College Campus Resource Centers: Trans-Friendly Or Trans-Ambivalent?

By Heidi Steinour

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Steven Tuch
Professor of Sociology

Abstract Of Thesis

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In recent years, many college campuses have invested in establishing campus based resource centers for the growing population of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) students. Almost all of the established resource centers target the LGBT community as a whole and researchers have argued that in many cases these centers overlook the unique challenges faced by the transgender student body. In this study the perceptions of LGBT campus center staff are analyzed and the practices, policies, programs, and advocacy of their programs are explored in relation to the challenges transgender students face. Implications for current and future campus based centers as well as the continued push for an inclusive college environment will be discussed.

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Introduction

In the past few decades the increased visibility of LGBTQ students on college campuses has caused university administration to rethink its inclusion policies. Inclusion policies are often focused on LGBTQ students as one homogenous group when in fact issues surrounding transgender and gender nonconforming students present new problems that need to be taken into consideration. Therefore, emerging studies about transgender students tend to analyze how these students are different from the LGB population. Prevalent literature surrounding the climate of college campuses and inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students predominantly focuses on three key areas: perceptions and experiences of LGBT people, perceptions about LGBT people, and the status of policies to improve the academic and living arrangements of LGBT people, (Renn, 2010, p. 134). Sanlo et al. (2002) state that climate studies provide data on experiences of and attitudes about LGBT people and can be used as a basis for creating and expanding LGBT programs and services on campuses.

In recent years a small number of studies have emerged that explore ideas for making campuses and educational institutions more inclusive and supportive of transgender students. Miner (2005), in his study of how to create a friendlier work and campus environment, noted that "the pitfall into which many of us have fallen is grouping the LGBT community into one diverse category and concentrating only on the LGB concerns and forgetting about transgender students" (p.69). Abes (2009) corroborated this view in a study of power structure and student development by showing that little research has been done on transgender students separate from the LGBT

community as a whole. The few studies conducted on transgender students and campus climate have concluded that there is a need for gender inclusive language, gender neutral facilities and housing as well as further education for administration, staff and students about transgender concerns and awareness.

Research specifically on inclusion for transgender students is needed because these students face issues with gender variance rather than or in addition to sexual orientation. Gender variance is defined as behaviors or expressions of gender that do not conform with dominant characteristics of female and male genders. The term *transgender, a*s defined by literature, is an inclusive term for all gender variant individuals, (Girshick, 2008, Valentine, 2007, Stryker, 2009). The term *transgender* includes individuals who identify as drag, femme, genderqueer, inter-gender, male to female, female to male, androgynous, and individuals who believe gender identity is fluid and situational. This distinction is important to understand in studies conducted about transgender individuals as gender expressions can be situational and at times do not conform to the traditional gender binary of male or female. It is also important to highlight this in studies of campus climate as many transgender students feel displaced by the structures of college campuses.

The term *gender* has become a very fluid concept meaning that it is unstable within and across populations, contexts or situations. Given this, sociologists most often have studied the gender identities of transgendered people through the theoretical lens of feminism, gender studies, and queer theory. Researchers have found that transgendered people usually fall into two categories: individuals who reject the gender binary and

remain fluid in their gender (known as *gender fluidity)*, and those who embrace the binary and attempt to transform their bodies and lives in order to meet a socially constructed view of the gender they want to assume (known as *gender performativity*).

Gender Fluidity

The Western gender binary places individuals into one of two gender categories: male or female. These categories are usually favored within society and given specific social and legal rights. Gender identities become reified through culture and are enforced by institutional structures such as media, family, law, politics, religion and education. Stryker (2009), in her innovative book *Transgender History*, states that gender is a social organization of different kinds of bodies into different categories of people that varies by culture and is continually evolving.

Transgender studies have begun to break down the connection between sex and gender by analyzing gender as a performative social construct. *Sex* as defined by West and Zimmerman (1987) is a "determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males, while *gender* is the activity of managing situated conduct in the light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category," (p. 127). Therefore, the expression of gender-variant individuals says little if nothing regarding their sex, sexual orientation or genetic makeup. Gender becomes a binding social construct given the specific interaction that is taking place and the specific structures that are influencing the individuals involved. This distinction is important in the study of transgendered people as

many do not adhere to this binary and do not fit into any one type of gender. Valentine (2007) found that many transgender people he interviewed in New York City saw gender as fluid and depending on the given context they would identify as male, female, both or androgynous.

A study by Ekins and King (1999) attempted to introduce a conceptual framework for developing theories for transgendered studies. Their article focuses on four distinct processes that the authors believe transgendered bodies can acquire through the process of gender variation. These four processes are as follows: migrating (moving from a body on one side of the gender binary to the other permanently), oscillating (moving back and forth across the gender divide), erasing (expunging gender altogether) or transcending (moving beyond gender and into a third space). They advocate that due to the many possibilities of transgendered identity and embodiment, future steps need to be taken to accurately address the sociology of transgendered bodies. They argue for studies that arise from grounded theory taking place in a specific social interaction, situation, and structure.

Many transgendered people have a hard time identifying themselves within the context of American society and with the use of the English language while others strive to successfully adopt and perform the traits of a given gender. Researchers have come to the conclusion that transgendered identities cannot be characterized in a generalizable way because the concept of gender and transgender identity is always changing (Valentine (2007), Schilt et al. (2007), Girshick (2008), Stryker (2009)).

Schilt et al. (2007), in a study of how transgendered identities are used to teach sociological concepts, demonstrated that transgendered individuals have been used in sociology to argue that gender is a social construct. This group of people have also been used to demonstrate how the gender binary and provide ways of challenging the heteronormative assumptions of society. Since gender is seen as a social construct by those with transgender identities, Schilt et al. argued that it is imperative to avoid classifying transgendered people. Girshick (2008) found among her interviewees that some transgendered people felt the need to be able to express "the truth of the moment." They believed that the truth about gender, sex, or sexuality is always shifting and therefore is reserved for the moment in which it occurs. Therefore, findings presented by studies of transgender individuals have been confusing and difficult to generalize.

Gender Performativity

While many transgendered people defy the gender binary and rely on gender fluidity as a source of identity others believe successfully performing a certain gender is critical. Appearance is important to establishing and maintaining a gender identity given that representation is an important way that society defines an individual. Many scholars support the framework of gender performativity by using Goffman's (1959) presentation of self and Butler's (1988) concepts of performativity. Goffman wrote about performance and acting in everyday life by showing that people choose what costume or props to utilize when they construct how they want the world to see them.

Butler related this theory to gender specifically in her works that describe gender as an act, something that is rehearsed, repeated, and displayed (Butler, 1988). However, Butler grounds her theory in the idea that "gender is not a stable identity in which various acts proceed," (p 1). Rather, her understanding is that identity is constituted in time and creates reality though repetition and embodiment. Therefore her application of performativity to gender allows the concept of gender to be understood as a variety of expressions rather than a fixed category.

West and Zimmerman in an analysis of Garfinkel's (1967) study of Agnus, a transsexual boy who obtains a female identity, demonstrated how gender can be adopted and performed in daily life. They specified that Agnus was not faking what real women do, but rather learning how to be a woman with the socially constructed conception of what a woman is and does. Girshick's (2008) collection of interviews regarding transgendered people notes that gender is being and doing. She states that many transgendered people believe that acting out a gender identity is what Wilchins (1997) refers to as a "performance of internal visualization," (as cited by Girshick, 2008, p.70). By this she infers that transgendered people use appearance to express their true internal identity to the world. Factor and Rothblum (2008) show that "dressing is defined as the way one presents themselves that feels most satisfying," (p. 246). This study analyzed gender identity, sexual identity, clothing, medical procedures and community involvement among transgendered people. Results from this study show tremendous variation among gender experience and expression existing within a specific transgender population.

Another article by Maltz (1998) analyzes the performativity of "stone butch" individuals and the efforts they make to embrace masculinity. In order to assess the use of masculinity Maltz conducts research on New York City drag shows and analyzes the different displays of masculinity among drag kings. She introduces a concept she calls "passing," which requires legitimate markers of attaining, performing and mastering the opposite gender; in this case masculinity. She states that stone butches define themselves as "definitely not a woman but not quite a man" (p. 280). Stone Butch individuals participate in drag shows in an attempt to own their masculinity and command it with authority. The author also notes that at times stone butch individuals critique masculinity by mocking the appearance of "maleness" with society.

Purpose of the Study

Based on the diverse nature of how transgender students construct their gender and the specific services that they require, focus on campus climate and how institutions are providing these services is critical. This study aims to explore how the staff and administration of LGBT support centers on college campuses view institutional support of transgender students and in turn challenge the heteronormative structures to which a campus structure adheres. Analyzing perceptions and understanding of the staff is key to this study in order to understand how the staff and administration perceive gender identity in relation to overarching campus structure. It is important to assess the staff's base understanding of how "gender" is defined in order to improve services or policies that may address one aspect of gender variance but not another.

This study is being conducted to gain insight into how LGBT centers support, advocate, and protect transgender students, specifically, while assisting them in facing the challenges of transitioning into college life. To gain insight into LGBT center practices this study explores perceptions of LGBT center staff on programs, policies, and education put in place to help change the way transgender students on college campuses are understood and supported as well as the challenges faced in creating an accepting and understanding environment. With the emergence of multiple identities and this concept of gender fluidity, transgendered people are able to explore and create identities that are specific and unique to them. The more these identities are researched and understood, the easier it will be for transgendered people to be fully integrated in society.

Abes & Kasch suggest that educators and administration can help support students by helping them identify and overcome obstacles of identity formation that contradicts the social norms. They also suggest that it is necessary for educators to challenge their own views on student development and understand that decisions they make can be based on a heteronormative assumption. This is one of the main goals of student and staff advocacy through LGBT campus centers. Once this process is understood the administration can become allies of the students rather than onlookers.

Given that queer theory is grounded with a focus on the intersection of identities it has been used as a theoretical model for studying gender identities among college students was utilized successfully by Abes and Kasch's (2007) in their study of the multiple identities of lesbian students. Abes and Kasch applied queer theory to a longitudinal study of lesbian identity to show how lesbian college students' sexuality and

identity resist heteronormative structures. The authors address what they call queer-authorship as the "necessary deconstruction of heteronormativity" as a way for lesbian students to change and redefine the meaning of their identity outside that of a heteronormative binary" (p. 630). By creating and recreating multiple meanings of identity, lesbian students are able to resist heteronormativity to construct their identities.

Theoretical Framework

In this study I explore the perceptions and experiences of eight LGBT centers and staff through the theoretical framework of queer theory in order to understand how their vision of LGBT center support allows for a rethinking of the institutional structures rather than strictly finding a place for the inclusion of the transgender people within the existing institution. Queer theory "critically analyzes meaning and identity with a focus on the intersection of identities and resistance to oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender," (Abes & Kasch, 2007, p 620). By this Abes and Kasch means that queer theory focuses on the multiplicity and meaning of identities that are formed and maintained among individuals in society. These identities are then analyzed in relation to how they relate to or challenge the rigid gender binary that is structured within our society. Queer theory explicitly acknowledges the influence of sexual politics on gender, and conceptualizing gender as a social construct (rather than an inherent trait) and problematizes social hierarchies that rely on a heteronormative structure. The use of queer theory has allowed researchers to challenge heteronormativity as a fundamental principle in the organization of social structures and order.

Challenging heteronormativity as a fundamental principle of institutional organizational structures is a striving goal of the eight LGBTQ centers and staff that were interviewed. The goal of LGBTQ center staff is to advocacy for an administrative and institutional change that fully includes and supports gender minorities throughout their academic careers. Heteronormativity is the unquestioned assumption that people in society fall into the distinct gender categories of male and female as well as the assumption that male and female relationships are the dominant ideology. Queer theory argues the opposite of this by stating that gender, sexual identities, and desires are fluid and dynamic and therefore change within certain contexts (Gamson & Moon, 2004).

Seidman in his books *Difference Troubles (1997)* and *Contesting Knowledge* (2004) argued that researchers need to challenge the social structures that perpetuate the production of subjects within a heteronormative gender binary. Seidman viewed the normative gender binary as a power/knowledge regime that defines how we relate to our bodies, pleasures and sexual behaviors; therefore creating what is acceptable and what is considered deviant.

The concept of a power/knowledge regime was first introduced by a philosopher by the name of Michel Foucault who analyzed the relations of power through the history of sexuality and discourse in his book *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault ([1974] 1990) used the history of sexuality to examine the discourse and deployment of sexuality while questioning who has done the speaking, as well as how and in what context sexuality is discussed. He directly links knowledge to power and states that what we know and how we came to know it is determined by the power relations that motivate our will to know.

He concluded that speaking about a certain group of people in a certain way becomes a method to construct those people as subjects, analyzing how they are situated and produced within society.

The production of this binary, Seidman argued, creates a challenge for sexual politics because "a binary system creates rigid psychological and social boundaries that give rise to systems of dominance and hierarchy" (Seidman, 1997, p. 149). Seidman was referring to the sexual and gender boundaries (male, female, heterosexual) that are placed on society as a way to structure and control how systems in society are constructed. Therefore, Seidman argued that sexual identities should be viewed as a category of knowledge rather than an innate characteristic and studied within the cultural, social and historical context of each situation. Seidman advocated for queer theory as a theoretical framework for studying gender identity and gender binary regimes within this socio-historical context.

Renn (2010) further advocated for queer theory as a theoretical framework for gender studies; specifically in studying college student's identities. She argued that researchers must move past a post-positivist exploration (a theory of objective reality) of transgender experiences to a postmodernism or queer approach that analyzes the multiple identities of gender identity. This concept is important to the study of transgender student inclusion on college campuses because it emphasizes how difficult it can be to understand and advocate for multiple gender realities within a structure that relies on gender binaries.

Adam Green (2007) wrote an article on the misunderstood yet beneficial nature of queer theory to sexual and gender studies. Green advocated that queer theory should focus on the social order rather than the subjective self and therefore queer theory tends to revolve around social dissolution rather than a set of characteristics of the self. He argued that queer theory "seeks to disrupt the normalizing tendencies of the sexual order, locating non heteronormative practices and subjects as a crucial site of resistance," (pg. 28 as referenced by Butler 1993; Warner 1993; Eng et al. 2005). Given this controversy, Green stated that queer theories "contribution to sexuality studies lies not in the uncovering of subjects and services but by pivoting the analysis to a broader field of normalization that invokes the terms and the social order so that it might ultimately reduce them to obsolescence," (pg. 43). This concept is invoked by LGBT center staff in their attempts to relate the identification of transgender students to the broader social structures of institutions that are currently excluding gender minorities.

Universities reliance on a heteronormative structures creates a great burden for inclusion of transgender students. Therefore, by situating perceptions of transgender students within a queer framework this study is able to analyze how current administrative and structural practices that are in place affect the experiences of gender minorities on college campuses. The concept of gender and sexuality are assumed to be social constructs that are affected and maintained by structures of power and regulation (Gamson & Moon, 2004).

Given queer theory's notion that gender is intertwined with power, gender binaries and the idea of fixed categories are seen as a basis for discrimination and

oppression. Therefore, organizational structures in society that follow a heteronormative environment inevitably exclude gender and sexual minorities. This environment is representative of most of today's college campuses in that structures, administration and faculty members are not knowledgeable, understanding or equipped with the resources to transcend and support the nature of gendered bodies transitioning into college life.

Prior Research on Policies to Promote Inclusion of Transgender Students

In recent years few studies have emerged that explore ideas for making college campuses and educational institutions more inclusive and supportive of transgender students. However, most of these studies center on how transgender bodies are identified and included within the current structure of college campuses. Miner (2005) conducted a study that identified potential solutions for the inclusion of transgender students on college campuses. Miner found that there is a growing need for student service administrators to create and implement a policy that allows for successful, confidential name and gender changes on academic records for students who changed their gender identity. He discussed the need for gender neutral facilities on all campuses in order to not only promote inclusion but also to protect transgender students from violence and harassment in the bathroom. He also advocated for the inclusion of gender identity and expressive language in the non-discrimination policies in effect on college campuses.

Beemyn , Curtis, Davis & Tubbs (2005) also explored issues faced by transgender students on college campuses. They corroborated Miner's findings regarding the need for gender inclusive language and gender neutral facilities. However, Beemyn et al. also

suggested the need for private locker rooms to protect transgender athletes from being outed by their teammates. Beemyn et al. examined the need for proper academic and educational programs that include knowledge and support for transgender students facing a gender identity crisis. Another proposal identified by these authors was the need for professional and educated campus resource center staff that can address issues of gender identity, counseling, health care, and violence against transgender students.

Messenger (2009) also conducted a study of creating LGBT friendly college campuses. Her findings support those of Miner and Beemyn et al. in promoting gender inclusive language and support for transgender students. Messenger found that only 567 colleges nationwide offer support, protection and inclusive language policies for transgender students. This number represents approximately 8% of all college campuses currently in the country. Her study identified a series of steps that can help administrators and students successfully foster inclusive policies and proper support centers for LGBT students.

Messenger wrote about the importance of proper leadership and local government support in passing LGBT friendly policies and creating LGBT support centers. She advised that the leadership on campuses must put together strong cases for the LGBT community that required providing academic literature, briefings, success stories, policy implications and successful models of policies that are being presented. She also mentioned the importance of language in the models proposed as well as the need for a strong staff to implement approved policies in order to truly promote and see change on college campuses.

Ritchie and Banning (2001) conducted a qualitative based research study on the development and success of LGBT campus support centers by pulling themes from surveys, interviews and documents created by 20 campus based resource centers. Ritchie and Banning specifically focused on the obstacles faced by LGBT centers, the support received for the centers and suggestions for improvement through employee feedback. Their findings showed that most centers face obstacles of funding, educated staff and campus politics in initially establishing support centers. Their analysis of the surveys answered by current employees showed that future visions for the support centers suggested fundraising techniques, expansion of services for LGBT students and ways in which the center can impact policy and activism on the campus and in the surrounding community.

In today's campus environment there are roughly more than 100 professionally established LGBT resource centers on college campuses nationwide to address the needs of the LGBT community. While this number is certainly an improvement from previous years the fact remains that there are not enough professionally staffed and educated personnel to deal directly with transgender students. A survey study conducted by Rankin (2004) on the perceptions and experiences of LGBT students about climate and diversity on college campuses shows that despite the establishment of LGBT resource centers and recent campus policy changes nearly 60% of queer college students felt they were targeted for harassment, violence and discrimination. Rankin also found that, based on her respondents, most transgender students felt underrepresented and that transgender minorities felt unsafe due to the overwhelming presence of white transgender students.

Based on these findings Rankin suggested the need to provide awareness for queer issues and equip LGBT resource centers with staff who have been properly educated on LGBT issues.

A later study on the perceptions of university administration from the responses of LGBT identified students by Susan Rankin (2005) also advocated for a shift in the organization of institutional structures. She stated that "as participants in institutions of power, higher education faculty and staff are part of systems of relations that can silence those who are not in positions of power. Heterosexism and homophobia, for example, operate to reinforce the heterosexual norm," (p 21). To address this system, Rankin suggested that a shift in basic assumptions and premises must be achieved throughout the university. These assumptions must be challenged with the understanding of diverse sexualities and relationships rather than heterosexual assumptions. Only then can an institution take the steps that it needs to become more inclusive and supportive of all its students

Using queer theory's basis that non-heteronormative practices are a site of resistance as a theoretical model, I assert that the staff of LGBT campus based resource centers are fighting for a restructuring of campus administration and services. By changing the way in which administration, faculty and students envision gender identity, sexual identity and gender expression, LGBT center staff are opening the doors to a more understanding, knowledgeable and supportive campus environment. With continued efforts and education there is hope that in the near future campus institutions as a whole can recreate structures that are not based strictly on a heteronormative structure. Renn

(2010) stated that "the insights to be gained from queered analyses of apparently nonqueer organizations have the potential to move discussions of persistent, intractable problems (e.g., access, equity, diversity, student success) to new solutions", (p. 137).

Methodology

This study of the support LGBT campus centers provide for transgender students uses a qualitative inductive approach. By this I mean explore research questions through the context of interviews and sensitizing concepts in order to create themes or theories from the information gathered. I use the phrase "sensitizing concepts" here to mean concepts or notions that guide observations and data collection in inductive qualitative research. These concepts incorporate previous theory and research as well as a researcher's own biases and interests. This method is chosen in order to gain a concrete understanding of how LGBT campus center staff perceive their college climate, how transgender students are assisted and included on college campuses and what administrators believe still needs to be addressed within their institutions. In-depth, semi structured interviews are conducted with a small number of LGBT directors and assistant directors at universities on the East Coast of the United States. The purpose of these interviews is to accurately assess the perceptions and reality of the administrators as they face the complex issue of supporting transgender and gender non-conforming students who are adapting to college life.

In order to obtain participants for this study, a comprehensive list of established LGBT centers was created. The centers chosen for this study included LGBT centers with

at least one full time staff member in order to represent universities with an active, established diversity center specifically for LGBTQ services. Each center was reached directly by either email or phone in order to obtain participants for the study. Fifteen centers in the Mid-Atlantic area were contacted and out of that fifteen, eight agreed to participate in the study. Each center director who agreed to participate in the study was interviewed over the phone for the duration of thirty minutes to an hour.

One of the participants requested that the interview take place over email. Therefore, this participant was sent a list of semi-structured, open ended questions to evaluate the center's services for transgender students, campus climate and future endeavors for the center. After the responses were initially received, follow up was conducted to request specification of certain responses. Given that the communication was not over the phone and therefore not continuous the same questions available for phone participants were not incorporated in this interview.

All participants were assured of confidentiality for themselves and the college at which they were employed. The center directors were employed at universities in the Mid-Atlantic including the states of North Carolina, Virginia, Washington DC, Pennsylvania and New York. The universities represented in this study are both public and private with established campus based resources centers for the LGBT community. Given budget constraints, all of the offices except for one have two full time staff, graduate assistants and periodically rotating interns or work study undergraduates. The one exception had more than three full time staff members.

Of the participants in this study two out of the eight respondents identified as male while the other six identified as female. All of the directors had a background in sociology, social work, and social justice or LGBT issues. One of the men was an associate director as the director was not available at the time of interview. He had LGBT issues as a concentration in his graduate work. Race or ethnicity was not discussed in the interview process.

The interview questions (see Appendix A) address how the LGBT campus support center included transgender students, what struggles the staff faced establishing and administering policies and what further actions could be taken to best benefit transgender students in feeling included on the campus. Interviews were immediately transcribed. Interviews were transcribed in order to assess what emerging patterns and contexts could be found. After interviews were transcribed they were sent to back to staff members (at the staff members request) who were interviewed to ensure that words, phrases and meanings were accurate and not misconstrued from their original meaning. Transcribed interviews were not sent back to all participants just those who had requested review of their interview. This process of member participation is to ensure that the themes and patterns identified are accurate, (Leitz & Zayas, 2010).

Once the transcriptions were reviewed by the participants and returned to the researcher they were coded for themes that help categorize the responses into meaningful units of analysis. Coding refers to "assigning one or more key words to a text in order to permit later identification of the statement," (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 201). These

coded texts are then used to generate themes. In other words, what are the central themes that are prevalent among LGBT center staff about transgender student experiences? Themes were coded based on meanings, phrases or words that represent the perceptions of the participants interviewed. The goal of obtaining themes is to categorize long interviews into a few simple categories, (Kvale & Brinkmann, p. 203). Once all of the participant data was properly coded, patterns and themes were identified and discussed. The coding for the data collected consisted of Understanding of Trans-friendly, services offered to transgender students, and future concerns for the university climate

After the themes have been thoroughly reviewed they were pulled together to see what meaning can be given and attributed to what the participants were saying. The importance of assigning meaning to the themes is to create and decipher possible theories among the responses. Rather than just describe what the participants have said the goal is to generate comparisons, ideas, and suggestions regarding the perception of staff members and use them to elaborate on how college campuses can better include these students. This elaboration is presented in the discussion section below.

Findings

The results of this study are presented by reporting major themes derived from the responses of the staff at mid-Atlantic LGBT campus support centers. After careful analysis of the responses given during the interview process a steady and consistent understanding of the term "trans-friendly campus" was identified. However, while many of the staff members shared similar views on the applicability of a trans-friendly campus,

many found that in order to adhere to the heteronormative structures of college campuses, distinct characteristics of the trans-subject had to be identified in order to apply trans-friendly, supportive and protective services, programs and academia for the inclusion of transgender students.

Trans-Friendly Campus

LGBTQ center staff's perceptions of campus climate and trans-friendly practices were assessed by asking them what the term trans-friendly meant to them. They were then asked to apply their meaning of the term to the actual administration and campus climate at their university to assess how trans-friendly the campus was in their view. The term trans-friendly was derived from previous interviews I conducted with transgender students who repeatedly mentioned that university services were not trans-friendly. Their understanding of this term was awareness and knowledge about transgender issues, the offering of transgender specific services, advocacy for transgender students and the necessity of staff and administration to implement equitable and fair practices for gender minorities.

The meaning and understanding of the term trans-friendly, as applied to university campuses, varied among the different staff members and institutions who participated in this study. However, it was clear that trans-friendly meant much more than creating an "accepting and not discriminating" climate for trans-folk. In fact trans-friendly was considered to be a transcending of the subject of transgender people. In other words, all of the staff members believed that a mere acceptance of transgender

students and allowing of certain rights, programs and inclusive rights was not enough to truly to challenge the overarching structures that inevitably exclude gender minorities. The views and visions of a trans-friendly campus transcended a specified set of characteristics and resolutions and went into the realm of disrupting of the current social structure.

All of the participants believed that a full institutional change was required for transgender students to ever feel fully accepted on campus. One participant referred me to the Promising Practices for Inclusion of Gender Identity/Gender Expression in Higher Education as a guidebook for how administrators can begin to implement Trans-friendly programs and practices on their college campuses. Success of these types of changes required full support of the administration in order to successfully transform the way in which the institution viewed gender from that of a binary to that of a fluid or non-gendered space. A non-gendered space referred to rethinking of structure in terms of male and female rather than merely creating a new space to allow for a new understanding of the gendered self. One participant stated that "institutions must move beyond the gender binary to truly advocate for trans-inclusive space that does not segregate or form around the concept of gender," (Interviewee 3). Another stated that "on campus there is a lack of knowledge about how to react in a gender neutral space. At least that is my perception. For example student's may not understand how to react to seeing a transgender student in the bathroom or what is appropriate and what is not," (Interviewee 2). This participant believed that most of the students adhere to and live within a gender structured institution and therefore exclusion of transgender students is inherent. As a result, there was a strong

desire to see education and knowledge about a shift away from gendered space brought to the administration and the students on college campuses.

Based on navigating a heteronormative space, the term trans-friendly has come to mean providing a trans-inclusive and trans-supportive climate for students. By this, respondents believed for a campus to claim to be trans-friendly certain structures had to be in place to protect, encourage and include transgender students. One of the directors interviewed stated that "bare minimum a campus must have gender inclusive policies, procedures and language as well as gender neutral bathrooms and facilities, educational training of staff and students and gender neutral housing, (Interviewee 4). Of the eight centers interviewed, six had already established the minimum requirements for their students.

Administrative support has been important to any successful implementation of trans-inclusive facilities, policies, or security measures. Half of the staff members interviewed believed that their administration had a strong commitment to resolving issues and making changes when needed. Without this support, students have felt like the campus is "trying" or "striving" to be inclusive rather than actually being inclusive. All the campuses who believed they had administrative support addressed concerns about the support coming in the form of a reactive nature. This meaning that once a certain incident arose, the institution would be willing to work with the student and center to resolve the issue. However, the staff members felt that to create a more trans-friendly climate the institution must take a more proactive approach. One of the participants summarized it as "a need for institutions to anticipate future changes and implement them," (Interviewee

5). This way you are addressing the concerns prior to students or staff reaching out for assistance.

Trans-Inclusive Programs

In addition to the structural changes institutions are beginning to make, successful changes have also been implemented on university campuses to provide more efficient trans-specific services, courses, programs, advocacy and trainings. These changes have been created and implemented mainly by staff of the LGBT campus resources center. Among the multiple campus created programs for inclusion Safe Zones were the most successful. The goal of a Safe Zone is to create a safe and welcoming environment for transgender students as well as promote networking and educational support for staff, students and faculty. The main purposes of these Safe Zones are to recruit and educate heterosexual allies to help support and advocate for the LGBT community.

In addition to Safe Zones, all of the schools hosted transgender awareness weeks to support and create awareness of transgender students on campus. At these and other events speakers and popular academics were brought in to teach staff and students about transgender specific issues and academic literature. Networking groups such as *Trans Talk or Trans Talk Tuesdays* were created to allow for networking among transgender students and their allies. The centers also provide training for staff, students, faculty and health services about trans issues to push for a more accepting and educated campus.

Student health care centers create difficult obstacles for transgender students because they are not properly informed about treatments, therapies and hormone

replacements that are sought by many students. In many cases, transgender students do not have access to proper healthcare coverage and are told to look for assistance off campus. LGBT center staffs have assisted in this problem by successfully establishing relationships with the university services (and specifically student health) in order to provide trainings for the staff members, address concerns brought to the LGBT center by students and implement academic policies to better serve transgender students.

Advocacy has also resulted in the inclusion of counseling, psychotherapy and hormones on student's insurance to assists students who are in transition. One director took pride in the fact that her office helped establish a relationship with their medical school to change the curriculum for medical students to include practice rounds and academic review of transgender health issues. Another implemented a transition policy that requires assistance for students in transition as well as the allies who work with them.

All of the LGBT centers who participated stated that they have implemented some form of an evaluative review process that assesses educational outcomes and success of services as well as possible concerns to be addressed. In some cases individual surveys were sent to students who participated in specific programs. These surveys were designed to "see why those students chose to come, what they learned and how they heard about the event," (Interviewee 1). One university conducted focus groups to ask transgender students about safety concerns and experiences, presentation of facilities, classroom experiences, and how the center itself can better enhance student life. Others utilized findings from the campus climate surveys to understand how the climate is shifting from

one year to the next. The more tenured offices conducted annual external reviews over a three to five year term to evaluate the center and its efforts.

Future Concerns

Although implemented programs and policies were extremely helpful in supporting and protecting transgender students on campus, staff members still had their doubts about how effective they could be with such limiting provisions. Tension and frustration was expressed around the fact that each center only had one to four staff members that were responsible for advocating on behalf of transgender issues. Staff spoke of a reoccurring frustration with having a two person office handle all the trainings, outreach, advocacy and policy changes. With the scarcity of staff and resources, the center staff felt that providing a space for transgender students was not sufficient to include the multiplicity of gendered bodies that encompass the world today.

Due to this reality, many center staff felt that their efforts expressed a climate that was trans-friendly but as for the institutions as a whole much work was needed. One participant stated that the "institution was not trans-friendly but rather trans-ambivalent," (Interviewee 3). Therefore, a consistent theme throughout the responses expressed a desire for universities to be discussing, brainstorming, and bringing awareness to new ideas and structures. The LGBT center staff believed that institutions needed to pull together to help promote an inclusive environment for all gendered bodies. One participant stated that institutions must move beyond the gender binary to advocate for trans-inclusive space that does not segregate. Another believed that his perception of the

students on campus revealed a lack of awareness to transgender students. Therefore, a concern for him was that most people who would encounter a transgender student may not know how to properly react.

Additionally concerns were addressed surrounding the complexity of utilizing preferred names, pronouns or coding for student administrative systems. This problem can be attributed in part to the lack of knowledge of the institutional staff as well as out of date database systems. To resolve this issue staff have been working directly with student services and computer programmers to try to restore proper coding of students to include correct pronouns or changed legal name. LGBT centers also worked closely with each student service office to ensure that the rosters used for housing assignments, classes, admissions among others had the most up to date name and pronoun requested by the student.

As discussed previously, only six of the eight schools who participated considered themselves trans-friendly. The other two did not. The difference between these schools relied mainly on the regulation at the state and local governing level. Given that state laws did not include gender expression or identity in state wide non-discrimination policies, the schools themselves were limited in their ability to include and protect transgender students. Without inclusionary and protective language, students who are openly transgender on campus are not legally protected and there is little effort currently being made to include them.

This legislative barrier also denies transgender students health coverage, hormones, and psychotherapy because they are not recognized by state laws. Gender

neutral housing, bathrooms and facilities were not standard on all new buildings and there was much push back from staff advocating for plans for create them. Although attempts had been made by center staff to change these policies, considerable pushback was received. One center staff member stated that the top administration has decided not to fight the necessary political battles in order to obtain permission for transgender inclusive programs or facilities. Another referenced "that there is a strong fear of losing state funding" should an institution not adhere to the popular ideology, (Interviewee 6). Based on the predominate ideologies and beliefs of the states, the center staff were forced to try and foresee what programs or services would be needed should inclusive language one day be acceptable and in turn attempt to implement them without administrative support.

Discussion

The desire to truly imagine what an institution would look like if it relied on de-gendered spaces may be one of the primary characteristics of a trans-friendly campus, and it was prevalent in all of the interviews conducted in this study. While the staff members of the participating LGBT campus centers have done their best to create awareness and acceptance of transgendered individuals, many of them still believe that creating space for multi-gendered bodies in a binary structure is never going to be truly accepting, including or protecting of transgender students. In order to fully understand and include transgender students, LGBT center staff strives towards dissolution of the social order in which administrative services, building structures, facilities, academia and student services rely on a heterosexual binary that inevitably excludes gender minorities.

A specific example given in the interview process was in regards to the gender neutral bathroom signs. One staff member was not satisfied with a gender neutral bathroom that showed a sign of either male and female or family restroom. As she stated, "this is not inviting to transgender students as it still boxes people into the concept of a gender binary and can be offensive to many people," (Interviewee 7). The very idea that a solution to gendered bathrooms was to create a male and female bathroom space was not sufficient for how the staff member of these centers viewed a trans-friendly campus

While institutional structures and state laws limited the potential for LGBT center staff to implement a true change in organization structures, many took small steps to change the institutional structures for future planning. Examples of this change were indicative in new building plans that were required to have gender neutral bathrooms, housing or facilities to ensure that new space was created outside that of a male and female binary. Staff members also conducted trainings and seminars that spoke not only to current transgender lives or needs but to how the campus as a whole can learn to adapt to a change in the gendered structure as well as ways in which students can learn to accept and act towards gender minorities.

Established relationships with student services and student health care opened doors for center staff to educate medical professionals on ways they can learn to serve transgender students without preconceived assumptions of the traditional male or female gender roles, questions, tests or labs. Finally, advocacy for transgender rights, space and inclusion is the most productive way that center staffs make sure their voice is heard and considered among top administrative and state levels.

Although significant progress has been made by LGBT center staff and student support, inclusion for transgender students will require a change of the institution as a whole. Although this type of change will take time and constant effort on the part of staff, faculty and students there are a few minor changes that can be implemented in the near future to help move institutions in the right direction. One proposal is updating institutional computer database systems to include spaces for name changes, preferred names and preferred gender pronouns. This allows for systems that do not adhere strictly to the concept of a gender binary and also introduces the staff of university services to the idea of the multiple genders and realities of the students they deal with on a daily basis. A few of the centers are working directly with software companies and programmers such as Oracle and Banner to assist in developing and implementing a system for university wide services.

Another proposition is to obtain support from the senior administrators of institutions to create plans and structures that would degender new spaces in buildings, facilities, classrooms and services. This proposal creates a way to not only insert institutional changes into daily administrative conversations but it also allows for a restructuring of future development and progression to expand the concept of multiple genders and realities beyond the work of LGBT center staff.

For the institutions that are still fighting at odds with state and local lawmakers, a redrafting of state laws regarding gender and sexual minorities needs to be put into effect. Although advocacy for a change in state laws has happened, the political battle for equal rights among gender and sexual minorities is still receiving pushback. This debate is

consistently developing across the fifty states but until a consensus is reached true changes in university structures may be difficult to achieve. Future studies on how students, staff and allies can assist in bringing awareness to administrators, lawmakers and politicians will help this advocacy spread and hopefully allow for the continuing expansion of LGBT centers, the number of staff and the effects their cause has on institutional structures.

Limitations

This study encountered a few limitations that will be addressed in this section. In order to minimize these limitations as much as possible several precautions were taken. As with many qualitative studies the findings may not be generalizable to all LGBT center staff or the inclusive environments of all college campuses. However, the information gathered in this study will be presented in a way that the study can be duplicated at other campuses in order to compare and contrast the findings. Future research and collaboration on the needs of transgender students and the degendering of institutional structures will be beneficial to creating a more inclusive environment, reducing violence and hate crimes and implicating additional strategies and policies that administrators can follow in the future.

A second limitation exists with the sensitivity of the proposed topic and the limited population of transgender students. In order to address this limitation confidentiality and trust were established with the participants and maintained throughout the study. A concise and carefully constructed questionnaire was created to ensure that

the perceptions of the participants were heard, understood, and presented in an appropriate, sensitive manner.

A third consideration is the validity of the responses. To ensure that my coding is valid and representative of the responses I chose to use participant feedback (as noted above), faculty reviews, repetitive analysis of the data, and possibly negative case sampling. Faculty reviews were conducted once the data was coded and analyzed for theme analysis. This is to ensure that my conclusions are properly supported. During the process of coding I used the technique of reflexivity (CITE) to critically evaluate my own bias in the research. The principle of reflexivity assumes that a person's thoughts and ideas are inherently biased so by critically reviewing my themes and patterns I was able to minimize my own bias in the findings. Participant feedback was also utilized to ensure that I am not misreading the transcriptions based on my own previously determined knowledge of the subject. No negative case samples were found.

An additional point to address on limitations is the begging question why weren't transgendered interviewed? Initially this study was based within a queer theoretical framework and aimed to look at how transgender students perceived their gender identity and navigated through college experiences and student service organizations on one chosen Mid-Atlantic campus. However, the problem of locating and accessing this student's was difficult due to the small, unique population that inhabits this campus. Therefore, revisions were made to address how staff and administration perceive transgender students, services needed and offered, and how campus climate affects transgender student's experiences.

Conclusion

Institutions and administrative services are facing a new challenge of inclusion now that gender minorities are fighting for their rights and protection all over college campuses. While this challenge is a rather new concept, LGBT center staff has hit the ground running. Inclusion of gender minorities (given the multiplicity that now exists) takes more than creating a space to include them in an already existing structure. As the literature shows without a change in meaning, understanding and thinking transgender people and transgender students will never truly feel included. Therefore, I advocate that future research should focus not only on campus climate, programs and inclusionary measures for transgender students but rather focus on the organizational structures in place that create an environment that is already unfriendly to gender minorities.

As Kristin Renn (2010) argued, queer theory should be integrated into studies of gender and specifically gender on college campuses. By opening up the possibility of multiple gendered realities, studies on campus climate and inclusion can begin to address adequate understanding and awareness of gender (not simply sexual) minorities. This understanding and awareness of gender requires more than taking non-discriminative measures (while this is a good place to start). Rather this understanding must come from a true realization that the current heterosexual systems that govern our social world create inequalities and exclusion every day. In order to move past this system new ideas, structures and methods must be created, utilized and promoted.

This study is intended to be a stepping stone in analyzing how a small population of university administrators perceives students' experiences, gender identity, and a strive

towards a new institutional organization. However, given the limited amount of staff that is employed by the campus LGBT centers it is hard to speculate how many people on college campuses are making this a priority. Therefore, future studies would benefit from moving past research that only includes LGBT centered staff to truly see how applicable these ideas are on a larger scale. In the end persistence will be key to achieving a world in which gender minorities will be better included and supported on college campuses.

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Appendices

Questionnaire

1) How long has the LGBT campus support center been open?

Did you face any difficulties opening the center?

2) Is the campus support center funded?

If so, did you face any difficulty obtaining funding?

3) How many full time staff members work on LGBT issues?

Are the staff educated on current transgender issues?

Do the staff have the opportunity to be trained?

4) Does the center have a high population of transgender students who use the services?

5) What policies are in place to promote inclusion and safety for transgender students?

What, if any, hurdles did you face implementing those policies?

What policies or programs are you currently working on?

6) What transgender specific services do you offer?

How do you promote them?

7) Does the campus have a SafeZone?

How effective is the Safe Zone in educating and promoting awareness among staff and students?

8) Does the campus support center advocate for transgender safety on campus?

What other issues are advocated for and how?

9) Does your school currently offer LGBT focused classes?

10) Do you have a working relationship with the student health services on campus?

Do you assist in educating the staff about transgender health and sensitivity?

11) Does the university use inclusive transgender language?

12) Does your campus have gender neutral bathroom and locker room facilities?

10) Are evaluations of the center conducted in order to assess progress and development?

Who conducts these evaluations?

What are the outcomes?

11) Does your staff reach out to transgender students on campus for feedback on what the center can do to enhance transgender students campus experience?

If so, what kind of issues have been addressed?

12) What concerns do you believe need to be addressed on your campus?

What plans do you have in place to address these concerns?

13) Would you consider your campus Trans-friendly?

If so, could you elaborate on what you provide to make that possible?

If not, why and how could it be improved?

What does a trans-friendly campus mean to you?