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A Profile of Policy Discussions Regarding Gender-Inclusive Housing Amongst Four-Year Public Institutions in the Midwest: A Qualitative Approach

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A Profile of Policy Discussions Regarding Gender-Inclusive Housing

Amongst Four-Year Public Institutions in the Midwest: A Qualitative Approach

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Alexis Hill

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A Profile of Policy Discussions Regarding Gender-Inclusive Housing Amongst Four-

Year Public Institutions in the Midwest: A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

This study utilized a qualitative approach to analyze gender-inclusive policies amongst four-year public institutions in the Midwest. This study focused primarily on residence life administrators, who are responsible for the creation and implementation of such policies on their campuses. 40 institutions completed a survey inquiring about their policies or practices, and four institutions were interviewed as a follow-up. Several themes emerged from the study, which included: 1) even if an institution did not have a policy, they more than likely have a practice; 2) change in trends are inevitable and professionals must be willing to change with them; and 3) the administrators willingness to support students has far outweighed any resistance or restrictions they encountered. This study recommended Student Affairs professionals to show a care and concern to their students in an effort to provide a supportive living-learning environment, and to constantly research and create policies in order to continue to move forward. Faculty, staff, and administrators have the ability to make a lasting impact on the students that reside on college campuses and providing an outlet where they can feel secure enough to talk about what they want to see out of their experience and environment is important.

Key words: Gender-Inclusive, Housing, Transgender, Nonbinary, Gender and Sexual Diversity, Administration, Policy

Dedication

My original motivation for choosing this topic changed throughout my time at Eastern Illinois University. Once I realized that I was not doing this for me or for one other person, I became even more passionate about the issues that plague gender and sexually diverse students on a daily basis. I would like to dedicate this thesis to anyone who thought that their voice wasn't loud enough and the students who don't believe that they can make a difference on their college campus. Don't be afraid to stand-alone and scream louder than the voices around you.

This work is also dedicated to my great auntie Adele, who taught me that something in life is always good and nothing is impossible... maybe it just takes a little extra time to find it. You may have left us too soon, but you will never be gone in my heart. I strive to continue to impact the world the way that you had the natural ability to.

In loving memory of Adele Swenson

"Life was good then, life is good now."

1922-2017

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Chapter I

Introduction

Gender-inclusive housing is a relatively new phenomenon that has been gaining in importance in higher education at a quick rate. Willoughby, Larson, and Carroll (2012) noticed this trend and acknowledged, "We believe that the advent of gender-neutral housing may represent a new wave of change coming to college housing" (p. 733). Gender-inclusive housing has primarily been an accommodation for transgender students and the approximately 1.4 million adults in the United States who identify as transgender (Hoffman, 2016).

Until 2014, Title IX did not protect transgender individuals due to the fact that it recognized biological sex and not gender (Martin, 2014). Beemyn (2015) conducted a study on nonbinary transsexual students and it was stated "Colleges must provide safe and comfortable housing for trans* students as an ethical imperative" (p. 1). However, this accommodation could also be for individuals who identify as queer or gender non-binary. Essentially, it was only an expectation that this accommodation would exist, not a requirement. However, when a "Dear Colleague" letter was released in May of 2016, the ethics set forth turned into a requirement under law. The letter specified, "This prohibition encompasses discrimination based on a student's gender identity, including discrimination based on a student's transgender status" (Lhamon & Gupta, 2016, 1). Institutions now have a responsibility to accommodate transgender students based on their gender identity rather than their biological sex (Lhamon & Gupta, 2016). Gender-inclusive housing can improve the campus climate of any institution. In order for a

campus climate to be effective for students of all kinds, the assumptions that are currently in place have to be challenged (Rankin, 2003).

In a research study that evaluated strengths-based approaches to residence life communities, Soria and Taylor (2016) understood that staff and faculty have certain strengths they bring to residential life departments, rather than those strengths being integrated into the department itself. There are individuals who conduct strengths-based training to faculty and staff in order to aid in the development of all students, but particularly for the development of underrepresented populations, including transgender students. The information and resources given to staff during training can help in the trials and tribulations that transgender students could be faced with at this pivotal point in their lives by being able to give them the support necessary to make this change in their lives.

Accordingly, it can be understood that the administration at an institution is the heart of the campus climate amongst any area. Residence life professionals must set a tone for the department to determine how they will create an inclusive environment. Gender-inclusive housing is not only a safe-haven for those who are transgender, but also for those who would feel more comfortable with living in an environment where they are not segregated by their biological sex (Soria & Taylor, 2016). In a study of the sudden shift to co-ed residence halls in America, Willoughby, Carroll, Marshall and Clark (2009) noted that gender-inclusive housing facilities would help blur the lines between sexes. This study also noted that individuals who reside in residence halls are less likely to believe in and/or participate in gender stereotypical behavior. Gender-inclusive housing could be pivotal in a college student's identity development.

By focusing on residence life administrators in this study, information was collected based on the processes and procedures that are followed in order to accommodate transgender students. Evaluating their preparedness to adapt to these situations allowed for the evaluation of their campus climate and level of acceptance that gender and sexual diverse students experience. Due to the fact that individuals entering college could be at different points in their identity development, there could be negative implications for those who are not yet comfortable with their gender identity or sexuality. Zubernis and Snyder (2007) outlined stressors for homosexual college students and mentioned, "Adolescents may hide their sexual orientation, which can result in intense feelings of loneliness and alienation from the self" (p. 76). All things considered, a lack of gender-inclusive housing could cause individuals to not feel comfortable in what is supposed to be their home. This research looked at how prepared residence life programs are to accommodate and support students with gender-inclusive housing facilities. While there has been research on students and their perceptions, the actual policies have previously been examined on a much smaller scale.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of gender-inclusive housing in residence life departments from 40 public four-year institutions in the Midwest region. Findings from this study will eventually allow for others to evaluate the preparedness institutions have in regards to policies, the need the Midwest has for gender-inclusive housing, as well as how to move forward with this up and coming trend. While institutions have become better at accommodating students, many research studies have indicated that these students still do not feel supported (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, &

Tubbs, 2005; Biemiller, 2015; Graybill, Varjas, Meyers, & Watson, 2009; Zubernis & Snyder, 2007). Biemiller (2015) surveyed inclusivity on college campuses and stated, "Even for colleges committed to welcoming transgender students and faculty and staff members... existing facilities present a multitude of challenges" (p. 1). It is a priority to identify what challenges administrators face and how those can be overcome in order to make campuses across the Midwest a more welcoming place for all.

Research Questions

Due to the small amount of research conducted surrounding policy makers on college campuses, this study sought to gain an understanding about what types of perceptions exist regarding gender-inclusive housing. While there are many different parts to a gender-inclusive community, the researcher hoped to understand what stage of the process institutions are in to better understand if administrators are accepting or opposed to these types of communities. This was discussed by answering the following research questions:

1. What are the current policies in place regarding gender-inclusive residence communities?
2. If there is not one in place at an institution, is there a plan to make one anytime in the future?
3. What type of positive stigma surrounds gender-inclusive housing? What type of negative stigma surrounds gender-inclusive housing?
4. What type of need or want for gender-inclusive housing exists within institutions in the Midwest?

5. What is the current action plan of an institution if a resident were to need a

gender-inclusive accommodation in order to live safely and comfortably?

Assumptions

My belief was that most residence life programs amongst institutions in the

Midwest would not have a set policy in regard to gender-inclusive housing. It was my

understanding that administrators may potentially have a plan for responding to these

requests, but there was not going to be a priority to put a written policy into place. I also

believed that administrators would be very unaware of their students needs in regards to

gender-inclusive communities, which would be the reasoning for not having a policy

implemented. I further believed that institutions would be aware of a general want for

gender-inclusive housing on their specific campus; however they would not have the

means to determine whether or not there was/is a need. These means could include

assessment, research, and also the financial ability to create gender-inclusive areas with

ease.

Significance of the Study

A portion of the generation that is about to enter their collegiate career was raised

with a very ambiguous view about their gender identity (Norwood, 2013). Savin-

Williams (2005) analyzed the idea of a growing homosexual adolescence and found a

sudden increase that was a complete surprise to experts who study development of

children and teens. There is a large focus on allowing children to determine their own

identities without the limitations of society's norms (Savin-Williams, 2005). Eagly

(2013) identified gender identity as a spectrum of beliefs rather than what has been

normatively identified as male versus female. Hence, there is an upcoming need among

college students that will require a gender-inclusive community in order to live in a place

they feel safe and comfortable. Nicolazzo & Marine (2015) stated, "roughly 2% of the

adult population identify as trans*... given the approximate 18 million student population

U.S. higher education institutions today... that figure translates to approximately 360,000

students who may identify as trans*" (p. 162).

Willoughby et al. (2012) conducted a study, which involved 148 universities

demonstrating that gender-inclusive communities are not a norm in higher education

currently. By interviewing residence life administrators on this topic, I hoped to

determine whether or not collegiate institutions were prepared for this very complex

situation. This research will continue to aid in the development of more cohesive policies

throughout higher education and ultimately improve the overall challenges administrators

face by examining practices that currently exist as well as the reasons policies do not

exist.

A gender-inclusive community within residence life is something that will be

important to address in the coming years. Residence life departments must be prepared

to encounter a variety of questions, comments, and concerns. In a research study done

that analyzed the housing preferences on college campuses, researchers found,

> Students who seek GIH [gender-inclusive housing] options for on-campus
>
> housing often have a number of concerns about how it will be implemented, such
>
> as... whether the housing professionals who administer it will be trained to assist
>
> with the unique needs of students in the community... (Krum, Davis, & Galupo,
>
> 2013, p. 76).

It is hoped that individuals will continue to see the importance of this study from the viewpoint of a higher education professional that looks out for the betterment of their student population. While gender-inclusive communities may be daunting and challenging to some, there are benefits that outweigh any negative. The comfort and safety of students are what residence life professionals work to accomplish each and every day. Our society is changing, so our campuses must change with it.

Limitations of the Study

When discussing limitations of this study, there must be awareness about the differentiation of policies amongst all institutions. In the study conducted regarding housing preferences amongst students, Krum et al. (2013) stated, "Although some colleges and universities have made an effort to provide for the housing needs of their transgender and gender-nonconforming students, these policies vary across institutions and are continually evolving...". This is important to note because when administrators filled out the survey, they were asked whether their institution has a policy currently in place regarding gender-inclusive housing. It is possible that an institution could have a policy, but it could be a very vague policy or it could be a policy that does not specifically outline a certain process. The ambiguity of the definition of a policy could be a major limitation of my data.

Another limitation was based on factors outside of the control of the housing program. These factors include state laws, institutional policies, and occupancy rates. These type of factors impact whether or not a housing program a gender-inclusive housing policy is able to be implemented at a particular institution.

Definitions of Terms

Gender and sexual diversity (GSD). An umbrella term used to describe the multiple facets of physical sex, assigned sex, gender identity, gender role, gender presentation, and perceived gender (ManyVoices.org, 2010).

Gender identity. The personal belief of an individual's own sex and is known as the "most important determinant of a person's sex" (Levasseur, 2015, p. 951).

Gender-inclusive housing. A specific policy that was put into place by the administration of a college or university, which gives the ability for opposite-gender individuals to live together in a campus-owned facility (Anderson, 2011). This is often referred to as gender-neutral.

Gender non-conforming. An individual who does not believe the social-context of gender but does not identify as transgender (Seelman, 2014).

Gender spectrum. The term that is used to allow for others to understand that the word "gender" is multiple components. It includes all components of the modern view of gender, which includes sex, expression, and identity. (Gender Spectrum, 2015).

Policy. Something that is put into place in order to control situations, people, and environments. (Merriam-Webster, 2016).

Residence hall. A location on most college campuses that a student lives and learns in for a certain period of time in their college career. This place has the potential to become a very important factor in their social and cognitive development while in college. (University of Houston, 2011).

Sex. The biological definitions that describe men and women (as cited by Carabez, et al., 2015).

Sexual orientation. An individual's preferences for whom they will engage in a relationship and romantic activities with (as cited by Carabez, et al., 2015).

Title IX. "Protects individuals from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance" (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Transgender. The term that identifies a person who undergoes a transition to a gender that is different than their biological sex (as cited in Seelman, 2014).

Transphobia. Irrational fear, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender or transsexual people (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

Summaries

Throughout this chapter, the importance of gender-inclusive communities at higher education institutions has been identified, outlined the purpose of this study, as well as the research questions being answered. Previous findings have focused on student perceptions, expectations, and needs which is the reason why this study focused on departmental policies and institutional reasons. While the students' perspective is important, there is very little that students can do except voice their concern. However, policies affect students and their experiences at an institution. By approaching this topic from a programmatic perspective, the researcher had the opportunity to delve deeper into the motivations and setbacks that institutions encounter. This topic will continue to be relevant in higher education as societal gender binary continues to be challenged.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

There is a variety of research and literature that suggests that gender-inclusive housing communities have implications for a college students' life, both positive and negative. The following literature review will evaluate how institutions create an inclusive campus, the importance of creating inclusive campuses, housing preferences among college students, and the impact that these communities have on identity development.

Creating an Inclusive Campus

When thinking about why institutions implement gender-inclusive housing, Pryor (2015) noticed that it is normally due to the motivation to create an inclusive campus. While this has been a continuous goal for institutions, many have not fully accomplished this goal. Some research has indicated that college campuses are not designed to meet the needs of transgender students (Pryor, 2015). Seelman (2014) outlined recommendations for institutions to accommodate transgender students and stated, "...few college campuses are comprehensively prepared to meet the needs of transgender students..." (p. 618). This is a shocking revelation as one in five college students in the United States report an identity in a minoritized population (ACE & AAUP, 2000). Strange and Banning (2001) researched the effectiveness of campus climate and how environments contribute to the overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction of a collegiate student. Going off of this, the campus climate can indicate how inclusive an institution is towards their members of all diverse backgrounds. In a national survey conducted by the Campus Pride Index (2010) to identify campus climates from the perspective of LGBT

students, demographics were compiled from 5,149 students, staff, faculty, and administrators from across the United States (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). The demographics indicated that 33% identified as gay, 20% identified as lesbian, 12% identified as bisexual, 16% queer, 16% heterosexual, and 2% asexual (Rankin, et al., 2010). In a similar study, Rankin (2003) found that 4% identified as transgender and that was from a significantly smaller sample size. Rankin's survey also provided an "undecided" option, however the updated survey from 2010 did not. More recently, the Human Rights Campaign (2010) surveyed 10,030 youth who aged from thirteen to seventeen years old. In this report, 925 individuals identified as transgender or "other", which was 10.8% of the participants. Elam and Brown (2005) identified that the creation and promotion of a positive campus climate is important for students to be successful in their college career, both academically and socially.

Ottenritter (2012) wrote an article that centered on understanding the importance of environment in regards to gender and sexually diverse (GSD) college students and he believed that the environment a student lives in is an important aspect of the changes within their life. If an individual, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, lives in an environment that is adaptable and accepting, they will be more successful personally and academically. However, institutions must be willing to face a variety of challenges when creating this inclusive environment (Ottenritter, 2012). Biemiller (2015) evaluated a variety of gender-inclusive bathrooms on college campuses and results indicated that many college campuses face challenges when making these implementations and also cannot always guarantee the safety of an individual who chooses to use them. These challenges and safety concerns include, but are not limited

to, privacy issues, inconveniency of users, and lack of proper funding. While this will be

a challenge for all transgender accommodations, this is something that will be relevant to

the process institutions will take when creating gender-inclusive facilities of any kind

(Biemiller, 2015).

The lack of an inclusive environment could have a major impact on the mental

health of an individual. A research study conducted by Seelman in 2016 reviewed 2,325

transgender college students regarding their environment and their relationship to suicide.

When discussing the methods taken during the study, Seelman specified,

> ...the present study sheds light on how the minority stress model might be used to
>
> understand how institutional climate factors in college settings (specifically,
>
> bathrooms and campus housing that are not accessible to transgender people)
>
> relate to psychological wellbeing in the form of lifetime suicide attempts (p.
>
> 1379).

If a non-inclusive or transphobic environment is a large factor of suicide amongst college

students who would prefer inclusivity, then this issue must be a priority for college

administrators. In the same research study, Seelman (2016) introduced the topic by

indicating that college campuses must be aware of the diverse populations that will be

entering their communities to ensure that their every need is being met. It can be inferred

that this topic is no longer a want, but rather it is a need amongst incoming students.

An inclusive environment is also crafted with the careful training and

considerations of the faculty and staff at an institution. If individuals feel accepted from

the top-down, they will be more confident in their day-to-day abilities. A book that was

published in 2013 by Fisher and Komosa-Hawkins focused on creating an inclusive

environment for GSD students as well as their families. Fedewa and Candeleria (2013) stated within this book "…it may be beneficial to arrange the front office, conference room, and other publicly viewed areas in the school to promote a positive message of belonging and welcoming" (p. 182). Fedewa and Candaleria identified that a variety of publications such as posters, literature, and resources would aid in the positive messages that administrators should want to send to their students. Additionally, Fedewa and Candaleria noticed that providing empathy training as well as training that will allow for a faculty or staff member to know where to report information that could be threatening to one or multiple students. While an inclusive campus community has multiple components, they are all able to work cohesively to benefit students.

Student Housing Preferences

A variety of studies have been conducted to analyze the preferences amongst students who live in on-campus communities. While these findings have varied, it has been indicated that there is a comfort and acceptance of gender-inclusive housing, even for those who do not need it (Biemiller, 2015). This demand started approximately 46 years ago according to a study that examined the sudden shift to co-ed residence halls. Within this study, Willoughby, et al. (2009) stated, "…many housing offices reported that student demand for gender-specific housing quickly began to recede in the early 1970s and housing offices began to have difficulty filling residence halls that were not coed" (p. 28).

The first study that was conducted in 2012 included 98 universities and the policies that they have implemented regarding gender-inclusive facilities. Willoughby et al. (2012) stated, "…41% responded that some form of formal or informal discussion has

already taken place regarding introducing gender-neutral housing on campus or expanding it" (p. 738). The research also indicated that of the ten largest universities that were evaluated, half of them have a policy implemented or they will be implementing one in the near future. This suggests that larger universities are aware that they must be accommodating to the incoming student population (Willoughby et al., 2012).

Another study conducted by Krum et al. (2013) researched students' housing preferences amongst transgender college students. One-hundred and three individuals participated in the study and options included different sex pairings, apartment style, same-sex assignment, single rooms, and suites, which would include two females and two males. Results showed that students, "...would be significantly more likely to attend an institution with apartment-style housing and self-contained single units over the other three options" (Krum et al., 2013, p. 75). This research shows the importance of housing options and how it impacts a student's likelihood to attend an institution. Due to the fact that many institutions will not advertise their gender-inclusive housing options, it can be a determining factor for students looking at different institutions. Blimling (2015) noted the impact residence halls have on learning and stated, "...the experiences they have in RHs [residence halls] contribute significantly to what they learn, the friends they meet, their identities, their likelihood of graduating, and their overall satisfaction with college" (p. 179). If an individual is more comfortable within their environment, their experience will be more positive as a whole.

Identity Development

Residence life plays a key role in the identity development of a college student, which includes both positive and negative aspects. Ottenritter (2012) studied the impact

of college environments and he stated, "…environments play a key role in creating attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which, in part, determine aspects of one's identity" (p. 532). As mentioned prior, the experiences that an individual has within their residence hall can directly impact the feelings they have toward higher education (Blimling, 2015). With the decline of in loco parentis, universities have become much more accepting of individuals and are able to accommodate for a diverse population (Willoughby et al., 2012). This idea that college is the place to go to get away from authority has caused a sudden shift in identity development.

With the decline of in loco parentis, the impact it has on an individual's identity development could have a negative correlation. A research study conducted by Willoughby and Carroll (2009) focused on campuses that already had policies regarding gender-inclusive housing. The students within the communities as well as a comparative sample in gender-specific communities were evaluated based on their likelihood to participate in risk-taking activities such as drinking and sexual promiscuity. Willoughby and Carroll (2009) concluded,

> …students living in gender-specific housing were less likely to consume alcohol and engage in binge drinking than students living in co-ed housing. Students living in co-ed housing were also more likely to have more sexual partners in the last 12 months, use pornography more frequently, and have more permissive attitudes toward sexual activity than students living in gender-specific housing (p. 243).

This information in relation to a students' identity development will be helpful to note for institutions who want to implement gender-inclusive communities in relation to program development for residents.

Renn and Bilodeau (2005) examined leadership amongst LGBT college students and it was noted that the level of involvement a student had while living on campus impacted their identity development. The research study focused on D'Augelli's model of sexual orientation and identified the different stages an individual goes through in order to determine one's true sexual identity. This is important to realize because residence life administrators must be aware of the fluidity of sexual identity and gender expression. As mentioned prior, individuals who are not open about their sexual orientation could experience much more mental health issues, such as minority-related stress, compared to those who have accepted it (Zubernis & Snyder, 2007). However, if an individual is surrounded with others who are accepting of their identity, they are more likely to experience positive mental health. It was indicated, "The extent to which students find supportive relationships to buffer the discrimination in the larger society and develop positive coping skills can determine their successful identity development and quality of life" (Zubernis & Snyder, 2007, p. 78). A gender-inclusive housing community will allow for individuals to connect with those supportive individuals.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

There are three theories that directly impact the basis of the idea of gender-inclusive communities. The first is Bilodeau's idea of "genderism". This idea of "genderism" is defined by Bilodeau as the encouragement for, "… all members of a community to express their gender identities in ways that align as expected with their

observed sex and subscribe to a gender binary that allows for masculine (male) men and feminine (female) women" (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 333). This idea is important because it encourages the idea of gender identity expression and therefore should be a primary focus of residence life administrators. "Genderism" could begin to be the basis for residence life communities in the future in order to keep those lines of communication open.

The second theoretical perspective that is imperative to the formation of gender-inclusive residence communities is Strange and Banning's (2001) Campus Environment Theory. This theory has four tenants: physical environment, aggregate environment, organizational environment, and constructed environment. All four tenants are important to understand college campuses and the way that gender-inclusive housing facilities affect them. The first, physical environment is one of the most important features to incoming and prospective students. The physical features of a college campus are what attracts and pulls in a student. Campuses who have created gender-inclusive housing on their campuses will be more appealing to those who want it and would choose one campus over another because of it. The second aspect, aggregate environment outlines how the people within an environment influence how people are "attracted to, satisfied within, and retained by those environments" (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 35). Gender-inclusive housing environments create a safe space for minoritized populations and by surrounding themselves with others who are inclusive, they are creating the home that residence life departments on college campuses so desperately try to create.

The third tenant of Strange and Banning's (2001) Campus Environment theory is organizational environment. On college campuses, environments are organized for a

purpose. Many times, that purpose is to fulfill a role of student satisfaction and to aid in a learning environment, both inside and outside of the classroom. These organized environments can be formal or informal and in the case of gender-inclusive housing, they are often formal. Policies and practices are organized to aid a student's comfort in their living situation depending on the institution and the types of facilities they have available. The fourth and final tenant of this theory is constructed environment. A constructed environment, unlike the other three tenants, is based on the subjective perception of the environment from an individual. These perceptions could be positive or negative and in the case of a collegiate atmosphere, it could greatly impact the type of experience they are having as a student. When residence life departments have a well organized and successful gender-inclusive policy, they are opening the door for a student's constructive environment to be positive. When students have positive experiences in a residence hall, they encourage other students to live there as well and in turn, they become successful.

The third and final theoretical perspective that aids in the understanding of gender-inclusive housing communities and the students within them is the Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development. This theory was developed by Albert Bandura (1997) with consideration for three components: personal, behavioral, and environmental. The personal components include, but are not limited to, a variety of biological features, self-concept and perception, and self-regulation. Behavioral components are based on the activities an individual partakes in that relate to their gender, regardless of if they are conforming or non-conforming. And finally, the environmental components take into account individuals around them, their learning environment, and any media that someone participates in (television, radio, magazines,

social media, etc.). The social component of this theory derives from the reactions given from individuals around them based on their appearance or actions. During an individual's gender-identity development, this theory explains that they will experiment are try to find what makes them the most comfortable, as well as what provokes the most natural response from peers, faculty, and family around them. Bandura (1997) noticed the three components; personal, behavioral, and environmental, are fluid and can change as much as much as the individual influences them to. For example, a student who moves onto a gender-inclusive community in a residence hall will alter a portion of their environment and may feel more comfortable to express their gender identity while on that floor around and accepting group of peers.
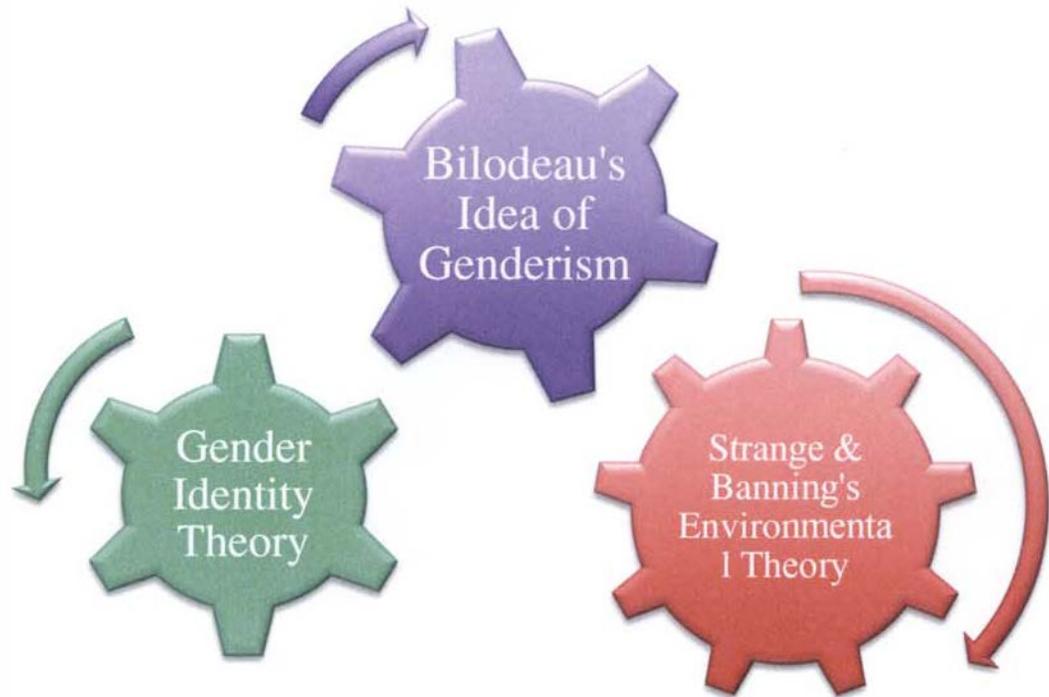
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework. This figure illustrates how the theoretical framework outlined above works together to formulate the importance of gender-inclusive residential communities.

Summary

The literature identifies that there is a need and a want for gender-inclusive residence communities amongst higher education. An extensive amount of research has been done regarding this topic and the student perspective, however there is a need for new and updated research on behalf of the residence life administrator. Based on the development that students undergo through their life in college, there are many things that institutions could do to accommodate those students, and one of those include the creation of a gender-inclusive housing community. Throughout this chapter, I have reviewed literature that has been collected based on the evaluation and importance of inclusive campuses across the nation, an in-depth examination as to what college students

prefer in terms of living arrangements, and the impact that gender-inclusive communities have on the theoretical development of students and their identities.

Chapter III

Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative survey as well as four follow-up interviews. Qualitative research is defined as, "research studies that investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials" (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015, p. 320). To include information from a variety of institutions, a qualitative survey was selected as the best means for the study that was conducted. In addition, four institutions were selected for follow-up interviews to gather more in-depth answers about institutional history with Gender Inclusive Housing.

Design of the Study

The first part of the study was conducted using a qualitative survey that was sent out via email to sixty institutions. Residence life administrators at forty four-year public institutions in the Great Lakes region; Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin completed the survey. The survey consisted of demographic questions about the institution as well as open- and closed-ended questions about the policies and procedures that their department has in order to accommodate students with Gender Inclusive Housing needs. These questions allowed for the examination of the preparedness and levels of comfort with gender-inclusive housing departments have at their institutions. A qualitative survey was utilized because this provided the freedom for individuals to submit more extensive answers and have the reassurance that their institution would be kept anonymous. At the end of the survey, professionals had the opportunity to provide contact information if they would like to be selected for a follow-up interview.

When the data was analyzed, the researcher identified four institutions from those that provided contact information to conduct follow-up interviews as a second part of the research. Two of these institutions currently have a gender-inclusive policy in place and two institutions did not elect to create or implement a policy. Institutions were selected based on size, faculty student ratio, and their location in order to receive some sense of continuity amongst answers. These institutions still remained anonymous, however phone interviews were conducted in order to get a better look at the responses in the survey answers they provided.

Participants/Sample

The target population was residence life directors or administrators who were in charge of the creation and/or implementation of gender-inclusive communities at their respective institutions. By narrowing it down to the people who were enacting or creating the policies, a more accurate assessment of the perceptions within the residence life community as a whole was possible. These participants were contacted via email with a link to a Qualtrics™ survey and they were contacted personally via email for a follow-up interview if they elected to participate.

The Qualtrics™ survey was sent to 60 institutions and yielded 40 responses, which was far more than the anticipated sample. Of these 40 responses, 32 had a policy in place for gender-inclusive housing and eight did not. As mentioned before, participants had the opportunity to indicate if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Four of those institutions were selected to be interviewed based on their willingness to participate, the presence of a policy, and student demographics in order to

acquire the most accurate representation of gender-inclusive housing policies and practices.

Below are the demographics and information about each of the institutions that were chosen to participate in a follow-up interviews. All of the institutions had previously agreed to participate in this interview when they completed their survey responses.

Yes 1 (IN4): IN4 was an institution in Indiana that had a 16:1 student-to-faculty ratio. They had an on-campus population of less than 1,000 and their gender-inclusive housing policy had been in effect since 2014.

Yes 2 (OH10): OH10 was an institution in Ohio that had a 14:1 student-to-faculty ratio. They had an on-campus population of 1,000 to 2,000 and their gender-inclusive housing policy had been in effect since early 2016.

No 1 (IL2): IL2 was an institution in Illinois that had a 14:1 student-to-faculty ratio. They had an on-campus population of 2,000 to 3,000 and they indicated that they did not have a plan to create or implement a gender-inclusive housing policy in the future. This institution does, however, have a practice in place at their institution.

No 2 (MI6): MI6 was an institution in Michigan that had a 15:1 student-to-faculty ratio. They had an on-campus population of less than 1,000 and they indicated that they did not have a plan to create or implement a gender-inclusive housing policy in the future.

Research Site

The survey was sent out to residence life administrators at sixty public four-year institutions across the Midwest region. These institutions were selected for this study as

it allowed for the researcher to evaluate the policies and practices within a specified

geographic region in order to compare schools with a shared regional identity. In

addition, public institutions were surveyed because they do not have the religious

exemption within Title IX that private institutions can obtain. Surveys were sent out via

email using a list that was put together by the researcher through the NASPA database.

The institutions were selected based on the Great Lakes region - Illinois, Iowa, Indiana,

Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. Along with contacting institutions directly, a

representative from the Great Lakes Affiliate of College and University Housing Officers

(GLACUHO) professional association also sent out the survey on their regional listserv.

Instrument

Qualtrics™ was utilized for the instrument to conduct the research. The survey

consisted of a variety of demographic questions as well as questions that allowed for the

researcher to analyze the perceptions of gender-inclusive housing communities at their

respective institutions. To ensure the reliability of my instrument, the researcher's thesis

committee prior to distribution reviewed it. To ensure validity, open-ended questions

were used in order for respondents to give the most descriptive answers. Confidentiality

was ensured by assigning the institutions codes used to report answers and specifics

about the housing program. Questions that were included in this survey are included in

Appendix A.

As for the follow-up participant interviews, the four institutions that were

identified were asked a variety of questions (Appendix C) regarding the history of their

policies or the conversations that took place regarding a practice or policy. Many of

those questions were a follow-up to their answers provided in their survey or other questions that arose regarding research and current events.

Data Collection

The electronic surveys were distributed on June 7, 2017. Institutions within the Midwest region (Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin) were identified via the NASPA database and the GLACUHO listserv. Email addresses for the residence life administrators were obtained by the institutions website. Surveys were sent out via email, which included a link to a Qualtrics™ survey, which remained active until July 7, 2017.

Follow-up interviews took place in October 2017 after analyzing the data that was collected via the electronic survey. These interviews took place over the telephone.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the survey was imported into Excel and coded through a second-cycle coding method. This same coding method was utilized for the interviews after transcription took place. This coding method is referred to as pattern coding. Pattern coding can be used to organize the data that is collected but it is also used to find a meaning to the information (Saldaña, 2013). This is important to the research that was collected because the purpose of the research was to identify if institutions are ready or prepared for gender-inclusive housing needs but the answers given may have not directly identified if the answer was yes or no. Information was then exported into Microsoft Word for content analysis.

Treatment of the Data

An informed consent document was included in the beginning of the survey as well as provided to the participant prior to their follow-up interview. When the information was exported into Excel, the institutions names were coded based on their institution location. The codes and their assigned institutions was saved on a flash drive where all contact information was deleted and maintained in a separate file, which was also saved on a flash drive. The remainder of the information and data was password-protected and saved on the same flash drive, which was kept in a secure location. The recording of the interviews was kept in the safe along with the flash drive. Data will be kept for three years [2020] upon completion of the research, per the institution's IRB policy. After three years, the flash drive, recorder, and all identifiers will be destroyed.

Summary

In this chapter, the method for which the research was conducted was explained. Utilizing a Qualtrics™ survey, residence life directors in the Great Lakes region were contacted regarding their current, emerging, or absence of gender-inclusive housing policies. Participants had the opportunity to provide anonymous answers about their institutions and the preparation that they have or have not completed for the upcoming need of gender-inclusive residential communities. After the information was collected, the results were coded utilizing a pattern coding method and they were analyzed further. Follow-up phone interviews took place with four institutions that have elected to continue with the study. After the interview took place, the information was transcribed and analyzed using pattern coding, similar to the survey results.

Chapter IV

Results

This research was conducted to explore different gender-inclusive housing policies

and practices that are currently in place at four-year public institutions located in Illinois,

Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Michigan. This research was conducted in an effort to

identify the reasons why Higher Education administrations do or do not implement a

gender-inclusive housing policy. Many studies have been conducted from the basis of

the student, however the purpose of this study was to form conclusions regarding policy

makers. This chapter outlines the results that were found that will answer the five

research questions that guided the survey and interviews. A total of 40 institutions

participated in the survey and out of those, four similar institutions were selected for

follow-up interviews; two institutions with gender-inclusive policies and two without

gender-inclusive policies. The data was analyzed utilizing pattern coding and placed into

themes depending on the research questions.

Table 1. Demographics of Survey Participants

Demographics (N=40)	*Number*	*Percentage*
Policy Status		
Has a policy	32	80%
Does not have a policy	8	20%
Institution Location		
Indiana	5	12.5%
Illinois	8	20%
Ohio	10	25%
Michigan	7	17.5%
Wisconsin	10	25%
On Campus Population		

Less than 1,000	4	10%
1,000 to 2,000	5	12.5%
2,000 to 3,000	5	12.5%
3,000 to 4,000	8	20%
4,000 to 5,000	3	7.5%
5,000 to 10,000	9	22.5%
Over 10,000	6	15%

RQI: What are the current policies in place regarding gender-inclusive residence communities?

For the first research question, the gender-inclusive policies in effect at four-year public universities in the Midwest were analyzed. Of the 32 institutions that responded that had a policy in place at their institution, all of them provided a link to and/or information about their policy. This allowed the researcher to easily identify the types of themes that were consistent throughout the policies and the institutions that created them. Three common themes were identified about the policies that existed at institutions: the application process, accessibility to housing options, and housing inventory.

Application Process

Nine institutions (28.1%) had an application process outlined or mentioned within their housing policy. An individual was required to either make their selection for a certain residence hall, or they were required to submit a separate application to live in a gender-inclusive residence hall. At one institution (IL5), individuals were required to submit a written request to the Director of Residence Life as well as sign an agreement specifically for gender-inclusive housing. After those documents were provided, they had to wait to be approved to live in a particular space. At another institution (OH2), their policy required students to disclose why they wished to live in a gender-inclusive

space and if they did not choose to submit this, they would be placed in a space with someone based on their biological sex. A common thread among the institutions that required an application or opt-in form to be submitted was that freshman did not have access to this housing option due to a separate application, a first-year live on requirement, or the type of space that individuals lived in (apartments, upper-classman suites, spaces without an RA, etc.)

Another way that departments placed individuals in specific residence halls were based on their gender identity that they provided within their housing application. In other words, students were able to indicate their gender identity on their application and then placed in a space based on that. On one institution's website, it was stated,

> "In meeting the needs of our residents, [department] will recognize and respect the gender identity the student has established. Staff will not ask for any more information than is required to meet the student's housing needs, and all disclosed information will be kept strictly confidential" (M2)

During the process of transitioning into a gender-inclusive housing model or implementing a policy, the first thing to change for many institutions was the application. During a follow-up interview with IN4, they first found proper wording to put on the application and changed the gender options to male, female, and "decline to state". This institution also required a screening through the Counseling Center on their campus, the results of which are not written down to avoid fear of exposure. However, they would place a student based on the gender they indicated on their yearly application as well as the gender they identified with to the counselor.

Availability

If an institution did not include an application to access gender-inclusive housing, students were required to contact the main office or a particular person to request a gender-inclusive space. One institution recounted during the follow-up interview, "… they give us what their preferences are… and they call [person] who's the assignments person and they talk to [person] about what their interests are and then [person] works with them to make sure… if there's any special needs, then they get that squared away" (IL2). Often times, institutions that did not have a policy set in place did note that they had a process they communicate to students when they request information or ask how the department will accommodate their needs.

The cost is also a factor that many institutions brought up; not only the cost of switching to gender-inclusive housing or providing a space but also the cost associated with living in a set gender-inclusive space. As mentioned, some institutions have inclusive housing strictly in apartment or suite-style areas, many of which have higher rental rates. An answer in an FAQ provided on the housing website of a surveyed institution stated, "The cost of living is based on a specific residence hall, not whether you live on a [gender-inclusive] floor" (IL4). However, there were some institutions that accommodated individuals by providing them with an apartment or suite at the cost of a communal space or a general housing contract. Several institutions that did not have a policy would provide a "medical single" to accommodate the needs of those who may be or have transitioned. Yet, this accommodation would still be on a single-gender floor based on their biological sex and not their gender identity.

The question was asked how institutions market these facilities and many institutions stated that their policy or the accessibility of gender inclusive housing are

available on their website and/or within the housing contracts. Another way that students were able to receive this information was from different campus offices. A few institutions shared that they emailed admitted students, as well as to students who currently lived on campus during the recontracting process, regarding the availability of the housing option.

One institution stated on their website, "Because of limitations in the available housing options, there is no guarantee that all of a student's preferences can be met, but we are highly committed to working with the student to find the best accommodations possible" (MI4). This is a common limitation among institutions where gender-inclusive spaces were only provided on a certain floor in a residence hall or a specific space based on restroom needs.

Housing Inventory and Occupancy

Housing inventory and occupancy is an important aspect of inclusive policies and the determination of whether or not an institution can sustain and accommodate gender-inclusive housing needs. The facilities that an institution has, the types of student rooms, and the style of restrooms that are available can all contribute to whether or not a space is inclusive or exclusive. It also determines which students are able to live in those spaces. Likewise, if an institution is at 100% occupancy, they are less likely to be able to accommodate or create policies that allow for flexible housing options and vice versa. This is due to the fact that there would not be enough spaces to move around individuals who may need gender-inclusive accommodations if every space is already occupied through the reassignment process.

On one institution's website, administrators articulated, "[gender inclusive housing] is available for continuing groups of undergraduate and graduate residents in the [name] apartment-style living area" (OH7). During a follow-up interview with an institution that indicated that they did not have a formal policy, the participant specifically mentioned housing occupancy status when explaining how they provide accommodations for students who may need them. "We are in a lucky spot in that occupancy is not at 100% and so typically when a student is asking for something like that, we have spaces, specifically single student spaces like studios, that we're able to offer them" (MI6).

However, other institutions had a multitude of options in order to accommodate the highest number of students. On OH4's website, there were six different options available for students wanting gender inclusive housing to encourage the highest level of inclusivity based on the comfort of the student. These options ranged from mixed gender suites or apartments, opposite legal sex roommates, single floors, private bathrooms, etc. This was a similar situation at another institution (MI7), which had four residence hall options and three apartment options. These institutions were more easily able to create accommodations due to the makeup of their housing inventory and occupancy rates that was unique to their specific campuses.

RQ2: If there is not one in place at an institution, is there a plan to make one anytime in the future?

The second research question looked at institutions that did not have a policy currently in place in order to examine if they were going to be implementing or creating one in the future. There were eight institutions who indicated that they do not currently

have a policy in place, and out of those eight, three (37.5%) indicated they were in the

process of creating and implementing one in the future. Two of the three stated this

policy was going to be put into place by spring semester of 2017 or fall semester of 2018

and one institution mentioned that they have a practice in place, but do not yet have a set

policy created or outlined. The themes that emerged from this question were student

buy-in and the idea of being proactive versus reactive in policy making.

Student Buy-In

One of the factors for an institution deciding to not implement or create a policy

was the perception of student buy-in. In the survey, participants were asked if there was

a demand for gender-inclusive housing on their specific campus. Of the 34 institutions

who responded, 23 (67.65%) stated that there was a demand and 11 (32.35%) stated that

there was not a demand from the students. This was emphasized further during the

follow-up interviews with the institutions that did not have a policy in place,

> ... we are also kind of waiting for some student buy-in, not that we need student
>
> buy-in 100% to drive our policies and procedures, especially when it comes to
>
> situations of inclusivity, like we definitely don't want to just wait for other
>
> students to bring it out. But there isn't a desire on campus yet, so we don't think it
>
> has pushed the administration to go hardcore with it. (MI6)

During the interview with an institution that did have a policy in place, they indicated

during their conversations with the LGBT student group on campus, the students did not

seem very interested in the strides that they were making with their residence halls. The

participant stated,

Because it wasn't something that was on their radar at the time or something that

they really thought was huge and essential for us… And so there wasn't a sense of

urgency that we were hoping for from the group that I thought we needed to see.

(IN4)

Proactive vs. Reactive in Policy Making

Institutions that did not have a formal policy were asked during the interviews

what the reasoning or rationale was for not yet creating a policy and a common theme

was they were waiting for a situation to arise. This was different from the institutions

who already created a policy in order to be proactive and preparing for the need rather

than waiting and not being ready, "I think, unfortunately, we're stuck in this pattern of

reactiveness…" (MI6). They indicated that they (the professional) was new to the

institution and when they had gone through orientation, they had little to no policies that

the professional had experienced at other institutions and so they felt as though they were

constantly being confronted with situations where there were no policies in place.

Another institution shared similar reasoning. "Well, there is not a need for a

policy if there is an option of reality that's just part of the system… the more you label it,

the more it is I think sometimes excluding as opposed to including" (IL2). This

institution established a practice that was currently in use, but there was no set policy that

dictated whether or not they would be required to continue to offer gender-inclusive

housing options to students who requested or needed them. This institution did recognize

in a proactive statement, "…organizations need to be prepared to serve an evolving

population" (IL2).

RQ3: What type of positive stigma surrounds gender-inclusive housing? What type of negative stigma surrounds gender-inclusive housing?

The idea of positive and negative stigma that surrounds gender-inclusive housing was observed both from the online survey as well as during the follow-up interviews. This was extrapolated based on the reasons why, or why not policies were created, as well as interactions that administrators had with outside forces (students, parents, etc.) regarding gender-inclusive housing. This is also the area that was identified as the most important to the administrators that created the gender-inclusive policies that were in place. By being able to provide their students with a home that made them feel safe and secure, they were increasing the student retention and overall support that the Residence Life Departments provided. Themes that emerged included implementation of policies, cultural resistance, safety of students, campus collaboration, and administrative support.

Implementation

As with any policy, there is an implementation process. Although the idea of implementing a new policy can be daunting, many of the individuals during the interview stated that their implementation process was smooth. The professional explained, "The implementation was pretty smooth. I just said 'Hey we want to do this'... and my supervisor was very supportive and she did run it by [the President] but [the President] said 'Yea go for it'" (IN4).

Institutions also had their own unique way of implementing a gender-inclusive policy based on their campus and student culture. Some institutions did it quickly, whereas others would slowly transition a community into an inclusive one. OH10 shared,

... we designated some spaces when we did housing reassignment for the coming

year... we took some rooms offline... and the process was that they were the

better spaces, they were good spaces in each building for students who were

nonbinary to live in. Due to the location of the room or kind of bathroom facility

on hand and that sort of stuff.

While the implementation on some campuses as well as within departments have been

smooth, it sometimes leads to dissent within the current and previous student populations.

Because this was often an after-the-fact issue that was brought up, it did not affect the

original plans of gender-inclusive housing.

Cultural Resistance

Cultural resistance (also referred to as dissent) can occur amongst a multitude of

individuals for a variety of different reasons regarding a policy, especially one like

gender-inclusive housing. It was a common theme that many institutions received some

sort of backlash when proposing or implementing the policy or change to the residential

program. This is often one aspect that deters departments from creating a policy that

provides nonbinary individuals with different residential options. In one particular

instance, the Director at IL2 mentioned that the only concern the President had in

creating a practice for the department was the pushback that the institution would receive

in response or the possibility of a lack of support from key stakeholders. During the

follow-up interviews with institutions that have a gender-inclusive policy, participants

were asked if they had any issues during the creation and implementation of their policy

from students, parents, administration, alumni, or otherwise. Though some did not

indicate a specific instance of dissent, there was an undercurrent in their voice that

indicated otherwise. Despite this, others shared specific instances that they recalled where the policy or practice they had proposed was challenged.

At IN4, a student was placed in one of their gender-inclusive floors without a roommate and then a new student came to campus that needed a place to live. The department offered the room on the gender-inclusive floor, and while the student agreed, the parent did not. "Well... the parent was part of this conversation as well and the parent said absolutely not" (IN4). At OH10, the participant stated that the spaces they designated as gender-inclusive were popular amongst upperclassman as it was a very private suite-style residence hall. They then went on to explain that a student decided to change their gender identity in order for her and her roommates to live in that space. The participant stated, "I said 'Help me understand what you're trying to do here' and the bottom line was all she was trying to do was get the suite. But her thing was 'Well you can't discriminate against me if I just want to say that I don't want to identify as a binary female anymore'" (OH10). The institution's solution was to allow the student to move into the suite but the department had a conversation with the student about how inappropriate it was that she was doing that simply to live in a popular suite.

IL2 indicated that they had a practice in place for gender-inclusive housing accommodations and addressed any issues regarding dissent against the spaces they provide. They stated that, for the most part, students, faculty, and alumni alike were very supportive of their choice to create gender-inclusive facilities but one particular alumnus "... from the '70's who told me I was going to burn in hell... 'Who's going to pay for the abortions?'... but, ya know, you have to expect a little bit of that" (IL2). While impactful, this instance in particular did not affect the implementation of the gender-

inclusive practice and was atypical from many circumstances. Overall, the anticipated

resistance often did not manifest or they were prepared for more than what they actually

encountered.

Safety

One of the most appealing motivations of creating a gender-inclusive policy was

ensuring the safety of a student, no matter their gender identity. This theme emerged

during the follow-up interviews when institutions were stating that that lack of a gender-

inclusive policy was needed in order to ensure the safety and security of their nonbinary

students in an effort to not single them out in a specific space. One stated, "… but I

definitely saw that it was a trend in housing and I was concerned that we weren't doing

enough… for the safety of our students" (IN4). Another recounted, "… we didn't have a

policy to make their experience a positive one and that was despicable in my opinion"

(OH10). Another benefit departments found was creating a gender-inclusive space

allowed it to become a space of learning. IL2 expressed, "… I want integration. I want

people to… live in a way in which they're all comfortable but they all learn from each

other."

However, one concern that arose is the idea that gender-inclusive housing

excludes nonbinary students due to the state that students are in when they enter college.

During the interview with IN4, the issue was faced when they were educating students

about their gender-inclusive facilities. The participant stated, "I wasn't sure that… in the

process of educating our students that they would come in 100% accepting, ready, and

understanding of what it meant to be transgender so I was worried for those students

around them…." (IN4). They stated that they created the facilities to be the "most safe

environment available", realizing that it was not a guarantee that it would turn out that way.

Campus and Regional Collaboration

Cross-campus collaboration was one of the most common ways that gender-inclusive policies emerged at institutions and it is also a benefit associated with gender-inclusive housing. By creating this policy, departments within institutions are brought together for the betterment of their campus and to increase the satisfaction of the students they serve. The meaningful and constant communication between residential life departments and other departments or student organizations such as: Admissions, the Counseling Center, Marketing, Hall Council organizations and gender and sexually diverse student organizations as well as resource centers, was raised multiple times during the study. On certain campuses, different departments could provide different benefits or input regarding the policy and student group participation allowed students to participate in the development of the policy and the changes they were making. In particular, Admissions proved to be the most often mentioned as helpful for creating the policy due to the interactions they had with prospective students. Admissions contacts are usually the first point of interest for many individuals exploring the idea of attending an institution. If those staff members have an idea of the type of options available to transgender or nonbinary students, the institution may be more appealing to students because they know they would be supported.

In regards to regional collaboration, both of the institutions that had a policy in place on their campus had connected with other institutions within the region to form the base for their policy. One participant emphasized further, "… we pretty much begged,

borrowed, and stole what we did from other places and then looked at other schools from the state we're currently in" (OHIO). This sharing of experiences and resources provided a starting point for many institutions in developing a policy for their own institutions.

Administrative Support

Some residence life departments that began writing a gender-inclusive policy did not receive support from the upper-administration to create a policy. There is a stigma surrounding gender-inclusivity and we have seen this within the realm of student, parent, and alumni resistance. However, institutions that have overcome this have found that administration is overall supportive of this effort to unify and create an inclusive environment for the students they serve on campus. During the implementation process of IL2's inclusive practice, they stated that their President had visited students to gauge the interest of this. By seeing students who were excited about the changes residence life was implementing, the President was also excited about generating a better campus for students to engage in.

If an administration does not support residence life in their endeavors to create a policy or practice, it is difficult for a department to create a policy or carry out a practice. In the instance of system institutions, administrators across a particular state require agreement about a policy in order to implement it on all campuses. In the case of MI6, they expressed, "... we are partners of the [system] and so if [campus] does it, it pretty much opens the door for us to do it. And they're kind of not fully invested in a process or policy at the moment, so we're kind of waiting."

RQ4: What type of need or want for gender-inclusive housing exists within institutions in the Midwest?

The fourth research question examined the need or want that existed from students for gender-inclusive housing within the sample population. 67.65% of the survey respondents indicated that there was a demand on their campus while 32.35% indicated that there was no demand from students. The themes that emerged were student input while creating policies, the emotional stability or maturity of students, as well as the different state laws and restrictions that are in place regarding the creation or implementation of these policies.

Student Input

Student input was regularly mentioned as important during the creation of a gender-inclusive policy. Student input came from a mixture of three outlets: direct student contact, Resident Satisfaction Surveys, and LGBTQA+ student groups. Administrators and policy makers who were in the beginning stages of creating gender-inclusive policies or communities took this input into account. Despite the lack of a formal policy, IL2 still included student input in determining how they would accommodate nonbinary students. During the initial conversations to create an inclusive community, the Director of Residential Life went to speak to Hall Council's of the areas that were going to be converted and also had conversations with the LGBTQA+ student groups on campus. As the process continued, the more the Director communicated with administrators, the more discussions began to happen between the President and residents within the community that was explained prior.

The feedback that administrators or policy makers receive from students is not always positive, despite the need or want for gender-inclusive housing. One participant stated,

> We're a highly commuter institution and the vast majority of our students in that [LGBT] organization are commuters. And so from a residential perspective, they weren't necessarily focused on that [policy creation]... And so there wasn't a sense of urgency that we were hoping for from that group that we thought we needed to see. (IN4)

Another participant shared that there was a student who originally requested an inclusive space and they were the reason the institution created a policy. Because of this, the institution (OH10) relied heavily on this student and asked for their input regarding the policy and any changes they should make regarding it. That student aided them in their endeavors during the duration of their time at the institution and the participant shared how much their input helped the department.

Educational Support

The idea of emotional stability and maturity was mentioned multiple times regarding students who are not used to encountering students who are nonbinary. Some departments expressed a concern or fear that incoming students were not aware of the gender and sexually diverse students that exist. While edification exists and institutions strive to achieve a level of education to be inclusive, there is not always a readiness on the students' end to receive that. In turn, students who do not yet understand or do not care to understand, gender and sexual diversity will not be aware of the importance of gender-inclusive housing to exist on their respective campuses.

IN4 discussed this the most, as they recognized that many of their students enter college with little understanding of the issues associated with nonbinary or transgender students. This lack of understanding highlighted for institutions the fear that students who do identify as nonbinary will not feel comfortable in their space. The participant stated, "...[nonbinary students] find a level of acrimony or misunderstanding... and I want to be able to have something in the community where we call 'inclusive' for the students [within] that community" (IN4). They further emphasized that they strive to provide education for all students and their nonbinary students are usually willing to educate their peers as well. Despite an increase in visibility, this is a common issue that institutions will encounter, as incoming students continue to come from a variety of different backgrounds.

Laws and Restrictions

In some cases, there may be student demand for gender-inclusive policies however laws or restrictions in the state may deter an institution from making needed accommodations. Of the 34 institutions that responded to this question on the survey, five (14.71%) stated that there is a law or restriction in place that made the process difficult or impossible. For those states where such laws and restrictions exist, there is the possibility of a roadblock for whether or not an institution is able to create a policy or provide needed accommodations. In addition, students researching these institutions who are in need of a safe space may not be able to find the necessary information. To protect the anonymity of the participants, specifics of the law or restriction will not be given due to the fact that many were system institutions and/or administrators that had put the boundaries in place. However, the institutions that provided their restrictions had stated

that they were required to provide other gender-inclusive facilities (such as restrooms) but they were not able to provide coeducational housing as it was not appropriate. A few state institutions stated that these restrictions are being altered in 2018 to allow individual campuses to make the decisions for themselves based on their student population and the types of demand that are present.

RQ5: What is the current action plan of an institution if a resident were to need a gender-inclusive accommodation in order to live safely and comfortably?

The fifth and final research question looked at whether or not institutions had a plan in place to accommodate students who were in need of gender-inclusive housing if they did not yet have a policy in place. Information was utilized from both the follow-up interviews as well as the institutions who responded to the survey. For the most part, institutions did have a plan in the case that a student requested a space or was in need of a community that would ensure a nonbinary student felt safe and comfortable. Two themes that emerged from this research question related to facility management and upper class occupancy.

Facility Management

Facility management was one of the most common themes that emerged when institutions discussed their current action plan. These plans varied based on the different types of spaces that were available for gender-inclusive housing. One that came up a couple times was the idea of "flexible housing". This was seen directly from OHI0 when they mentioned, "… our housing is flexible enough that basically we [can provide accommodations] in all but one residence hall. So students can live anywhere under our policy" (OH10). This was implemented when a new Director went into the position and

found that the action plan included providing a student a medical single when they identified as a different gender than their biological sex. The new Director thought it was not appropriate due to the fact that the student may not want a single room, and certainly not one that is labeled a "medical" single.

Another method of facility management is utilizing empty bed spaces to the advantage of accommodating students who are in need of a gender-inclusive space. As mentioned prior, MI6 was able to constantly accommodate students with safe spaces due to the fact that they were not at 100% occupancy and therefore had a multitude of unused spaces. In turn, there is a positive reputation associated with the department for taking that risk and providing that space, despite a lack of habitation.

A question within the survey prompted participants to indicate whether or not they have other gender-inclusive facilities provided on campus. Of the 34 institutions who responded to this question, 29 (85.29%) indicated that they did have other gender inclusive facilities on campus. These facilities included public restrooms, locker rooms, and shower facilities in on campus recreation centers.

Upperclassman Occupancy

An important issue impacting gender-inclusive housing is the existence of upperclassman-only accommodations for particular spaces where freshmen do not qualify to live. One institution had a policy in place that did not allow for first-year students to live in the buildings where their gender-inclusive spaces were available. Institution IN4 for example did not allow first-year students to live in their apartment-style housing, which was where they located their gender inclusive spaces. Since first-year students were not allowed to live there, freshman needing gender inclusive housing were unable to

be accommodated. IN4 also did not have a practice in place for when a first-year student was in need of a gender-inclusive space and indicated that they would attempt to find them a roommate who was inclusive and comfortable with their gender identity. Although first-year students may not always be aware of who they are and utilize their collegiate career to develop their identity, there are many first-year students who have self-identified prior to coming to college to seek such an accommodation.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the results of the data that was collected via an online survey as well as within the four follow-up interviews that took place with representative institutions. The data collected provided an understanding of institutions that have a policy and those that do not, as well as those institutions that have a desire to accommodate students without the restrictions and issues that a formal policy provides. The themes that emerged included: application process, accessibility, housing inventory and occupancy, student buy-in, proactive and reactive policy making, implementation, cultural resistance, safety, campus and regional collaboration, administrative support, student input, emotional stability, laws and restrictions, facility management, and upperclassman occupancy.

Chapter V

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

This study was designed to form conclusions regarding and analyzing the gender-inclusive policies that are present on college campuses. Surveys and interviews were conducted with residence life professionals at 40 public, four-year institutions in the Midwest. This chapter will delve into the results of the research as it relates to the literature review conducted and will also provide recommendations for administrators, students, and future research.

Significance of Findings

Themes that emerged from this study and their significance are discussed below. The themes found and identified are organized under each research question.

RQ1: What are the current policies in place regarding gender-inclusive residence communities?

Application Process

Throughout each of the survey responses, one commonality amongst the participants that emerged is that gender-inclusive housing is identified as an option and/or offered within an application or recontracting process. This can be problematic because prospective students who do not have access to a recontracting application or do not feel comfortable to reach out the university will not be aware of the option. Therefore, that institution could lose an individual to the lack of information provided on their website or publications. Having this option be clear on a publication rather than hidden within the application could increase the awareness of the policy or available options to current and prospective students.

It was mentioned during the interview with IN4 that individuals were required to meet with the counseling center to measure the identity development with a student throughout their collegiate journey. Depending on how the student was identifying with their counselor during their annual appointment was how they were placed in their residential space. This took the locus of control out of the hands of a student to decide how they would identify and left it up to the interpretation of a clinical health professional. Other institutions that participated in the survey also identified the need for students to meet with counselors or psychiatrists in order to be "approved" to live in their gender-inclusive spaces.

According to Willoughby et al. (2009), the need for co-educational housing began to increase in the 1970s and single-gender buildings were no longer an accommodation that was requested. Renn and Bilodeau (2005) also analyzed the importance of living on campus in an effort to be involved. Involvement in higher education is a pivotal point for students and feeling comfortable where they live gives students the ability to more easily reach out for resources, leave their room to socialize, and stay on campus to continue that development for their tenure at the institution. Without the knowledge of a gender-inclusive space or the support from the institution, a student will not have the ability to accomplish this. While they could very well still be successful in their time in higher education, they will be less likely to develop with the resources they need.

Availability

To expand on this even further, we find that availability and accessibility is a factor in the current policies that are present on campuses across the Midwest. For institutions that did not create a formal policy, participants shared that the costs of

maintaining as well as the lengthy process of creating a gender-inclusive facility contributes to their reasoning for not having a space. While this is understandable, many other institutions have demonstrated that the reward outweighs the cost and counters the false assumption that institutions need to build gender-inclusive spaces from the ground up. This is simply not the case as many institutions have simply changed the living situation of a building or renovated a couple floors to accommodate this type of housing option. While a new and renovated building would be ideal for any student, it is not a critical expectation from student populations.

Housing Inventory & Occupancy

Previous housing inventory and occupancy are factors that are completely out of the control of the departments and sometimes even the institution as a whole. Inventory and occupancy have been a factor that has both benefitted and deterred residence life departments from creating and/or implementing gender-inclusive spaces. As mentioned prior, when occupancy is low, departments have a lot more flexibility in accommodating students and therefore have the ability to move individuals around, create open spaces, and hire strategically. A couple states in the Midwest have ran into budget concerns that have also contributed to low housing occupancy and enrollment decreases. However, this will not always be the situation. As enrollment increases and occupancy continues to grow, those accommodations will be less available and if alternatives do not exist students may be unable to find a safe space to call home on campus.

It is wishful thinking that these factors would not contribute to the lack of formal policies on college campuses and rather would become a motivation to set an expectation to accommodate any and all students regardless of their need. The conclusions drawn

from this study have found that a policy is much more common than a practice.

Conversely, practices are not contingent nor a promise to accommodate – it is simply

what has always been done. The 32 institutions that identified ownership of a formal

gender-inclusive policy mentioned that their policy revolved around a specific space or

residence hall that is designated as gender-inclusive or co-educational. These

departments altered their housing inventory or utilized their housing occupancy to

provide accommodations to their nonbinary, gender non-conforming, or any student who

required a special interest space.

RQ2: If there is not one in place at an institution, is there a plan to make one anytime in the future?

Student Buy-In

Conclusions from the study found that there is an apparent lack of student interest

at institutions across the Midwest. Previous research that has been conducted regarding

gender-inclusive housing concludes that there is a demand and students on college

campuses would like these spaces, regardless of their own gender identity or need.

Perhaps residence life programs are not reaching out to students or assessing the wants

that they have on their particular campuses. Many participants mentioned that they had

conducted Residence Life Satisfaction Surveys, which asked about their happiness with

the programs offered on their campus. Based on the results from these surveys,

administrators did not see a need for a new policy and had been dealing with student

requests on a case-by-case basis.

Students often do not have the ability, outlet, or confidence to speak up for their

beliefs or what they would like to see on their campus. Higher Education professionals

should be able to have intentional conversations with their students and give them a safe space to voice their concerns or demands. Students on college campuses have a lot to worry about, and many do not think that they have the ability to make a change that is not seen as a top priority at the institution. Gender and society are ever changing and therefore, college campuses must be willing to change with it and residence life should prepare for a foreseeable need before it is needed. Prospective students see visuals of inclusivity before they arrive on campus and incorporating inclusive practices early on benefits current and future students.

Proactive vs. Reactive in Policy Making

Similarly, college campuses are often more reactive than proactive in regards to policy-making and change. Although society is changing, and there is evidence to back that up, there is a lack of publicity regarding proactive acts or policies. One participant in particular admitted that Student Affairs as a whole being stuck in a pattern of reactiveness because of the multitude of other things that occur on a daily basis. This is true in the fact that Student Affairs work is unpredictable in the day to day, however professionals need to be able to provide best practice in support of students. Being proactive in policy-making would relieve students of the necessity to advocate for their needs on such a sensitive issue and allow them to see an institution's ability to anticipate trends and act on them accordingly.

Unfortunately, it is not directly clear as to why institutions are reactive as opposed to proactive when it comes to policy making. MI6 recognized this unfortunate pattern as well when they mentioned that their institution had not done much to progress their gender-inclusive accommodations but rather waited for a student to rock the boat.

Perhaps this is a common occurrence amongst college campuses that needs to be addressed through social justice or advocacy in an effort to break the habit and set a standard to encourage advancement.

RQ3: What type of positive stigma surrounds gender-inclusive housing? What type of negative stigma surrounds gender-inclusive housing?

Implementation

Participants reported that they were hesitant to create a gender-inclusive policy for fear that the implementation would be difficult. This fear was based either over concerns with the publication of the policy or the costs involved in the renovation and construction needs of residence halls. Overall, everything associated with implementation could act as a deterrence but it should not be the deciding factor. As institutions mentioned, implementation on other campuses has gone smoothly for other institutions. Although there was some initial cultural resistance, the implementation was ultimately smoother than expected and Residence Life Programs did not experience major issues with the cost or overall construction of a space. Two institutions in particular expressed concern over the implementation and release of the policy due to the cultural resistance they expected to receive, however it turned out to be an easy and seamless transition. The institutions that were able to accomplish a gender-inclusive housing policy had the motivation and reasons necessary to make the accommodations and progress on their particular campus. Considerate research and careful planning can also avoid problems within the planning and executing of a gender-inclusive policy.

Some institutions that had chosen to not have a formal policy instead chose to still have an informal case-by-case process. Because these instances are often not consistent,

they can not be measured by how good or bad the application has been. However, just because there is not a way to accurately measure the success of these practices, does not mean that they are not a positive addition to the department or student population. Institutions that create a practice despite any barriers they encountered are institutions that focus on student need and demand. Even when an institution chooses to not create a formal policy, it does not mean that the support for students does not exist, however the institution still risks developing a negative reputation regarding inclusivity.

Cultural Resistance

Overall, the cultural resistance that was received by institutions with both formal policies and informal practices consisted primarily of parents and alumni. While these are both key stakeholders at an institution and important to the overall progress, institutions did not allow that to halt the progress. The creation of these policies or practices were implemented or announced prior to the feedback being received and therefore they were not very worried about this type of negativity. Administrators recognized the concerns that were provided from parents and alumni, however they were more focused on the student need that existed.

It is, however, important to note that there has been little to no direct cultural resistance from students themselves. Although it is more than likely that it exists, there was nothing that was identified during the research. With that being said, perhaps students are willing to admit the need for a policy, even if they do not necessarily agree with it and this is what contributes to the lack of resistance.

Safety

The safety and security of students was a major theme that emerged throughout the research. Institutions created gender-inclusive policies and practices in an effort to encourage students to feel safe, supported, and welcome within their residence hall community. Pryor (2015) concluded in his study that the non-support nonbinary students received from their peers directly impacted the safety and inclusion that they experienced on campus. In turn, their comfort within their residence hall community was at risk. While this depends on the community and campus, students who live in campus-owned housing experience more support and are provided greater resources. If a student does not feel comfortable in their on-campus living space, they face a higher risk of not being retained at the institution. Therefore, gender-inclusive housing is important to not only create a safe environment for nonbinary students and their allies, but also to create an educational environment for those who are not aware of these differences in an effort to impact other Higher Education issues that occur off-campus.

Regardless of the rest of the campus climate, students who need or want a gender-inclusive space should have a place where they feel comfortable and safe to go back to at the end of the day. Not only this, but they have university staff members available who are trained to handle situations of oppression or hate as well as provide additional support from an institutional standpoint. Pryor (2015) noticed that college campuses have become increasingly more focused on creating inclusive practices as well as providing training for faculty and staff members. This type of education enhances the safety in not only spaces outside of a classroom but also inside. Faculty and staff members who have the ability to identify resources and provide support to nonbinary students allow for students to feel comfortable to partake in social activities, attend classes, and live in on-

campus housing. The co-curricular approach provides safety and security to students who need it in all areas of their collegiate experience.

Campus & Regional Collaboration

As mentioned in the literature, student affairs professionals often collect data and analyze what they identify as best practices in higher education in an effort to create other policies for their own institution. These types of collaborations emerged from findings that students' articulation that they felt safe within gender-inclusive spaces and were able to more fully be their authentic selves. Seelman (2014) found that student groups, supportive faculty members and administrators, gender and sexually diverse centers and/or organizations were identified as key stakeholders in the retention of nonbinary students. Pryor (2015) noticed that the participants within his study mentioned individuals who made a positive impact on them outside of the classroom. Many of these individuals were part of university services, including housing, which provided resources and support to gender and sexually diverse students. This is an opportunity for housing professionals to become a primary resource and support for students on their campus.

It is important for residence life administrators to identify the impactful individuals on their own campuses, regardless of the presence of a policy or practice, in order to provide resources for their nonbinary students. A staff member being able to refer students to a resource or provide a listening ear to a student in need promotes positive interactions with students as well as with other offices or individuals on campus. Research suggests that it seems as though student organizations did not prove to be the most helpful during the research of gender-inclusive policies, but student input is still

important to many of the administrators. This is not because students do not care, but rather because they are not aware of the impact they could have on the policy.

Regional support is also important because of the ability to compare and contrast policies and practices occurring at similar institutions. Just as this study experienced, institutions that are similar in size, location, and demographics would benefit from communicating with each other and creating an open dialogue sharing policies and plans on addressing current trends and needs that benefit their nonbinary students. While institutional differences and campus climates will not always be an exact match, they will be able to identify what will work for them as well as things that will not as they learn from each other and exchange ideas.

Administrative Support

Similarly to collaboration, the support of faculty and administrators is also very important to the overall success of a gender-inclusive policy. When one department makes a decision that is done in an effort to progress and support a minority student population, everyone must be on the same page. As Pryor (2015) mentioned, faculty who support nonbinary students in their collegiate endeavors are more likely to aid in the retention of a student than even their own peers. Because when students have the support they need within their classroom, they are able to create a positive environment for their own success. Just as the university President on IL2 supported their endeavor of creating a practice, other administrators must be just as excited about the progress and change occurring on their campus.

RQ4: What type of need or want for gender-inclusive housing exists within institutions in the Midwest?

Student Input

While institutions mentioned a lack of student interest, the research conducted indicates otherwise. One particular institution (OH10) mentioned that because one student inquired about the existence of a gender-inclusive space, they were inclined to create it since they did not have it available. That student aided them in their endeavors during the duration of their time at the institution and the participant shared how much their input helped the department. This is an uncommon instance and it depends on the campus in which it is occurring on, but one that speaks volumes to the care and concern a department has for a student in need of a safe space. The impact that this single student had on shaping the policy for OH10 is an instance that should happen more often. This student's self-representation and advocacy is not typical and not every institution will be provided with such a direct instance as this.

Students who have the ability to advocate for the needs of themselves or their peers are those that have the ability to change the world. Previously, it was an expectation that students would come to college in order to develop their identity. Research indicates that students are coming to college knowing who they are and establishing a gender identity within their years in high school or before. Because of this changing demographic, administrators must be able to keep up with the trends in higher education. The student at OH10 is an example worth showcasing. In this instance, not only did this student positively impact their own experiences but they also positively impacted the experiences of any nonbinary student who comes after them.

Not only is it important for students to advocate to create gender-inclusive policies or practices, but it is also important that there is continuous review and assessment of the policies and procedures that are occurring on college campuses. A student living in a particular community should be able to have the ability to communicate the strengths and weaknesses of the spaces they live in, regardless of the type of community it is. Institutions recognized that they accomplish this through Resident Satisfaction Surveys, although they indicated that it is not always done in the first year, it should be done in an effort to promote the outlet and make the changes for the following year for increased resident satisfaction. Special attention is needed to these types of assessment tools because a survey of overall satisfaction may not provide enough information regarding this type of housing. Due to the fact that the students are living in these spaces, they should have the opportunity to impact the way they are designed or maintained.

Educational Support

A common theme that emerged from participants was providing emotional support for the binary students that surround the gender-inclusive space who would not be accepting or understanding of the reasoning for a policy or practice. While the institutions that mentioned this also mentioned the accessibility of education, this may also be a valid point for those who do not create a policy or practice due to these types of limitations they feel exist. Although valid to a point, it is also a rationalization for those unwilling to educate or accommodate for underrepresented students. A lack of education or exposure to diversity is an issue amongst new students however, this can be addressed without sacrificing minority students and the experiences they are having.

An educational opportunity does exist, but utilizing the excuse that an institution cannot create a policy or practice because of other students' inability to understand what it means is invalid. This is an area in which students and faculty can unite to advocate for the rights of gender and sexually diverse students in an effort to create educational opportunities before issues arise. Student groups, campus offices, and national or regional publications can help to educate less-informed students about the value of these policies without negatively impacting the benefits of the policy. We have seen that students learn a lot about themselves while in college, and these educational opportunities are part of the journey.

Laws & Restrictions

Another obstacle that institutions encountered were the variety of local, state, regional, and national laws and restrictions. A particular board of regents or a local law in place often created many of these restrictions. While sometimes loopholes exist, institutions must abide by legitimate rules and restrictions. Despite the student need or want on a college campus, there may be a lack of support from other stakeholders that exist outside of housing and who may have more of an influence on the decisions that are made. This is when practices come into place. Although a policy cannot be published, a general practice that departments use to accommodate students can be formed. There is legitimacy to following the rules, however finding ways to operate within them does not mean that administrators give up hope and progress. A gender-inclusive practice can be supported within those boundaries from involved parties. Many institutions within system schools will create these practices to further development of their department, while still staying within the guidelines of the system's ideals.

RQ5: What is the current action plan of an institution if a resident were to need a gender-inclusive accommodation in order to live safely and comfortably?

Facility Management

Accommodations were provided based on the facilities that exist on a campus and how institutions provided their accommodation depended on the availability of spaces and specific needs of a student. In this study, the practice of using empty beds to allow for a single room was the most common accommodation provided. This is effective facility management because the lack of housing occupancy negative affects the number of beds being utilized, and by using them to accommodate a student who needs a private space, administrators are using the room much more effectively than simply leaving it empty. It is important to also note that this will not be possible on every campus, however where it is, it is an effective form of facility management that also directly impacts the student and those that surround them.

Room style also plays a pivotal role in the types of accommodations given to students who are in need of a gender-inclusive space. At times, availability is limited and individuals are not able to be provided with a space that allows them to express gender identity. This can vary based on the campus and the possibilities are endless, however the most accommodating room style would be one that allows an individual to be in a room, with or without a roommate, and have their own bathroom or access to a gender-inclusive restroom. No matter the case, providing individuals with greater ability to control their facility surroundings based on the ownership of their own gender identity is ideal.

Upperclassman Occupancy

Although first-year students may not always be aware of who they are and utilize their collegiate career to develop their identity, there are many first-year students who have self-identified prior to coming to college and seek such an accommodation as freshman. Students who confirm their identity – or at least from a gender perspective – prior to college can utilize their campus to identify support mechanisms, key stakeholders in their lives, as well as analyze their ability to cope with problems they will encounter as their gender and sexually diverse selves. Admissions departments on campuses could easily provide prospective students with the identified resources on campus and in the local area in an effort to also encourage them to attend their institution.

At several institutions, gender-inclusive housing options are only available to upperclassman students due to the nature of that type of housing most attractive to upperclass students is often the type of housing that is easily adapted for a gender-inclusive community. But when an institution restricts their gender-inclusive spaces to upperclassman only, they lose the ability to accommodate incoming first-year students who are considering attending their institution. As a result of this failure, prospective students may be deterred from enrolling at the institution feeling that they are not supported by faculty or administrators. While this not the case for every student, it is most important and accommodating to allow anyone to utilize the resources available on their campus.

Recommendations for Administrators

Share care and concern for underrepresented students. At the end of the day, the reason administrators work on a college campus is because they share a desire to support college students in their development. It has been mentioned many times that giving

students an outlet to share their concerns or advocate for change starts with their comfort to speak with faculty, staff, and administrators about these distresses. If administrators provide the channel for students by showcasing their care and compassion, they would be more likely to share both the pros and cons of their experiences as well as what they would like to see.

Researching and creating a gender-inclusive program. With the multitude of change that occurs in Higher Education and the existence of progress, administrators must be willing to continually review decisions to insure that their policies are the best for their campus and their students. Keeping contact with other professionals at similar institutions while creating these policies allows for collaboration and development. It is critical that policies and programs continue to be assessed and evaluated as well as trends within Student Affairs continue to be analyzed for potential application.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on forty institutions, some of which have a gender-inclusive policy and some that do not. Through this study, it was indicated that institutions that do not have a policy instead have a practice that allows for the accommodation of gender-inclusive housing. Administrators expressed frustrations with the lack of progress their institutions have made were authentic in nature and created a sense of awareness for the researcher. Student experiences were emphasized but the overall problems that still exist often have little to no merit especially as other institutions have proven that this resistance should no longer be a reason for the lack of advancement. Below are recommendations for future research:

- Additional research should be performed on the different implementation strategies and experiences of professionals that created formal policies. This information should be collected as examples of best practices for institutions who are wanting to explore providing gender-inclusive housing.

- A replication of this study in different geographic regions would identify any regional resistance as well as identifying commonalities across institution type.

- A quantitative study should be conducted that looks at the policies and practices of housing programs regarding gender inclusive housing on a national level.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to gain perspective on the gender-inclusive policies that exist at four-year public institutions in the Midwest. Chapter V discussed the importance of these policies on student success as well as how students and professionals alike are impacted by the accommodations that exist or do not exist on campuses. There is a clear value in the existence of gender-inclusive policies or practices and while some institutions do not currently have the ability to create a formal policy, professionals still attempt to provide needed accommodations.

During this study, there were no major changes in national policies or laws affecting the participating institutions, however change is inevitable. Housing professionals need to constantly be assessing the needs of their students rather than simply assuming that lack of overt action by students indicates that there is not a need for this type of housing. Housing professionals are often on the forefront of supporting new

services and programs to meet the needs of underrepresented student populations and this is another arena where the professionals can lead the discussion in support of some of our most vulnerable students. It is my hope that as more schools successfully implement these inclusive policies, the fear and uncertainty that some institutions have will lessen so that students will see that they are supported and welcome in our residence hall communities.

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Appendix A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is the name of your institution?

2. What is the on-campus population of your institution?

    Less than 1,000

    1,000 to 2,000

    2,000 to 3,000

    3,000 to 4,000

    4,000 to 5,000

    5,000 to 10,000

    Over 10,000

3. What is the housing occupancy rate on your campus?

4. What is your title at your institution?

5. Does your institution have a current gender-inclusive housing policy?

    Yes

    No

6. If yes, state the policy including how long you had the policy.

7. If not, does your institution plan to create and implement a gender-inclusive housing policy in the near future?

8. When will this be put into place?

9. Are there any state laws or restrictions that you face that prevents or has prevented you from implementing a gender-inclusive housing policy?

    Yes

No

10. Please give a brief description of the state law or restriction.

11. Do you have any gender-inclusive facilities on your campus?

    Yes

    No

12. Please give a brief description of them.

13. What are the current materials used to publicize your gender-inclusive housing facilities?

14. Does your institution have a need for a gender-inclusive housing facility?

    Yes

    No

15. How did you know this?

16. Does your institution have want a gender-inclusive housing facility?

    Yes

    No

17. If yes, how did you know this?

18. How have you been conducting evaluations of these facilities?

19. How do you engage students in the gender-inclusive housing process?

20. As a second part of my study, I would like to conduct interviews on four institutions based on the answers provided. If you are interested and would like to provide your contact information to be selected to participate in a phone or Skype interview, please put your information below. Please note: all information will still remain anonymous.

    Phone number: Email:

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A Profile of Policy Discussions Regarding Gender-Inclusive Housing Amongst Institutions in the Midwest: A Qualitative Approach

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Alexis Hill and Dr. Jon Coleman, from the College Student Affairs department at Eastern Illinois University.
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a Residence Life administrator or policy maker at a public 4-year institution in the Midwest and you indicated on your survey that you would like to participate in a follow-up interview.

• PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The generation that is about to enter their collegiate career was raised with a very ambiguous view about their gender identity. There is an upcoming need for gender-inclusive housing communities in order for all students to feel accepted and comfortable in their safe spaces. It is my hope that through this research, I will be able to identify the perceptions of gender-inclusive housing communities on four-year public institution campuses from the basis of a residence life administrator.

• PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:
You were asked to provide your contact information at the end of the questionnaire that was conducted from June 7th-July 7th. If you chose to do so, you were contacted to conduct a phone interview with follow-up questions about the answers you provided previously. Although this is an extended piece, it will continue to remain anonymous in the final analysis. These interviews will take place between October and November 2017. These phone interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes.

• POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseen risks with this study because of the level of confidentiality that the researcher is going to keep with the participants. Although the researcher wants to give readers an insight as to how prepared institutions are for gender-inclusive communities, there will be no identifiers in the final analysis.

• POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Gender-inclusive housing is becoming a much more prevalent need amongst college students today. There are several benefits to this study, and I believe that it has the opportunity make a lasting impact on residential life as we know it. Institutions will be able to visually see how prepared schools like them are for this need and they will be offered recommendations to make a more inclusive campus climate at their institutions. Examples of positive efforts on college campuses will be showcased and therefore, readers will get ideas for how they can be implemented on other campuses. Overall, this study has the opportunity to create a lasting impact on students and administrators alike.

• CONFIDENTIALITY

Sll phone interviews that take place and are recorded will be stored on the flash drive in the safe as well. Recordings will be kept for transcription purposes and destroyed after transcription takes place. Transcriptions will be kept on the flash drive and destroyed in five years. Names of institutions will be coded based on their location and there will be no identifiers within the analysis.

• PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.
There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

• IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:
Alexis Hill
(630) 388-8071
ajhill4@eiu.edu

Dr. Jon Coleman
(217) 581-7240
jkcoleman@eiu.edu

• RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576

E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

Appendix C

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for institutions that do have gender-inclusive housing policies:

1. Were you part of the process when developing your institution's policy?

    a. (If they say yes) Would you be comfortable talking about the development
       of your policy?

    b. (If they say no) Would you recommend anyone that I could speak to?

2. What was your institution's motivation in developing and implementing a gender-
   inclusive housing policy?

3. Have you ever had a student reach out to you about gender-inclusive housing?

4. Can you briefly describe the history behind the policy?

5. Were there any difficulties encountered with the policy specifically on your
   campus? (examples include bad press, roommate issues, parent dissent, student
   dissent, etc)

6. Can freshman live in flexible housing?

    a. (If they say no) Why is it upperclassman only?

        i. What is your process when you receive a request from a freshman
           student?

7. Has there been any collaborations with other offices on campus for this initiative?

8. How do you evaluate the policy you have and can you expand on it?

    a. If not

9. How are your facilities structured?

Questions for institutions that do not have gender-inclusive housing policies:

1. Have you ever had a conversation about implementing a policy?

   a. What was the end result?

2. What was your institution's reasoning and rationale for not implementing a gender-inclusive housing policy?

3. Have you had any negative consequences from not offering gender-inclusive housing?

4. What is your current practice when a student asks about or is in need of gender-inclusive housing options?

   a. (If they have something) How do you communicate that to students?

5. Do you have a live-on requirement?

   a. If so, what is it?

6. Have you ever had a student reach out to you about gender-inclusive housing?