as possible to

resolve the dispute and continue to work to build the professional development workshop together.

Professional development workshop volunteers need to engage more directly in advertising before the event and engage with the participants on the day of the event. Volunteers should understand what the committee expects of them and be fully informed to distribute accurate information while advertising and speaking with various parties to increase awareness. During the professional development workshop, the volunteers should know their roles and the resources available to direct participants if needed. Volunteer roles can include information desk representatives, set up and clean up teams, session assistants, and other various positions as required.

Participants in the event will work to meet the professional development workshop goals and aim to achieve the learning outcomes (detailed in the next section) of the professional development workshop. Participants can reach the learning outcomes through the concept of “full participation.” Full participation is an affirmative value-focused concept that creates spaces that enable people of all identities and backgrounds to share in dialogue, realize their capabilities and limitation, engage meaningfully in the institutional community, and enable others to do the same. This concept could include listening and giving others space to express themselves, putting away all cell phones, tablets, and laptops unless used for note taking, being fully present in the sessions, and looking for additional opportunities to engage. Providing the committee with feedback during and following the professional development workshop will allow the participants to participate even after the professional development workshop concludes fully.

No matter the individual's role within the professional development workshop, the committee expects all participants to explore their own identity and learn more about the LGBTQIA lived experience. All participants should identify ways to continue their education and further their involvement beyond the three professional development workshop days to implement the support and change needed for LGBTQIA students.

Project Evaluation Plan

The professional development workshop evaluation begins before the event occurs, continues throughout the three session days, and carries through into the professional development workshop debrief. As the committee created a set of learning outcomes for the event, the committee is aware of the aims while planning the event. The monthly planning meetings should allow time to check-in and evaluate what areas of the planning need greater focus and support.

There is an opportunity for some initial feedback during the professional development workshop sessions at the end of each session. Providing the participants with a quick poll that session leaders can project on a screen and responding anonymously by cell phone allows the participants to rate the sessions 1-5, one being highly unsatisfactory and five being highly satisfactory. The committee compares this formative evaluation to the data provided in the summative assessment distributed post-professional development workshop to see if opinions shifted as the participants attended further sessions and experienced more of the professional development workshop.

The post-professional development workshop evaluation will be the more in-depth evaluation form that allows the committee to get a more detailed sense of the

individual experience, what worked well, what could be improved, and what was valued. Participants will receive the digital form in an email following the conclusion of Day 3. The session leaders will notify participants about the evaluation at the end of the final session. The session leaders will keep the participant responses anonymous to encourage open feedback.

The form will be a mix of short-response questions, Likert scale ratings, and extended response questions. Short response questions will include role at the institution (student, faculty, or staff), which will be a required response, and have voluntary questions regarding personal identity (gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, etc.). The Likert scales will allow participants to rate each session how effective they felt the session to be in meeting the professional development workshop's goals. The long responses will be prompts asking what the participants engaged with or learned from most, what challenges they experienced, and what improvements they would like to see. These long response questions will be aligned with the learning outcomes to determine if the committee met the learning goals and learning outcomes. The learning outcomes for the professional development workshop include:

- a. Shift in Perspective
 - i. Demonstrate an ability to consider different perspectives
 - ii. Consider these diverse perspectives, educate themselves on unfamiliar subjects
 - iii. Evaluate their attitude and challenge previously held assumptions

- iv. Try to listen while without judging when learning new or unfamiliar terms or ideas
- b. Communication
- i. Aim to connect and dialogue intently with those who are different from oneself
 - ii. Demonstrate communication learned skills that enable inclusive communication, including practical listening skills
 - iii. Interact respectfully and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts
- c. Collaboration
- i. Work to build connections across a variety of professional and personal identities and backgrounds to establish ways to build community across the institution progressively
 - ii. Demonstrate professionalism by working inclusively and creating an environment where each perspective is considered for the intentional purpose of making progress toward common goals
- d. Cultural knowledge and self-awareness
- i. Ability to share a detailed aspect of one's own culture and a beginning understanding of other's identities, particularly within the LGBTQIA community
 - ii. Recognize and critically reflect upon one's own cultural biases

- iii. In the appropriate situations, consider that some of the norms and practices one espouses and treats as “universal” might be culturally dependent
- iv. Interrogate structures of power and institutions from the standpoint of cultural inheritance

The evaluation goals are to identify if the professional development workshop was able to successfully meet the learning outcomes for the individual and the institution. The committee will review the data from the in-session polls and the post-professional development workshop evaluation form to find where they could develop the potential areas for growth, what topics needed to be better supported, and what was successful and what they could carry into another possible professional development workshop. The evaluation aims to determine how the participants have continued their engagement and identify how the professional development workshop experience was. One of the overarching goals throughout is not just education but engagement. The evaluation will allow the committee to determine the effectiveness of the professional development workshop in increasing LGBTQIA student awareness and support.

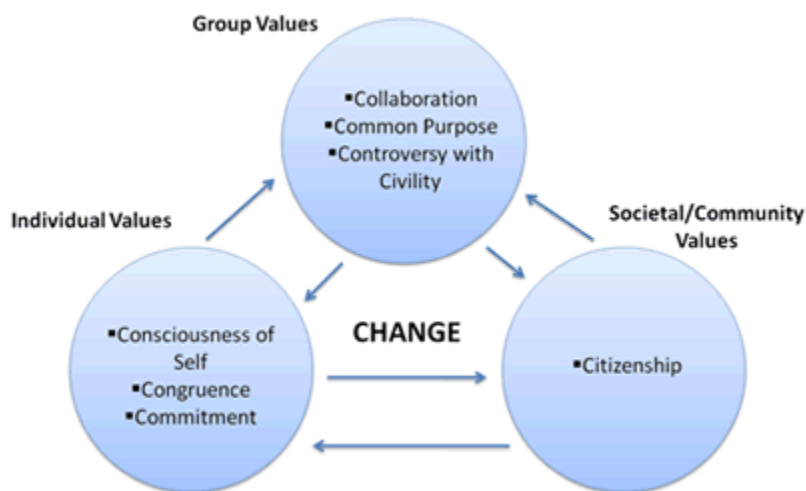
Throughout the professional development workshop process, the entire institutional community becomes potential stakeholders. The LGBTQIA student's experience might focus on a specific group of individuals, but those who can support and contribute to making change include all who choose to become involved. Throughout the research, there is a continued call for action that extends beyond the LGBTQIA

community itself. The stakeholders need to be everyone looking to support and make active, positive change at an institutional level.

Project Implications

When looking at social change and how it can connect to this professional development workshop, the Social Change Model of Leadership Development becomes key in clarifying how participants view it. Astin and Astin (1996) created the Social Change Model with the concept that an individual approaches leadership as a purposeful, collaborative, values-based process that results in positive social change. The faculty, staff, and students involved in the professional development workshop are leaders or potential leaders.

The Social Change Model includes the “Seven C’s” that work together to create social change:



Using the Seven C’s approach, the participants and committee all work to improve their values, grow the group values, and bring them out into society or community. In this case, the information learned or the work started within the professional development

workshop should carry further out to the college community to those not in attendance. This action could be through word of mouth in discussing the professional development workshop, getting involved in showing up to more campus events as an ally, or working with the administration to find new ways to support the LGBTQIA students better.

The professional development workshop provides only a fraction of what could be covered when educating on the LGBTQIA community and the areas of need. The professional development workshop calls to action within the learning goals and outcomes – a space where education and progress begin. The participants should view the professional development workshop as a starting point. The participants should carry out the discussions that occur to the local and global communities. The challenges LGBTQIA students face are not exclusive to this institution and are evident across higher education. The students, faculty, and staff alike have a vested interest as stakeholders to carry these goals and outcomes further than when the professional development workshop started. Change comes in varying degrees, but the potential for growth in supporting LGBTQIA students is enormous.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

When creating a professional development workshop titled “Inclusion from Within: Committing to the Growth and Support of the LGBTQIA Student Community,” a stakeholder could make various assumptions about what the professional development workshop will include and how the committee will design it. As a stakeholder, the student, faculty, or staff member is aware that this focuses specifically on LGBTQIA students and how this population is experiencing their institutional journey and where they need support. As planning committee members, they could consider many potential strengths and limitations when presenting this content in a professional development workshop format. The committee should consider strengths and limitations when presenting the information, engaging the participants, and creating momentum after the professional development workshop.

Addressing the Problem

When reviewing this study's broader problem, the challenges identified included gaps in the research and practices, conflicts in the intersections of identity, the impacts on the LGBTQIA lived experience and the lack of support for LGBTQIA students. Once I concluded the research for this study, the challenges identified included the inclusion of LGBTQIA students, internal challenges within the LGBTQIA community, LGBTQIA leadership, framing multiple identities within the self, and LGBTQIA student wellbeing. When choosing to create a professional development workshop in the project study, I determined that the evaluation report, curriculum plan, or policy recommendation would

not address the identified problems effectively. Many of the issues I identified could not be approached by changing the academic experience through curriculum or instituting policies, as each would only cover part of the problem. The professional development workshop provides an actionable engagement of the population, which is needed to create the change that a passive evaluation report could not.

The strength of a professional development workshop lies in the engagement of the people involved. These participants, professional development workshop planning committee members, and professional development workshop volunteers are looking to take the time to learn, discuss willingly, and conceptualize change not just at the institutional level but globally in higher education. Nichols et al. (2020) conceptualized that a professional development workshop provides human, social, and cultural capital. With participants learning new information about their identity, the LGBTQIA identity, and the LGBTQIA student experience, they gain human capital. Participants obtain social capital through the networking and dialogue opportunities provided throughout the professional development workshop sessions and social gatherings. Participants can then have the potential to gain cultural capital by getting involved beyond the professional development workshop in joining a committee, planning events, or planning to attend future professional development workshops.

These various forms of capital work also reach a larger, more diverse population and potentially engage populations that have previously not been engaged in the work to support LGBTQIA students. The more varied the people reached, the more connections that they can build to reach out to students, faculty, and staff of all backgrounds who may

not have been aware of the problems or do not connect to them in any way. The growth of the population through the professional development workshop format is a significant visual representation for the LGBTQIA students to see the support and how it can reach areas of campus they may not have felt welcomed or included in (BrckaLorenz et al., 2021). The professional development workshop format takes a topic that has been discussed within the LGBTQIA community and shifts it to the larger campus community, and then aims to shift from dialogue into actionable steps for change.

Within the push towards actionable change, there is a potential to see a call for moves beyond just this institution. Across higher education, Duran (2021), Formby (2017), and Bowling et al. (2020) have all detailed the need for increased support for LGBTQIA students. This support can include increased funding, increasing staffing for LGBTQIA Centers, and more significant resources academically, medically, emotionally, and socially. The potential change that the professional development workshop could bring is not just within the tangible changes of funds and staffing but also within the realm of the global policy change and a shift in higher education's perspective on the needs and support of the LGBTQIA student.

Such an undertaking of potential success can put a lot of weight on planning a major professional development workshop to confront the research and study problems. Within the initial planning stages of the professional development workshop, there needs to be intentional and realistic dialogue when looking to the challenge of attendance, campus-wide engagement, and buy-in. These are not limitations exclusive to the professional development workshop but are systemic throughout the obstacles of the

LGBTQIA student experience. Stegmeir (2018) and Rankin et al. (2019) both explained that this is a two-part challenge when looking for buy-in. First, there is the challenge of having individuals recognize and care about a problem outside their own identity. There needs to be consideration of communicating why this is important and why these individuals should be involved. Second, support must be present from the institution to demonstrate to the stakeholders that there is an institutional commitment to supporting the LGBTQIA community and working towards change. Lack of individual buy-in or a visual demonstration of institutional support at the college could hurt the level of engagement desired at the professional development workshop. Less involvement from the wider population could also limit the potential impact that the professional development workshop aims to have. The learning outcomes of the professional development workshop aim to have the individual take what they have learned and share it beyond the scope of the local community. Having a small population could hurt the chance of making more remarkable changes. However key stakeholders could make a difference in attending the professional development workshop by encouraging more dialogue and professional development opportunities.

The concept of the professional development workshop and how the committees work to address the problems should not be limited to the local institution. It has been demonstrated by researchers such as Formby (2017) and Rios and Eaton (2016) that these challenges span across higher education and that each institution experiences them in varying ways and degrees. However, the focus should then shift to looking beyond the fine detailing of the differences to the macro concept of the need for greater visibility,

inclusion, and support for LGBTQIA students in higher education. There has been significant progress since D'Augelli (1994) began to address the identity development of queer individuals. However, there are still many factions within the community, such as queer students of color or transgender students, that have barely begun to receive the focus and support those other members of the LGBTQIA community receive. The problem is systemic within higher education, but it does not have to continue to be. With projects such as professional development workshops that broaden perspectives and grow from conversation to action, there is a growth in the potential to shift the way higher education acknowledges, addresses, and creates support for LGBTQIA students.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Alternative Methods

While the professional development workshop is the project that best fits this study, there are several options when looking to approach the challenges of the LGBTQIA student experience and the need for more significant support. One of the other potential methods is using several smaller projects to create a large-scale change. These smaller projects could include the establishment of a dialogue group where they discuss success and challenges of the LGBTQIA community; assessments of the current institutional resources to identify target areas of need; and a committee that is made up of students, faculty, and staff and works to address the challenges of the LGBTQIA students. Having varying types of projects allows for more options of how an individual could choose to engage and carries this into the long term rather than just one weekend at a professional development workshop. The dialogue group, assessments, and committees

allow for varying degrees of anonymity or confidentiality, creating more space for those at different comfort levels. Additionally, these projects are ongoing and can constantly shift to where the needs may be. While the professional development workshop addresses many problems and opens the conversation, the alternative approaches give room for evolution as conditions change and a better focus of one issue at a time, allowing for a greater chance to confront and address a problem successfully.

Alternative Problems and Solutions

While many of the problems identified in the literature reviews and this study identify challenges at an institutional level, there is also consideration of the internal challenges within the LGBTQIA community that could be the focus. The concept of the internal challenges of the LGBTQIA student groups, the LGBTQIA leadership, and the lack of inclusivity occurs throughout higher education. Duran (2021) supported these findings by demonstrating that some of the problems LGBTQIA students face are from their LGBTQIA peers. The questioning of identities, valuing some identities more than others, and excluding specific identities from the conversation can potentially be even more detrimental than the institutional exclusion (Guerin & McMenamin, 2019).

Solutions to this problem become more interpersonally based with a focus on communication and dialogue. There also needs to be a growth in oversight by trained professional staff as much of these groups are student-run and lack guidance. While the professional staff does not need to run the group, advising, offering resources, and lending support could shift how the students operate. These LGBTQIA student leaders hold a lot of responsibility in running these clubs but do not receive training in conflict

mediation or creating dialogue, nor are they assessed in any way. Providing some form of evaluation, informs opportunities to identify the issues and how staff could train the leaders to address them. The hope is that the leadership and clubs would step away from being part of the problem and move towards finding ways to be part of the solution.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change Scholarship

Throughout the doctoral literature research and preparing the study, I have gained an immense amount of knowledge about the LGBTQIA community. In addition to my passion for learning about the LGBTQIA community, I have learned how to apply critical thinking in connecting varying resources. The field of LGBTQIA students in higher education is a very niche topic and was challenging to research. Gaps in the research and practices were something that the sources continually discussed. Learning how to use resources beyond the scholarly databases opened new avenues to my education. Gathering a sufficient number of books and journal articles to support my research was essential to the process, but learning to network within the scholarly community was also critical. Personally, reaching out to various authors whose work specifically focuses on LGBTQIA students opened opportunities for increasing dialogue between scholars and learning of different resources that I was not aware of before. I learned that this study that I am doing works to address the problems I have identified in the research gap. My continued pursuit of knowledge within this field allows that gap to shrink as my and other scholars' voices add to the study area.

Project Development and Evaluation

When I started my proposal, I could have never anticipated that something like Covid-19 would occur and could so radically shift how I executed my research. The institution I had initially planned to work with shut down and did not allow any studies even though I had already spoken with them to start the analysis. In pivoting to work directly with the institution where I am currently employed, it became a more beneficial learning experience than I could have had at the other institution. While I had no prior interaction with the participants, I was familiar with the institution as I have worked here for seven years. I was unaware of many of the challenges they identified but understood the bigger picture.

Understanding the campus culture in tandem with the information learned in my participant interviews, I was able to identify which approaches would be most effective in communicating the needs of LGBTQIA students and substantially evaluating what areas need the most support. LGBTQIA students' experience is still a growing area of study in higher education. Many of the small groups within the LGBTQIA community are just now starting to receive the recognition and attention they so desperately need. As a scholar and practitioner it is my responsibility to work towards building the space for learning and growth opportunities both in writing and practice.

Leadership and Change

In knowing the institution's culture, I could see how professional development and training in the form of a professional development workshop could impact the institution. Within my role at the institution, I often create and execute significant events and training. I could quickly identify how I would build the professional development

workshop and the potential positive change it could make. While this was by far the most considerable undertaking of event planning I have ever done, I know that I will be able to put it to use as a practitioner and project developer within my higher education career. My passion for the support of LGBTQIA students does not end with my doctoral program. I hope to take what I have learned within the process to carry that to my institution and beyond to continue the push towards change.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

As I have stated, the field of study – LGBTQIA students in higher education – is niche and small. However, the literature and the analysis continually demonstrate how much the research needs to continue to grow. While I know that one study will not shift the scales of change radically, adding further research to the conversation is what matters the most. Research and scholarly work are at their core researchers building upon one another to create a body of work that not only demonstrates the need for change but creates change.

The eleven participants are a small fraction of the voices of the conversation, yet each account of their experience contained a depth and weight that speaks loudly. The diverse representation within the LGBTQIA community reflects in the study. Many of the identities are underrepresented in prior research and include queer women of color, first-generation queer, transgender, and gender non-binary, aromantic and demisexual, and many more. These people are more than their queer identity. Their accounts are more than just their individual student experience. Instead, these voices come together to identify and reflect the triumphs and struggles of many LGBTQIA students across higher

education and how they are not alone in the challenges and needs I have worked to identify through this study.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications and Applications

The potential impact for positive social change can occur at several levels within this study's framework. For LGBTQIA students, this could allow them to feel seen and feel validated in their own experience. Recognizing their experience in another's account provides the comfort and inclusion they may be seeking. Additionally, this may drive them to want to become more involved within their LGBTQIA community. As identified at the local institution, the LGBTQIA leadership needs additional resources and support. Having the participant accounts share the issues could be a reliable resource to find what changes they need.

At the local institution level, the faculty, staff, and students have an opportunity for greater involvement. The call to step outside their own identity space and expand the support for another is no easy task. Smaller steps like the dialogue group or action committee outlined could provide steppingstones to a bigger target like a professional development workshop. At the global higher education level, this adds to the many strong voices already running training, speaking at professional development workshops, and building community to grow the support LGBTQIA students need. While it may not have as significant an impact at the macro level, it has a significant potential impact for positive social change at the local institution for those who may not have had a voice or space to be before.

Directions for Future Research

The LGBTQIA community is a vast, highly diverse, and ever-changing community. The research starting now will be chasing the research to follow it as the community cultures are evolving rapidly. With the increase in the involvement of a younger population than ever before, mainly through social media, much of this research will continue to race against progress and time. As identified in the study, students are becoming more vocal in their identities and the intersections of those identities and are finding their voice. Research into LGBTQIA students' experience will need to become even more focused and ensure that they accurately include as many voices as possible to represent a burgeoning and fluid population.

Conclusion

The LGBTQIA student experience is a complicated and deep story with a rich history of activism fighting for representation and inclusion. Throughout the literature and the study, the need for greater focus on the needs of LGBTQIA students is not just called for but demanded. Challenges within the LGBTQIA community leadership, the intersections of varying identities, and the lack of inclusion or discrimination continue to occur not just at the local institution but across higher education.

The research question asked, "For LGBTQIA students in higher education, what is their lived experience academically, residentially, and socially at the institution, and how does their experience inform them as students?" I demonstrated in the research the need for change at the individual, LGBTQIA community, institutional, and global levels. These needs demand more vibrant representation, equity and inclusion for LGBTQIA

students, and a call for further research to create a lasting, positive, and impactful change throughout higher education.

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Appendix A: The Project

Inclusion from Within: Committing to the Growth and Support of the LGBTQIA

Student Community

1. Professional development workshop Goals
2. Audience (who the committee would invite to the event)
3. Possible Location
4. Outcomes
5. Themes
6. Schedule
7. Materials

Objectives

1. Build opportunities for difficult discussions and reflection on issues of LGBTQIA needs and LGBTQIA inclusion to become part of daily practice, in which there is an acceptance for continuous learning
2. Involve participants in more high-impact, high-quality, and applied-to-learn activities that involve real-world problems, progressive issues, and big questions. Provide all participants with hands-on, experiential learning in challenging environments, including leadership roles within the sessions.
3. Develop programs and services around healing processes, such as restorative justice, conflict resolution, early intervention, and mediation
4. Learn about policies and procedures that support and protect LGBTQIA students and work to change the policies that may need improvements to better support.

Audience

This professional development workshop is a voluntary professional development workshop open to all institutional community members – the committee welcomes all faculty, staff, and students. The committee asks professors to encourage their students to attend. The committee will ask student clubs and organizations to attend as well. As it is a professional development opportunity, the committee will ask Human Resources to promote the event.

Possible Location

The institution has a robust Student Center that houses many conference rooms of varying sizes (they seat 1-100 people) and an ample conference space that can sit 500 people. These spaces all come with built-in technology stations so that any audio-visual equipment that is needed is available.

Outcomes

- After this professional development workshop, all participants should be able to:
- a. Shift in Perspective

- i. Demonstrate an ability to consider different perspectives
 - ii. Consider these diverse perspectives, educate themselves on unfamiliar subjects
 - iii. Evaluate their attitude and challenge previously held assumptions
 - iv. Try to listen while without judging when learning new or unfamiliar terms or ideas
- b. Communication
 - i. Aim to connect and dialogue intently with those who are different from oneself
 - ii. Demonstrate communication learned skills that enable inclusive communication, including practical listening skills
 - iii. Interact respectfully and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts
- c. Collaboration
 - i. Work to build connections across a variety of professional and personal identities and backgrounds to establish ways to build community across the institution progressively
 - ii. Demonstrate professionalism by working inclusively creating an environment where each perspective is considered for the intentional purpose of making progress toward common goals
- d. Cultural knowledge and self-awareness
 - i. Ability to share a detailed aspect of one's own culture and a beginning understanding of other's identities, particularly within the LGBTQIA community
 - ii. Recognize and critically reflect upon one's own cultural biases
 - iii. In the appropriate situations, consider that some of the norms and practices one espouses and treats as "universal" might be culturally dependent
 - iv. Interrogate structures of power and institutions from the standpoint of cultural inheritance

Themes

1. Identity and Belonging
 - a. Understanding what identities individual's hold, how you identify yourself, and how these identities play a role within the various institutional communities
2. Education and Experiential Learning
 - a. How are individuals educating themselves on the LGBTQIA? What knowledge are individuals coming into the space with? What are the assumptions of the LGBTQIA community, and what can they learn?
3. Community Governance and Action
 - a. What is the state of the institution in regards to the LGBTQIA experience? What challenges are occurring, and how can they be addressed? Who is responsible for community education, outreach, and support?

4.
Schedule

Day 1: Building a Groundwork through Community Engagement

Time	Session	Notes
9 AM – 10 AM	Welcome and Introductions: Finding a Common Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small groups at tables to introduce (Ice breaker #1) - Set up of ground rules and expectations of the community (created as a whole group)
10 AM – 11 AM	Why Am I Here: Goal Creation and Aimed Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual check-in sheets that are filled out and retained until the end of full training (have individuals work to identify why they are participating and what they bring to the space) - Discussion as a community of what they hope to achieve (targeted questions left on the slide to guide discussion) - Review from Training Leader of Pre-Designed Goals and Outcomes (Slides)
11 AM – 12 PM	Who Am I?: Adding Context to the Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole group activity where individuals look to identify themselves in the space in a private method (Post It Challenge) - Review of post-it gallery walk and discussion in table groups and the whole community
12 PM- 1 PM	Lunch	
1 PM – 3 PM	Stepping Outside Self: The Context of Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Slides/Presentation on what identity is, how it relates to others, how it plays a role in development (Refer to tie ins with the conceptual framework of study) - Small table discussion: How does the identity of self impact/affect the identity of others?
3 PM- 5 PM	Queer 101: From the Ground Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gingerbread Person and the Gender Unicorn Presentation - Handout: Brief History of the Queer Experience - Safe Space Activity: Asking questions afraid to ask, pushing topics into the light - Looking to the future of the training/ wrap up

Day 2: Identifying Challenges of the LGBTQIA Experience

Time	Session	Notes
9 AM- 930 AM	Warm Up and Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing Seating, so everyone is at new tables for small table discussions - Ice Breaker #2 - A reminder of ground rules and expectations
930 AM- 10 AM	Setting the Scene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What takeaways from Day 1 will carry through - Small table share out of Day 1 experience - Small table share out of hopes and fears of Day 2 - Share out to the large group
10 AM- 1130 AM	Putting in Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roundtable Presentation of LGBTQIA students from the institution in which they introduce themselves and discuss through guided questions their lived experience as an LGBTQIA student at the institution - Follow Up Q&A – community asks questions they may have had while observing roundtable discussion
1130 AM – 1230 PM	Lunch	
130 PM- 230 PM	Presentation of Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slide Presentation of Findings of the Study - Presentation to include major and minor themes and focus on areas of challenge that need focus - Q&A- open floor discussion of findings to allow clarification
230 PM-330 PM	What Role Do I Play?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed group dialogue in which assigned groups address a specific challenge identified in the data findings - Using guiding questions, the group will discuss what the potential

		causes of the issue, the effects of the issue, and how to support or advocate within each individual are
330 PM- 5 PM	Internal Communities – Breaking the Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The community will divide into groups made up of either faculty, staff, or students only - Each group will identify the framework of their group’s community about the LGBTQIA students (what relationship exists and how does it function) - Allyship: Small slide presentation on allyship given by LGBTQIA students – what it is and what they look for in an ally - Group shareouts/activity: Mix with other groups so that each of the new groups includes faculty, staff, and students – Share out success and limitations of relations with the community. Create a diagram to see what commonalities and outliers exist - Share out and wrap up

Day 3: Building Solution-Focused Goals and Continuing Education

Time	Session	Notes
9 AM – 10 AM	Not Moving On But Forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pivot the framework to have a more direct address to individual responsibility - Ice Breaker # 3 (A more intensive interpersonal activity that calls out challenges affecting institutional LGBTQIA community and the training space)
10 AM- 11 AM	Accountability of Self and Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual activity: On a blank sheet, have each individual identify moments where the individual is accountable, where they need to engage more, where they need more education in the context of the LGBTQIA student experience

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large Group Share to create and large live Jamboard where “call-outs” of accountability can be shared confidentially but openly
11 AM – 12 PM	Why Me?: The Fear of Stepping Out and Being “That Person”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct address on the fear of confrontation or holding others accountable. Addressing stigma attached to advocating and addressing problematic behavior. Hold large group discussions of naming the fears and how they can challenge them. - Barriers to accountability: group discussion of what prevents them or others from doing more, possible repercussions - Impact of Inaction – Discussion of the further implications of the LGBTQIA community if there is no change
12 PM – 1 PM	Lunch	
1 PM – 3 PM	Making the Leap: Becoming an Active Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Justice– What does it all mean? (Presentation on moving from passive to active support and what that can look like) - Changing the narrative and creating dialogue: Presentation from leaders of the Dialogue Project
3 PM- 5 PM	Reflection and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The participants review their reflection sheets from the beginning and complete part 2 of the sheet to compare - Takeaways and hopes (live Jamboard activity) - Moving Beyond Checking a Box: Where Do We Go From Here? Have each person share out takeaways from the professional development workshop and things they plan to continue going forward - Resources share out – how to get involved after and what resources to go to - Wrap Up

Materials

Day 1 Materials

9-10 AM Icebreakers

Icebreaker #1: Live poll – Using a live poll application site such as a www.slido.com display questions for participants to interact with on their phones live.

Sample Questions

How energized are you feeling right now?

(Rating 1-10, 1 = no energy, 10 = super energized)

Who is in attendance? (Faculty staff, student)

What are you most looking forward to at the professional development workshop?

(Meeting other individuals, engaging in discussion, learning new perspectives, etc.)

Icebreaker #2: The One Word:

Divide meeting participants into smaller groups. Then, tell them to think for a minute or two and then share one word that describes different words such as ‘LGBTQIA’ or ‘equity’ with their group.

For example, if the word is ‘culture,’ tell the groups to describe work culture, or your office culture in particular, in one word. Once they've shared with their groups, you can invite them to share their word with the entire room.

10-11 AM

Self-Reflection Sheet (Part 1)

Name:

Role at Institution:

Reason for Participation:

What are you looking to learn from this professional development workshop?

In what ways does your role currently intersect with LGBTQIA students?

How do you currently support LGBTQIA students?

What questions do you have about the LGBTQIA student community?


Questions for Group Discussion and Goals and Outcomes



Why did you choose to participate in this conference?


What are your personal goals for the conference?

What are you looking to learn throughout the conference?



Conference Goals

1. Build opportunities for difficult discussions and reflection on issues of LGBTQIA needs and LGBTQIA inclusion to become part of daily practice, in which there is an acceptance for continuous learning
2. Involve participants in more high-impact, high-quality, and applied learning activities that involve real-world problems, progressive issues, and big questions. Provide all participants with hands-on, experiential learning in challenging environments, including leadership roles within the sessions.
3. Develop programs and services around healing processes, such as restorative justice, conflict resolution, early intervention, and mediation
4. Learn about policies and procedures that support and protect LGBTQIA students and work to change the policies that may need improvements to better support.



Conference Outcomes

At the conclusion of this conference all participants should be able to demonstrate:

1. Shift in Perspective
2. Development of Communication
3. Increased Collaboration
4. Improved Cultural Knowledge and Self Awareness

11 AM – 12 PM

Post It Challenge: Divide into groups no larger than 20 people per group. Post large poster paper on the walls with the titles (one on each): Age, Gender Identity or Expression, Race, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Mental/Physical Ability, Education, Political Belief, Religion, and Socioeconomic Status. Ask the group to silently write on individual post-its how they describe themselves on each paper. For example, for Political Belief, people could put ‘Democrat,’ ‘moderate,’ ‘I don’t participate in politics,’ etc. They are open to posting any response they want. The reply should be anonymous and posted on the corresponding posters around the room. Once the small post-its are all

on display, the group should then do a silent gallery walk to observe the group's responses. Once the walk is complete, the moderator will read out the questions, and the group will respond.

Step to the card that:

- You feel most comfortable with
- Scares you the most
- You want to learn more about
- Had something on it that surprised you
- You feel challenged by
- You are most proud of
- You think about most
- Nobody knows about you
- Causes contention with family
- Causes contention with friends
- You feel misunderstood by
- You feel most supported at this institution
- You feel that needs more representation at this institution
- You have to stand up for or defend the most
- You feel most assumed or judged by
- Requires more focus or awareness in your life

Follow Up Questions:

What are ways that you work to support LGBTQIA students in their journey of discovering their own identity?

How does recognizing your own identity contribute to your work with LGBTQIA students?

11 AM -12 PM Concepts of Identity



Stepping Outside Self: The Context of Identity

What is identity and how does it form?

The distinctive characteristic belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group.

Individuation, is the development of the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity (known as personal continuity) in a particular stage of life in which individual characteristics are possessed and by which a person is recognized or known.

Pieces of the person's identity includes a sense of continuity, a sense of uniqueness from others, and a sense of affiliation with others of a like identity

Marcia's Identity Development

- **Identity-Diffusion** status is a status that characterizes those who have neither explored the options, nor made a commitment to an identity.
 - The individual does not have firm commitments regarding the issues in question and is not making progress toward them. Those who persist in this identity may drift aimlessly with little connection to those around them or have little sense of purpose in life.
- **Identity-Foreclosure** status is the status for those who have made a commitment to an identity without having explored the options.
 - The individual has not engaged in any identity experimentation and has established an identity based on the choices or values of others. Some parents may make these decisions for their children and do not grant the teen the opportunity to make choices. In other instances, teens may strongly identify with parents and others in their life and wish to follow in their footsteps.
- **Identity-Moratorium** status is a status that describes those who are exploring in an attempt to establish an identity but have yet to have made any commitment.
 - The individual is exploring various choices but has not yet made a clear commitment to any of them. This can be an anxious and emotionally tense time period as the adolescent experiments with different roles and explores various beliefs. Nothing is certain and there are many questions, but few answers.
- **Identity-Achievement** status refers to the status for those who, after exploration, have made a commitment.

D'Augelli's LGB Identity Development Model

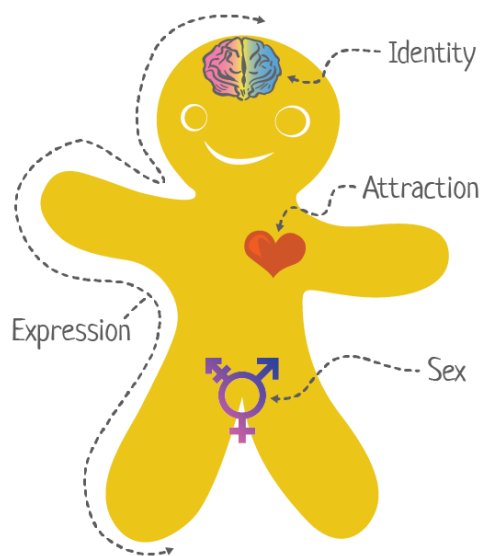
1. Exiting a **heterosexual** identity
2. Developing a personal lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity status
3. Developing a lesbian, gay, or bisexual social identity
4. Claiming identity as an LGB offspring
5. Developing an LGB intimacy status
6. Entering an LGB community

Discussion

How does identity of self, impact/affect the identity of others?

3-5 PM Queer 101: From the Ground Up

The Genderbread Person v4 by its pronounced METROsexual.com



⊖ means a lack of what's on the right side

Gender Identity

- ⊖ → Woman-ness
- ⊖ → Man-ness

Gender Expression

- ⊖ → Femininity
- ⊖ → Masculinity

Anatomical Sex

- ⊖ → Female-ness
- ⊖ → Male-ness

Identity ≠ Expression ≠ Sex
Gender ≠ Sexual Orientation

Sex Assigned At Birth
 Female Intersex Male

♥ Sexually Attracted to... and/or (a/o)

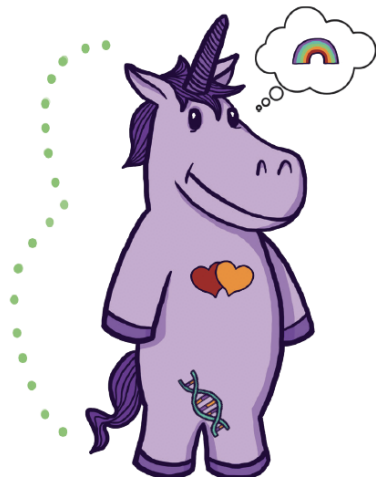
- ⊖ → Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People
- ⊖ → Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

♥ Romantically Attracted to...

- ⊖ → Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People
- ⊖ → Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

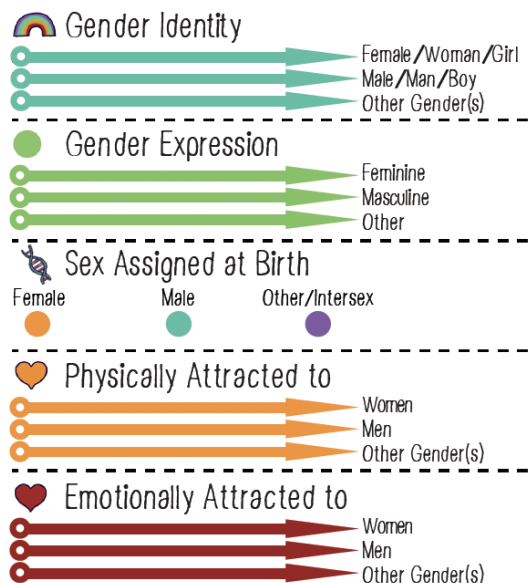
The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



GLSEN

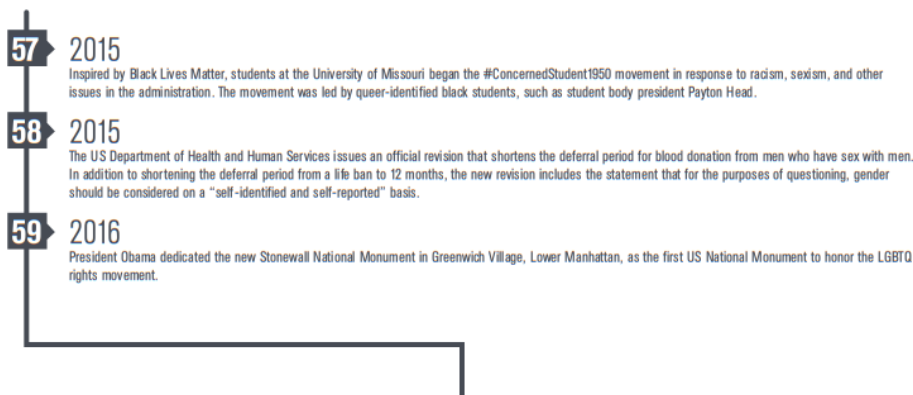
LGBTQ HISTORY TIMELINE REFERENCE

- 1** 2ND CENTURY, 130
Antinous, a 18-year-old man who was the Roman Emperor Hadrian's favorite lover, mysteriously dies in the Roman province of Egypt. After finding out about Antinous's death, Hadrian creates a cult that gave Antinous the status of a god and built several sculptures of him throughout the Roman Empire.
- 2** 1623
Francis Bacon, a noted gay man who coined the term "masculine love," publishes "The Advancement of Learning—an argument for empirical research and against superstition." This deductive system for empirical research earned him the title "the Father of Modern Science."
- 3** 1624
Richard Cornish of the Virginia Colony is tried and hanged for sodomy.
- 4** 1649
The first known conviction for lesbian activity in North America occurs in Marsh when Sarah White Norman is charged with "lewd behavior" with Mary Vincent Hammon in Plymouth, Massachusetts.
- 5** 1749
Thomas Cannon wrote what may be the earliest published defense of homosexuality in English, "Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify'd."
- 6** 1779
Thomas Jefferson revises Virginia law to make sodomy (committed by men or women) punishable by mutilation rather than death.
- 7** 1886
Wo'zhu, a Zuni Native American from New Mexico, is received by US President Grover Cleveland as a "Zuni Princess." They are an accomplished weaver, potter, and the most famous Ihamana, a traditional Zuni gender role, now described as mixed-gender or Two-Spirit.
- 8** 1924
Henry Gerber forms the Society for Human Rights, the first gay group in the US, but the group is quickly shut down.
- 9** 1925
Blaise Singer Ma Rainey is arrested in her house in Harlem for having a lesbian party. Her protégé, Bessie Smith, bails her out of jail the following morning. Rainey and Smith were part of an extensive circle of lesbian and bisexual African American women in Harlem.
- 10** 1928
The Well of Loneliness, by Radclyffe Hall, is published in the United States. This sparks great legal controversy and brings the topic of homosexuality to public conversation.
- 11** 1950
The first lasting gay organization, the Mattachine Society, is formed in Los Angeles. They refer to themselves as a "homophile" group. The group exists for about a decade before splitting into smaller entities.
- 12** 1952
Christine Jorgensen is the first American who comes forward publicly about being transgender and speaks openly about her experiences with gender confirmation surgery and hormone replacement therapy. Her transition causes an international sensation, and for many, she is the first visible transgender person in the media.
- 13** 1955
The Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), considered to be the first lesbian rights organization, is formed by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon in San Francisco, California. The group is conceived as a social alternative to lesbian bars, which were considered illegal and thus subject to raids and police harassment.
- 14** 1956
James Baldwin, African American novelist and intellectual, publishes his first novel, Giovanni's Room, a critically acclaimed work that explores bisexuality, as well as intimate relationships between men.

- 15** 1962
Illinois becomes the first U.S. state to remove sodomy law from its criminal code.
- 16** 1963
Bayard Rustin, noted civil rights activist and gay man, is the chief organizer behind the historic March on Washington, which culminates with Dr. Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech.
- 17** 1963
The first gay rights demonstration in the USA takes place on September 19th at the Whitehall Induction Center in New York City, protesting against discrimination in the military.
- 18** 1966
Compton Cafeteria Riot broke out at a San Francisco eatery when trans women were denied service and arrested for breaking gendered clothing laws.
- 19** 1969
Police raid the Stonewall Inn in New York City in the early hours of June 28. This leads to four days of struggle between police and LGBTQ people. Transgender people, LGBTQ people of color, and youth are a major part of these "riots" that mark the birth of the modern LGBTQ movement.
- 20** 1970
The first "Gay Liberation Day March" is held in New York City.
- 21** 1970
Marsha "Pay It No Mind" Johnson and Sylvia Rivera are co-founders of Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (STAR).
- 22** 1973
The board of the American Psychiatric Association votes 13-0 to remove homosexuality from its official list of psychiatric disorders, the DSM-II. The resolution also urges an end to private and public discrimination and repeal of laws discriminating against homosexuals. However, homosexuality continues to be pathologized by appearing as Sexual Orientation Disturbance in the DSM-II, and then as Egodystonic Homosexuality in the DSM-II. Sexual orientation is finally removed in the revised version of the DSM-III 1987.
- 23** 1977
Harvey Milk becomes the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in California when he wins a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.
- 24** 1980
Democrats are the first political party to add "gay rights" to their platform during the Democratic National Convention.
- 25** 1982
Nearly 800 people are infected with GRID (Gay-Related Immunodeficiency Disorder). The name is changed to AIDS by the year's end.
- 26** 1984
Virginia Urbie begins Project 10, a program to support LGBTQ students in a Los Angeles high school. The project is eventually adopted by the entire Los Angeles School District.
- 27** 1985
The first memorial to the Nazi's gay victims is unveiled at the Neuengamme concentration camp, a pink granite stone monument inscribed, "Dedicated to the Homosexual victims of National Socialism."
- 28** 1987
ACT UP, a direct-action activist group, is founded in the LGBT Community Center in New York City to bring attention to AIDS-related issues using civil disobedience.
- 29** 1989
Billy Tipton, a famous male jazz musician, dies. As a result, it becomes publicly known that Tipton was assigned female at birth but lived and identified as male for most of his adult life.

- 30** 1989
Denmark becomes the first country in the world to legally recognize same-sex unions, after passing a bill legalizing "registered partnerships" in a 71-47 vote.
- 31** 1991
Audre Lorde is named State Poet of New York. She is a critically acclaimed novelist, poet and essayist who was also politically active in the social justice movements, a cofounder of The Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, and an editor of the lesbian journal "Chrysalis."
- 32** 1994
Pedro Pablo Zamora (born Pedro Pablo Zamora y Diaz, February 29, 1972 – November 11, 1994) was a Cuban-American AIDS educator and television personality. As one of the first openly gay men with AIDS to be portrayed in popular media, Zamora brought international attention to HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ issues and prejudices through his appearance on MTV's reality television series, *The Real World: San Francisco*.
- 33** 1996
Kelli Peterson founds the Gay/Straight Alliance at East High School in Salt Lake City, Utah. The city school board bans all "non-curricular" student clubs in order to keep the group from meeting.
- 34** 1997
Elen DeGeneres and her television character, Elen Morgan, come out. *Ellen* becomes the first television show to feature a lesbian or gay lead character. The show is cancelled the following year.
- 35** 1998
Matthew Shepard, a gay Wyoming college student, is brutally beaten by two young men, tied to a fence and left overnight. He dies six days later.
- 36** 1998
Tammy Baldwin became the first openly lesbian candidate ever elected to Congress, winning Wisconsin's second congressional district seat over Josephine Musser.
- 37** 1999
GLSEN conducts its first National School Climate Survey to assess the experiences of LGBTQ youth with regards to their experiences of school-based harassment and victimization, the frequency with which they heard homophobic language in their schools, and their overall comfort in school. The survey is the first of its kind to examine the specific experiences of LGBTQ-identified youth in schools nationally.
- 38** 2002
NYC expands the definition of "gender" to include protections for transgender and gender non-conforming people in employment, housing, and public accommodations in the NYC Human Rights Law.
- 39** 2003
Horizon Foundation creates the *Gwen Arjoo Memorial Fund for Transgender Education* in honor of Gwen Arjoo, a slain trans teenager. The fund's purpose is to support school-based programs in the nine-county Bay Area that promotes understanding of transgender people and issues annual grants.
- 40** 2003
The U.S. Supreme Court overturns sodomy laws, proclaiming rights to privacy and decriminalizing "homosexual" behavior.
- 41** 2004
Massachusetts becomes the first U.S. state to legally recognize same-sex marriage.
- 42** 2006
Attorney and transgender activist Kim Coco Iwamoto is elected to the state-level Board of Education in Hawaii. She is the first openly transgender person to be elected to a state level office in the US.
- 43** 2006
Soulforce, an organization committed to confronting religious-based hate, launches its first Equality Ride bus tour, visiting 33 colleges and universities that ban enrollment of openly LGBTQ students.

- 44** 2009
President Obama signs the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, also known as the Matthew Shepard Act, into law. The law expands the 1969 U.S. federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability, and becomes the first federal law to include legal protections for transgender people.
- 45** 2009
The David Reiv Hate Crimes Prevention Act or David's Law was a bill first introduced in the US House of Representatives by Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee of Texas. It was designed to enhance federal enforcement of laws regarding hate crimes, and to specifically make sexual orientation, like race and gender, a [protected class](#).
- 46** 2011
The US military policy "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" officially ends. This allows lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to serve openly in the military. The repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" does not lift regulations barring many transgender people from serving.
- 47** 2011
United States Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan issues a statement clarifying that students have the right to form gay-straight alliances (GSAs) under the Equal Access Act of 1984 in any public school that allows noncurricular student groups to form. Schools must also provide GSAs with the same opportunities as other groups to convene and access resources.
- 48** 2011
When We Were Outlaws: a Memoir of Love and Revolution by Jeanne Cordova, lesbian activist and pioneer in the fight for LGBTQ rights, is published.
- 49** 2012
The Food and Drug Administration approves Truvada to be taken as a daily preventative for those at risk of acquiring HIV as PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis). The Center for Disease Control notes that this is the first time a drug has been approved to prevent acquisition of sexually and intravenous transmission of HIV.
- 50** 2013
The US federally recognizes same-sex marriages, extending federal benefits to couples in states that allow same-sex marriage. The Supreme Court strikes down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), a law signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996 that prohibited same-sex couples from receiving federal marriage benefits. On the same day, the Supreme Court also rules that California's Proposition 8 ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, allowing California to become the 13th state where same-sex couples can marry.
- 51** 2014
The Department of Education issues official guidance to clarify that transgender students are protected from discrimination under Title IX, a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against students on the bases of sex/gender in federally funded education programs and activities.
- 52** 2014
Laverne Cox is the first transgender woman to win an Emmy as an Executive Producer for *Laverne Cox Presents: The F Word*, a documentary. It aired on MTV.
- 53** 2014
Austin City Council approves ordinance for single-stall bathrooms to be recognized as gender-neutral.
- 54** 2015
The Supreme Court rules that states are constitutionally required to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, legalizing marriage equality in all 50 states.
- 55** 2015
Cincinnati votes to ban reparative/conversion therapy of LGBTQ youth.
- 56** 2015
MTV's critically acclaimed series *True Life* airs an episode covering the topic of living and being genderqueer, bringing to light for many viewers at home (beyond the introduction to the world outside of the gender binary) how to properly use the singular "they" and other neopronouns.



Safe Space Activity: Using a live Jamboard via Google allows the participants a space to ask questions or make comments anonymously. The aim is to enable the freedom to ask questions they might be scared to ask or unsure of the answer. As these questions and comments populate, the moderator can work to answer and address them.

Day 2

9-930 AM Icebreakers #2: Flying Challenges – Hand out pens and paper and prompt participants to write down their challenges in the context of their own identities or when interacting with LGBTQIA identities. Then instruct them to crumple up the paper into balls and throw them in the air at once. After this, each participant should pick up the nearest paper ball and read out some anonymous challenges. Allow for small discussions about the challenges that are named.

10-1130 AM Roundtable Discussion Questions

1. Go around and provide an introduction of each student – include identities they choose to share, what major, and other clubs and organizations they belong to on campus
2. What is the day-to-day lived experience of an LGBTQIA student at the institution?
3. Where do you find the most support for LGBTQIA students on campus? Why?
4. What challenges have you or someone you know experienced in the context of the LGBTQIA student identity?
5. What changes or improvements would you want to see for LGBTQIA students at the institution?
6. What is something you wish people knew more about in regards to the LGBTQIA experience?

130-230 PM

Challenges of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) Student in Higher Education

Findings of Study

Study Overview

- 11 full time LGBTQIA-identifying undergraduate participants
- Private 1-on-1 interviews
- Follow up review of transcripts
- Change of names and locations

Major Themes

- Impacts of intersectionality
 - Religion
 - Race
 - Gender
 - Socioeconomic Status
 - Employment
 - Neuro-Diversity and Mental Health
- Challenges within the LGBTQIA Center
- Challenges with the LGBTQIA clubs
- Non-acceptance
- Institutional disconnect.

Minor Themes

- Pre-College Challenges
- Domestic vs International
- Academic Inclusion

Discussion Questions

What challenges described resonated with you the most?

Which challenges were you unaware of?

What challenges do you want to learn more about?

230-330 PM Guiding Questions

- Assemble small groups for dialogue in which session leaders assign each of the groups a specific challenge identified in the data findings slides
- Questions:
 - What are the potential causes of the challenge?
 - What impacts does the challenge have on LGBTQIA students individually? As a community?
 - In your role, how can you support or advocate to help with this challenge?
- Have each group present their discussion and open up the challenge discussions to the whole group.

330-5 PM Allyship Slides

Internal Communities – Breaking the Barriers in Allyship



What is an ally?

- Any person who supports, empowers, or stands up for another person or group
- A non-group member who provides an outside perspective to assist the group

Goals of Allyship

- To organize, unify, and empower communities
- To develop allies
- To change systematic problems
- To create a moral standard
- To establish community connections

Steps to Becoming an Ally

Overcoming Prejudice and Confronting Personal Bias

Work to Educate Yourself

Avoid “Performative Allyship”

Confront Systems of Oppression

Embrace Discomfort

Learn and Grow from Mistakes

Listen!

Day 3

9-10 Icebreaker

“Defining Moments”

Gather into groups of ten and have them sit in a circle. Ask them to think about the three most defining moments in their life in regards to their identity. Have them write a few words about each one on a separate piece of paper.

When everyone finishes, take turns describing their defining moment in detail as much they feel comfortable sharing. Then have them discuss how those defining moments shaped them as individuals and the impact these moments had on their lives. Then tape

their moments to a blank wall to silently observe to see the moments of others. Allow for quiet reflection time.

1-3 PM Social Justice Slides

Making the Leap: Becoming an Active Advocate in Social Justice



What is Social Justice

- Full and equal participation of all groups in a society
- Upholding human rights
- Advocating for others, valuing equity and inclusion, and providing supportive environments

Privilege and Oppression

- Privilege
 - Unearned, unasked for, often invisible benefits and advantages not available to members of targeted groups
- Oppression
 - The discrimination of one social group against another, backed by institutional power
 - Occurs at the group or macro level and goes well beyond individuals

Strategies for Social Justice Work

- Self Work
 - Improving the education of the individual
- Inspiring & Educating Dominant Group Members
 - You have a responsibility to educate your colleagues
- Creating Institutional & Cultural Change
 - Share a responsibility to influence change on campus
- Supporting Target Group Members
 - Provides support, witness and advocacy

**"Social Justice is not a single act but a way of life.
It is
the conscious decision to challenge oneself and
others to refrain from participating in systems of
oppression that help to maintain inequity and the
status quo."
-Annice Fisher**

3-5 PM Individual Reflection Pt. 2

Self-Reflection Sheet (Part 1)

Name:

Role at Institution:

Reason for Participation:

What did you find and learn from this professional development workshop?

In what ways could your role further intersect with LGBTQIA students?

How will you work to better support LGBTQIA students?

What engagement could you have with the LGBTQIA student community?

What are your biggest takeaways from this professional development workshop?

Professional development workshop Assessment:

What were your key take aways from this event?

Your answer _____

How satisfied were you with the logistics? *

1 = Very dissatisfied 5 = Very satisfied

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Accommodation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-Conference Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication emails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Welcome activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Venue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sessions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Follow Up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional feedback on sessions *

Your answer _____

Which sessions did you find most relevant? *

	Not relevant	Relevant	Very relevant	Did not attend
Welcome activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaker #1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Activity #1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaker #2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Activity #2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Closing activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How satisfied were you with the session content?

Both presented and pre-read material

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent

Any additional comments regarding the sessions or overall agenda?

Your answer _____

For each of the following objectives please rate how well you think they were met 1 = Very dissatisfied 5 = Very satisfied

	1	2	3	4	5
Build opportunities for difficult discussions and reflection on issues of LGBTQIA needs and LGBTQIA inclusion to become part of daily practice, in which there is an acceptance for continuous learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involve participants in more high-impact, high-quality, and applied-to-learn activities that involve real-world problems, progressive issues, and big questions. Provide all participants with hands-on, experiential learning in challenging environments, including leadership roles within the sessions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop programs and services around healing processes, such as restorative justice, conflict resolution, early intervention, and mediation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Learn about policies and procedures that support and protect LGBTQIA students and work to change the policies that may need improvements to better support.

Any overall feedback for the event?

Your answer _____

Name (optional)

Your answer _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Below are the questions that guide the interviews.

Section 1: Perception of Identity

1. Within the framework of the LGBTQIA community, how do you identify?
2. When did you begin to identify as a member of the LGBTQIA community? What was that experience like for you?
3. Please describe other aspects of your identity (race, gender, ability, socioeconomic status, etc.) that directly impact your and others' perception of your LGBTQIA identity?
4. Before attending this institution, how open were you with your identity (at work, with family and friends, etc.)? Was this part of your identity welcomed/accepted?
5. Before attending this institution, how did your LGBTQIA identity impact your academic experience? How did it affect your lived experience?

Section 2: Detailed Experience

1. Upon starting your academic experience at this institution, what was your perception of the culture of the school concerning students who are LGBTQIA?
2. Describe how the perception of the campus culture changed over time and what experiences changed your opinion?
3. How would you describe the effectiveness of the institution's policies regarding equity and inclusion, anti-bullying, and anti-harassment?

4. What policies and procedures could be improved to create a more inclusive and safer environment for LGBTQIA students?
5. How supportive do you believe the institution would be of these changes? What steps would need to occur to ensure buy-in from faculty, staff, and students?

Appendix C: Alignment Matrix

Elements of Framework	Research Question	Interview Questions
<p>D'Augelli's (1994) human development model includes the factors that inform an individual's identity and how the human development model leads to the development of their LGBTQIA identity.</p> <p>- Fraser and Lamble (2015) aim to take a queer approach to pedagogic techniques that focus on queering the higher education system and introduce queer theory into all facets of education and development.</p>	<p>For LGBTQIA students in higher education, what is their lived experience residentially and socially at the institution, and how does their experience inform them as students?</p>	<p>Section 1: Perception of Identity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Within the framework of the LGBTQIA community, how do you identify? 2. When did you begin to identify as a member of the LGBTQIA community, and what was that experience like for you? 3. Are there other aspects of your identity (race, gender, ability, socioeconomic status, etc.) that impacts your and others' perception of your LGBTQIA identity? 4. Before attending this institution, how open were you with your identity (at work, with family and friends, etc.)? Was this part of your identity welcomed/accepted? 5. Before attending this institution, how did your LGBTQIA identity impact your academic experience?

		<p>How did it affect your lived experience?</p> <p>Section 2: Detailed Experience</p> <p>6. Upon starting your academic experience at this institution, what was your perception of the culture of the school concerning students who are LGBTQIA?</p> <p>7. Has your perception of the campus culture changed over time, and if so, how? What experiences changed your opinion?</p> <p>8. How would you describe the effectiveness of the institution's policies regarding equity and inclusion, anti-bullying, and anti-harassment?</p> <p>9. What policies and procedures could be improved to create a more inclusive and safe environment for LGBTQIA students?</p> <p>10. How supportive do you believe the institution would be of these changes? What steps would need to occur to ensure buy-in from faculty, staff, and students?</p>
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