



Diversity Issues: Discrimination and Harassment the LGBT Community faces at work and school

INTRODUCTION

At some point in our lives we have probably all dealt with a form of discrimination or harassment based on race, socioeconomic status, level of education received, appearance, and gender. Think about how this made you feel. Imagine if you had to deal with this based on your sexual orientation and gender identity on a daily basis. “Sexual orientation refers to whether or not a person is homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual”, (Joiner & Lyons, 2016, p. 13). “Gender identity is how one perceives themselves, and can be different from their gender assigned at birth”, (Joiner & Lyons, 2016, p. 13).

Now ask yourself, who gives someone the right to tell you how to identify with your own gender and how your yourself? These are some of the issues that will be discussed and presented. Along with examples of discrimination and harassment LGBT people have to deal with in the workplace and at school. There will also be proposed solutions for how these social science issues can be resolved.

METHODS

- ❖ Use various existing surveys and studies to increase access of data to LGBT and Queer research in Higher Education. This includes studies that focus on student behavior, such as Harvard Alcohol Study, and the 2004 National Study of Living Learning Programs, (Renn, 2010)
- ❖ Recruit youth at social events where large sexual minorities can be found to broaden participation among youth for data collection on surveys, (Walls, Wisneski, Kane, 2010)
- ❖ Assess and investigate gender issues in the workplace to “investigate the impact to the extent of which someone’s transgender identity is central to their self-concept on decisions and attitudes including job satisfaction, commitment and anxiety”, (Discont, Martinez, Sawyer, Smith & Thai, 2016, p. 3)
- ❖ Utilize ground theory to “build a process model of gender transition while at work, along with a career decision-making model identifying occupational barriers and influences that impacted occupational attitudes and behaviors”, (Discont, et al., 2016, p. 4)

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Most social science disciplines could work together to provide protection, and support to the LGBT community. The three that I chose to discuss are:

- ❖ Psychology – would look into how LGBT persons who are discriminated against and harassed are affected mentally. Psychologists could also research how many youth attempt and commit suicide from being bullied at school, and the impact this has on family life. Psychologists can provide safe spaces, similar to the Gay-Straight Alliances mentioned in the Results section, to provide a safe place for children and adults to go to.
- ❖ Political Science – can work with psychologists and sociologists to determine the types of laws and policies that need to be put into place to protect LGBT people from discrimination and harassment in the workplace, and youth at school.
- ❖ Sociology - this approach would focus on the social issues of understanding what homosexuality is, and the difference between sexual orientation, and sexual identity. A sociologist could also look into how this relates to sexual deviance, and how to some this type of behavior is not the norm, and the impact this has on society.

EMPLOYMENT - RESULTS

LGBT employment discrimination and harassment is a serious issue, based on the courts and the EEOC the following scenarios can be considered gender identity or sexual orientation discrimination: (Joiner & Lyons, 2016)

- ❖ “Treating an LGBT employee adversely for failing to hold or follow the employer’s religious beliefs.” Terveer v. Billington, 34 F. Supp. 3d 100, 113 (D.D.C. 2014)
- ❖ “Permitting and/or refusing to investigate claims of harassment based on sexual orientation by coworkers and supervisors.” Koren v. Ohio Bell Tel. Co., 894 F. Supp. 2d 1032 (N.D. Ohio 2012).
- ❖ “Failing to promote an employee based on LGBT status.” Baldwin v. Foxx, EEOC Appeal No. 0120133080, 2015 WL 4397641 (EEOC July 15, 2015)
- ❖ Even with all the protections towards LGB and transgender individuals in the workplace “as recently as 2011, 90% of respondents to the largest survey distributed to trans gender people reported they are still being harassed at work”, (Pizer, Sears, Mallor & Hunter, 2012, p.721)

SCHOOLS - RESULTS

The two tables below show indications of two different studies and how students feel towards LGBT harassment in the higher education sector and youth campuses.

- ❖ Table 3 indicates how students feel towards their campus climate in the Higher Education sector. It shows that while “75%students feel safe, about half conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity” to peers, and faculty to avoid harassment and discrimination, (Ellis, 2009, p.733)
- ❖ Table six represents how sexual minority youth respond to having Gay-Straight Alliance groups at their schools, and whether or they feel safer being a member of these groups. Based on the results, there is a not a significant of those who did or did not experience harassment between members and non-members based on sexual orientation. There is also no significant difference between feeling safe or unsafe vs. being a member or non-member, (Walls, Wisneski, Kane, 2010, p. 322)

Table 3 Indicators of 'climate of fear'	Yes	No
13. Since being at university have you ever feared for sexual orientation or gender identity?	23.4	75.6
14. Since being at university have you ever deliberately concealed your sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid intimidation?	54.3	44.7
15. Since being at university have you ever avoided disclosing your sexual orientation or gender identity to a tutor, lecturer, supervisor or other staff member of the university due to fear of negative consequences?	40.5	59.1

Table 6 Tests of Difference, GSA Membership	GSA, nonmember %	GSA, member %
Experienced harassment (general)	Yes = 54% No = 45%	Yes = 60% No = 40%
Experienced harassment (sexual orientation)	Yes = 46% No = 54%	Yes = 57% No = 43%
Felt unsafe	Yes = 30% No = 70%	Yes = 28% No = 72%

DISCUSSION

Although, there have been several policies put in place to protect sexual minority workers and youth in schools, it is evident that there is still a lot that needs to be done. Based on these results it seems that this is an accepted practice and human behavior needs to be changed. Right now there is a growing trend at the state and local level to protect workers from discrimination, however many states still do not have these protections. This leaves it up to federal law to put these protections in place, (Munoz & Kalteux, 2016).

To continue to yield positive results in youth campus climate, queer theory, and new research methods need to be put into play. This will help to examine, policies and programs, and will allow for a comprehensive research agenda, (Renn, 2010)

SOLUTIONS

- ❖ Continue to study the LGBT policies and it’s contributions to political science to have an impact on political protections and rights
- ❖ Change the queering development of the political agenda to rebuild LGBT movements for change, (Drucker, 2009)
- ❖ Adults need to inform sexual minority children that they are not alone by aiding them with adequate, honest information about themselves and others who are like them, (Talbert, 2004)
- ❖ Provide information to heterosexual and LGBT students to decrease bullying, and cultivate self-esteem in groups, (Talbert, 2004)

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