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Exploring Cultural and Linguistic Aspects within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth Community

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EXPLORING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ASPECTS WITHIN THE

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER,

AND QUEER YOUTH COMMUNITY

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

————————————

by

Julie Marie Houston

Justine Carrillo

June 2015

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the cultural and linguistic aspects within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) youth community. A qualitative research design with an exploratory approach was utilized in this study. An interview questionnaire was created to explore participants' perceptions and experiences to generate an understanding on LGBTQ culture in practice. The study sample consisted of 12 youth who self-identify as LGBTQ recruited by snowball sampling. One-on-one interviews were conducted, audio-recorded, per participant consent, and transcribed for thematic analysis. Based on participant narratives, this study found there are cultural considerations that pertain specifically to the LGBTQ community, such as the importance of having family togetherness or personal identity. A key finding was LGBTQ youth sought to create families who provide them with feelings of acceptance, warmth, and belonging. Another key finding was LGBTQ youth are continuously developing and creating new ways of naming themselves to self-identify and identify others in the community. Implications for social work practice include increasing cultural humility and awareness of the fluidity in the LGBTQ community when working with LGBTQ youth. Future research is needed to understand LGBTQ youth perceptions of cultural sensitivity and social work practice. Finally, it is recommended that researchers use feminist and queer theoretical frameworks when working with the LGBTQ youth population.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

I, Julie, would like to dedicate this work to the Activists, Feminists, and Radical Queers raising their voices and making a difference in this world. Your passion is contagious and glorious.

To my parents, Thank you for supporting me throughout this process with your love and patience. I love you.

To my beloved, Thank you for keeping my spirits high and supporting my passion for social justice. You are my rock.

To my thesis partner Justine, Thank you for being a great teammate. I'm honored to have made this academic feat with you.

I, Justine, would like to dedicate this work to my four-year-old son, Cruz. It has been challenging for me to not be blessed with your presence everyday for the last two years. It is important for you to know you are my number one and everything I do is for you. I love you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a general description of the current issues lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals experience within a social context. An overview of specific issues and concerns pertaining to the needs of LGBTQ youth within the field of social work is presented.

Problem Statement

LGBTQ youth are depicted by some parts of society as being at high risk for experiencing a variety of problems (Travers et al., 2010). LGBTQ youth are more prone to develop problems such as depression (Remafedi, French, Story, Resnick, & Blum, 1998), suicidal ideation (Travers et al., 2010), and other psychosocial and social problems (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006) than their heterosexual counterparts. Furthermore, LGBTQ youth are at greater risk for experiencing feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, low self-esteem (Murphy, 2012), social isolation, and self-harm (Allen, Hammack, & Himes, 2012). To leverage support for LGBTQ youth, it is important to understand what factors contribute to their community and the unique challenges they experience. Therefore, it is essential for social workers to gain further knowledge concerning LGBTQ youth culture and language to better understand, support, and meet their needs.

LGBTQ youth are aware that society discriminates and stigmatizes their sexual identities and community (Ragg, Patrick, & Ziefert, 2006; Morrow, 1993). Lesbian and gay youth often experience various forms of bullying, harassment, and violence due to their true identities (Robertson, 2014). Additionally, stigmatized youth are more likely to experience stress, isolation, and hold negative self-images (Chutter, 2007). In coming out and disclosing true identities, LGBTQ youth face "devastating consequences" such as peer, familial, school, and community rejection (Chutter, 2007, p. 24). Therefore, lesbian and gay youth often hide their true identities to avoid homophobic and negative social interactions (Ragg, Patrick, & Ziefert, 2006).

According to Chutter (2007), LGBTQ youth experience a "lack of social support, due to stigmatization and isolation" (p. 24). There seems to be a lack of general support for and knowledge about LGBTQ youth in child welfare agencies and community programs. Specifically, there is a lack of social work competence and responsiveness to the LGBTQ youth population (Ragg, Patrick, & Ziefert, 2006). Social work professionals, agencies, and educational institutions have ignored the needs of LGBTQ youth (Ragg, Patrick, & Ziefert, 2006). Although social workers are receiving some training concerning the LGBTQ population, agencies fail to provide continuous trainings that center on LGBTQ best practice methods (Travers et al., 2010).

Furthermore, social workers must also "work to dispel negative stereotypes, myths, and discrimination" about the LGBTQ community (Morrow,

1993, p. 659). In doing so, LGBTQ youth can comfortably seek social work professionals for help and support. At least 46% of LGBT youth do not disclose their sexual orientation to professionals due to the fear of being rejected or treated differently (Chutter, 2007). Therefore, it is essential for social workers to gain the skills and training to effectively identify and understand LGBTQ youth issues to better support the community.

Social work professionals, who work closely with children and adolescents, also work with LGBTQ youth and are responsible for identifying, addressing, supporting, and meeting their needs. Approximately 2.5 million youth in the United States identify as LGBTQ, one in five youth identify as LGBTQ in the foster care system, and almost 80% of LGBTQ youth are likely to experience mental health problems (Acevedo-Polakovich, Bell, Gamache, & Christian, 2011; Potts, 2014). LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system, such as foster care or residential care are also more likely to experience additional challenges, such as verbal harassment and abuse from foster families (Ragg, Patrick, & Ziefert, 2006). Given the severity of experiences LGBTQ youth face, it is important to capture youth perspectives to better understand their community. LGBTQ youth need the opportunity to express themselves and discuss which characteristics represent them as community in order to obtain effective services and the support they need (Davis, Saltzburg, & Locke, 2009). In doing so, LGBTQ youth can define and explain what is important to

them as well as discuss what they need from society and in the field of social work to reduce instances of stigmatization and discrimination.

Purpose of the Study

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth are likely to experience stigmatization due to social homophobic or heterosexist attitudes. For instance, the experiences of stigmatization increase the risk of psychosocial problems, such as emotional problems and suicide attempts (Chutter, 2007). Stigmatization often creates societal barriers which prevent LGBTQ youth from seeking social services (Acevedo-Polakovich, Bell, Gamache, & Christian, 2011). If societal barriers, such as stigmatization, are preventing LGBTQ youth from seeking social services, then it is important for workers to become more aware of LGBTQ-related issues. In gaining awareness, workers can identify youth needs and reduce instances of social stigmatization by offering inclusive, supportive, and affirmative based services.

The underlying premise of the various social service approaches to working with LGBTQ youth and their families focus on affirmative practice methods and agency policy changes. However, the changes in practice methods and policies are not sufficiently encompassing LGBTQ culture and language. The extent to which social workers are cognizant or comfortable in approaching LGBTQ-specific issues with youth is relatively low. Current research addresses and emphasizes the disproportionate percentage of LGBTQ youth within the child welfare system in need of supportive and

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affirmative social services. For instance, child welfare services face difficulties, such as the lack of research about sexual minority youth in social policies and lack of training for foster families housing sexual minority youth (Sulivan, 1994). These challenges make it difficult for child welfare agencies to effectively serve the needs of LGBTQ youth. Furthermore, the development of affirmative practice methods has led to an increase in trainings and committees dedicated to raising awareness about LGBTQ youth related issues. Conversely, studies continue to emphasize negative LGBTQ outcomes, which detract from discussions concerning positive systems (i.e., communities grounded in LGBTQ culture) and the use of inclusive language most often found within these said communities.

The current study focused on exploring the perspectives, experiences, and diverse narratives of LGBTQ youth who seek out affirmative spaces on college campuses within San Bernardino County. The central premise of this study focused on the meanings youth created within their narratives in relation to LGBTQ culture and language. Culture is defined by the way individuals "receive, organize, rationalize, and understand...particular experiences in our world" (Saleebey, 1994, p. 352). Due to the exploratory nature of this topic, a qualitative method was used to examine and provide descriptive understandings about the meaning and importance of culture and language from LGBTQ youth themselves. The study utilized in-depth interviews to create a greater understanding of the "lived experiences" (Hesse-Biber &

Leavy, 2007, p. 7) attributed to LGBTQ culture and language by the participants. The goal of the study was to gain knowledge about LGBTQ culture based on youth experiences and contribute to affirmative practices in the field of social work.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

As LGBTQ issues come to the forefront of social work research and practice, practitioners need to be culturally competent regarding the changing dynamics of this population, especially when working with LGBTQ identified youth. According to Kirk and Okazawa-Rey (2010), *dominant culture* includes the values, symbols, means of expression, language, and interests of people in power in this society. The growing visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the dominant culture (i.e., the media, schools, congregations, and communities) has led to a growing number of accessible resources and research covering a range of topics related to the LGBTQ community. Still, dominant culture perceptions of sexuality are limited, as demonstrated by the common use of umbrella terms, such as LGBTQ. The term LGBTQ is used to describe individuals who do not fit the the portrayal of the institution of heterosexuality, its norms and practices, as natural and inevitable, i.e., the *heteronormative* mold (Kirk & Okazawa Rey, 2010). Therefore, it is important for qualitative researchers to focus on the development and *meaning-making* (Robertson, 2014) of words, behaviors, and places that are of importance to LGBTQ identified individuals. The present

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study included a sample of LGBTQ youth who were involved or familiar with the Santos Manuel Union Pride Center, at California State University, San Bernardino. The Pride Center provides a safe space for LGBTQ youth on campus and provides youth with a sense of community and support.

Given the importance of respecting and accepting diverse populations, it stands to reason it is essential for social workers to be culturally competent when working with LGBTQ youth (Morrow, 1993). As such, social workers should be educated and culturally competent to effectively address and meet the needs of LGBTQ youth. According to Ragg, Patrick, and Ziefert (2006), LGBTQ youth have reported experiences of vulnerability, stigmatization, and rejection in social work. Specifically, LGBTQ youth within the child welfare system have experienced stigmatization and marginalization from social workers and foster parents (Clements & Rosenwald, 2008).

Social workers must become aware of the specific challenges, issues, and important aspects LGBTQ youth face to understand their individual needs, while maintaining cultural competency determined by the client/youth. Therefore, social workers may need to expand their current knowledge about the LGBTQ community, as well as offer emotional support (Chutter, 2007).

The generalist social work practitioner uses multilevel assessments and interventions tools to identify presenting problems and develop treatments plans to treat problems (Teigiser, 1983). It is important that social work practitioners use generalist practices when working with LGBTQ youth since

they experience different challenges and strengths. In addition, treatment plans should be specific to the needs of each identified LGBTQ youth individual. For instance, LGBTQ youth who have not disclosed their sexual identities to their families are at high risk for experiencing family rejection, violence, or abandonment (Chutter, 2007). These youth, in particular, are reluctant to disclose their sexual identities to avoid negative experiences. Also, Child Protective Services is more likely to intervene in such cases to protect youth from the negative risks associated with disclosure. Overall, social workers should include safety plans within treatment plans for youth who have not come out to their families and need to be inclusive to all LGBTQ-specific needs (Chutter, 2007).

The implementation of interventions will vary with the needs of individual LGBTQ youth. At this time, current social work practices are problematic because they adopt irrelevant frameworks and are insensitive to individual differences between heterosexual and homosexual populations (Willis, 2007). Conversely, newly designed models such as the Gay Affirmative Practice Model (GAP), is strength based and culturally sensitive to the LGBTQ community, but is rarely used in practice (Crisp & McCave, 2007). As such, having a better understanding about LGBTQ youth subcultures and youth development will expand social workers' knowledge, consider meaningful aspects of the community, and contribute to new ways of working effectively with LGBTQ youth. Furthermore, social work agencies in charge of

out-of-home care need to implement standards that meet the unique needs of LGBTQ youth, as seen in the Model Standards Project. The Model Standards Project sought to develop new levels of practice when working with LGBTQ youth in child welfare (Wilber, Reyes, & Marksamer, 2006).

Additionally, follow-up and termination are important steps to consider when working with LGBTQ youth. Such information can be used to determine whether culturally sensitive practices were effective in supporting LGBTQ youth. According to Willis (2012), social workers must gain *professional competence* to identify, construct, and understand various perceptions of LGBTQ youth identities. Professional competence may be beneficial in better understanding the needs of LGBTQ youth and positively contribute to the worker-client relationship (Morrow, 1993).

Considering the likelihood of child welfare social workers and other professionals in the engagement and treatment of LGBTQ youth, it is essential for social work professional to become familiar with the important aspects of LGBTQ culture and language within the context of youth development. It is also important to understand the meaning of subculture in a predominantly heterosexual culture according to LGBTQ youth themselves. Furthermore, social workers should have a better understanding concerning LGBTQ youth needs that do not solely focus on negative risk factors (Asakura, 2012).

The current study contributed a descriptive understanding of the needs of the LGBTQ youth population. The study expected to develop a sense of

LGBTQ youth perceptions as it pertains to LGBTQ culture. Particular attention was given to linguistic patterns, terminology, and participant experiences. This study provided insight into effective approaches in working with LGBTQ youth population and cultural competency within the field of social work.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the literature on the LGBTQ youth

population, and discusses research on LGBTQ culture and language, with an

emphasis on LGBTQ youth needs and issues. Additionally, it reviews various

theoretical views of youth's sense of sexual identity, gender expression,

same-sex desire, and the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Furthermore, a detailed review of dominant cultural perspectives on LGBTQ

youth, identity and sexual identity formation will provide insight on the impact

these have on social work practice with LGBTQ youth. A discussion of

feminist, queer, critical, intersectionality, and sexual identity theory is also

provided. Finally, this chapter discusses how the present study intended to

contribute to the existing literature about the LGBTQ youth population and

social work practice.

Definitions of Culture

According to Low, Molzahan, and Kalfoss (2014) the definition of

culture is determined by the values, beliefs, and qualities of the people

involved in families, communities, or the nation. Low et al. (2014) stated that if

the culture values individualistic behaviors and values, then the individuals

within that culture will internalize those values as their own and perceive the

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world around them accordingly. The "self-ways" or behaviors dictated by the culture also demonstrate if the individuals within it are in fact "good" members of that culture (Low et al., 2014, p. 644). If they do not meet the norms of that culture, it will be noticed by others, and in turn affect the individual's self-perception. Therefore, within an individualistically driven culture, individualistic behavior will be the ideal since that is what the culture upholds as valuable.

In relation to LGBTQ identified youth, this phenomenon can be seen in the internalized beliefs youth may hold which are derived from the dominant heteronormative culture in the United States. The dominant culture pertains to the values, symbols, and means of expression, language, and interests of the people in power in this society. (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2010, p. 53) The United States is a patriarchal system that upholds heteronormative values, language, and symbols that are demonstrated throughout every facet of society. Therefore, those who do not meet the norms are noticed, as evidence by the marginalization, stigmatization, and discrimination felt by LGBTQ youth and families. However, culture is an important facet of human development that helps create a sense of community, belonging and place in the world, and allows peoples to know who they are in relation to others within various social structures, hence, its importance to social workers interacting with groups and communities with diverse cultures.

The National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics defines culture as an "integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social group" (NASW, 2008, p. 61). The NASW definition demonstrates the complexity of a culture and the elements to be explored by social workers and researchers. In addition, social workers must be able transverse the various aspects of a given culture (i.e., LGBTQ culture) and apply methods to end forms of social oppression and injustice. Conversely, social workers must be educated in the complexities of LGBTQ culture if they are to be successful in creating social change. Therefore, social workers should be cognizant of their behaviors, values, and beliefs in relation to the dominant culture and ask themselves how it has shaped their movements in society and interactions with others. Perhaps this insight would create a bridge in communication between cultures, such as with LGBTQ, and enhance social work direct practice methods.

Subgroup Culture, How They Form and Why

Blackman (2014) examined the historical context and development of subcultural theory and its evolution in various fields of academia. The significance of this article in relation to this study is the critical analysis of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) theory on subcultures in exploring the social and political factors that affect groups experiencing some form of conflict within the larger culture. Historically, the theory behind

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subcultural formations applied to deviant behaviors and beliefs held by youth in western society. CCCS was the first in terms of theory to apply subcultural development theory to groups exhibiting behaviors that deviated from the norms of the majority, primarily as a result of marginalization and conflict in values, language, and beliefs. There are various theories that try to explain subcultures and why they form given the time and place of when and why they formed (Blackman, 2014).

Post-subculturalist theory applies a more flexible concept to the formation of subcultures, emphasizing the individual's position and self-actualization within a subculture (Blackman, 2014). It is important to understand the theoretical background of subcultures; however, in relation to the purpose of this study, the simplified definition, as seen in the Merriam Webster Dictionary (n.d.) will be used. Therefore, subculture is defined as a "group that has beliefs and behaviors that are different from the main groups within a culture or society" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d., para. 1). This definition will be used as a basis for contextual development.

Within the dominant heteronormative culture in the U.S., the LGBTQ community would be considered a diverse mix of individuals who makeup different subcultures with different values, symbols, and terminology. Subculture pertains to a group that has beliefs and behaviors that are different from the main groups within a culture or society (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, n.d.). A dominant culture may have many subcultures that share

different values and behaviors, some of which may conflict with the norms attributed to the dominant or national culture (Chang & Chuang, 2005). For this paper, the communities centered around sexual identities will be viewed as subcultures within the larger dominant heteronormative culture of the United States.

The development of subgroup cultures can also be found within the LGBTQ community itself (Halberstam, 2005). The subcultures found within the LGBTQ community center on gender-variant and sexual identities. For example, the bear subculture is found within the Gay men's community, the butch/femme subculture is found within the lesbian community, and the drag-queen subculture is found within the transgender community. These subcultures are examples that demonstrate the complexity of subgroup cultures found within the dominant culture. These differences are driven by sexual preference and gender performance and illustrate the complexities that form in communities.

Definition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer

LGBTQ-identified individuals are often conceptualized as sexual minorities who have complex needs. Wells et al. (2013) defines sexual minorities as "anyone who is attracted to or sexually active with persons of the same sex, whose gender identity differs in some way from their biological sex, or who otherwise self-identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer" (p. 312). Complex needs are described in terms of physical health,

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such as engaging in risky sexual behaviors or substance abuse and mental

health needs, such as being more prone to depression, suicidal ideation, and

emotional distress (Travers et al., 2010). The physical and mental health risks

LGBTQ youth encounter place them at a greater risk for negative outcomes.

      Furthermore, the process in which persons identify as lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender, or queer is vital to the understanding of sexual identity.

LGBTQ youth go through various identity tasks in forming their sexual identity.

According to Berger (1983), individuals must achieve the task of *sex*, which

includes sexual or physical (e.g., kissing) encounters with others. Second,

individuals disregard *social reactions*, which involve being labeled by others.

Finally, individuals must gain a sense of identity by completing a series of

identity subtasks. These subtasks include the experience of *identity confusion*,

which includes feelings of discomfort or anxiety. Individuals must also be able

to label themselves, such as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, which is known as

self-labeling. Individuals will also complete the task of *self-management*, which

allows the individual to disclose their sexual identity. Once the subtask of

self-management is reached, individuals experience *militancy*. Militancy is

when the individual outwardly expresses social problems pertaining to them,

such as the effects of social oppression or stigmatization. The final task is

when the individual achieves *sexual acceptance* and is when the individual is

comfortable with who they are. Overall, these tasks are important in the

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identity formation of LGBTQ-identified individuals and in understanding LGBTQ youth experiences.

In completing Berger's (1983) tasks of sexual identity formation, individuals begin to self-label using terms, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Currently, the most frequently used terms are expressed in the acronym LGBTQ. Each letter represents a term frequently used as a means for self-identification. As defined by the Human Rights Campaign (n.d.), the term *lesbian* is used when a woman is emotionally or sexually involved with the same sex. The term *gay* is used when a man is emotionally or sexually involved with another man, or as an umbrella term for men and women attracted to the same sex (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). The term *bisexual* is used when a person is emotionally or sexually involved with someone of the same or opposite sex (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). The term *transgender* is used when a person experiences or expresses their gender differently from their biological or assigned sex (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). The term *queer* is used as an umbrella term for LGBT-identified individuals (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). Given the historical context of these terms, the meanings attached change depending on the cultural environment.

Social workers must be cognizant of the diverse and fluid nature of sexual orientation and gender identity. When working with youth who may be questioning or do not identify as LGBTQ, social workers would benefit by

exercising an anthropological approach when working with sexual minority and gender-variant youth (Welle, Fuller, Mauk, & Clatts, 2006). It is also important to understand the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity. Gender identity is usually determined at birth by the person's reproductive organs and individuals are then labeled as either being male or female (Nagoshi, Terrell, Nagoshi, & Brzuzy, 2014). Sexual orientation is determined by the person's intimate thoughts and feelings towards another person of the same or opposite sex (Nagoshi, Terrell, Nagoshi, & Brzuzy, 2014). Furthermore, the terminology/language used by youth may be localized with meanings that are important to the individual (Welle, Fuller, Mauk, & Clatts, 2006). Social workers should work towards understanding the terminology/language local communities and groups use as well as a broader understanding of the terms and concepts used across the nation.

<div align="center">

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
Culture/ Community

</div>

Welle, Fuller, Mauk, and Clatts (2006) studied the complexity of language and identity when working with LGBTQ youth, specifically for queer-identified youth who are navigating the meanings behind the diverse gender and sexual identities found within the LGBTQ community. One of the interesting points of this article touches on the process of identity formation within the LGBTQ community. Based on previous articles, it seems like those who identify under the spectrum of LGBTQ face the same issues. However,

there are tensions between certain communities and those who do not fit in within that community. Transgender and queer individuals, those living within the margins, have unique issues that affect their access to healthcare and other social services. Therefore, social workers need to be trained and exposed to youth who identify as queer and realize that methods used specifically for lesbians or gays, may not work with a youth who identify as transgender or queer.

Shugar (1999) explored queer theory and its application to social activism within lesbian communities. Queer theory is defined as "a set of theoretical ideas...that primarily aims to deconstruct or disassemble sexual categories, such as straight, gay, and lesbian, and, in particular, trouble the gendered and sexual boundaries between heterosexual and homosexual populations" (Willis, 2007, p. 182). The importance of this issue to LGBTQ youth in child welfare is the perspectives of the lesbian community and those who live within the margins as queer and trans individuals. In order to be culturally competent, social workers must know the symbols, values, language, and beliefs that are important to a community. Some studies have been conducted with queer theory in mind. Shugar (1999) makes the argument that queer theory in certain aspects helps the lesbian communities' inclusivity towards transgender and queer persons via the acceptance of butch/femme identities and sadomasochism. Conversely, queer theory's perspective on gender dilutes the power dynamics that have helped feminist

driven lesbian communities advocate against the patriarchal system. Social workers need to understand each culture and community within the larger pan-centric LGBTQ community if they are to provide culturally competent services.

Language

Cultural competency stems from identifying and understanding the group's needs. Language stems from assumptions about gender, attitudes, values, or cultural beliefs (Cameron, 2005; Chutter, 2007). In feminist theory, language is defined in terms of *voice, naming oneself, reclaiming, reconstructing, and stealing the language* and is essential in understanding cultures (Kolmar & Barkowski, 2010). Sexual minority youth (i.e., LGBTQ-identified individuals) need others in society to understand and recognize cultural aspects, such as the language used. Previous research indicates there are pre-existing concerns about "linguistic performances" among those who identify as LGBTQ (Cameron, 2005, p. 491). For instance, homosexuality is exploited and stigmatized in terms of being able to separate gender from sexuality (Cameron, 2005). As such, the importance of understanding language and gender among LGBTQ culture is exemplified in feminist research (Cameron, 2005).

While cultural competency is used in feminist research, understanding the use of language among LGBTQ youth can increase knowledge and communication between social workers and clients. LGBTQ-identified

individuals may sometimes have difficulty expressing themselves to others. According to Welle, Fuller, Mauk, and Clatts (2006), queer and transgender youth may sometimes struggle to acquire language that helps them express themselves so that their peers or partners may better understand them. For instance, transgender youth might have difficulties in verbally expressing the thoughts and feelings that do not comply with social gender identity norms, such as dressing and feeling like a male when the person was born with female sexual organs. In the dominant culture, gender identity is tied to a person's reproductive organs. In identifying the importance of language, social workers can be a source of education for queer or transgender-identified youth and help them acquire the language needed to effectively communicate with their peers or partners.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth can benefit from social work services if the environment is understanding and acknowledging of individual needs. Social work professionals working with LGBTQ youth should use "respectful and inclusive language that does not assume youth have a specific sexual orientation or gender identity" (Wiber, Reyes, & Marksamer, 2006, p. 3). In doing so, social workers create inclusive language and supportive environments that welcome opportunities for youth to engage in diverse conversations (Wiber, Reyes, & Marksamer, 2006). Social workers can create the use of inclusive by replacing the words girlfriend or boyfriend with partner to avoid heteronoramtivi (Chutter, 2007; Crisp & McCave, 2007).

Social works should also use gay affirming terminology, such as gay, lesbian, or bisexual versus homosexual (Crisp & McCave, 2007). Also, social workers can discuss topics relevant to queer interests, situations, or current and future events (Chutter, 2007). A basic understanding of the language used among LGBTQ youth and topics relevant to their community is useful in social work practice.

<div align="center">Importance of Cultural Competency in Social Work</div>

Social work practitioners need to keep up with the changing dynamics and experiences LGBTQ youth face and be able to understand how such changes negatively or positively impact youth lives. To be culturally competent, a social worker must be cognizant that people who do not fit the cultural standards, or norms, are discriminated against, marginalized, and stigmatized to the point that they do not seek out healthcare services within the culture that breaks them down (Gandy, McCarter, & Portwood, 2013). Social workers who are culturally competent build greater awareness in understanding how factors, such as homophobic attitudes, impact LGBTQ youth and their abilities to seek and receive mental health care. Cultural competency can be achieved through familiarity of terminology, symbols, experiences, coming out process, and identity formation among LGBTQ individuals (Crisp & McCave, 2007). These social work qualities will benefit not only client outcomes, but the client-social worker relationship.

Social workers are obligated by the NASW Code of Ethics to follow a specific set of values when working with clients. The NASW Code of Ethics states "social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of… sexual orientation and gender identity" (NASW, 2008, p. 22). Furthermore, social workers should "act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of… sexual orientation and gender identity" (NASW, 2008, p. 27). Social workers should also define LGBTQ cultural competency as seen by LGBTQ individuals and not social workers. In following NASW Code of Ethics and building cultural competency, social workers provide effective and ethical practices in working with LGBTQ youth.

<div align="center">Theories Guiding Conceptualization</div>

<u>Feminist Theory</u>

It would be remiss to exclude feminist theories as a basis for conceptualization. A general explanation of the basic tenets of feminist theory will be discussed, including a specification of its applicability towards the exploration of LGBTQ youth cultures. Feminist theory seeks to explain and analyze the condition of women's lives within patriarchal systems (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2010). Feminist theories give voice to women's experiences, while examining the patriarchal productions that dominate the ideas and values of the larger society (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2010). Issues pertaining to the social structures of gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and nation are examined with

a feminist lens by theorists, attempting to create social change and move towards social justice.

According to Kolmar and Bartkowski (2010), feminist theories include a vast array of perspectives on sexualities with "multiple possibilities" on identity formation, orientation, and sexual expression (p. 43). It is from this feminist attempt at redefining that other theories centered on sexualities developed, including gay and lesbian theories, as well as queer theory. There are a number of lesbian theorists that redefined sexuality within feminist thought and helped broaden the discussion, specifically, ideas pertaining to sexual desire and the de-naturalization of it as being innate. Through feminist theory, sexual desire is reframed through social, political, and historical methods of conceptualization. Feminist theory reconstructs meaning in language, providing marginalized groups a voice to define the systems that oppress them. Terms such as *heteronormative*, *patriarchal*, and *dominant culture* are used extensively in studies that draw from feminist thought.

Formby (2011) explored the sexual attitudes of youth in relation to the dominant culture and the meanings applied to sexual expression and health. The importance of this qualitative study illustrates how cultural perspectives influence youth's perceptions of themselves and their movements through society. Generally, dominant heteronormative views on sexuality shape the discourse on health education and silence lesbian, gay, and bisexual identified youth by excluding information concerning their sexual health needs (Formby,

2011). LGBTQ youth perceptions included accessing information on homosexual safe sex practices and the exclusion of their experiences (Formby, 2011). Therefore, LGBTQ identified youth are less educated on same sex healthy relationships, safe sex practices, and accessible services which is detrimental to their health. Overall, Formby (2011) suggested practitioners acknowledge the silencing of LGBTQ sexual behaviors in the dominant discourse, and work towards a more inclusive perspective on sex education and health services.

Critical Theory

Using a theoretical analysis of the dominant perceptions of social work practice, Willis (2007) examined popular frameworks by intersecting queer and critical theory and applying them to the dominant modes of working with LGBTQ identified youth. Critical theory is used to better understand the conditions of specific subjects, such as the LGBTQ population, and examines how different conditions influence the subject (Stoner, 2014). This study introduced perceptions about sexuality and identity that are not commonly found in the field of social work by utilizing queer theorists' perspectives on sexual identity and applying them to commonly practiced frameworks. Willis used queer theory and narrative therapy as a means to better serve LGBTQ youth in a heteronormative society. In combining queer and critical theory, practitioners will understand the power dynamics that are intrinsically involved with sexuality and gender. Additionally, practitioners will recognize how

narrative approaches allow marginalized youth to add their lived experiences to the growing body of youth identity and sexuality studies (Willis, 2007). Overall, social work practitioners need to be culturally competent and understand the complex nature of sexual identity formation as the LGBTQ community continues gaining visibility within the heterosexual dominant culture.

Queer Theory

Queer theory is based on a collection of ideas that seek to dismantle gender identity. Queer theorists such as Judith Butler, have redefined the concept of gender and the meanings applied to it within the dominant culture (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2010). The concept of gender as simply a performance that is socially constructed and reinforced by cultural and social norms can be simplified as simply stating, gender, you're doing it (Butler, 1999). Queer theory addresses the gender and sexual binary, and gives meaning to terms, words, and values held by those who exist within the margins of dominant cultural perceptions of gender. Queer theory gives voice for those who do not fit one identity but are fluid within their identities and sexualities. Therefore, applying this theory to the study of LGBTQ youth cultures and language is important for those who do not identify as LGBT but are queer or questioning.

According to Shugar (1999), queer theory argues that people choose to engage in gender performance and that gender is not determined by sex or biology at birth. Gender is culturally and socially reinforced as evidence by the

cultural phenomenon of baby showers that reveal the sex of the baby by applying gendered themes of color, i.e., blue for boys, pink for girls. The gender/sex binary is ingrained within U.S. society and applying queer theory allows researchers to reexamine this issue and disconnect it from other social identities.

Driver (2005) examined how queer identified youth expressed their sexuality and desire on Internet homepages as a means to network and share within the private and public sphere their sexual culture and self-expression of their sexuality. Queer youth, specifically *queer girls*, create cultural meaning for themselves and connect with other queer youth in the process (Driver, 2005). The use of context analysis in this study demonstrated a growing shift in LGBTQ youth cultures in their making what was once invisible, visible, to the dominant culture. As such, in creating cultural meaning, youth developed their own language, and ways of expressing themselves and their sexuality (Driver, 2005).

Levy and Johnson (2012) analyzed methodological literature in order to better understand the terminology usage of *queer* in research and its implications for those who identify as queer. This study also examined the historical and political significance of queer and its evolution in the dominant culture. Understanding the complexity of the word queer and its fluidity has implications for those who wish to do qualitative research with the LGBTQ community. They found that researchers often focused solely on lesbian and

gay perspectives, thus silencing transgender, queer, bisexual, and pansexual voices/ experiences. Levy and Johnson (2012) also found that researchers were unaware that the term queer had been reclaimed and was no longer an offensive term, but a political stance. They found that it is used most often by those who do not want to identify in either the heteronormative binary or the homonormative binary that only recognizes lesbian and gay sexual identities.

More individuals within U.S. society are coming out as *queer-identified* since there is a greater awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ related issues. As such, Levy and Johnson (2012) recommend six important strategies in order to work effectively with LGBTQ populations. Specifically, researchers must be comfortable with fluidity, attentive to identity, prepared for the unknown, ready for questions, sensitive, and an advocate (Levy & Johnson, 2011). Based on the findings from this article, utilizing queer theory can be challenging since it's history is politically charged and rooted in eliminating any signifiers or labels that could potentially create an invisible barrier around one's sense of self. Therefore, the study will not seek to define queer theory but use a fluid approach in working with self-identified queer individuals.

Intersectionality Theory

Kirk and Okazawa-Rey (2010) defined *intersectionality* as an integrative perspective that emphasizes the overlap between various dynamics like gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation. Parent, DeBlaere, and Moradi (2013) utilized intersectionality theories to explore the identities of

gender/sexuality (i.e., LGBTQ), race/ethnicity, and the relationship between them when applied to an individual's lived experience. The study identifies how the dominant culture influences people's understanding of what identities mean, specifically concerning the acronym LGBTQ. Furthermore, Parent, DeBlaere, and Moradi (2013) explored how dominant cultural influences affect individual perceptions, coupled with racial and ethnic identities. It is important that social work researchers understand how gender, race, and sexual orientation intersect with one another (i.e., attention to how each identity affects the other). Overall, incorporating intersectionality perspectives allow researchers to gain greater insight into the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation and its impact on identity development.

Wagaman (2014) explored "the effect that social stigma has on the service-seeking and program-utilization patterns of LGBTQ-identified young people" using intersectionality theoretical concepts (p. 112). Wagaman utilized an intersectional approach to understand the relationship between multiple identities, such as ethnicity, gender, or class and LGBTQ youth experiences in social services. Intersectionality theory examines the interactions between multiple identities to better understand LGBTQ youth service experiences and needs (Wagaman, 2014). As a result, Wagaman (2014) identified service experiences, such as the negative and positive impact of social services and barriers, such as limited access due to financial resources or transportation as two major themes from participant responses. As such, Wagaman (2014)

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encourages service providers to be "safe, inclusive, and affirming of the multiple identities of the young people they serve" (Wagaman, 2014, p. 141). In understanding LGBTQ youth experiences using intersectionality approaches, social workers can identify various important aspects in youth's lives. This will help workers be more inclusive to the individual needs of youth as well as provide a supportive environment.

Sexual Identity Theory

Hammack, Thompson, and Pilecki (2009) explored the formation of sexual identity and the meanings applied to desire and behavior through the examination of four case studies and their *master narratives*. The development of sexual identity in LGBTQ youth is a process that gives meaning to both the youth's perceptions of their identity and the perceptions applied to them by the dominant culture (Hammack, Thompson, & Pilecki, 2009). Through the examination of individual narratives and emphasizing description and interpretation, researchers gained a better understanding of how LGBTQ youth create new cultural meanings in the context of who they desire, how they express themselves, and how they perceive themselves in a heteronormative society. Generally, it is important to understand how LGBTQ youth create meaning and develop sense of identity through sexual expression. The cultural limitations, such as language, are apparent when working with LGBTQ youth (Hammack, Thompson, & Pilecki, 2009). They

become more apparent as lesbian and gay youth seek to define themselves in a dominant culture that places them within pre-made boundaries of identity.

Robertson (2014) examined the construction of sexual identity in adolescents within a heteronormative society. Additionally, Robertson explored the meaning-making that happens when youth are limited by the dominant culture in understanding their feelings of desire. The study utilizes a qualitative approach by examining the personal experiences of LGBTQ identified youth and how they navigate their own sexuality when faced with constrained definitions of what sexuality means. As the dominant society continues to change in that there is a moving visibility of the LGTBQ community, youth are now faced with new ways of developing their identity. Youth are not only confronted with the heteronormative system that seeks to define them, but also the *homonormative* system that navigates along the same spectrum of limitations as heteronormativity (Robertson, 2014). For instance, the marginalization of youth who identify along the lines of bisexual or pansexual is considered as a homonormative limitation (Robertson, 2014). Therefore, it is essential to build awareness to this upward phenomenon as it adds to the growing discourse of LGBTQ youth sexual identity formation and the implications it may have on youth trying to make sense of who they are.

Willis (2012) examined the ways in which LGBTQ expressed their identities in a heteronormative system and the process of how youth come to understand their sexuality development. Willis suggested youth utilize the

LGBTQ framework in defining their sense of sexual identity and that there is flexibility and fluidity in how youth identify (Willis, 2012). This adds to the growing notion that LGBTQ youth constantly create new meanings for their sense of self. The study incorporated queer theory and a reflexive standpoint in its exploration of LGBTQ frameworks, such as *Framing Lesbian* and *Gay Identities*, *Problematic Identity Frames*, and *Multiple Identity Frames* (Willis, 2012). Generally, Willis focused on how recent trends in the LGBTQ community and the growing visibility contribute to youth's perception of themselves within the dominant culture.

In reviewing the current literature on LGBTQ related issues, it was overall found that there is a need for exploring cultural meanings in relation to sexual identity (Hammack, Thompson, & Pilecki, 2009), self-expression (Driver, 2005), and gender/sexual norms (Robertson, 2014). Queer theory has also been found to be useful in applying perspectives on commonly practiced frameworks (Willis, 2007). Therefore, the current study utilized Queer theories as well as narrative to examine and explore individual perspectives in order to effectively meet LGBTQ youth needs. Queer theories were also combined with critical theories (Willis, 2007) to understand the specific dynamics revolved around sexuality and gender development between the homonormative and heteronormative culture (Robertson, 2014).

Summary

In the current study, the needs of LGBTQ youth and that they are a high-risk population was considered. The purpose was to examine LGBTQ cultural aspects as defined by the youth. The objective was to explore any thoughts, concerns, or interests from the LGBTQ youth participants. In doing so, the study hoped to develop a sense of how dominant social and cultural attitudes shape youth's perceptions of their sexual identity and self-expression, as it pertains to contemporary LGBTQ youth culture. Most importantly, the current study was interested in the participants' reports of important cultural and linguistic aspects in the LGBTQ youth community.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

Chapter Three gives an overview of the methods used in this study. The design of the study, sampling, data collections and instruments, will be discussed in detail. In addition, the chapter will explain the procedures and protection of human rights to be utilized in this study. Last, the chapter will explain how data will be collected and analyzed in this study.

Study Design

The purpose of the study was to explore Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) youth perspectives concerning LGBTQ cultural and linguistic aspects. Specifically, the study was interested in answering the question: what are the important aspects of LGBTQ culture and language according to LGBTQ youth themselves? The central premise of this study focused on the meanings youth created within their narratives in relation to LGBTQ culture and language. Since the current study focused on LGBTQ youth perspectives, experiences, and narratives, a non-experimental, qualitative design was used with an exploratory research approach (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). One-on-one interviews were used for data collection and to examine the many facets LGBTQ youth considered being important to their own culture. Participant responses and observations were considered

essential in the process of exploring and providing meaning to LGBTQ culture and language.

There are certain limitations to consider with the current investigation. First of all, participants were self-selected from the California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) Santos Manuel Student Union (SMSU) Pride Center and members could not be randomly selected for the study. Second, participants were enrolled as CSUSB students. Furthermore, participants preferred to participate in individual interviews versus focus group discussions. This study also focused on culture and language within one community. Therefore, the results are not necessarily generalizable to other communities.

Sampling

The sample of this study consisted exclusively of CSUSB students who were affiliated with the SMSU Pride Center. The study utilized 12 young adults (4 Male, 7 Female, 1 Gender Queer) who met the inclusion criteria. The sample size was chosen in order to descriptively capture the in-depth understanding of individual LGBTQ youth's meanings of LGBTQ culture and language. The inclusion criteria were that participants must be an identified member of the LGBTQ community. Participants were between 19-26 years old. The purposive sample provided qualitative data gathered through participants responses to questions regarding LGBTQ culture and language as defined by respondents.

Participants were recruited with the help of SMSU Pride Center staff. The study was advertised through the use of flyers (Appendix A), which was available to individuals at the SMSU Pride Center. CSUSB students were offered a free lunch and a five-dollar gift card as a form of incentive to participate in the focus groups. Incentives were advertised through the use of flyers, word of mouth, and conducted at the CSUSB Pride Center. Interested students were told a time to come into the SMSU Pride Center office for the individual interviews with researchers.

Data Collection and Instruments

Data about the meanings of LGBTQ culture and language as defined by the individual LGBTQ youth who participated in this study was collected by using qualitative exploratory methods. Researchers conducted 12 one-on-one interviews with LGBTQ self-identified youth and asked a series of semi-structured questions regarding their knowledge and meanings of LGBTQ culture and language (Appendix B). The purpose of the qualitative semi-structured interviews was to uncover potential themes in relation to LGBTQ culture and language. A demographics form was created and used in this study to collect participants' age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, income, and education (Appendix C) based on ordinal and nominal data.

Procedures

Prior to conducting interviews, participants received an overview of the study as well as informed consent (Appendix D). Participants were also given a demographics form to fill out (Appendix C). In order to participate, LGBTQ youth created a code name (e.g., tiger) to ensure anonymity. LGBTQ youth who voluntarily agreed to participate engaged in one-on-one interviews.

Data collection was undertaken between January 2015 and March 2015. Qualitative data was elicited by conducting semi-structured one-on-one interviews (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). An audio-recorder was used to record one-on-one interview discussions per the consent of the individuals who participated in the study. Individual interviews allowed participants to explore, define, and discuss LGBTQ youth culture and language. These discussions yielded approximately four hours and 36 minutes of audiotape and 71 pages of transcribed text. The participants, interview questions, and comments were transcribed. Data was protected and placed in a locked file cabinet until a written word-for-word copy of the discussion was created. Once the data was transcribed, the audiotapes were destroyed to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to beginning interviews, participants were provided with an informed consent form (Appendix D) and informed of their right to choose to participate or not at any time during the study. Participants also created a code

name to ensure anonymity. After participants completed the interview, they were provided with an informational statement (Appendix E). Data yielded from the study was placed in a locked file cabinet to ensure the protection of participant's anonymity and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Participant discussions were transcribed and analyzed using a grounded theory thematic research approach. Grounded theory is a qualitative approach used to allow individuals to share their perspectives and experiences within a specific context (Whisenhunt et al., 2014). The purpose of grounded theory is to utilize individual responses to inform analysis and uncover any underlying understandings or meanings between relationships (Whisenhunt et al., 2014). Thematic analysis is a qualitative approach used to identify, report, and analyze any patterns or themes emerging within participant narratives (Svoboda, Williams, Jones, & Powell, 2013).

The study was sensitive to the possible differences in discussions of LGBTQ youth culture and language based on participants age, education level, and racial background. Researchers began their analysis by immersing themselves in the data collected and writing down any ideas or patterns that emerged. The transcripts were coded, using thematic analysis, by identifying emerging themes from narrative material. Researchers began with a literal coding procedure and ended with a focused coding procedure in order to obtain abstract themes.

Summary

      This chapter outlined the research methods and procedures that were used to conduct this study on the cultural and linguistic aspects found within the LGBTQ youth community. The study's design, sampling, and data collection/ instruments were described. In addition, the procedures and protection of human subjects in this study were discussed. Finally, the process of data analysis was explained and outlined the procedures used by the researchers.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study in the form of short narratives, which give further description of the following categories: family of choice, personal identity, language, community visibility, and expansion within community. Additionally, sub-themes for each category are described. A brief description of demographics of those who participated in the study are also discussed.

Demographics

The sample was comprised of 12 youth who identified with the LGBTQ community. Of the 12 participants, three, were self-identified as pansexual, two were queer, three were gay, and two were bisexual, while the remaining two were lesbian. Of the 12 participants, seven were female, four were male, and one identified as gender queer. The age range of the sample was 19-26 years, with a mean of 22 years. The 12 participants were all current California State University, San Bernardino students. The majority of participants, six, identified as Latino or Hispanic, two identified as African American, two identified as Caucasian, one identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, and one identified as American.

After transcription, the 12 one-on-one interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (Svoboda, Williams, Jones, & Powell, 2013). In using this model, common themes and sub-themes were identified in each interview. These themes were then examined to determine what are the important aspects of LGBTQ culture and language according to LGBTQ youth themselves.

Family

Under the main theme of "Family," two sub-themes emerged (see Table 1 in Appendix F) and will be discussed. The majority of the participants believed family togetherness was an essential component to LGBTQ culture. One of the subthemes is "family of choice."

Family of Choice

In regards to "family of choice," many participants identified choosing individuals outside of their biological families to be critical to building a family. One participant stated, "You have chosen families instead of just the family you're born into and I feel like that's a big part of the LGBT community" (Participant 5, Survey Interview, March 2015). Another participant noted "…a lot of queer folks have to make their own family, outside of their biological families because their biological families have rejected them for who they are and so they find others like them and get that support and build new families" (Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015). Finally, regarding family of choice, one participant stated,

… a lot of LGBT people face a lot of problems at home and some

believe they don't have that acceptance there, so they go and they

search it out somewhere else. In the LGBT community, they find their

own little families and I feel like that something that's kind of unique to

the LGBT community because the thought of straight people—you don't

really hear a lot about how they're so unaccepted by their family and

that they have to move out and go along with other people that are of

similar identity and fund their own family. I feel like that's exclusive to

the LGBT community and so I think that's definitely a part of the culture.

(Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 2015)

<u>Sense of Belonging and Acceptance</u>

Another subtheme is "sense of belonging and acceptance." In

discussing family, participants felt it was important that people who they

choose to be a part of their family were welcoming and non-judgmental. For

example, one participant suggested,

It's important because like it brought me from a world where I was kind

of like actively excluded into something where everyone welcomed me

because here I was gay too, and like you're gay, let's be friends! So it

showed me how to be welcoming when so many people are not.

(Participant 3, Survey Interview, March 2015)

Another participant stated, "It's just belonging to a group of people who

understand you and are liking you for you" (Participant 6, Survey Interview,

February 2015). Finally, another participant explained "…it was really empowering and it felt really good to be around others like me and just be like surrounded by it and not have to worry if I was going to be judged" (Participant 7, Survey Interview, February 2015).

Personal Identity

The main theme "Personal Identity" produced three sub-themes (see Table 2 Appendix F) and will be discussed. The participants described personal identity as a process that involves respecting other people's identities and self-identities. One of these sub-themes is to "avoid assumptions."

Avoid Assumptions

Many of the participants explained how making assumptions about other people's gender identity or gender expression is adverse within the LGBTQ community. For instance, one participant stated, "I would ask them if they are gay or not gay or if they are like part of the LGBTQ community. I typically ask, I don't just assume because it's wrong to assume" (Participant 2, Survey Interview, March 2015). Another participant along these same lines suggested, "I've always had this mindset that you should ask, you shouldn't just assume…but personally I've just been one of asking and feel comfortable…and try not to seem insulting" (Participant 1, Survey Interview, March 2015). Last, one participant stated,

> …the biggest thing that I have had to teach myself or get out of the
>
> habit is gendering someone based on how they look….If they don't

self-identify or disclose on their own and its relevant to whatever it is I'm

doing, then ill ask them. (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February

2015)

Personal Meaning

In addition to avoiding assumptions, participants also described their

"personal meaning" in regards of having a personal identity. For example, one

participant explained, "But queer for me, I feel more in tune with everybody,

where its like I understand everyone's struggles. It isn't just some radical term

or name/identifier that I want to give myself, so it's inclusive" (Participant 10,

Survey Interview, February 2015). As another participant stated, "Definitely

one of them being gender non-conforming and gender-neutral. It's like

rejecting society's ideas of what it means to be masculine or feminine or what

it means to be a man or a woman" (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February

2015). Furthermore, another participant's personal meaning emphasized the

importance of respecting personal identities,

It's just like, okay you respect their identity regardless of how they

identify. If they identify as a straight, then you respect the identity that

they identify as. So if I said I identify as straight because I have

meaningful relationships with women, but I just enjoy having sex with

men, I'm still straight and that's an identity that you should respect.

(Participant 10, Survey Interview, February 2015)

<u>Intersectionality</u>

In other instances, participants illustrated the importance of intersecting identities. For example, one described their intersecting identities as, "All my identities intersect at some point, and at the same time, it also is about the different privileges I'm awarded for these identities, so it's acknowledging that at the same time too, because they all intersect at some point" (Participant 10, Survey Interview, February 2015). A second participant stated, "Everything intersects with everything, I think. But specifically, I think because I identify as part of that community, all of my identities intersect with that and they all overlap" (Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015). Finally, one participant explained,

> They're all different in the sense of, if we're looking at race in general, so Latinos in general have a very strong sense of family. And so, when you bring that in with also being queer, it's like I value my family of choice, my very close friends who I consider family. I bring that with me and that ties in to how we interact with each other, what we can say to each other, how much I value their opinions. (Participant 10, Survey Interview, February 2015)

<center>Language</center>

The main theme "Language" produced four sub-themes (see Table 3 Appendix F). Most participants felt that language was an important aspect of

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the LGBTQ community. The first sub-theme to present itself was the use of "fluid expressions."

Fluid Expressions

According to some participants, the language used to identify others and self constantly change. As one participant stated, "It's different and it's more open, I can talk more freely about things. I think language is important because we use it to communicate and we have our own language to try and help people understand" (Participant 11, Survey Interview, March 2015). Another participant explained fluid expressions as, "The language in the community is always changing, and I find that really interesting. Queer for example has taken on an entirely different context than it did back in the 60's, and my encounter with older folks who don't even want to say the word" (Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015). Along the same lines, another participant explained,

> So I think language is important and I think the idea of that language
> can change and there can be new things that are created from that…
> Especially being queer there's basically an endless amount of
> possibilities of how you can identify as queer an.. if there is a label out
> there that doesn't necessarily fit you, like I feel like being queer um
> makes it possible to create your own. (Participant 11, Survey Interview,
> March 2015)

<u>Reclaiming versus Insulting</u>

Another subtheme is the reclamation of words that were used against the community. As one participant explained,

I think it's just people within my community like we're taking steps to reclaim certain things so we're redefining it so that people who are outside of the community don't, so we're taking back power for us. It starts with language and it starts with how we talk about each other and how we talk to each other. (Participant 12, Survey Interview, March 2015)

In addressing the importance of respecting ones language in relation to how they identify, one participant stated,

It's important because queer people are always reclaiming terms that were used to stigmatize them. It's important to listen to queer people and just realize what they're telling you, what they feel, so that the language that they want you to use is the language you should use and need to be respectful of that. (Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015)

Additionally, many of the participants felt that the word "Fag" should not be reclaimed or used to identify oneself. As one participant stated,

With the importance of language the first thing that comes to mind is being aware of slurs like some cultures use slur reclamation but I that some words are left abandoned like the (spells out) F-A-G word I don't

see a point in trying to reclaim that. (Participant 1, Survey Interview, March 2015)

Another participant similarly expressed a concern for the word fag,

some people may feel that their entitled to certain types of language and then some people may feel the total opposite that you should not use that language that you should not appropriate it such as there are people who personally identify with the word "FAG" and I personally don't care for that. (Participant 1, Survey Interview, March 2015)

Finally, some participants considered the reclamation of certain slurs to be both empowering and/or insulting,

The F word tends to be one of those things for some people, so can the word dyke between folks who are lesbian, or even within the queer community in itself will tend to use that word, because it's been appropriated in a way that it's okay to say, and it has no negative connotation; which is interesting, because it almost tends to be the lesbian equivalent of the 'F' word for some people, but that word, you hear it more, and I feel like in a positive manner. (Participant 12, Survey Interview, March 2015)

Use of Queer

A third subtheme is "the use of queer" and varied among the participant's narratives. One participant stated, "I like it because it's a really big umbrella term and the thing about the term queer is that you can make it what

you want it. Like you don't have to fit the label, the label fits you" (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 2015). This participant also stated, "there's no one way to be queer. Being queer is not designated to one race or ethnicity and stuff like that. We are everywhere. We can create what is normal for us. We can redefine what it means to be a man or woman and everything in between and outside of that" (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 2015). Finally, other participants explained queer as,

> It can refer to you not following gender norms because you're a cis gender [presenting gender matches the persons sex organs] heterosexual woman that is the career woman while your husband stays at home and you choose not to have children too, you are a trans person who doesn't identify with any gender and is in a polyamorist relationship...and um has ambiguous genitalia, so something that's not like your traditional textbook vagina or text book penis. (Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015)

Accessibility

In addition to the use of queer, the "accessibility" of language was identified as a subtheme. As one participant stated,

> I know some people who think one word is one way and then another person think one word is one way and then another person thinks it's another way...some people think bisexual is two or more and in my head, is that Pan or is that Bi, because I thought Bi was two and so it's

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really like not one hundred percent defined yet. (Participant 7, Survey

Interview, February 2015)

Another participant described accessibility as, "...the language we have is left

out. I think it's because people believe that they already have an

understanding of someone's identity based on the language that we have

available to us, but it's just like no, there's so much more to that" (Participant

8, Survey Interview, February 2015).

Community Visibility

Under the main theme of "Community Visibility," three sub-themes

emerged (see Table 4 Appendix F). The participants described community

visibility as the process of how the community is socially recognized. One of

these sub-themes is "social movements."

Social Movements

A few participants discussed the importance of social movements within

the LGBTQ community. As one participant noted,

There have been social movements like drag shows, not only for

entertainment, but it's also for education on the way that you can dress

like a woman, but it doesn't mean you are a woman and umm how you

can play with gender in different ways and its fun. I mean Pride Parade

big time is a huge show of LGBT culture and how many different

people...and um different people's experiences with the community.

(Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015)

Another participant described social movements in terms of community empowerment, "It helps to raise consciousness just about discrimination, social movements, and action against discrimination like for civil rights peoples" (Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015). Finally, one participant described social movements as,

> Queer justice is a lot more radical idea. It's more inclusive. It's more challenging ideas of what society has socialized us to believe. So instead of 'oh yeah, we want to be just like straight people,' it's like, 'no we have our own identity'. We are reclaiming that space that should be allowed for us. Queer justice is more radical. Gay rights is more liberal. It's like what you hear in major politics; talking about marriage equality and adoption rights. Queer is more fighting for trans people to have better protection under the law. (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 2015)

<u>Social Perspectives</u>

In addition to the social movements of the LGBTQ community, changes in perspectives have been made within, which contribute to the dominant cultural. Several participant described the acronym itself has become more inclusive. One participant stated, "It's become more inclusive. I feel like now, to this point, it's so much longer. it's like L-G-B-T-Q-Q-I-A,-there's more added on to it to try to include everyone who's not heterosexual" (Participant 1, Survey Interview, March 2015). Another participant pointed to the cultural shift

in attention stating, "I feel like it's starting to get more inclusive. Like we're focusing more on other letters than just L and G" (Participant 12, Survey Interview, March 2015). However, one participant felt that the changes made to the acronym were counterproductive stating,

I feel like the more letters you add, everyone outside of the community's already confused about us. You put L-G-B-T-Q-A-A-P-P, something else-they're already confused and you're adding on more things. Now, there's more things for them to learn, giving them more reason to ignore us. (Participant 9, Survey Interview, February 2015)

Conversely, several participants who self-identified as bisexual felt that their community was not represented well and continuing efforts to educate and raise awareness was of importance. As one participant stated,

We're the least represented and also, the ones that get the most negative representation, especially in mainstream because it's like 'oh so if you're bisexual, so you're like half gay.' You get a lot of negative reactions. Basically, it's just like you're straight enough for straight people or you're not queer enough for gay people. (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 2015)

Social Media

In other instances, community visibility within social media was a sub-theme that presented itself throughout most of the participant's responses.

One participant offered a personal example, which highlights the importance of social media, stating,

> So how we're represented on TV and music, stuff like that, um that's what people who aren't in our community will see it as. So it's just like if you come out or something and you come out as bisexual, and you're like cis woman who identifies as bisexual, but you're really feminine, they're just like 'oh, you're not really bi, you like guys, you just haven't found the right guy yet.' Like that's a lot of the negative stereotypes that fall within certain identities. (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 2015)

Several participants illustrated how community representation in mainstream media was skewed to heteronormative perceptions. One participant suggested the community was portrayed, "Stereotypically, negatively, and very heteronormatively, or what's also known as homonormative. We're portrayed as almost straight acting, more appealing to straight audiences, so then that becomes common place when other folks start coming out. So people are like Oh, you don't act this way" (Participant 10, Survey Interview, February 2015).

Additionally, most participants highlighted the use of social networks to share and make connections with others within the community. As one participant stated,

> It's being utilized so heavily and it's like people are just getting so much more support and acceptance and affirmation based on social media. I

don't really use Facebook. I use Tumblr, but I feel like it's kind of a

whole different vibe. Or at least the people I would follow, they were

more accepting, and I follow a lot of social justice blogs that are into this

stuff. (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 2015)

Another participant explained,

I think a lot of LGBT people are really owning social media, too. They're

taking that platform and transforming it into their own space that's safe

to them. On Tumblr, I feel like Tumblr's completely LGBT-pro, it's just

completely positive, and I feel like people have been claiming that

space as their own. Like for me, when I'm on Tumblr, I usually just

assume most people are queer on Tumblr for some reason. (Participant

5, Survey Interview, March 2015)

Expansion within Community

The main theme "Expansion within Community" produced two

subthemes (see Table 5 Appendix F). The participants described expansion

within community as the importance of growth and recognition within the

LGBTQ community. One of the subthemes is "acknowledging privilege."

Acknowledging Privilege

Many of the participants considered acknowledging the different

privileges people have within the community as an important cultural aspect.

For instance, one participant stated,

I can acknowledge that privilege that comes with being identified as a

gay male, so the privileges that come with identifying as gay means not

having to really explain what queer means to other people…I'm also

acknowledging my male privilege at the same time too. (Participant 10,

Survey Interview, February 2015)

Another participant explained privilege in terms of who had the most privilege,

"…gay men usually have the most of the power in this community. Things are

more focused toward them so once again, its whole realm of male privilege,

even thought they're gay" (Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015).

Along the same lines, one participant suggested,

…gay cis white men hold the most privilege within the gay community.

So its just like, not only do they get male privilege, they for the most

part, get passing privilege, in the sense that most people won't know

they're gay unless they're flamboyant or something…They're more

likely to get listened to than someone else in the community. So yeah.

Radical queer. (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 02, 2015)

Subcultures

In other instances, participants explained the various "subcultures"

within the LGBTQ culture. One participant stated, "I could see gender-non

conforming, honestly everyone is a little gender non-conforming in their own

way, whether they are heterosexual or homosexual. There are girls who wear

their boyfriends t-shirts and that's technically gender non-conforming"

(Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015). This participant also identified "gender variant, gender non-conforming, gender fluid, gender queer" as important subcultures (Participant 8, Survey Interview, February 2015). Along the same line one participant explained, "If we're looking within the gay male community, you're looking at the bear community, you look at the twink community, there's the leather community within the LGBT community" (Participant 10, Survey Interview, February 2015). Another participant introduced, "polyamory is basically consensual monogamy. I don't necessarily have on monogamist relationship with one person at a time. I can have multiple ones and it's not an issue" (Participant 11, Survey Interview, February 2015).

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study. Basic demographics of the study were discussed. Participants expressed important cultural and linguistic aspects that are unique to the LGBTQ youth community. A qualitative thematic approach was used to develop the major themes and sub-themes regarding family, personal identity, language, community visibility, and expansion within the community. The information provided by participants, in their own words, provided a glimpse into the diverse dynamics found within the LGBTQ youth community.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of the present study. The limitations of the study are explained as well as the implications for practice. Next, this chapter addresses recommendations for social work practice and future research in the LGBTQ youth community.

Discussion

Findings of the present study are consistent with the literature and theories guiding conceptualization. In relation to feminist theory, most participants felt strongly about social justice movements within the community, the reconstruction and reclamation of terms, and were able to identify/define larger systems that marginalize them. Participants who self-identified as pansexual utilized queer theoretical frameworks by creating fluid identities that are neither heteronormative or homonormative. According to Levy and Johnson (2012), queer youth do not abide by binary self-identities and use more fluid terms. In relation to this study, participants introduced terms, such as *gender-fluid, gender-queer, gender-nonconforming, gender-variant,* and *cisgender.* This provided youth fluidity in their identities and contributed to the growing lexicon used by the queer community.

Furthermore, most participants discussed the intersection of gender, race, and sexuality in relation to their experiences and perceptions as members of the LGBTQ community. Current research suggests gender, race, and sexual orientation intersect in relation to a youth's development of identity and is largely impacted by the dominant culture (Parent, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2013). Participants recognized ways their racial or spiritual identities intersected with the LGTBQ community and shared how those experiences shaped their perceptions. Overall, feminist theory, queer theory, and intersectionality theory were relevant to participant's perceptions of LGBTQ youth culture and language.

Finally, this study sought to identify important cultural and linguistic aspects that are unique to LGBTQ identified youth. Specifically, the study was interested in answering the question: what are the important aspects of LGBTQ culture and language according to LGBTQ youth themselves? Collectively, the participants in this study had diverse sexual identities, ethnicities and shared common perspectives. Based on participant narratives, the researchers found that LGBTQ self-identified youth considered family, personal identities, language, community visibility, and expansion within community to be important aspects within the LGBTQ community.

Family

Family of Choice was a key finding that presented itself throughout the study. Most participants felt strongly about finding and creating relationships

that provided feelings of acceptance, warmth, and belonging. According to

Pidduck (2009), the phrase *families of choice* came about during the 1980's as

a way of describing alternative family practices in the queer community that

differed from kinship familial practices. This difference in kinship and family of

choice was present in participant's statements regarding biological families

and families of choice. As mentioned in the literature and by participants,

LGBTQ youth face an unnecessary hardship when biological families disown

or abandon them because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. In turn,

LGBTQ youth create bonds and relationships with people who are supportive

and understanding, which ultimately creates a family that enhances the

youth's sense of self within the LGBTQ community and dominant culture.

Personal Identity

A notable finding of this study was LGBTQ youth expressed strong

values in regards to respecting people's identities within the community and

outside as well. Poynter and Washington (2005) suggested individuals should

be supported in the name they give themselves or their identities. Many of the

participants in this study discussed the importance of respecting one's identity.

Participants also felt it was disrespectful to assume a person's self-identity or

gender. Therefore, members of the LGBTQ community feel it is important not

to assume a person's identity or gender based on their physical appearance or

gender expression. Participants in this study suggested to "ask" and "don't

assume" another person's identity as a form of respect for their identity.

Language

Another key finding of this study was that LGBTQ youth continue to develop and create new ways of self-identifying and identifying others through language. For example, youth used the term *cisgender* to describe persons whose gender expression matched their sexual anatomy. According to Yost and Gillmore (2011), the term *cisgender* is used to differentiate persons who identify as *transgender, gendervariant,* or *genderfluid* from those who identify within the gendered binary. Furthermore, the use of pansexual and its frequency as a way to identify were of interest. Participants described pansexual as being a sub-set of the term queer since it encompasses everyone and is less constricting to binary terms of sexuality. Elizabeth (2013) found the emergence of pansexual identities as a challenge to the current dichotomies and gendered binaries that are prevalent in the dominant culture. The majority of participants felt language was a tool that aided in their self-expression, helped educate others inside and outside the community, and aided in identifying larger social issues that affect the LGBTQ community.

Community Visibility

This study also found that LGBTQ youth perspectives varied among age, level of participation they have in the LGBTQ community, and transitions from heteronormative views of the community to fully involved queer views of the community. Researchers found that youth who had recently identified as members of the LGBTQ community considered the term gay to be the most

inclusive umbrella term. Conversely, youth who had a history of being politically and socially active within the LGBTQ community considered the term queer to be the most inclusive umbrella term. The differences seem to be related to acquire knowledge within the LGBTQ community, education, and level of social activism. Youth new to the community held the perspective that gay was the most inclusive term because it is most often used by mainstream media within the dominant culture.

Furthermore, older youth felt that queer was the most inclusive due to its ambiguity and fluidity versus the privileges and homonormativity found within the gay community. Older youth had a deeper understanding of the meaning of the term and were able to apply it to societal constructs and social norms. The majority of participants also felt gay and lesbian experiences were more recognized than the visibility of the queer community. However, participants discussed how the transgender community has evolved and created greater visibility for queer issues. For instance, participants identified celebrities, such as Laverne Cox and Janet Mock who are transgender and are currently raising the dominant culture's awareness of trans issues and experiences. Finally, researchers found that issues of community visibility are to be worked out by those who identify and are members of the community.

Expansion within Community

As a final point, another key finding of this study was the impact of privilege in correspondence to members of the LGBTQ community. Privilege is

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defined as the "unearned benefits and advantages" that dominant groups have compared to oppressed minority groups (Monahan, 2014, p. 73). For instance, there is white privilege, class privilege, and male privilege (Monahan, 2014). The majority of participants in this study felt gay, cis-gender, white males have the most privilege in the LGBTQ community. This is due to gay males having access to both white privilege and male privilege. Several of the participants felt gay males are more recognized in society and as a result, everyone else in the LGBTQ community are overlooked. Participants felt it was important to bring greater awareness to other identities, such as lesbian or pansexual to be more inclusive.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to consider in the current study. The sample of 12 participants was too small to represent the entire LGBTQ youth community. A quantitative study may have provided a larger sample of LGBTQ youth participants. Further, the perspectives of participants are not generalizable since the data was limited to the perspectives of CSUSB students. Also, the majority of participants engaged in one-on-one interviews for limited amounts of time. The limited amount of time may or may not have allowed participants to provide meaningful and in depth responses. However, most of the participants provided personal insight and experiences, which were critical to the findings of this study.

In addition, this study was not able to conduct focus groups since participants preferred to participate in one-on-one interviews. Focus groups may have allowed participants to exchange ideas with one another and researchers to observe the social interactions and any linguistic patterns between participants. Finally, the study was unable to recruit members of the Kink, Bear, Chapstick, Fems, or BDSM sub-cultures that were mentioned in the participant narratives. These perspectives would have provided diverse narratives and aided in further exploration of the LGBTQ community.

Recommendations for Social Work
Practice, Policy and Research

This study allows those working with LGBTQ- identified youth to increase their knowledge base and understanding of the cultural and linguistic aspects of the LGBTQ youth community. In addition, this study will enhance academic research related to the LGBTQ community and provide possibilities for further exploration through a mixed-methods or quantitative approach. Furthermore, social workers will become more aware of the constant changes made within the LGBTQ community and the rising importance of online social networking for LGBTQ identified youth. Finally, this study will contribute to the growing literature on practicing cultural humility when working with the LGBTQ community.

For future research, it is recommended that researchers continue to use feminist and queer theoretical approaches to working with LGBTQ identified

youth. Utilizing these theories will enhance researchers conceptualization of the constant changes in terminology and growing lexicon found within the LGBTQ community. In addition, as suggested by some participants, researchers who identify as queer could contribute to academia by exploring issues through a queer lens insuring that queer research is done from an insider's perspective.

For future policies and practices, it is recommend that social workers continue to practice cultural competency/ humility and be comfortable with ambiguity. In addition, due to the constant changes made within the LGBTQ community, social work practices should insure that information provided in trainings is current and up to date. Finally, social workers, researchers, and the academic field should strive to collaborate with agencies and programs that empower and provide safe spaces for LGBTQ identified youth.

Conclusions

This study aimed to identify and discuss the important cultural and linguistic aspects in the LGBTQ community. By using a qualitative design, this study revealed the unique perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ-identified youth. The study was able to generate important LGBTQ cultural implications for practice. This study also revealed LGBTQ youth seek to create families who provide them with feelings of acceptance, warmth, and belonging. It was also found LGBTQ youth demonstrated critical values, specifically respecting people's self-identities. Another key finding was LGBTQ youth are

continuously developing and creating news of naming themselves to self-identify and identify others in the community. Another notable finding of this study was LGBTQ youth perspectives varied among age and level of involvement in community. Finally, this study found it was important for LGBTQ to recognize the privileges people have or do not have in the LGBTQ community. Implications for social work practice include increasing cultural humility and becoming more aware of the fluidity in the LGBTQ community when working with LGBTQ youth. These findings cannot be generalized to the entire LGBTQ youth population since this study was designed specifically for California State University San Bernardino. Further research on LGBTQ subcultures and intersecting self-identities is recommended.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

RESEARCH STUDY RECRUITMENT!!!!

WHAT ASPECTS DEFINE LGBTQ+ CULTURE AND LANGUAGE TO YOU?

- **Do you consider the LGBTQ+ community to have its own unique culture?**
- **If so, are there certain beliefs or attitudes that are specific to the LGBTQ+ community?**
- **Are there certain phrases, terms, or symbols that are important to LGBTQ+ culture?**

If you were able to answer these questions, we would like to invite you to participate in our study.

The purpose of this research study is to explore LGBTQ+ youth perspectives, experiences, and diverse narratives about the meaning and importance of culture and language in the LGBTQ+ community. Your participation will give voice to LGBTQ+ youth experiences and enhance the use of affirming practices in the field of social work.

The study requires either a 30-45 minute interview or 45 minute to an hour focus group.

Master of Social Work students Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo from California State University San Bernardino are conducting this study.

The interview and focus group will be held at a location convenient to the participants.

You will receive free pizza for participating in the focus group and a five-dollar gift card for participating in the interview.

If you are interested in being a part of this study, please contact Julie at (949) 870-2940 or Justine at (909) 803-4811. Thank you!!

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What does the acronym LGBTQ mean to you?

2. How has the acronym LGBTQ changed in the last couple of years?

3. What do you think is the most inclusive term? Why?

4. What do the acronyms, for example, the "L" mean to you? Why?

5. How does the acronym LGBTQ play a role in society?

6. How have you seen the LGBTQ community portrayed in social media?

7. Do you see a difference in how it's portrayed locally (campus, community, San Bernardino)?

8. What is your definition of "culture?"

9. Would you consider the LGBTQ community to have its own unique culture?

10. Do you consider yourself to be a member of the LGBTQ community? Why?

11. Do you belong to any other cultures/communities?

12. Do they intersect with the LGBTQ culture? If so, how?

13. Can you define and describe the important aspects of LGBTQ culture, including the importance of language?

14. Are there code words, phrases to let others within the culture know who they are?

15. How do you identify others in the LGBTQ culture?

16. In what ways would you consider LGBTQ culture to be an important characteristic in your life?

17. What would you say is, from your point of view, the most commonly held misconception about LGBTQ culture? How come?

18. Are there any other subcultures within the LGBTQ culture you identify with (Examples: gender-variant/non-conforming expressions)? How come?

19. How do you identify someone who is in the same subculture?

20. Are there any misconceptions about those subcultures within the LGBT community?

Developed by Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

DEMOGRAPHICS

Please thoughtfully and accurately fill in the information below.

1. **What is your current age?** _____

2. **Which gender do you identify?**
   ☐ Males
   ☐ Female
   ☐ Other _____

3. **What is your sexual orientation?**
   ☐ Heterosexual   ☐ Bisexual
   ☐ Gay   ☐ Other _____
   ☐ Lesbian   ☐ Prefer not to say

4. **To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify?**
   ☐ African American (non-Hispanic) ☐ Latino or Hispanic
   ☐ Asian/ Pacific Islanders   ☐ Native American or Aleut
   ☐ Caucasian (non-Hispanic)   ☐ Other _____

5. **What was your total family income last year (from all sources, before taxes)? This refers to the combined incomes of all individuals living in your home. Please select one.**
   ☐ Less than $15,999   ☐ $40,000-$49,999
   ☐ $15,999-$19,999   ☐ $50,000-$59,999
   ☐ $20,000-$29,999   ☐ $60,000-$69,999
   ☐ $30,000-$39,999   ☐ $70,000 or more

6. **Are you a current student at California State University, San Bernardino?**
   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

7. **What is the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received?**
   ☐ Some High School   ☐ Some college
   ☐ High School Graduate   ☐ College degree
   ☐ GED or equivalent

8. **What is your current major at California State University, San Bernardino?**

   _____

Developed by Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

Informed Consent

The study you are being asked to participate in is designed to gather data on the cultural and linguistic aspects of the LGBTQ youth community. The study is being conducted by MSW students Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Ph.D, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

This study is completely anonymous and any information that is obtained within this study will remain confidential. The researchers will not ask for any identifiable information and will request that you give a code name (i.e. tiger1) to maintain anonymity.

- If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to complete a demographics questionnaire. The questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes.
- Following the completion of the questionnaire, you will engage in individual or group discussions regarding LGBTQ culture and language. These discussions will be held at the Santos Manuel Student Union Pride Center. We want to talk about the things that provide meaning and understanding to LGBTQ youth culture and language. Each one-on-one interview is 30 minutes to an hour long. Each focus group is 45 minutes to an hour and a half long.
- The individual or group sessions will be tape-recorded so that we can accurately remember what was said. You may still participate in the research even if you decide not to be taped. After we listen to the tapes again, we will make notes and then the tapes will be destroyed. We will keep the answers confidential and no names will be written in any of the notes.

We plan to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. To keep your information safe, the audiotape of your interview will be placed in a locked file cabinet until a written word-for-word copy of the discussion has be created. As soon as this process is complete, the tapes will be destroyed.

Your participation is totally voluntary. You will be able to pass on any of the questions you do not want to answer and you can quit the study at any time. You will be given a free lunch and a 5 dollar gift card for participating in the group study. If you decide to stop before the study is completed you will still receive the incentives.

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this study. We believe the data collected from this study could benefit and expand knowledge on LGBTQ culture and language within social work and other service agencies.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researchers please contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Ph.d by email: rmccasli@csusb.edu, or phone: 909-537-5507

PLEASE DO NOT PROVIDE A NAME OR IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ON CONSENT FORMS.

Please place a check mark indicating you are over the age of 18 and you have read and understood the information above. Through the placement of a check mark you are consenting to voluntarily participate in this study.

Place Check Mark Here _____ Date:_____

APPENDIX E

INFORMATIONAL STATEMENT

INFORMATIONAL STATEMENT

Thank you for participating in our study! This study was designed to explore the cultural and linguist aspects of the LGBTQ youth community. Your participation was essential to researchers gathering more information on this topic.

Thank you again for your participation. If you have any questions regarding the study please contact Julie Houston and/or Justine Carrillo or Dr. Rosemary McCaslin at California State University San Bernardino by email: rmccasli@csusb.edu, or phone: 909-537-5507. Results will be available in the PFAU library at California State University of San Bernardino in September 2015.

Have a wonderful day!

APPENDIX F

TABLES

Table 1.
Main theme: *The importance of "family" is considered an essential aspect of LGBTQ culture.*

Theme	Subthemes
Family	Family of Choice
	Sense of Belonging and Acceptance

Table 2.
Main Theme: *The importance of having a "personal identity" is considered an essential aspect of LGBTQ culture.*

Theme	Subthemes
Personal Identity	Avoid Assumptions
	Personal Meaning
	Intersectionality

Table 3.

Main Theme: *The importance of "language" is considered an essential aspect of LGBTQ culture.*

Theme	Subthemes
Language	Fluid Expressions
	Reclaiming versus Insulting
	Queer
	Accessibility

Table 4.

Main Theme: *The importance of "community visibility" is considered an essential aspect of LGBTQ culture.*

Theme	Subthemes
Community Visibility	Social Movements
	Social Perspectives
	Social Media

Table 5.
Main theme: *The importance of "expansion within community" is also considered an essential aspect of LGBTQ culture.*

Theme	Subthemes
Expansion within Community	Acknowledging Privilege
	Subcultures

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

Team Effort: Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort: Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo

b. Methods

Team Effort: Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo

c. Results

Team Effort: Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo

d. Discussion

Team Effort: Julie Houston and Justine Carrillo