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*Questioning Attitudes: Surveying LGBTQ+ Students about
Their Concerns as They Enter the Workforce*

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May 1, 2016

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ABSTRACT

The LGBTQ community is challenging the status quo, both legally and socially, within the American society. Legally, the members of this community are increasingly protected by the Supreme Court's ruling that states cannot ban same-sex marriage. However, social discrimination, bullying, and misunderstandings ensue. Undergraduate students who identify as LGBTQ continue to face the issue of whether or not they should "out" themselves socially or professionally. This article explores survey results which gauges the attitudes of undergraduate students who identify as LGBTQ as they leave the university environment and matriculate into the heterosexual dominated workforce.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this report is to portray the transitional needs as it regards the LGBTQ+ college-aged student community. Within the United States of America, laws are currently being passed that allow businesses the right to refuse service to LGBTQ+ individuals based on religious grounds. On top of that, many states lack laws necessary to provide legal protections to these individuals. An action is needed to help students transition into heteronormative workforces where prevalent numbers of LGBTQ+ individuals are seen being discriminated against in various ways, from jokes to job losses.

LGBTQ+ adults in the workforce are seen passed up for jobs, fired, and often subjected to discrimination. College students entering a workforce are currently seen as lacking as opposed to previous years. Through various research, one of the major complaints among employers is in regards to student readiness as they enter the workforce. Among this lack of readiness, students within the LGBTQ+ community have a higher prevalence of mental disorders, diagnosed and undiagnosed, among college students. LGBTQ+ have higher levels of substance abuse and higher suicide rates. LGBTQ+ students entering the workforce have uncertain thoughts when it comes to how they will portray themselves in a heterosexist society to which they don't fully fit into.

In order to help students reach their full potential, the transitional period of college to career needs to be altered in order to fit with today's society. Universities need to put together incentives for businesses and community leaders to help LGBTQ+ students find jobs, careers, internships, and futures in accepting establishments. To achieve this, programs need to be established, policies need to be created, and businesses need to answer to the needs of students, future employees, and the economic growth that comes along with hiring a diverse community.

INTRODUCTION

Within the last few years the LGBT community has come under more light and is gaining more rights within the United States. However, with legal rights being acquired, perceptions, discriminations, and coping strategies are developed within a heteronormative workforce. This is a significant issue for students who are unsure on how to pursue their personal lives inside of a professional setting. According to Julie Gedro, a professor at SUNY Empire State College and certified Professional in Human Resources, “this orientation manifests any time someone places a picture of their spouse or children on their desk, wears a wedding ring, or brings a spouse to a company function. LGBT+ people do not have this privilege, and must negotiate the heterosexism of their organizational settings through a variety of strategies” (2007, p. 2). This is seen as an underlying discrimination not necessarily from individuals, but rather from the society which has been set in specific ways for so long.

Psychotherapist Vivienne Cass (1979) gives 6 stages of the formation of sexual identity for members of the LGBT community starting with identity confusion, then going through comparison, tolerance, acceptance, pride, and ultimately ending with synthesis. Chung (2001) however identifies homosexuality in a different viewpoint, focusing specifically on the management strategies of sexual identity, labeling the various levels as: acting, passing, covering, implicitly out, and explicitly out (2001, p. 39). Both Cass and Chung focus on the identity of homosexuals and, more deeply, their identity they show the outside, heteronormative world around them. Heterosexism is seen as a belief that heterosexuality is the ultimate superiority of sexual orientation. This can be seen by homophobic judgment, prejudice, concern, fear, and overall intolerance of LGBT community members (Obear, 1991). Homophobic discrimination comes in many different levels; four specific levels being: overt discrimination, covert discrimination, tolerance, and affirmation (Gedro, 2007).

Many individuals identifying within the LGBT community fear, within the workforce, they will be denied employment, fired, overlooked for promotion. They also believe they will get the short straw when it comes to: assignments, pay, benefits, and acknowledgment. This concern and overall view of self-concept is called ‘sexual minority stress’ (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011). Based on a social experiment, it was found there were “higher prevalence rates of mental disorders for LGB persons than heterosexual persons for depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation and attempts, with suicide rates up to three to four times higher” (Lewis, 2009). What many people see as harmless or nonexistent discrimination, or jokes, among the homosexual workforce, those actually in the community can see it as so much more powerful. In fact, there is no federal law set in place to provide legal protection for LGBT workers in America. Additionally, 18 states lack the laws or policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. 29 states lack basic laws or policies prohibiting government entities or private businesses from turn away services to LGBT+ patrons such as movie theaters, libraries, bars, restaurants, shops, and venues. With a lack of laws outside of the workforces, it is not hard to believe laws governing the workforce are just as skewed (hrc.org).

According to a 2014 survey by the Human Rights Campaign, “70 percent of non-LGBT workers agree that ‘it is unprofessional’ to talk about sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace.” While many people argue that someone’s sexual orientation should be left private

and won't come up in the workplace, even the wearing of a wedding ring leaves LGBTQ workers vulnerable to private conversation. Chari and Vohra (2015, 351) stated, "if one reflects on workplace conversations— especially the ones that get people to form bonds and feel truly engaged with one another—many of them are in the realm of revealing to our co-workers who we are as people". The fear to engage in the daily banter and conversation in the workplace is made more apparent in careers within specific fields, as many careers in art and hospitality related fields tend to see a higher level of acceptance. Many careers that involve working with children have seen negative repercussions for homosexual workers. According to Richard Niesche, a professor at the University of New South Wales, "many teachers continue to express anxiety about the possibility of dismissal if they publicly announce their homosexuality. Additionally, there is a tendency to associate homosexuality with the issue of underage sexual relations and pedophilia" (2003, p. 44). The fear that homosexual teachers face is not only based on the possibility of dismissal from the workforce, but more so their integrity, humanity, legitimacy, and morals are questioned. Negative annotations can result in life threatening and life altering repercussions, such as false accusations. When looking at Fortune 500 companies, Hewlett and Sumberg have found, through surveys that 42 percent closeted LGBTQ+ workers feel isolated at work and 73 percent of those isolated, closeted employees are more likely to leave their jobs within the first three years of employment (2011).

Within these homophobic situations, there are multiple coping strategies used, knowingly or unknowingly, by LGBTQ+ individuals. Coping strategies include: non-assertive methods, supportive methods, and confrontational methods. Non-assertive methods include actions like quitting, silence, avoidance of particular settings and sources, self-talk, and pushing oneself to work harder in an attempt to cover the discrimination. Supportive methods include seeking support from family, friends, partners, people within the workforce (whether on equal hierarchal status or not), and talking to professionals (therapist, doctor, etc.). The confrontational method can be seen as the LGBTQ+ individual standing up against discrimination, whereby they go through established channels within the workforce. For example, after being mistreated, the LGBTQ+ individual would confront the offender then discuss the matter with the next one on the hierarchal chain of command, including human resources or media. This method also includes taking legal action against the offender or company as well as attempting to be part of the change within the workforce by helping to create or alter policies and laws pertaining to LGBTQ+ college age discrimination (Chung, Chang, & Rose, 2009, p. 215).

Adults within the LGBTQ+ community often see discrimination as it comes to the workforce. According to surveys done by the Pew Research Center, of 1,197 LGBTQ+ adults, 57 percent of individuals said when it comes to workplace discrimination, "equal employment rights should be a 'top priority.'" On top of being verbally discriminated, physically threatened, and being passed up for promotions; the LGBTQ population also earns a lower income than their counterparts. When it comes to the workplace, many adults spend 20-40 hours a week at work. According to the Pew Research Center Survey, bisexual men and transgendered individuals get up to 30 percent less acceptance than lesbians, bisexual women, and gay men (2013).

Before entering the workforce, many students face problems beyond the career struggle within the colleges and universities they attend. LGBTQ+ students can often be seen lacking a trust in doctors or other medical providers which can lead to worsening mental illnesses such as stress, anxiety and depression. Students also have to make the decision on whether or not to come out to fellow students, professors, or staff. A major issue that is coming to surface lately is the problem

of smoking within the LGBTQ+ community. According to the California Department of Health Services, “43 percent of young gay men and lesbians (aged 18 – 24 years-old) smoke, compared with approximately 17 percent of the general population of 18 – 24 year-olds (2.5 times higher)” (campuspride.org, 2013). The LGBTQ+ community is also more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs, with varying surveys showing a 20-35 percent higher likeliness for substance abuse among the LGBTQ+.

In 2015, it was calculated that 20.2 million students were enrolled in colleges and universities within the United States. This is important to recognize because this means roughly 15 percent of Americans are enrolled and on their way to entering the professional workforce. There are many challenges for this group, because the transition from academia into the workforce is filled with turmoil and psychological self-recognition. One problem seen in what Mel Levine (2007) calls “worklife unreadiness,” is the lack of mature preparation and determination needed for students to become professionals. Whether due to the lack of professional adult role-models at a young age, the obsession of peer approval and self-image, or the media’s over interpretation on adolescence and the importance of being popular. The lack of constant praise, extrinsic motivation, and the ability to go to their family or friends for professional work related help is a transition that many graduating students find difficult when entering their desired workforce. This is unlike patterns seen in middle school, high school, college, and university during the transition from school to career students must master knowledge-based, or course-based terminology, concepts, and procedures; instead of simply memorizing facts like many do in this educational, test-taking society. Another major transition problem young adults face is the ability to handle the workload required of them within the workforce, as well as managing time and responsibilities adequately (Levine, 2007).

A major problem that college students face which has direct negative impact on transition from undergrad to career ready professional is the growing concern on student mental health. According to a study conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Health, one in four students have a diagnosable mental illness, and 40 percent of those do not seek professional health. This overwhelming number affects a student’s ability to prioritize educational and professional goals because they are constantly battling within their brains and lives outside of these goals. 80 percent of those with mental illness have reported being overwhelmed by their responsibilities, while 50 percent struggle in school due to the amount of anxiety mental illness causes them (Crudo & Gruttadaro, 2012). With issues like this, it is understandable that students may struggle in transitioning from student life to a professional life which demands organized and self-motivated workers.

On top of adolescent mentalities and the growing mental health concern of college level students, college students also have difficulties understanding what is needed to succeed in their specific workforce. According to Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, “over the past decade, literacy among college graduates has actually declined. Unacceptable numbers of college graduates enter the workforce without the skills employers say they need in an economy where, as the truism holds correctly, knowledge matters more than ever” (www.shceo.org, 2006, p. 10). The lack of student participation and active learning in classes portrays lack of applied knowledge, which ultimately is shown in the lack of readiness for careers. Students do not foresee how the college experience should be a stepping stone to career lives, “similarly, when students complain about high performance standards, deadlines, accountability, and workload in their curricular and co-curricular activities, educators could communicate alumni suggestions

and the importance they occupy in workplace success” (Landrum, Hettich, & Wilner, 2010, p. 104). The lack of adequate effort needed in college is seen not only in the lack of knowledge portrayed during transition to the post-graduate workforce, but also in the general morale and qualities of students entering the workforce.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

While the transitions of students entering careers and workforces is made apparent through various articles, research and studies; the lack of research developed on the transitional expectations and concerns of LGBTQ+ students are currently lacking from student-input to employer-input. With college often being a major stepping stone for students wishing to delve into specific careers, the LGBTQ+ community is usually left out in ways of college academia, curriculum, and overall preparation. Though there is no exact number, it is estimated that there are currently 600,000 to 1 million LGBTQ+ enrolled college students in the United States (Weiss, 2010). Through Title IX laws, LGBTQ+ students are legally protected from discrimination in school but upon graduation, this law is no longer relevant. On top of classes, internships, jobs, exams, and all the other stressors of college life; LGBTQ+ students must also think about their future career choices openness when it comes to minority sexualities and varying gender identities. Students within this community must choose whether or not to come out to college friends, professors, and acquaintances; including those a part of their chosen job-prospective networking community. Students also must be careful and concise when creating and using public (and private) accounts, apps, and places where others can peer into their private lives. To better help LGBTQ+ students succeed in the transitional phase from college to career, more research is needed to examine how these students feel entering their workforce, as well as the additional challenges, mental illnesses, and discrimination they may face on their way.

METHODOLOGY

Overview: This study focused on the following questions: Do LGBTQ+ students face alternative transitions from college to career, while entering a heteronormative workforce? What kind of discriminations do LGBTQ+ students have in regards to their future work endeavors?

In order to answer these questions, a qualitative survey was designed to better understand the attitudes of the students. I utilized a qualitative study because qualitative studies approach subjects through a comprehensive, descriptive analysis of a group or individual response (Creswell, 2009). A qualitative research design can be used in studies such as this one which seeks to interpret context or discover meaning (Ezzy, 2002). Inductive qualitative studies use data to build theory rather than have data prove theory. They are typically utilized to provide greater depth of knowledge in a particular situation (Merriam, 1997). Qualitative research uses rich description to represent the depth of a situation. Thus, description is essential to this study. Collecting and analyzing thick description allowed me to more aptly understand the factors of student attitudes and how they anticipate roles in the workforce will be affected by personal sexual identity (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

Research Context:

Description of Setting

1. The setting for my research is a mid-sized liberal arts university in the southern United States.
2. With the university residing in a heavy tourist area, I found the location to be a good way of finding students from all over the country and representing a variety of viewpoints from candidates not necessarily born or raised in the south.

Participants

1. The participants used in this research were on a volunteer basis only and were chosen based on their minority sexual orientations and current or past relations to the university community.
2. There are various ways individuals within the LGBTQ+ community can identify. The following are definitions of identities seen throughout this survey:
 - a. Questioning: “the process of exploring and discovering one’s own sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression” (U of M Student Student Life Spectrum Center).
 - b. Queer Asexual: queer is often a term used to generalize all individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, instead of labeling. The term asexual means “[a] person who generally does not feel sexual attraction or desire to any group of people” (U of M Student Student Life Spectrum Center). To say queer asexual is to identify as someone within the LGBTQ+ realm who has no sexual attraction to others.
 - c. Queer Bisexual: the use of the word queer is the same as in the previous subsection. The term bisexual refers to an individual “who is attracted to both people of their own gender and another gender” (U of M Student Student Life Spectrum Center).

- d. Pansexual is a term that refers to a “person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions, not just people who fit into the standard gender binary (i.e. men and women)” (U of M Student Student Life Spectrum Center).
 - e. N/A: was used in this survey for those students who identify within the LGBTQ+ community but either don’t know how to label themselves or do not find the need or want to label themselves.
 - f. Lesbian: “a woman who is primarily attracted to other women” (U of M Student Student Life Spectrum Center).
 - g. Transgender: a complex and varying term often use to describe an individual who does not fit assigned gender given at birth.
 - h. Gay: a term that can have many definitions and is often used to describe someone who is attracted to someone of the same sex. Though it is dominated in describing men who are attracted to men, it can be used by both sexes and all gender types.
 - i. Bi-curious: often confused with bisexual, is a term describing an individual who is questioning their sexuality in regards to the same sex but still is attracted to the opposite sex and has yet to act on, or decide on sexual orientation.
3. The sample was chosen through purposeful sampling which is nonrandom sampling done for the sake of researching within a specific interest group. This sampling is purposeful because it often results in representing specific populations within larger scales (Vellutino & Schatschneider, 2004). The use of nonrandom sampling allows the research to be geared directly at LGBTQ+ students as opposed to all students who may or may not be a part of said community.
 4. Student participants were chosen for opinions on their future workforce goals while regarding their sexual orientations. By volunteering to answer research questions, students who may not be out to their friends and families are putting significant trust in the research process and methods. Therefore, all participants are anonymous and names have been changed. In addition, the proper paperwork has been created for protecting students within the university. In order to survey college students, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol was filed through Coastal Carolina University titled, “Questioning attitudes: Surveying LGBTQ+ students about their concerns as they enter the workforce.” The reference number for this IRB is 2015.113.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

1. A. The survey tool was designed to explore previous discrimination of LGBTQ+ students. It was created with some dichotomous questions for clarification, as well as open-ended questions where student participants were asked to delve into their lives as minority figures within the scope of sexual identity. Questions maintain neutrality to prevent unconventional biases in participant answers.
B. The survey was distributed through email or in person depending on the preference of the participant. This accommodated some student’s desire for anonymity.
C. Based on student survey responses, I will be able to see how LGBTQ+ students feel in regards to:
 1. Their entrance into a heterosexist workforce.
 2. What concerns they have in regards to job prospects.
 3. What concerns they have when it comes to being discriminated against at work.

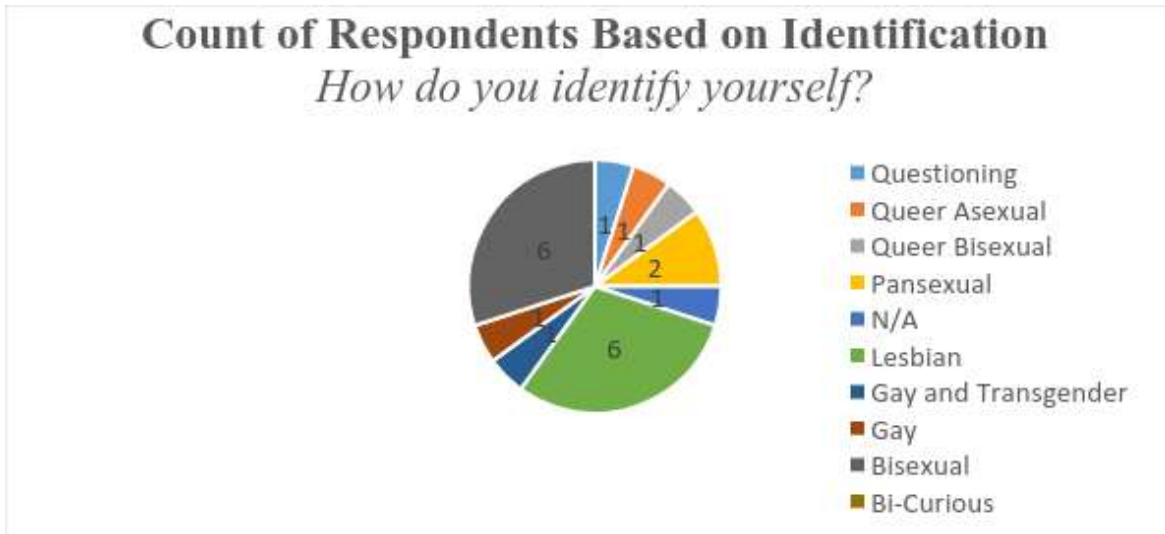
4. Overall thoughts on the transition from academia to workforce.

Data Analysis: Two methods of qualitative data analysis are content and thematic analysis. Content analysis is a method of using text to find meaningful patterns to better understand context (Ezzy, 2002). Content analysis is an *abductive* process allowing the researcher to move from the text to the research question using inferencing to logically connect the content to the question (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The process is as follows: first the population of study is selected. In content analysis, unlike thematic analysis, the researcher then creates units of analysis or categories based on the themes found in the literature (Ezzy, 2002). For example, place-based research suggests that students will better understand their identity through its activities (Esposito, 2012). Thus, I chose to look for qualitative survey responses that may be indicative of identity building practices. The process then continues analysis of words or concepts within the text. I coded the text looking for words which might indicate practices of identity building. The text was used to confirm or disprove the preconceived categories (Charmaz, 2006).

Thematic analysis is an *inductive* method of finding patterns in text (Ezzy, 2002). This method is appropriate for the theoretical framework because it places qualitative survey responses at the center of analysis rather than predetermined codes. The first step of thematic analysis is open coding. The researcher creates categories based on the patterns evident in the text. The text itself guides the analysis rather than categorical expectations. So unlike the content analysis, the researcher analyzes the text with no preconceived notion, rather it is coded through similarities in content.

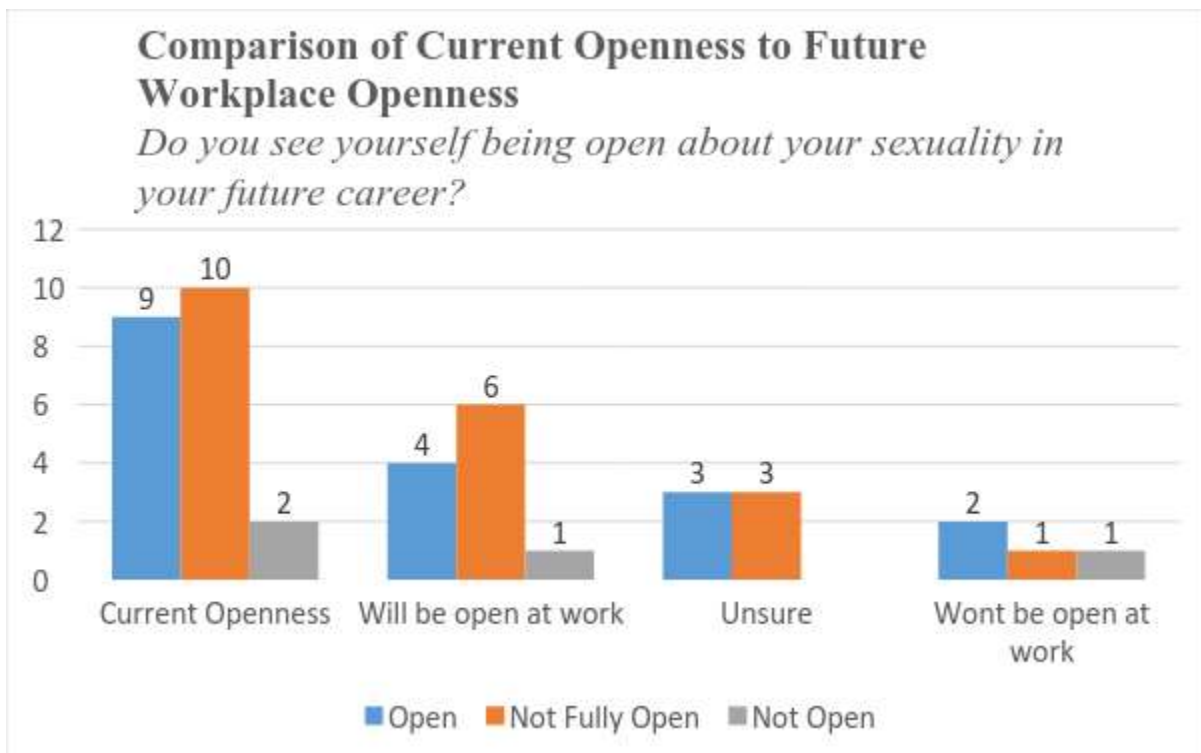
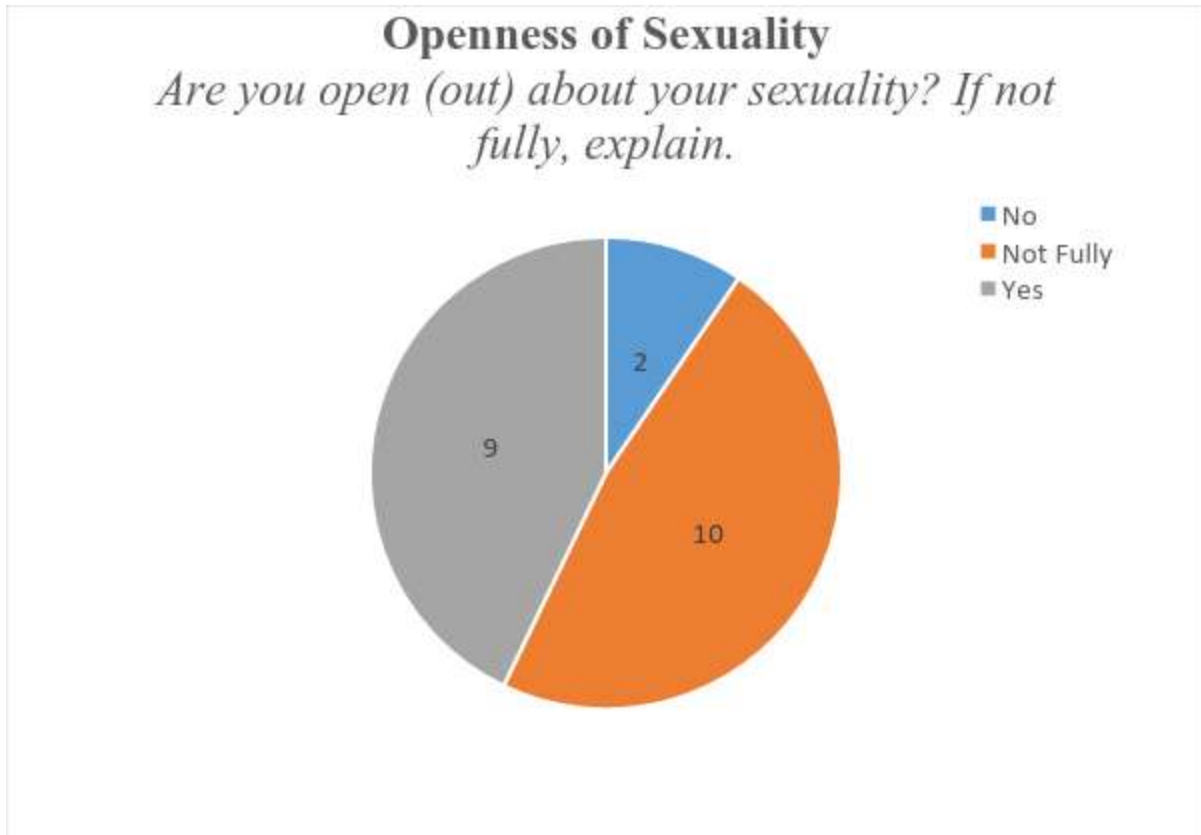
The strength of this study is how it used content and thematic analysis in concert. The combination solved some of the limitations of each. First, the limitations of thematic analysis rest in the researcher. The coding process is dependent upon the expertise and knowledge of the researcher. Bias, unclear inference practices, and bad coding can all taint the validity of the study. To correct this, the researcher must be very reflexive about the methods employed, their bias, and connection to the subject matter and participants (Charmaz, 2006). The primary limitation of content analysis is it can be used to confirm theories but it can't be used to build them. It assumes the researcher knows the categories prior to analysis. Content analysis limits the researcher to consider only the preexisting categories rather than use the text to discover new categories relative to the content (Ezzy, 2002). The study conducted on LGBTQ students within the university acted as a pilot question to the attitudes of graduating LGBTQ+ students as they leave the college environment and explore the workplace. These responses aided the researcher in determining student's thoughts in regards to entering a heterosexist workforce and what discriminations they fear facing as they leave the protection of academia.

FINDINGS

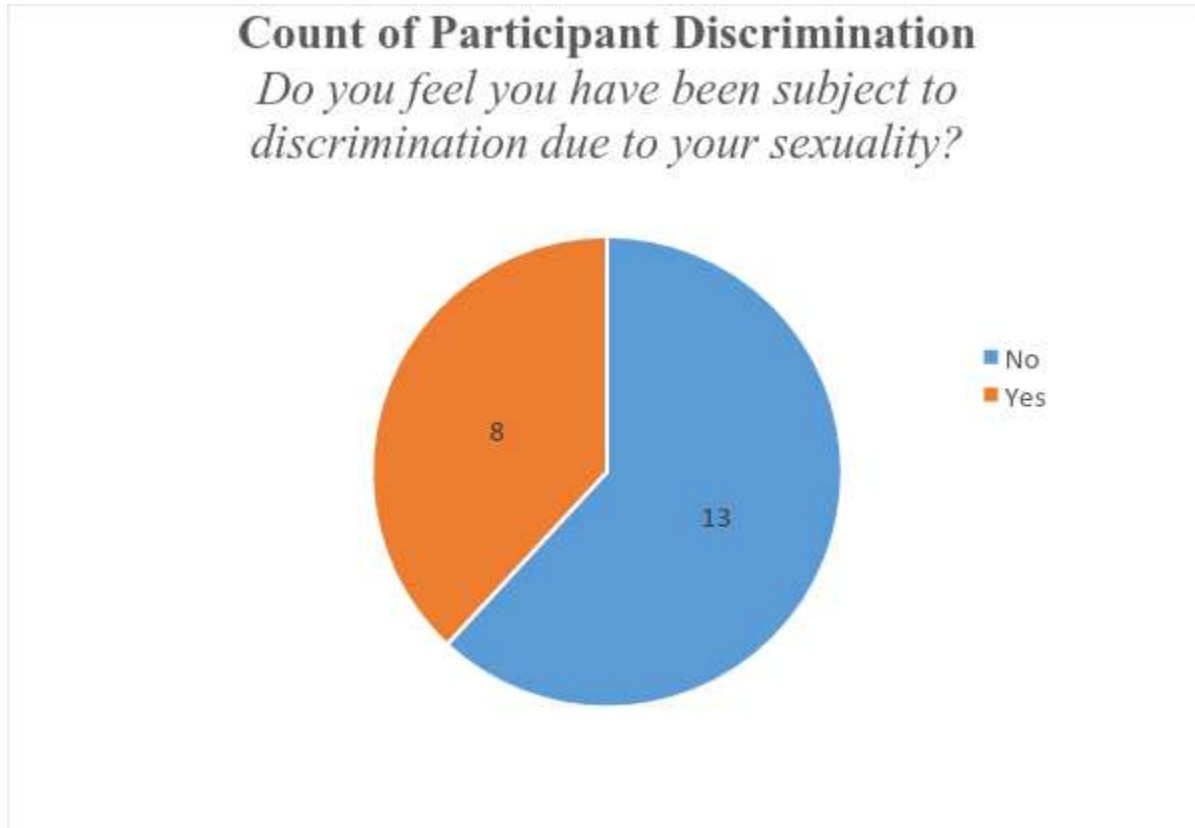


As seen in the data above, based on the findings from survey analysis, through purposeful sampling, the majority of LGBTQ+ students taking this survey were both lesbian, 28.5 percent, and bisexuals, 28.5 percent. Given the question, “how do you identify yourself?”, students were encouraged to answer freely. Some students had difficulties answering because they prefer not to label themselves or overall chose not to give themselves a specific label. Besides those two groups, there were a variety of other aspects within the community of sexual orientation minorities including 9.5 percent that identify as queer, but when asked to classify that further, they specify with alternative labeling such as bisexual or asexual. Overall the participants cover a wide range of sexual orientations and gender identities within the LGBTQ+ community.

Looking at the data on openness of sexuality among LGBTQ+ college students, a majority of students have not fully disclosed sexuality. This could be seen in a variety of ways, whether students are open to just a few friends, co-workers, or certain members of their families. The answer, “not fully,” can ultimately be seen as having at least one confidant in whom LGBTQ+ students can be themselves in front of. Based on my research, 42.8 percent of students are fully open to their sexual minority, whereas 9.5 percent of students are completely secluded (or closeted) about their sexuality for varying reasons. Overall, the majority of students, 47.6 percent, are open to certain people but not everyone in their lives.



When looking at whether or not students have been discriminated against due to their sexual orientation (in any instance, such as at school, work, church, home, etc.), 62 percent of students have said they have not felt victim to discrimination. However, 38 percent feel that they have been discriminated in a variety of different possible ways. It is important to note the discrimination rate varied among two levels: being fully open and not fully open. It was also seen that 69 percent of students who have not experience discrimination due to their sexuality were also either completely closeted, or not yet fully out. Also, 38 percent of students who have been discriminated against said they have been treated differently, people act differently because they don't understand, or they just have not been discriminated against "yet."



When looking at student willingness to be open at work when they leave college, the findings are much more hopefully than the other openness questions portrayed in the survey. The table above represents current sexuality openness among students as it compares to thoughts of being open in future careers and workplaces. A majority of students said they would like to be open in their future profession with 57.1 percent answering positively. However, approximately 10 percent said they definitely could not see themselves being open in future workplaces. 33 percent of LGBTQ+ students were uncertain on whether or not they would be open. Students who are not yet fully out have highest want and/or need to be open in future careers. The students who are currently most open about their sexualities within the LGBTQ+ community show higher numbers of uncertainty and overall dismissal of minority orientation openness.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research opportunities can include, but are in no way limited to, advanced research into how age, geographical location, major, and career prospects play a role in the level of concern and transition LGBTQ+ students face in regards to entering their workforce. With the emergence of LGBTQ+ youth in school systems, how can teachers and professors differentiate teachings in order to best reach these students? Also, with such low transitional rates among young millennial professionals entering the workforce as a whole, it could be beneficial to see what programs can be put in place to better the performance as they go from college to workforce in regard to all students.

Further research should also be done to see what universities can do to better pair young LGBTQ+ students with businesses within or surrounding the community. According to an interview done with Travis McCown, a worker at the DC Center for the LGBT Community in Washington DC, there are programs that can be put in place to help LGBTQ+ individuals find service providers such as doctors, realtors, etc. If universities explore sponsorship programs like that, a similar policy program could be put into place to help students find jobs and/or careers with equally accepting businesses or individuals.

Based on data, only 57 percent of LGBTQ+ students currently feel they will be open about the sexualities in future workplaces. More research needs to be done on why these students feel more positively on this, as well as the 43 percent who are unsure or unwilling to disclose their sexualities in the future. Whether it be because of experience, hope, career choices, or regions in which students plan to move after college.

OVERVIEW OF SURVEY TOOL

The tool used for research on LGBTQ+ college students was an 11 question, short answer, fill-in survey. There were five sub-questions as well as questions that were followed with “why or why not?” or “explain.” The use of short answer questions gave students the freedom to write down all experiences or thoughts without feeling constricted or pressured to answer a specific way. The first half of the survey was for demographics of the students whereas the second half was about student experience and perceptions. Students were encouraged to respond to all questions given. If a student did not want to answer a question or the question did not apply to them, they were given the option of answering with “N/A.” All survey responses were put into a data table to better calculate as well as compared student responses and perceptions of discrimination, school, work, and future careers.

CONCLUSION

With high levels of mental illness, suicide, substance abuse, and discrimination, LGBTQ+ students start off their college experiences at a disadvantage. On top of transitioning to college life and ultimately preparing for the future, these individuals have other issues they must face on a daily basis, like coming out about their sexuality, finding relatable peers, and developing a sense of self. Students transitioning into the workforce need preparation and students falling under the LGBTQ+ spectrum lack the skills their heterosexual peers are fully equipped with, the skills to operate and blend in with the societal norm of heteronormative sanctions in the workforce. Programs, incentives, and policies need to be put in place in order to best reach all students of college life, not just the ones that are apart of society's "norm." With sponsorships put into place, more students could have an easier and more successful transition into the workforce upon leaving college.

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APPENDIX A - SURVEY

LGBTQ Participant Survey

All questions are recommended to be responded to with short-answer responses. If a question is not applicable to you, please put “N/A.”

1. What’s your major?
2. What career do you wish to pursue upon graduating?
3. Where are you from?
4. How do you identify yourself (ex: gay, bisexual, transgender, etc)?
5. How long have you identified as such?
6. Are you open (“out”) about your sexuality? If not fully, explain.
7. Do you feel you have been subject to discrimination due to your sexuality?
 - a. If yes, could you describe the ways in which you feel you have been discriminated against?
8. How protected do you feel from discrimination in school?
 - a. In your future?
 - b. In work/careers?
9. Do you see yourself being open about your sexuality in your future (or current) career? Why or why not?
10. Do you have any fears or concerns about your sexuality in your future workforce?
 - a. If yes, could you list some of those specific fears of concerns?
11. Do you think your sexual orientation with affect your job prospects in the future?
 - a. If yes, in what ways?

APPENDIX B – POLICY BRIEF

Briefing Paper

April 2015

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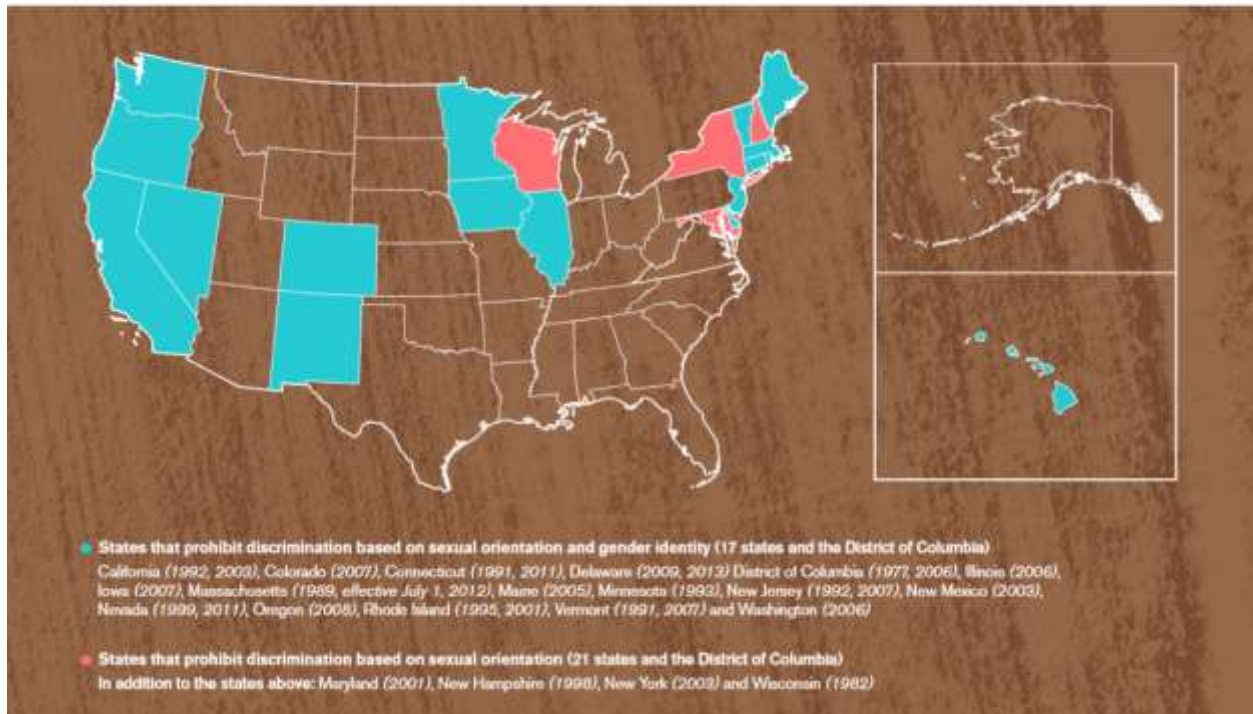
LGBTQ college students fear future discriminations

Action needed to aid LGBTQ students in workplace transition

Key points:

- New anti-LGBTQ laws are surfacing within the southern part of the United States and it is negatively impacting the LGBTQ community.
- LGBTQ students fear workplace discrimination and termination
- Recommendations for adjusting transitions from academia to workforce

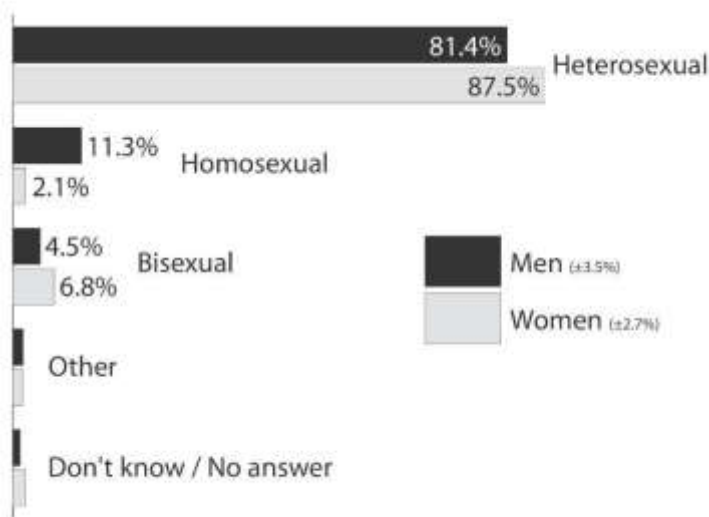
Statewide Employment Laws & Policies



Currently within the United States, only 18 states have laws set in place that prohibit discriminated based on sexual orientation and gender identity, whereas 21 have laws only set for sexual orientation. 29 states currently lack back laws or policies prohibiting governmental entities or private businesses to turn away services to LGBTQ patrons, such as movie theaters,

libraries, bars, restaurants, shops and venues (www.hrc.com). However, the larger society is constantly in conflict where legal protection of this community is concerned. An example of this is the ordinance approved in Charlotte, North Carolina which would protect the members of the LGBTQ community against overt discriminatory processes (www.charlotteobserver.com). Weeks later the North Carolina legislature not only overturned this ordinance but banned any other local government from instituting similar measures. It was supported by Republican Governor Pat McCrory, the entire Republican assembly and 11 democrats. This conflict impacts more than just bathroom usage. It lays the foundation for institutionally sanctioned discrimination.

This paper examines the problems LGBTQ students are facing, their concerns entering their future careers, and ways we can help this transition into adulthood.



The problem: Students within the LGBTQ community are questioning their outlooks on how to perceive themselves within their future careers, as it concerns their sexual orientations and/or gender identities. When researching a mid-sized liberal arts university in the southern United States, it was found that 43% of LGBTQ students surveyed, admitted to being unsure of their willingness to be open about their sexual identities in their future careers. Of this 43% of students, many projected their fears of disappointing their families, being discriminated against and/or being terminated from their jobs.

As of right now, many colleges and universities lack the resources, programs and policies needed to aid students within the LGBTQ community to find adequate job placement where they will have the same opportunity as their heterosexual counterparts, while being open to their sexual orientations or alternative gender identities. Though many schools have programs set up for internships, apprenticeships and even job placements, many lack the programs for students of diverse societal norms.

The data of college students: In 2015, 20.2 million students were enrolled in colleges across the country. This means that roughly 15% of Americans are enrolled and ready to enter the

workforce. According to a 2010 poll done by [The Harold](#), only 85% of student identify themselves as heterosexual. This goes to show that it is estimated that 2,424,000 to 3,030,000 (12-15%) students that are currently enrolled in college identify outside of the heterosexual lifestyle.

Based on research done in the mid-size liberal arts university in the southern U.S., only 42.8% of students surveyed are currently fully open about their sexual orientations. However, of these students who are fully open, 44% are currently unsure if they should be open in their careers.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, LGBTQ community members, “may experience more negative mental health outcomes due to prejudice and other biases.” With this being said, it is seen that LGBTQ individuals are three times more likely to experience mental health conditions in comparison to non-LGBTQ individuals. On top of this, the risk for suicide among LGBTQ youth is four times more likely, and three times more likely in questioning youth. It is also estimated that “20-30% of LGBTQ people abuse substances, compared to about 9% of the general population” (www.nami.org).



The workplace view on LGBTQ employees

According to the Human Rights Campaign (www.hrc.com), “70% of non-LGBT workers agree that ‘it is unprofessional’ to talk about sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace.” However, at the same time “81% of non-LGBT respondents feel that LGBT people ‘should not have to hide’ who they are in the workplace. And yet, less than half of non-LGBT employees

would feel comfortable hearing LGBT workers talk about dating.” With double standards being seen within these results, many adult employees are uncertain in their ability to be open or even partake in daily or weekly social conversations within their work days.

In 37 states, LGBT people can be denied work or fired from their jobs, just on the bases of sexual orientation. In 44 states, the same can happen because of gender identity. On top of this, many careers that involve working with children have seen negative repercussions for homosexual workers. “Many teachers continue to express anxiety about the possibility of dismissal if they publicly announce their homosexuality. Additionally, there is a tendency to associate homosexuality with the issue of underage sexual relations and pedophilia” (Niesche, 2003, p. 44). As seen in the HRC graph above, LGBTQ employees often have feelings of indifference, depression, avoidance and the need to hide or lie.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently within many universities and colleges, employees are required to go through various trainings upon entering their new jobs. However, among these trainings, many schools don't enforce professors, clubs, or school officials in being SafeZone trained (or other trainings in regards to LGBTQ individuals). Along with the lack of training, many schools do not have policies in place to help LGBTQ students' transition into their intended careers and workforces. In order to help these students, a policy needs to be set in place to better assist students through a very important, and overall thought provoking, time in their lives.

With most universities and colleges already having internships, apprenticeships, and job placement programs in place, I propose that there also be a policy in place to aid in those individuals that can be denied and/or terminated for their sexual minorities. Schools could give incentives, sponsorships, or advertising to businesses who identify as LGBTQ friendly or welcoming. On top of this, programs can be set in place to help students find, interview, and explore different job and career opportunities, without the fear of discrimination or termination. Transition workshops can also be put into effect for PRIDE groups or students who need help entering their workforces while identifying outside the societal norm of heterosexuality.

APPENDIX C: PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: April 1, 2016

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With new anti-LGBTQ laws emerging in the United States, some college students fear future discrimination

Highlights

- 18 states don't have laws in effect prohibiting discrimination of LGBTQ individuals at work
- College students in the Southeast have concerns about being open about their sexual orientations
- Incentives and sponsorships could link LGBTQ+ students with accepting and welcoming businesses.

Mississippi will be the next state in line, following North Carolina, to have a law set in place to establish statewide nondiscrimination covering race, religion, color, national origin and biological sex. However, the LGBTQ community is not included in this law.

With such laws being put into place and discrimination being an issue facing LGBTQ individuals, some college students in the Southeast are questioning whether or not they should be open about their orientations as they move into careers. According to a 2014 survey by the Human Rights Campaign, "70 percent of non-LGBT workers agree that 'it is unprofessional' to talk about sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace." Whereas many say that sexual orientation isn't something that will come up in the workforce, even the wearing of a ring can expose someone's orientation.

With discrimination ranging on multiple levels from name calling to being laid off, the lack of protection laws for the LGBTQ community can make students feel uneasy. Through a survey of college-level LGBTQ students, 43 percent of students polled feel unsure about being honest about their orientations or gender identities in their future workforces.

Students are protected by Title IX in college, but once they enter the workforce, this protective freedom diminishes. Since businesses don't put up signs saying whether they are accepting of LGBTQ job applicants and with new laws giving businesses the right to deny LGBTQ applicants based on religious grounds, many students are genuinely unsure about their futures.

Colleges with LGBTQ communities should set up incentives or programs to help link students with businesses and companies that are accepting of all gender orientations. A program that connects LGBTQ college students with potential workplaces can have a positive benefit to students who are uneasy or downright fearful of being open about their sexualities as it pertains to their future career endeavors.

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