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"You've Been Accepted"?: Homonormativity and the Imagination of Queer Higher Educational Spaces

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YOU'VE BEEN ACCEPTED?: HOMONORMATIVITY AND THE IMAGINATION

OF QUEER HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SPACES

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by

Faye DeLancey Pelow

2022

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
    College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This dissertation, written by Faye DeLancey Pelow, and entitled You've Been Accepted?: Homonormativity and the Imagination of Queer Higher Educational Spaces, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgement.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Mark Padilla

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Benjamin Smith, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 18, 2022

The dissertation of Faye DeLancey Pelow is approved.

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Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

DEDICATION

THIS DISSERTATION IS DEDICATED TO MY FAMILY

WHOSE LOVE AND SUPPORT WERE PARAMOUNT

AND, ESPECIALLY, TO MY GRANDMA

MURIEL DELANCEY

WHO I KNOW WOULD BE SO PROUD

AND SATISFIED.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

YOU'VE BEEN ACCEPTED?: HOMONORMATIVITY AND THE IMAGINATION

OF QUEER HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SPACES

by

Faye DeLancey Pelow

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Benjamin Smith, Major Professor

Spaces of higher education are often over-simplified in social science discourse, but their histories and evolutions are anything but straightforward. As colleges and universities have developed from institutions of religious social order to sites of perceived tolerance and exploration, they have also emerged as significant *queer* spaces. Indeed, some institutions of higher learning have even gained reputations for being particularly "LGBTQ+-friendly" safe spaces. Yet it is important to understand the social, political, moral and economic underpinnings upon which these establishments have been built and desire to uphold. Despite efforts to promote inclusivity, university spaces are also situated within an intricate web of normative powers that tend to keep identities "in their place". Utilizing a queer intersectional approach, this dissertation examines how heteronormative and homonormative powers are produced, felt and challenged by queer students in university spaces, as well as the programs those institutions provide. The aims of this study are (1) to uncover the normative discourses of power that inform queer higher educational spaces and experiences (2) to determine how homonormative imaginations of queer identities and spaces are disseminated to, reproduced by and

resisted by diverse queer student populations, and (3) to discover existing and new ways

to make higher educational spaces safer and better for queer students.

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CHAPTER I: AN INTRODUCTION TO QUEER UNIVERSITY SPACES

I'm sitting with David in a local coffee shop. He is the first student who has agreed to meet with me and his honest, articulate dialogue about LGBTQ+ issues initially catches me off guard, but then I learn that this is his chosen mission. He is the president of the Stonewall Pride Alliance at Florida International University, the school's most visible LGBTQ+ organization. A self-identified psysexual, demi-romantic, gender fluid man who feels like a woman sometimes, David is a pillar of the FIU queer community, but remains decidedly quiet about his identity at home. The safety and acceptance at the FIU campus is something that he has sought out himself and tries to foster with other students, but he knows that his experience is not a blanket experience for all students on campus- openly queer or otherwise:

Faye: "Do you feel that queer students are visible on campus?"

David: "Yes and no. It's a back and forth…I feel for like a regular student, they will still only self- disclose to people who are their friends already. For example: I had a friend who went to FIU two years ago who had a best friend and they started to romantically engage. He went the full nine yards and was holding hands in public and everything, but this was all off campus on South Beach. They went out for a day and everything happens, and then when they come back to the university, his friend pretends like nothing happened. Because I feel like there was a shame involved…like…*I can be like that when no one I know is around, but when people I know are around I can't be doing that anymore*. I feel like a lot of it is internalized and a lot of it is societally enforced because a lot of people to this day still feel like they can't be themselves

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because they either feel like they don't want to be stereotyped, or like they're trying to fulfill some kind of heteromasculine ideal... I think he felt like he was doing the 'traditional college experiment'. For me, though, people who do the traditional college experiment have more to their identity then they're leading on. They're like 'yeah I'm straight but I did some stuff in college'…and I'm just like- you're not as straight as you think you are. And it's totally fine if you're not. You don't have to change anything about yourself. You don't have to start watching Ru Paul's Drag Race. You don't have to go to pride parades. You don't have to change anything about you that's not letting you accept yourself."

From this short excerpt with an openly LGBTQ+ student at the FIU campus, we can see a glimpse of the intricacies and complexities that accompany queer identities and geographies. Like identities, queer spaces are fluid, dynamic and continuously evolving-experienced and understood uniquely by the individuals within and observant of them. For one student, a university campus may be appreciated as a safe-haven of exploration and acceptance while another may consider it a place to conceal and compartmentalize their identity. The reasonings behind these distinct experiences are also numerous. Universities are miniature societies in their own right; each having its own distinctive hierarchies and social structures that are exclusively experienced by the students and administrators that inhabit that space. Universities, therefore, present an interesting queer space case study as they are representative of both progressive and repressive power structures made up of a diverse array of subjects. Additionally, beyond the theoretical implications of what university spaces *are* is the need to understand what they *can be*. There was not one person interviewed for this research that said that their respective

university space was exemplary and without room for growth. It is important, then, to look at what work is currently being done within university spaces and what can be done to make them more informed and inclusive.

This dissertation analyzes how homonormativities – the social and political powers that create, maintain and restrict hegemonic manifestations of queerness (Duggan, 2002; Ferguson, 2005; Ghaziani, 2011; Morgensen, 2010; Petchesky, 2009; Puar, 2007; Yep, 2002)- are produced, felt, imagined and challenged through the migration of diverse students to colleges and universities, as well as the environments fostered by those institutions.   Colleges and universities are key, and often under-examined, institutions in terms of the production and maintenance of prevalent forms of homonormativity. Though colleges and universities (via classes, professors and resources) have certainly long been noted for curating comprehensions of what it means to "be queer" (Beemyn, 2003; Bowen and Bourgeois, 2001; Kane, 2013; O'Connell, 2004; Rankin, 2003), it is more so the role of higher educational space in the production of broader identities that make them so crucial to the topic at hand. Students often choose to attend institutions of higher learning for a variety of reasons that extend beyond earning a degree: to become immersed in wider social and professional networks, to enhance their economic and cultural capital and to remake themselves through the process of becoming independent adults (Altbach, 2007; Collins, 2010; Kumashiro, 2001, Thelin, 2004).   Perceptions, inclinations and experiences acquired while attending institutions of higher learning decisively shape subsequent years of people's lives (Abes, 2007; Howard and Stevens, 2000; Kumashiro, 2001; Meyer and Schwitzer, 2010; Rankin et al., 2002). This is especially significant for queer students as they shift and remake

their gendered and sexual identities within university spaces that can be both freeing and restrictive. Relationships within these spaces are also incredibly important as hierarchies that exist within homonormative structures are both challenged and upheld by students, professors and staff. Universities, therefore, not only introduce previously unknown conceptualizations of identity, but are also that pivotal space in which these ideas are both supported and opposed (Beemyn, 2003; Connolly, 1999; Ellis, 2008; Kane, 2013; O'Connell, 2004; Rankin, 2003, 2019).

For many students, the migration to universities represents a spatial shift from "home" to a different kind of space: one they hope to be more dynamic, social and safe (Collins, 2010; Kumashiro, 2001; Lewis, 2014; Weston, 1995). For their part, although long considered as tolerant "safe" spaces for a variety of "minority" identities (including queer identities), only recently have a significant number of American colleges and universities identified the need for LGBTQ+ student resources and, in some cases, begun marketing themselves explicitly as LGBTQ+ friendly spaces (Garvey et al., 2013; Wheeler-Quinnell, 2010). Diversity initiatives are both socially conscious and potentially profitable as universities can promote themselves as forward thinking institutions while also pleasing their students. This represents a major shift both in the demographic climate of higher education as well as in the recognition of LGBTQ+ students as a potential niche market that, in turn, point to larger economic, social and political developments.

Yet while colleges and universities in the United States are often alluring spaces for the reasons listed above (as well as institutions that consciously try to activate the gears of social change) to varying degrees they are also spaces that are rooted in duality

and uncertainty. For some queer students universities are a safe-haven of expression and exploration. However, for those students who are multiply marginalized by other aspects of their identity or by falling outside the bounds of homonormativity, university spaces can be more divisive. Thus, university spaces are both welcoming and privileged; accessible and expensive; progressive and stubborn. Though the common narrative put forward by universities is one of opportunity and exploration, not all students experience these spaces in the same way. As this dissertation will show, for some, university spaces represent the first set of doors to slam in their face, their first run in with the isms – sexism, racism, classism etc. - that continue to follow all of us through our adult lives. For LGBTQ+ students, it can be their first run in with phobias- homophobia, transphobia, queerphobia- that will shape their worldview and reinforce the fight to belong or break out. It is important, therefore, to recognize the unique positionalities of the students within these spaces as well as the dynamic nature of university spaces, themselves.

I.   Introduction:

For students just leaving high school, deciding to attend an institution of higher education is perhaps the first important, autonomous choice that they will make in their lives. It is not simply a decision, but also often a declaration to their families, themselves and the world that this place they have chosen is not only where they want to explore academic avenues, but also their broader interests. Choosing an institution of higher learning is, for many students, the symbolic of the next step forward becoming who they want to be. Ideally (if not always in practice), a setting can be found that is full of people who are accepting and inspiring, who can form a key part of the web of connections that will carry a student successfully into the adult world.

The weight of this decision is especially felt by students who identify as queer or

LGBTQ+.   Although not a universal or even experience, for much of the last half century

in the United States, a move to attend an undergraduate program often provided queer

students a chance to distance themselves from the too prevalent occurrence of restrictive

domestic spaces, intolerance and isolation (Beemyn, 2003; Ellis, 2008; Kane, 2013;

Mundy, 2018; Rankin, 2019; Rankin et al., 2010; Self and Hudson, 2015).   Furthermore,

depending on the institution and its surrounding area, such a move might provide a

chance to become part of more visible queer communities that are not just non-repressive,

but also supportive and enjoyable. Of course, colleges and universities are also sites of

intersection for the (re)production of multiple identities, along a variety of racial, ethnic,

gendered and socioeconomic lines – all of which impacts individual queer students as

well. Assumed queer "safe spaces" within and around colleges and universities are

therefore of particular types – attached to certain axes of difference (of class, of race, of

wealth, of bodily performances) more than others.

So, how is such an important decision about where to attend ultimately made?

Unsurprisingly, it varies from student to student. For some, the decision is pragmatic.

For others, it is idyllic. For most- including the majority of students interviewed for this

research- is it a combination of the two. Location of the university and financial

practicality are compounded with an imagined queer safe space. Though not always

thoroughly researched beforehand, most students have a certain idea of where they would

be going and what they would find- and hopefully not find- at their respective

universities. Certainly, none of the students interviewed chose their respective

universities with the idea that they would be unsafe or encounter overwhelming prejudice.

The geographic imaginaries upon which these potential queer students draw have been (re)produced through globalized media exposure and discourses, typically portraying certain parts of the United States (and institutions of higher learning within them) as model locations to experience a less restrictive, more accepting and open lifestyle for those who identify as queer (Brown and Knopp, 2008; Carrillo, 2010; Carrillo Rowe and Licona, 2005; Kehbuma Langmia et al., 2014; Miller, 2017; Trottier, 2012; Zheng, 2009). Traversing multiple news, entertainment and social media such as Huffpost Gay Voices, The Advocate, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook and TikTok, narratives of LGBTQ+ lives in the United States are reproduced in, and broadcasted to, broader national and international audiences. Many popular television shows geared toward Queer audiences (which tend to follow predominantly white, well-off characters) are set in noted, urban, LGBTQ+ safe areas. Examples include "The L Word" in Los Angeles, CA, "Tales of the City" in San Francisco, CA, "Queer as Folk" in Pittsburgh, PA, "Grace and Frankie" in San Diego, CA and "Will and Grace" in New York City. Set in the late 80's and early 90's, another popular show, "Pose" gives a glimpse into the New York City ballroom scene and shows the start contrast between early urban queer spaces and the inclusive, gentrified tropes we see today but this is more of an outlier- a historical account; an educational storyline with a beautiful cast. Thus, like all widely circulating geographic imaginations, conceptions of queer space are often of a certain type. While this these visualizations can obviously vary across boundaries (and often clash with the complexities of lived experiences), within the context of the United States,

the white, affluent, and urban vision is dominant (Brown, 2009; Driver, 2007; Duggan, 2002; Kates, 2002; Manning, 1996; Oswin, 2008). In this dissertation, three of the largest universities in South Florida – Florida International University, the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University – are the primary research sites, meaning that they were closely examined in terms of LGBTQ+ campus policies as well as the perceived and actual experience of LGBTQ+ students.

Through its primary focus on homonormativity, this dissertation analyzes how the identities and status of queer students evolve through migration to and within the United States higher education system, as well as how intersecting structures of expectation regarding race/ ethnicity, class and urbanity shape these experiences. It does so through a case study set in South Florida, which is uniquely positioned within queer imaginations in the United States (for reasons described below). The study also identifies how "other" identities within heteronormative and homonormative power structures are marginalized within university spaces. Furthermore, this research investigates how inequalities are identified, discussed and dealt with by LGBTQ+ students and university administration. Thus, this dissertation explores three key questions[1]:

i. What are the practices, ideals, discourses of power and policies that inform the production of queer higher educational spaces and experiences? Who is involved and how? To what extent do different types of homonormative imaginations permeate these spaces and practices?

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[1] These questions are not arranged chronologically in terms of the order that they will be investigated. Instead, they are arranged from widest in intellectual scope to narrowest, in order to provide topical focus to the final document. The order of research tasks is dealt with later in the proposal, in the Timeline.

ii. How are homonormative imaginations of queer identities and spaces

disseminated to, reproduced by, and resisted by diverse queer student

populations? What are the linkages and divisions within the LGBTQ+

spectrum; how are they created or challenged within university spaces?

Which identities are considered "other" identities and how are they

marginalized while simultaneously harbored under the Queer identity

umbrella?

iii. How are perceived inequalities dealt with by students and administrators?

Are motivations to change rooted in social responsibility or also the

potential for capitalistic growth? What measures are being taken and how

can we improve?

A queer intersectional approach will be applied to answer the above questions,

which is in keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of my training, which was primarily

in qualitative human geography, cultural anthropology and sociology. This analytical

framework reworks earlier intersectional approaches developed outside the context of

queer studies.[2] A queer intersectional approach utilizes a contextual analysis of groups of

people and individuals in order to bring to the fore, destabilize and decouple the

dynamics of power at the foundation of social structure and how these contribute to

space, identity and bodily inscriptions (Cohen, 1997; Duggan, 1992; Duran et al., 2020;

Ferguson, 2005; Hubbard, 2000, 2015; Johnston, 2018; McCall, 2014; Oswin, 2008;

Valentine, 1993). Queer theory and queer approaches to space highlight a multitude of

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[2] For summary of that literature and/or its relationship to queer studies, see Cho et al., 2013; Clark and McCall, 2013; Duggan, 1992; Fotopoulou, 2013; McCall, 2014; Nash, 2008; Oswin, 2008; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff, 2008; Valentine, 1993, 2007.

class, racial, gendered and embodied identities on top of a primary focus on sexuality, all of which serve to de-naturalize essentialized categorical binaries wherever they are found. The salience of language, gender performativity, sexual identity, the heteronormative family unit, kinship structures and concepts of morality in contemporary social theory are particularly emphasized in these queer analytical frameworks (Butler, 1990, 1993; Duran et al., 2020; Fotopoulou, 2013; Hubbard, 2000, 2015; Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1999).   This approach emphasizes a consideration of the "big picture": an awareness of the differences, symbolic meanings and cultural subtexts associated with social positioning, self- identification and power. This type of theoretical and analytical lens will highlight both the dynamic nature of queer space and geographical imaginaries of higher education in South Florida, drawing attention to shifting contexts of sexuality, race, class, power and identity that might be otherwise overlooked as they are outside of the "norm" of collective understanding. This is because queer theoretical approaches highlight the fluid, hybrid nature of space: how it is uniquely perceived and experienced; manipulated and controlled in ways that are not always expected.

As I continue with this dissertation, it is important to note that I will interchangeably reference students, spaces and theoretical frameworks as queer and LGBTQ+ to reflect the positioning of those people and places that are not identified as heteronormative or cisgender. The LGBTQ+ acronym can be and has been altered in many ways. Often it is shortened to LGBT or LGBTQ; sometimes it is lengthened to LGBTQA, LGBTQIA, or even LGBTQQIP2SKAAA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Pansexual, Two-Spirit, Kink, Androgynous, Asexual and Ally) (Linley et al., 2016; Mollet and Lackman, 2018; Wagaman et al.,

2018). There are several variations and letters that individuals or groups add and remove

depending on their preference. Language is important and I fully acknowledge that not

all members of this community would agree with being put under the Queer umbrella;

nor do I believe that each identity could be neatly compartmentalized into one acronym

that would be unanimously pleasing. For the purpose of this research, I believe that the

LGBTQ+ acronym is in line with current queer discourse and social/ political trends

while also acknowledging the significance and diversity of other identities that can be,

and often are, included in the acronym. While not intensely specific, this acronym

summons a familiarity and understanding for the general reader while also alluding to the

myriad gender and sexual identities on the spectrum (Wagaman et al., 2018). It is meant

to be recognizable and also inclusive. More commonly when referring to academic

analysis and concepts, abstract senses of place and space and general statements of

populations, I will refer to them as queer. By 'queer', I mean those 'other' identities-

whether sexual, social or political- that do not fit into a normative box and are decidedly

flexible and indefinite (Browne, 2006; Budhiraja et al., 2010; Butler, 1993; Cohen, 1997;

Duggan, 1992; Morrish and O'Mara, 2011; Oswin, 2015; Signorile, 2003). When

discussing identities, participant testimony or specific, tangible examples of space and

media that I feel should notably include and highlight the LGBTQ+ spectrum, I will refer

to them as LGBTQ+.   I will adjust the acronym if and when it is referenced differently

by other texts, organizations, the universities and the participants in this research.

 I now turn to the three bodies of work that connect most directly to this research:

critiques of homonormativity, theories of the production of identity in space, and the

reproduction of power in universities.

II.   Homonormativities

Homonormativity refers to the various norms imposed upon, supported or challenged by queer populations. These archetypes symbolize an "ideal" model of social, economic and political queer life which may represent positive changes, but also assumes a unified queer population (Budhiraja et al., 2005; Duggan, 2002; Ferguson, 2005; Morgensen, 2010; Petchetsky, 2009; Puar 2006, 2007; Yep, 2002). Whether in the geographical modeling of well-known queer residential spaces such as San Francisco and New York, or the pervasive LGBTQ+ imagery in popular culture and network television, a dominant queer discourse has been historically disseminated through an elite set of voices: white, prosperous gay men (Duggan, 2002; Ferguson, 2005; Petchetsky, 2009; Yep, 2002). As a result, marginalized social groups within queer communities are further marginalized and made less visible. As queer voices have become more outspoken and diverse, however, new and interesting narratives have begun to emerge regarding queerness, whiteness and class. These unique perspectives are particularly present in South Florida where understandings of whiteness and queerness have been unpacked and locally contextualized (Abalos, 1999; Hames- García, 2015; McDonald, 2009), with an emphasis on queerness versus straightness, heteronormative and homonormative forms of masculinity, race and visibility. This site could therefore open dialogues regarding the presence of multiple homonormativities that intersect and bridge across various racial, ethnic and gendered lines.

Homonormative social structures that (re)produce notions of queer space and identity are particularly fueled by mass and social media (Brown, 2009; Cavalcante, 2019; Ghaziani, 2011, 2014; Miller, 2017; Papacharissi and Fernback, 2008). Though

favoring certain perspectives over others (like all forms of communication), media and technological resources offer the ability to socially organize and connect with other queer-identified individuals on a global scale. This increased interconnectivity heightens the sense of a "global queer community", coalesces collective issues of interest and makes known potential safe spaces in "gay" cities and neighborhoods. Geographical imaginations of "gayness" (again, like all geographical imaginations) are quite-often policed, one-sided and simplified for mass consumption: "In order for these 'positive images' of gayness to be easily understood by the 'straight' world, all 'difficult' aspects of homosexuality are glossed over, and those whose lives place them slap in the middle of these difficulties are marginalized accordingly" (Manning, 1996: 100). Although this quote is twenty years old and acceptance has increased exponentially in recent years, the diversity and complex challenges of queer lives are just recently starting to be understood.

Class divisions, race, ethnicity and sexuality are too-often evaded in the production of an image of a unified, productive queer population- a standard that many under this umbrella find unattainable or undesirable (Abalos, 1999; Brown, 2009; Brown and Knopp, 2008; Duggan, 2002; Ghaziani, 2014; Kates, 2002; Oswin, 2008; Valentine, 1993, Yep, 2002). "This privileges an elite stratum of recognizably masculine or feminine bourgeois homosexuals whose 'minority' status is defined primarily by the ways they conform to the normative majority-for example, through legal marriage or upscale consumerism. The creation of identity groups thus ends up denying the complex intersections of sexuality and gender with class, race, ethnicity and geography" (Petchesky, 2009). Homonormative discourses are problematic as they privilege certain

queer identities; failing to adequately acknowledge important contextualities such as ethnicity, gender, self-identification and positioning. Queer students, then, are potentially exposed to primarily dominant kinds of homonormative queer imaginaries with the United States as their nucleus (Driver, 2007; Gray, 2009; Signorile, 2003).

Indeed, homonormativity as a concept can trace its genealogy to the notion of heteronormativity. The heteronormative nature of space emphasizes how spaces are ruled by Western, heterosexual, masculinist constructions that reproduce normative powers through cultural narratives and discourse (Butler, 1993; Collard, 1998; Ferguson, 2005; Valentine, 1993). Dominated by these hegemonic power structures of productivity and normative identity, common spaces are often seen as "aggressively heterosexual" (Valentine, 1993). Queer sexual and gender identities are therefore marginalized in both public and private spaces (Browne, 2006; Butler, 1993; Foucault, 1978; Ghaziani, 2014; Hubbard, 2000; Hubbard et al., 2015; Puar, 2006; Ruting, 2008; Valentine, 1993).   This awareness of the heterosexual inscriptions upon queer space helps intersectional scholars to draw attention to the contextual and relative nature of spaces as evolving sites of subjectification with varying degrees of participation and perception.

One of the major routes to combat homonormativity is through the aforementioned queer intersectional approaches (that examine the intersection of many axes of difference), which can facilitate useful theorization of how and why bodies are positioned; which bodies *matter* and which bodies are deemed 'Other', queer bodies (Cho et al., 2013; Clarke and McCall, 2013; Duran et al., 2020; Fotopoulou, 2013; Johnston, 2018; Nash, 2008; Valentine, 2007). Additionally, queer intersectional approaches consider how these bodies perform in public and private spaces and how this

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performance reflects the compulsive normalization of certain identities and discourses. Understanding how queer bodies have been historically positioned (within universities and in various parts of the United States) in comparison to how they are currently positioned is especially important for this dissertation.

Similarly, an essential component of this research has been to identify how axes of differentiation such as race, class and gender intersect within university spaces and how this affects the surrounding landscape. Although queer intersectional approaches are most often associated with the study of queer individuals and spaces, alternative approaches such as postcolonial, critical race and feminist intersectional approaches can also illustrate the foundational principles of queer theory (Oswin, 2008, 2015). These analytical frameworks reinforce the need to pay attention to contexts and systems of power; illuminating privileges within queer theory that are sometimes overlooked. This is particularly apparent in discussions of homonormativity. Though the aim is to be inclusive of all queer individuals, common homonormative discourses fail to adequately consider important contextualities such as ethnicity, gender, self-identification and positioning (Butler, 1993; Duggan, 1992, 2002; Ferguson, 2005; Kanai and Kenttamaa-Squires, 2015; Petchesky, 2009; Puar, 2006, 2007; Yep, 2002). Consequently, many queer individuals that do not or cannot adhere to the homonormative model of production are marginalized within queer spaces and within social science discourse.

Thus far, scholars have paid scant attention to the role that institutions of higher learning have played in forming and sustaining homonormativity – despite the fact that universities are well-known as credentialing and intellectual centers for many hegemonic (as well as counter hegemonic) ideas, identities and practices.

III.   Productions of Identity

Possessing a working theory of how identity is reproduced through space is a key prerequisite to the analysis conducted in this dissertation.   Although there are many such theories available, an approach which combines the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and an assortment of queer theory scholars, both in and outside geography, provides the greatest conceptual purchase on the topic at hand. This is because such a combination of scholars presents compelling arguments regarding the construction of identities as they are influenced by disciplinary powers and reproduced via gendered and sexual performances within spaces.   Utilizing these lenses and bringing them to the topic of queer student higher educational institution selection and experience sheds light on how identities are produced through hegemonic heteronormative and homonormative discourses. It also demonstrates how such discourses permeate the social, political, capitalist and nationalist underpinnings within higher educational spaces, as well as rights issues surrounding visibility and equal protection under the law.

Building upon Michel Foucault's foundational theorizations of power and sexuality, current queer scholars aim to highlight how these concepts are linked, their societal importance and how they relate to other social science disciplines. According to Foucault, sexuality is "…an especially dense transfer point for relations of power", where in desired and experienced bodily pleasure is developed by the deployment of alliance (Foucault,1978: 103). By "the deployment of alliance", Foucault refers to the nuclear reproductive family unit and related economic and political processes; while "the deployment of sexuality" signifies those techniques of power that control reproduction and regulate sexuality through normalized and exclusionary discourse.

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Relatedly, Foucault introduces the concept of biopolitics: the ways in which human life and bodies are subjugated to and managed by hegemonic powers. "Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem" (Foucault, 2003: 245). Biopolitics and powers that determine sexual norms produce certain reproductive agendas by making non-reproductive sex confined, invisible and forbidden. By turning non-reproductive sexuality into an illicit practice, however, biopolitical regulation actually incites sexual discourses that permeate both public and private spaces. Space is therefore inherently sexualized and plays a key role in disciplining people into certain identities (sexual or otherwise). As Foucault noted in *Discipline and Punish* (1979), modern society is defined by panopticism, that "…lays down for each individual his place, his body, his disease and his death, his well-being, by means of an omnipresent and omniscient power that subdivides itself in a regular, uninterrupted way even to the ultimate determination of the individual, of what characterizes him, of what belongs to him, of what happens to him" (Foucault,1979: 197). Thus, for Foucault, the sectioning, bounding and labeling of space is a key aspect of the production and privileging of certain identities. Furthermore, by using Foucault's analytical framework, scholars can conduct genealogies of such charged spaces (which universities certainly qualify as) in order to understand how they came to perform crucial functions within the capillary functioning of power.

In a related vein, Judith Butler examined how bodies and their performativity drive the always ongoing process of identity formation (Butler 1990, 1993, 1997, 2004). Heavily influenced by Michel Foucault, Butler furthers the argument that normative

identities are indeed socially constructed concepts that politically regulate the positioning of bodies. Butler posits that gender is a fiction perpetuated by discourses and practices of reproductive power. Queer "others" are those who question and struggle against regulative heteronormativity: "…the strange, the incoherent, that which falls 'outside,' gives us a way of understanding the taken-for-granted world of sexual categorization as a constructed one, indeed, as one that might well be constructed differently" (Butler, 1990: 149). Gender represents a constant and repeated struggle for recognition within a heteronormative social structure that denies and ignores those who are deemed "others".

Furthermore, for Butler, although performances of gender and sexuality are similar, they are not wholly the same and cannot be reduced to each other. In other words, she deploys a model queer theory stratagem of decoupling overly simplified and essentialized associations. In her analysis, sexuality stands as something which should be difficult to determine- since it is not fixed, but instead a constant negotiation between oneself and hegemonic sexual practices. In the absence of the "cultural fictions" of gender and sexuality, Butler suggests that subjects might not think of themselves in these terms and that identities would be produced differently and in multiple, unexpected directions. Rooted in heteronormative structures of power, gender and sexuality are neither true nor false, but rather an imitation of socially constructed roles that have been manipulated and reproduced over time. Like Foucault, Butler's insight regarding the ways that multiple axes of differentiation intersect is crucial to contemporary queer intersectional thought as it highlights the complex, contextual nature of identity and performance.

Of course, queer intersectional thought like that of Oswin (2008, 2015) and Valentine (2007) repurpose earlier literatures on intersectionality that have previously had a fairly narrow impact on geography (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2008; McCall, 2014). In particular, Butler's notion of performativity highlights that identity is only ever maintained through (often visible) repetitions of practices – that gender and sexuality must be seen in space to be performed correctly. Yet now, it is not only mandatory heterosexuality which must be performed; in certain contexts (including some higher educational spaces) it is homonormativity which must be constantly remade (and potentially destabilized).

Many queer theorists, in particular geographers, have built upon Foucault's and Butler's concepts regarding the production of identities through space. Contemporary geographers such as Gill Valentine, Phillip Hubbard and Natalie Oswin utilize an intersectional approach to more deeply examine how queer spaces and identities are evolving in tandem with shifting political and social terrains. These authors argue that the complexity of sexuality is lacking in the existing discourses of geography, which still too often leads to the heteronormatization of space (Oswin, 2008, 2015; Hubbard, 2000, 2015; Valentine, 1993; Valentine and Waite, 2012). Akin to Butler and Foucault, they acknowledge the importance of contextual axes of differentiation, the challenge of the pre-constituted sexual subjects and that power is both oppressive and productive. Utilizing this knowledge, geographers who utilize queer theory have revealed new insights regarding the heterosexual and gendered nature of space, especially accentuating how hegemonic inscriptions have historically caused both public and private spaces to seem "aggressively heterosexual" (Hubbard, 2000, 2015; Valentine, 1993). These spaces

include the workplace, schools, businesses, institutions, neighborhoods or even entire

cities (and for some, countries). Discussing the long tradition of heteronormative

inscriptions on public and private spaces, these authors argue that members of queer

communities are often forced to deny or disguise their sexual orientation in public space

and to seek out new, more accepting places (Hubbard 2000, 2015; Valentine 1993;

Valentine and Waite, 2012; Butler 1990; Oswin 2008, 2015; Wright, 2010). The

censorship and invisibility of queer identities in public and private spaces can therefore

cause spaces to appear restrictive and exclusionary. The result of this discourse is an

increased awareness of the ways in which public and private spaces are experienced and

how these experiences may be quite different for those who identify as LGBTQ+.

A much-needed next step in queer intersectional research is to further develop

cross-cultural consciousness and perspectives in existing discourses regarding queer

identities and space, since such an emphasis will destabilize the too easy assumptions that

are widely held about the formation of queer identities. Such an approach continues to

recognize foundational cornerstones of queer methodology while also considering how

effects of globalization, new media and emerging/evolving populations are impacting

contemporary queer discourse, heteronormative structures and homonormative agendas

(Collins, 2010; Kumashiro, 2001; Marginson, 2006). Much of the literature on queer

space and the practice of queer identities has been historically one-sided and Western-

centric; a white, upper-class male perspective regarding gay neighborhoods in widely

known urban locales (Aldrich, 2004; Brown and Knopp, 2008; Hubbard, 2000, 2015;

Johnston and Longhurst, 2008; Oswin, 2008, 2015; Valentine, 1993, 2012; Weston;

2005). Queer spaces and identities extend far beyond these boundaries (Brown and

Knopp, 2008; Lewis, 2014; Oswin, 2008; Rushbrook, 2002). Several authors have recognized this spatial gap and have begun contributing to a more inclusive discourse regarding the queering of non-Western spaces and developing countries, citing how conceptions of queerness are multiple, yet intersecting; produced and challenged by cultural influences, transnational capitalism and global media (Carrillo, 2010; Carrillo-Rowe and Licona, 2005; Jackson, 2009; Kulick, 1997; Manalansan, 1995, 2005, 2013; Parker and Aggleton, 1999). These contributions, though important, have yet to penetrate the widely circulated imaginations of queerness in the United States and therefore need to be addressed and emphasized.

Beyond social science literature, emerging technology and media has also enabled access to a plethora of new queer spatial landscapes which do not include simply urban spaces, but also rural space, global space and even cyberspace. The study of gender and sexual autonomy facilitated through higher educational spaces may open new and interesting dialogues regarding assimilation and resistance to queer identities during a time of rapid shifts regarding the status of queer persons in the United States. The positionality of queer students prior to, within and beyond higher educational spaces will provide a catalyst for in-depth contextual work that takes into account both the individual positionalities and narratives of students, as well as imaginations of queer space that circulate both within and beyond South Florida.

IV.   **Power and the University**

Places of higher learning have long stood as both symbols of prestige and institutions that reproduce religious, social, and political order (Domonkos, 1997; Freeland, 1992; Renn, 2010; Thelin, 2004). Additionally, at certain points in history,

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many colleges and universities have also been known as sites of perceived tolerance and exploration (Altbach, 2012; Marginson, 2006, 2010; Thelin, 2004; Webb, 2010).   With the arrival of the era of modern states, admission and rejection to the universities produced and reinforced nationalistic hegemonic social and political principles, often (although not always) through the initial (but usually not ever-lasting) exclusion of religious, gendered, raced and classed minorities.

In the United States, the first institutions of higher education were founded in the 1600's and 1700's.   These were private institutions, which most scholars agree were *intended* to establish a patriarchal and religious (as well as ultimately heteronormative) social order within the colonies.   These establishments of higher learning were meant to aide an emergent, conservative colonial elite – even though these institutions ultimately graduated many of those who would go on to lead the colonies into revolution and independence (Teweksbury, 1932; Thelin 2004).

Government involvement with institutions of higher learning was fairly limited initially in the new United States, with private institutions remaining dominant through the mid-1800s. The 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act and postbellum federal financial assistance altered the landscape of higher education in the United States and initiated the establishment of "…affordable, practical higher education offered by state colleges and universities" (Thelin, 2004). The land grant act gave each eligible state between 30,000 to upwards of 100,000 acres of land to be utilized for educational initiatives. State governments could then choose to funnel the profits of the sale towards the funding of advanced educational programs, or they could use the land in order to build colleges and

universities that emphasized a liberal arts curriculum and were intended to be more accessible to a wider range of the United States population (Thelin, 2004).

Yet despite the new allowance of coeducation in the post-civil war era and an effort towards inclusion, those who were not white and/or male were not treated equally, or even well. Many such students were denied entrance to private institutions and land grant colleges, and those who were admitted were often restricted to certain disciplines. These exclusions lead to the establishment and enlargement of several women's colleges (such as Wellesley, Vassar and Mount Holyoke) and black colleges (such as Tuskegee University and the Hampton Institute of Virginia) between 1860 -1890. Even with the development of new kinds of academic institutions, private schools persisted as the American model higher education model and continued to hierarchize and divide students (Thelin, 2004).

The post-World War I era saw the beginning of the "Golden Age" of American higher education (the 1920's-1970's), known for its emphasis on an "All-American" undergraduate residential experience. This era showed an expeditious growth in terms of enrollment, course offerings, social campus life and (to some extent) diversity (Thelin, 2004). Financial aid and government assistance policies which emerged during this era, such as the GI Bill in 1944 and the Pell Grant in 1972, made universities more, but not completely, economically accessible.

Even though the educational ecosystem thickened during this Golden Age, certain groups were still denied equal opportunity to access to certain types of institutions and programs. Gradually- very gradually- the highest echelon of institutions (once only for white, mostly privileged, men) began to allow certain social groups such as women, the

poor, and African Americans into their spaces, but (in the case of African Americans and women) regulated their attendance and curriculum options. For women, universities advertised degrees in English, education and agriculture (Eisenmann, 2001; Gordon, 1990; Thelin, 2004). For black students, curriculums focused on marketable trades as opposed to academia and the liberal arts (Thelin 2004). Indeed, even while claiming to be inclusive, class divides became increasingly pronounced within university spaces at this time. Those who were a part of this 'ruling' class on campus were, of course, wealthy, white, mostly urban men. Thus, despite allowing previously marginalized others "in" to university spaces, normative powers continued to keep them in their place, maintaining social hierarchies and hegemonic order under the guise of inclusion (Eisenmann, 2001; Gordon, 1990; Thelin, 1992, 2004).

Another factor which made academic institutions in the United States more exclusive and less affordable were demand for the residential "college experience" – which involved living independently from parents. Through strategic advertising and branding in the 1940s and 1950s, public and private colleges and universities revitalized their business models. This led to a rapid increase in tuition to levels never before seen in American history, a rise often far exceeding the rate of inflation which has mostly continued to this day. Within these early marketing campaigns, colleges and universities promoted themselves as pinnacles of history, modernity and a necessity for future lives of America's youth. It was also during this time that these institutions began branding themselves with alma maters, school colors and other varieties of differentiating institutional symbols. All of these efforts to differentiate and expand the on-campus

experience resulted in many students being priced out of American residential university spaces (Thelin 1992, 1994, 2004).

However, following WWII, more of an emphasis was also placed on providing mass access to higher education, and new kinds of educational options were becoming available to a more diverse set of students.   These included expanded urban universities, public junior colleges (community colleges), vocational institutes, and trade schools. At the same time, new majors and programs began to emerge to meet the needs of a changing industrial and business superpower – there was less attention paid at state-funded schools to the liberal arts, and more to "applied" programs. Indeed, "higher education had come to be a major focus of attention in the formation of public policies at both the state and federal levels…ultimately, [it] gained sustained state government support combined with federal commitment to advanced research and access to higher education" (Thelin, 2004).

In terms of access, nothing was more impactful than 1944 GI Bill, which would guarantee one year of education for every 90 days of military service, plus one month for every month of active service (including $500 per year towards tuition, fees, books and supplies). By 1946, over one million veterans were enrolled; by 1950, the number doubled to over two million. This increased enrollment caused fundamental changes in the United States higher education system including a more thorough application process (and thus more attention to previous training and standardized testing), an expansion of college campuses, additions of academic disciplines favorable to veterans, and the recognition of new kinds of students (Thelin, 2004). Whereas much of the previous student body were 17-21 years old with minimal real-world experience, academic

institutions now had to accommodate older students with families, jobs and disabilities. There was also an emphasis on higher education in urban areas, disturbing the often previously obligatory on-campus residential expectation.

While class access somewhat expanded, over the past forty years, this narrative has continued to evolve as colleges and universities have put more emphasis upon being safe, diverse and accepting communities for minority students (Eisenmann, 2001; Gordon, 1990; Thelin 1992, 2004). Vocal student protests in the 1960's and 1970's had led to an increased visibility of minorities that had been previously cast aside. At the same time, government funding options such as the Pell Grant guaranteed financial support to poorer students and therefore gave a more economically diverse student community access to universities that had not been available before. This trend in the direction of universal access for students was accompanied an acknowledgement of rights for minority students (which came to be enshrined in federal and state legal structures) and enshrinement of the idea of education as a human right in the United States. However, these gains also came at a time of undoubtedly increased commercialization (Marginson, 2006; Reismann, 1981; Renn, 2010; Ruch, 2001; Thelin, 2004; Trow, 1970; Webb, 2010). By the time the 1980s came around, there was increasing acknowledgement that higher education had become more like a business, and, in fact, a very high revenue one (Riesman, 1981; Ruch, 2001; Thelin, 2004; Trow, 1970).

Thus, it seemed that colleges and universities were willing to put aside some of their previous exclusionary tactics and instead attempted to selectively enroll as many students as possible. Indeed, the effort to enroll an increasing number of international students can be seen in this light – in that it is motivated both by wanting to provide

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access and diversity, but also by the higher tuition rates these students pay and lack of financial assistance they receive (to state universities in particular). (Altbach 2007). Therefore, the history of American higher education has not been a "straight" line with a simple start and end point but has been rather a negotiation between colleges and universities as institutions, government powers, discourses of rights, and those classed, gendered, raced and sexualized students who have occupied (or not occupied) these spaces (Domonkos, 1977; Marginson, 2002; Webb, 2010).

Once U.S. higher education was made more widely accessible to all, however, the demographics within these spaces changed significantly. Even though budgetary concerns partially drove those changes (as well as a genuine concern for access on the part of many students, faculty and administrators) these raced, classed and gendered spaces that had so long catered primarily to upper class white men are now largely dominated by those who were once (and in some ways still are) marginalized others; namely women and racial minorities (Eisenmann, 2001, Gordon, 1990). By making colleges and universities more budget driven, these spaces actually became more inclusive and rapidly evolved to reflect changing social and political movements. Given the importance of attracting students, the ways in which contemporary higher educational institutions assert their agendas through branding, marketing and manipulation of campus space is indicative of power relations within and beyond university space. Similarly, the ways that students choose and operate within these spaces to explore their identities, carve out niches or to change the landscape altogether reveals how power relations within colleges and universities have changed to reflect contemporary social and political

movements (Abes, 2005, 2007; Altbach, 2007; Collins, 2010; Kumashiro, 2001; Marginson, 2006, 2010; Renn, 2007; Rhoads, 1994; Thelin, 2004; Webb, 2010).

This is especially true for LGBTQ+ students, as the outward relationship between many institutions of higher learning and queer students is historically recent even if many these institutions have tended to be comparatively more accepting of many groups, including queer individuals, than the surrounding society of their time (Abes, 2005, 2007; Altbach, 2007; Kumashiro, 2001; Renn, 2007; Rhoads, 1994). Though a publicly acknowledged relationship is recent, it has quickly become quite profound as it demonstrates how some colleges and universities have significantly altered their campus image, policies and resources to be considered "gay-friendly" in a relatively short amount of time (Rankin, 2003). Some of those considered the most LGBTQ+ inclusive campuses – such as New York University, Yale University, Oberlin, and San Diego State University (Princeton Review, 2014) – also advertise educational initiatives, support groups, student organizations and campus sponsored events all geared towards the safety and advocacy of queer students (Howard and Stevens, 2000; Kumashiro, 2001; Rankin, 2002, 2003; Renn, 2007, 2010).

The question this raises is why the seemingly sudden change? How is it possible that queer issues on campuses have garnered as much administrative attention in the past fifteen years as gender and racial minority rights have in the past two-hundred years? Are universities simply "keeping up" with progressing social movements, or making the conscious decision to become more inclusive? Is this a neoliberal strategy, a sincere aspiration or something in between? While some argue that educational institutions and administrators have diligently worked to create tolerant campuses that challenge

oppression and homophobia (Kumashiro, 2001), others contend that this discourse of inclusion is a strategic marketing campaign that colleges universities are tapping into in order to capitalize upon queer students' geographical imaginations of campus spaces (Ghaziani, 2011; Rankin, 2003). To take it one step further, even if these universities are not currently capitalizing on queer students, it does make both financial and social sense to do so and could therefore be a persuasive argument for universities as to why they should further support diversity initiatives. Perhaps this argument creates a financial incentive even if a socially responsible incentive was not enough.

V.   Summary and Framework

This dissertation investigates how students and administrators at South Florida universities understand and reinforce normalized power structures, how "Other identities" within these spaces are identified and often marginalized and what measures are being taken by both students and faculty to deal with inequalities to create safer, better spaces for those who identify as LGBTQ+. It is my sincere hope that this research will prove useful for both students and administrators as they navigate these complicated discourses of diversity. This work is not easy, but it is essential. Let us endeavor to listen, understand and- most importantly- change.

This work utilizes a queer intersectional framework in tandem with participant testimony to ultimately give a clearer picture of LGBTQ+ student university experiences. I also present suggestions for tangible solutions that can assist universities to see where they may be lacking and to ultimately create improved safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students. In Chapter 2, I will more fully explain my methodological perspective and the methods

that I employed to execute this research: semi-structured interviews, participant

observation and social media analysis. I also delve further into South Florida as a

dynamic and queer intersectional space. I then give a more thorough background of the

university research sites: Florida International University, the University of Miami and

Nova Southeastern University. After a more thorough outline of my three primary

research questions, I discuss in detail the logistical and quantitative specifics of my

research process at each respective university. I finally explain how my data was

analyzed and how the major themes of this research were ascertained.

Chapter 3 focuses on the first main theme of this research: power. I employ

geography and queer theoretical frameworks to explain how space is constructed and

interpreted by individuals within those spaces. I then describe how 'gay' spaces[3] were

found, created and have evolved over time to become 'safe' spaces. Within these spaces,

I further expound upon how heteronormative and homonormative power structures are

created and maintained. This naturally progresses to a discussion of university spaces

and how they have become queer spaces and globally imagined as gay safe spaces. Less

positively, I also discuss in this chapter how universities can become sites of assault,

microaggressions, identity erasure and segregation for LGBTQ+ students, which were

mentioned by several of my informants

In the fourth chapter, I focus more upon how normative power dynamics affect

'other' identities and how they are often marginalized within university spaces. The

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[3] I refer to neighborhoods and spaces in general, as 'gay' spaces as this is the most common and well-known terminology outside of (and even within) academic circles. This certainly implies queer/ LGBTQ+ space and I will later refer to them as LGBTQ+ spaces or queer spaces unless otherwise specified.

chapter examines how certain identities- even those within the LGBTQ+ spectrum- are marginalized under the Queer umbrella. As a prominent example of this, and one that was repeatedly brought up by participants in this research, I examine bisexuality as an othered and often dismissed queer identity.   The dual erasure and pressure to conform to a specific identity from a community that touts diversity and inclusion reveals multiple layers of power and emotional stressors. I also discuss some of the challenges that transgender students face as part of the LGBTQ+ community and specifically on university campuses. I then use the specific example of bathrooms to demonstrate how a space within a supposed safe space can be problematic and challenging to navigate for the LGBTQ+ community. I also explore how identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum work together and separately to achieve goals (social, political, advocacy) within spaces and how these alliances affect visibility and positioning of othered identities.

Chapter 5 outlines LGBTQ+ student responses to dealing with inequalities at South Florida universities. I present a historical overview of universities as queer spaces and the progression of LGBTQ+ organizations on campuses. Also discussed is the evolution and importance of LGBTQ+ symbology, space and visibility at universities which include the progression of organizational names, logos and acronyms to reflect the current climate. In this chapter, I pay particular attention to the student narratives from Nova Southeastern University and the University of Miami; showing how each of these universities have addressed (or not) student concerns in different ways.

The final chapter outlines my recommendations for tangible actions that universities can take to make their campuses safer and better for LGBTQ+ students:

diversity training, campus resources, updated university bylaws and increasing LGBTQ+ course curricula. I explain how these resources would not only benefit the LGBTQ+ students on campus but would also be of great value to universities as a marker of diversity, a boost to campus climate and a strong marketing tool.

As previously stated, the next chapter will focus on my methodological framework and the qualitative methods that I employed to complete this research. I will provide an in-depth summary of my methods, an overview of my research sites, and will further expand upon my research questions. It also touches on both the accomplishments and challenges that I encountered while navigating this dissertation.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I outline my methodological perspective and methods used in the dissertation. First, I describe South Florida as a queer space. I then go on to discuss my university research sites: Florida International University, The University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University. I finish the chapter by explaining how qualitative methods used in gathering data for this research (semi-structured interviews, participant observation and social media analysis) were the best tools for this kind of in-depth investigation and contextual exploration.

I.   Research Sites: South Florida

I chose to focus on institutions of higher education as I contend that they are fruitful research sites for critical geographers looking to discern various constellations of power within a space that is not widely considered a "queer" space but could certainly be "queered". These spaces are complex and for LGBTQ+ students, they are often rooted in layers of oppression and societal discrimination that are difficult to navigate: As Susan Rankin notes:

> "…as with others who have been explicitly or implicitly excluded,
> GLBT people's struggle for acceptance within academia has been a
> rocky one…almost every step of measurable progress has been
> accompanied by a backlash. As a result, it can be difficult to
> understand the full import of the advances made by GLBT and
> ally students, faculty and staff…A closer look shows that this
> country's academic institutions are reflections of our larger
> society, struggling with the same social issues and prejudices.
> It is only recently that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender
> (GLBT) people have had any opportunity to express themselves

freely or pursue scholarship about GLBT issues" (Rankin, 2003).

College and university campuses often provide common meeting ground for a multitude of populations from different backgrounds. Peoples from various races, classes, sexualities- and from all parts of the world- present large and diverse student populations with incredibly dynamic positioning.   In the context of South Florida, these institutions are located within close proximity to widely known gay tourist destinations (South Beach and Wilton Manors), as well as gay residential spaces, which offered the opportunity to examine how campus and adult queer communities interact (or do not). South Florida is a space of multiple cultural and ethnic intersections. It is also one of the first urban areas marketed as a "gay-friendly" space, which attracts tourists and migrants from all over the world (Capó Jr., 2017; Clift and Forrest, 1999; Holcomb and Luongo, 1996; Rushbrook, 2002).

As a location with noted queer residential areas, prevalent businesses and publicized entertainment venues, greater Miami stands as a globally renowned queer spatial imaginary (Nijman, 2011). Furthermore, greater Fort Lauderdale is also a well-known tourist destination with a high concentration of queer-identified residents, as well as a prominent gay-friendly city: Wilton Manors (Cooke and Gates, 2013). Though greater Fort Lauderdale and greater Miami have similar venues and resources available to LGBTQ residents and tourists, their populations and residential areas have different trajectories. For example, the most noted "gay" space in Miami (at least in imaginations circulating in popular culture) is South Beach. While still very popular with gay tourists (based on the number of businesses that cater to them), it is no longer the most densely queer residential area in Miami-Dade County, as it was in the 1990s. Indeed, Wilton

Manors in Fort Lauderdale is a more densely populated queer residential area than South Beach, in addition to having a clearly defined gay business/ entertainment district (Cooke and Gates, 2013). While it is well known in queer communities, my research shows that it has far less nation-wide visibility outside of them.

When a student (whether queer or not) from outside South Florida imagines the region, it is likely that they are imagining something along the lines of the fashionable tourist district of South Beach. Over the past twenty years, the South Beach neighborhood in Miami, Florida has gained global recognition as a prominent LGBTQ+ hotspot (Burston, 1997; Clift and Forrest, 1998; Luibhéid and Cantú, 2005; Muñoz, 2009; Rushbrook, 2002). For example, several buildings in the Art Deco Historic District (such as The National Hotel, The Delano, and Hotel Nash) have been renovated and turned into gay-friendly hotels and businesses, demonstrating how the landscape of South Beach has consciously altered itself to appeal to queer residents and tourists. The district capitalizes upon a geographical imaginary of concentrated gay friendly businesses, entertainment venues and residential neighborhoods. This area, though, has become overtaken by the gay (as well as broader) tourist industry to the detriment of established residents and, as is the case with several prominent gay neighborhoods, many queer residents have migrated to adjacent districts outside of Miami Beach (Kanai and Kenttamaa-Squires, 2015).

Wilton Manors, a city which is just north of Fort Lauderdale in Broward County, is the most notable of these areas that have received queer migrants from Miami Beach. By the year 2000, Wilton Manors had an openly gay mayor, Vice Mayor and Councilman in office making it the second gay-governing majority in the United States. In November 2018, Broward County voters elected an all-LGBTQ council in Wilton Manors, thus

becoming "…the first city in Florida with an all LGBT+ City Commission - second only to Palm Springs, California" (LGBT+ Life in Wilton Manors, 2021). This is especially evident when comparing recent census information regarding the number of identified same-sex couples in South Florida. Miami-Dade County is ranked #11 in the state while the nearby counties Monroe (which contains all of the Florida Keys) and Broward are ranked #1 and #2, respectively (Cooke and Gates, 2013). Additionally significant are the number of same-sex couples per 1,000 households that have chosen to disclose. While Miami Beach is ranked 7th in the state with 18.18 same-sex couples per 1,000 households, nearby locations show significantly higher numbers with Wilton Manors topping the list at 125.33, Miami Shores with 42.87, Fort Lauderdale at 31.08 and Key West at 30.40 (Cooke and Gates, 2013). This means wide swathes of Miami-Dade County in particular (but Broward County as well), do not have significant concentrations of same-sex households.

The lived experiences of queer students looking to attend universities in South Florida may therefore be quite divergent from their initial geographical imaginary of Miami as a queer space, which (especially for younger individuals) tends to focus on South Beach. South Florida institutions of higher education, whose infrastructure tends to be mostly far from South Beach, therefore present a variegated landscape for queer intersectional research as these spaces are demographically dynamic and located within an evolving queer area. Another way that imaginaries of South Florida may differ from lived experiences is the fact that South Florida is not just home to sexual migrants (Gold, 2015; Nijman, 2011; Nijman and Clery, 2015), but also a plethora of international migrants (who of course may be sexual migrants as well). The city of Miami has the

highest percentage of foreign-born citizens in the United States, primarily hailing from Latin America and the Caribbean. This therefore adds a wrinkle to the typically "white", patriarchal, homonormative narratives that circulate widely in and about the United States. While those of Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, and even African heritages are often marginalized in South Florida, as they are in other parts of the United States (Stepick, 2011), in Miami the Hispanic/Latino communities are both numerically dominant and well-represented in the social, political and cultural power structures (Nijman, 2011; Nijman and Clery, 2015). Part of my research therefore involves how this statistical dominance plays into both imaginations and lived experiences of queer students who migrate to South Florida.

II.   Research Sites: The Universities

The three institutions of higher education in South Florida that I examined are Florida International University, The University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University.

Florida International University, the school where I currently study, was chosen not only for its prominent location and diverse population, but also due to my in-depth knowledge of the university, its resources and potential gateway contacts. Admittedly, before applying to the graduate school in 2011, I had little knowledge of FIU or it's significant imprint on the greater South Florida region. When I first arrived at the sprawling campus, however, I realized that I was dealing with a very major establishment. With a student body of 54,000 students, Florida International University (FIU) is the largest university in South Florida, one of the top five public universities in the entire United States in terms of enrollment (FIU "Rankings and Facts", 2021) and a

well-known institution in the greater South Florida region. The main Modesto A. Maidique campus (MMC) is located near Sweetwater, Florida in Miami-Dade County: a 45-minute drive (on a good day) or two-hour bus ride from South Beach. A smaller Biscayne Bay Campus (BBC) serves about 7,000 students in North Miami and hosts a few exclusive degree programs such as hospitality management and marine sciences. Since the Modesto A. Maidique campus is where the majority of FIU students attend classes and utilize campus housing, this is where my research was centered.

FIU promotes the notion that it prides itself on its diversity and accessibility to a wide range of students in their mission statement: "Florida International University is an urban, multi-campus, public research university serving its students and the diverse population of South Florida. We are committed to high-quality teaching, state-of-the-art research and creative activity, and collaborative engagement with our local and global communities" (FIU "Mission", 2021). FIU is a minority majority campus, with a student population that is 61% Hispanic/ Latino, 13% Black or African American, 4% Asian and 7% other minority groups. Only 15% of the student population are classified as Non-Hispanic Whites (FIU "About Us", 2021). When deciding which universities to research, I therefore assumed that students within this space would provide further engagement with various minority queer populations from a wide range of racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

More directly to the focus of this study, and one of the primary reasons why I chose this site, FIU has a growing number of resources for LGBTQ+ students. These include: an LGBTIQA Initiative under the Division of Student Affairs and the umbrella of Multicultural Programs and Services, The Stonewall Pride Alliance as well as The

Stonewall Legal Alliance, the H.W. College of Medicine Gay-Straight Alliance, a queer

campus newspaper (The LGBTQA Times) and even a Greek fraternity chapter- Delta

Lambda Phi (FIU LGBT, 2021). Florida International University also utilizes social

media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to bring attention to local and national

events that affect queer communities and actively takes part in events such as Pride

Month, National Coming Out Day, World Aids Day and the Lavender Graduation and

Recognition Ceremony – an event that acknowledges the successes of LBGTQ+ students

and leaders in the greater Miami community.

Since the start of this research, new initiatives have also been implemented

including the LGBTQA Ambassadors and Mentoring Programs that aim to create active

queer student leaders and pair queer students with FIU faculty and staff to facilitate a

university community of "support and encouragement" (FIU LGBT, 2019).

Additionally, FIU has initiated a Pronoun Campaign for those students who identify as

genderqueer, gender-variant and transgender to bring attention to the use of incorrect

pronouns and to promote the use of gender neutral, third-person pronouns. The

foundational ideas of these initiatives were discussed in depth during my fieldwork

interviews with FIU students and faculty, and it seems that the university has taken steps

to both address LGBTQ+ concerns on campus and also to highlight these developing

programs on the university website. In the *FIU LGBTQ Resource and Services* section of

the FIU library page (another recent development), the home page proudly announces:

"According to the *South Florida Gay News,* Florida International University is the

friendliest LGBT college campus in the state of Florida!" (FIU LGBTQ Resources &

Services, 2021).

Throughout this research process, it seemed clear that FIU actively advertises itself as an inclusive, gay-friendly space for prospective and current students and is therefore an ideal research site.

Similar to Florida International University, the University of Miami (UM) is widely known as a diverse campus and has several outlets available to queer students including SpectrUM (an undergraduate gay-straight alliance), oSTEM (Out in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), OUTLaw (the School of Law program), GradOUT (an organization centered on graduate students) and MedicOUT (a support program for U of M medical students). In 2015, 'UPride', a student run organization within the Student Activities Center, was also available on campus but seems to have since disbanded. Although the University of Miami is perhaps the most nationally recognized university in the area, thanks in part to its prominence in American football at the end of the last century and long-standing professional schools in Law and Medicine, LGBTQ+ resources on campus were somewhat limited in comparison to FIU. This partially has to do with its size: 17,000 students. Located in Coral Gables, UM has a beautiful, but significantly smaller campus as you might expect of a privately funded university. A walkable, tight-knit feel, the campus seemed modern but notedly personal; a place where visibility could be significant- especially for LGBTQ+ students. Another difference is UM's cost: an undergraduate year at UM costs $44,350 compared to $18,905 (and only $6,500 for in-state residents) at FIU. The university did not appear to actively advertise itself as a "gay-friendly" space, despite the fact that it is more residential than FIU, with 25% of students living on campus (versus the less that 6% of students living on campus at FIU), but that is gradually changing with the implementation

of a new LGBTQ Student Center on Campus- an initiative that was still in its infancy at the start of this research.

The University of Miami was chosen due to its notoriety, its diverse but distinctive student body in comparison to FIU and their willingness to participate in this research. Of the three universities, the UM faculty were by far the most responsive to my requests for interviews. I quickly learned why. LGBTQ+ issues were a hot topic on campus- especially with a recent study that had been done regarding how the students perceived the school in terms of safety and support that candidly highlighted changes that needed to be made. The political nature of this study, the administrative response to it and the consequential outcomes that resulted from it seemed to demonstrate how the LGBTQ+ landscape was transforming. As I will focus on later, my informants at UM adamantly expressed to me that merely appearing progressive was no longer an adequate band-aid for sincere, real change.

The third higher education space to be researched, Nova Southeastern University, differs from FIU and the University of Miami in that it is located in the Fort Lauderdale area, close to the popular queer residential area and gay scene in Wilton Manors. A year of tuition there for undergraduate students costs $25,950, which is more than FIU but less than UM. Although it has an osteopathy school and law school, both of those rank lower than UM's. It also has a higher acceptance rate than both the University of Miami and Florida International University. At the start of this research, I also chose this space as it was noted on its website for its Harris L. Kimball Memorial Digital Archive of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Florida Legal Oral History, but when I went to the

campus, no one seemed to know what this was, where I could access it or why it had been listed on their website. It was a mystery that was never solved and has since been removed from their site. The university did have an LGBTQ+ organization on campus-PRISM (Psychological Readiness Integrating Sexual Minorities) that replaced their previous Gay-Straight Student Alliance (GSSA). The university website had the least amount of information regarding LGBTQ+ students; most of which seemed outdated.

I also chose this university due to its student demographics. Of the 27,000 students at Nova, only 5,000 are undergraduate students. Thus, it has almost 22,000 graduate students.   At Nova, 4,860 students live in college owned, operated or affiliated housing. As a markedly older student population of mostly commuters, I thought that it would be informative to see how their college experiences differed from their undergraduate counterparts and if any of these students had expanded life experiences in the more well-known Gay areas in Miami. Positionality of the individual students was important here and I had several questions when considering the comparison of this type of university to the other two: was their LGBTQ college experience different? Would similar resources be available to these older students? How would LGBTQ issues be handled (or not handled?) Would Nova consider LGBTQ issues on campus to be a priority? Or is this something that was more of a priority/ in demand at undergraduate universities? Would queerness be visible or restricted? Would these students view the university as a potentially queer space or would they have found other queer spaces at this different point in their lives?

III. Methodology

To restate: This dissertation analyzes how homonormativities - the social and political forces that create, maintain and restrict hegemonic manifestations of queerness- are produced, felt, imagined and challenged - or not- through the migration of diverse students to colleges and universities, as well as the environments fostered by those institutions (Abes, 2005, 2007; Kumashiro, 2001; O'Connell, 2004). As such, it conducts this analysis by examining three primary questions, each with three more specific sub-questions. They are:

Question 1: What are the practices, ideals, discourses of power, and policies that inform the production of queer higher educational spaces and experiences? Who is involved and how? To what extent do homonormative imaginations permeate these spaces and practices?

i. *How do these practices and discourses work with or against other social forces, such as capitalist and nationalist modes of production? How have federal policy changes, legal reforms, and discourses of more expansive rights influenced notions and practices of queerness within university spaces?*

ii. *How do higher educational institutions and their employees attempt to harness and manipulate these practices and discourses? How much do these practices vary across institutions and why?*

iii. *How do homonormative discourses produced and experienced within university spaces parallel and deviate from other spaces? Are higher educational spaces a unique kind of queer space? If so, why?*

Question 2: How are homonormative imaginations of queer identities and spaces

disseminated to, reproduced by, and resisted by diverse queer student populations?

    i.   *How do homonormative discourses of queerness and queer space influence*

        the process through which queer students select their institutions? How might

        developing social media, as well as more traditional recruitment tools like

        word of mouth, personal connections to currently enrolled students, and

        websites factor into this process?

    ii. *What do students imagine the "ideal" queer higher educational experience to*

        entail? How (or how not) are various homonormative discourses and

        practices experienced, both positively and negatively? Do expectations vary

        by class, race, gender, urbanity/rurality, region and nation? How does or

        does not the South Florida demographic context meet or defy these

        expectations?

    iii. *Are there queer student populations who are challenging these*

        homonormative discourses? Why or why not? How are these challenges

        exhibited and acknowledged (or not) within university settings?

Question 3: How are inequalities identified within university spaces? What measures are

being taken to address these inequalities? What actions are not being taken? How can

universities improve?

    i.   *How do the perceived geographical imaginaries of higher educational*

        settings as queer spaces, whether good, bad, or non-imagined, compare to

        lived experience? To what extent are differently positioned students aware of

inequalities within university spaces. How are these spaces felt by unique

identities within the LGBTQ spectrum?

ii. *How and why are these institutions working with students and faculty to*

address perceived discrimination and social discrepancies? What kinds of

organizations are in place to address these concerns? How are they

evolving?

iii. *What part do the students and administrators play in amending university*

procedures and bylaws? How do these groups navigate other students,

professors, the community and social media in order to implement or deny

change?

iv. *Despite what is being done to support and accommodate queer students, what*

changes still need to be made? What can students and administrators do to

help universities to improve?

This research employs qualitative analytic methods in order to further examine

the ways in which homonormative structures produce and shape queer identities within

higher educational spaces. Each method of data collection has helped to provide

differentiated, contextual perspectives in relation to my core questions. The three

principal research methodologies utilized in order to perform this research were:

i.   Semi-Structured Interviews

I completed semi-structured interviews with thirty-seven volunteer participants

where questions were structured around how these queer students envision South Florida

and their respective higher educational spaces as "gay-friendly", unfriendly or neutral.

Positionality of the students was an important factor in this research, so preliminary

questions focused on background information of the students- their town/country of origin, socioeconomic background, and social identifiers such as race, gender and ethnicity. I then concentrated on the geographical imaginary by directing questions towards how the students made the decision about where to study. I additionally inquired as to what other colleges and universities they might have researched in order to discover patterns in the decision-making process. The third part of the interview concentrated upon lived experience of their institution; initial impressions, access to resources and the validity of the campus as a "queer" space. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and subsequently analyzed systematically using qualitative data analysis; thoroughly coding the data to uncover common themes and discourses discussed by both students and administrators. Through this exploratory analysis, I was able to further assess how queer students envision campuses as queer spaces.   For students, I structured the interview questions around the basic flow of conversation, starting with general demographic identifiers and slowly, as the subject became more comfortable, expanded into questions about identity, safety, family and ultimately their overall experience at their respective university. This allowed them to build their narrative in a natural way and ease into some questions that may have been uncomfortable in other settings. For administrators, questions were less about their personal experiences and more about the institutions and were therefore more straightforward. These questions were geared toward understanding their level of knowledge about LGBTQ+ issues and resources on campus as well as their perception of student experiences.

Participants were recruited via e-mails and chain-referral sampling. At each university, I contacted their respective LGBTQ+ organizations and asked that the flyer

that was approved by the IRB be sent out through their email list servs. At least one

organization on each campus complied with my request as I did receive participants

through email chain referrals. The study was also advertised with flyers that were placed

at communal spaces on campuses with a business card that was created for this research.

The business card included my contact information as well as the title of the dissertation

and was pinned directly to the IRB flyer. Spaces where this information was posted

included offices where LGBTQ+ organizational meetings were held as well as more

public spaces such as lounges, cafeterias and libraries at each of the respective

universities. Flyers were also posted in Wilton Manors and South Beach wherever

bulletin boards open to the public were available- primarily in coffee shops and

restaurants.

All participants willingly volunteered to be interviewed and have their testimonies

recorded for this research.   I did not offer any financial rewards or other incentives for

participation; thus I am extremely grateful for the precious time I was given by my

informants. It should be noted that all names of the participants have been changed so

that they remain anonymous; their contact information was not shared or utilized in any

way that could break anonymity. Information obtained through interviews was kept in

encrypted software and in a locked drawer, in a locked room where I had exclusive

access.

The length of these interviews varied significantly. While I originally estimated

that interviews would last for about an hour to an hour and a half, some interviews

spanned more than three hours in length. The average length of time of the interviews

was about two hours. Interviews were based on two question pools- one for students and

one for administrators- which each contained a relatively small number of broad

questions. Throughout this process, interviews tended to last for such a long period of

time that I did not feel the need to request follow up interviews. Contact information was

therefore deleted immediately following the transcription of the interview. Participants

did have the option to reach back out to me for any follow up information or chain

referrals. Some participants did follow up with contact information of other individuals

interested in taking part in this research. Throughout the interviews, I attempted to steer

research participants toward the core questions if they did not arise in the natural flow of

conversation, but also allowed the informants to drive the nature of our interactions in a

way that produced candid narratives of their own making and design (King and Horrocks,

2010; Wengraf, 2001; Whiting, 2008).

In addition to a diverse variety of queer positionalities, I attempted to recruit

students who thoughtfully chose to relocate to South Florida from somewhere else

(migrating from other parts of Florida, other states or other countries) - whether

specifically moving based upon their attraction to the university or their imaginary of

South Florida as a queer space (or both). Reasoning for this focus was based upon an

expectation that, given the nature of South Florida colleges and universities which draw

heavily from local populations, proximity would be a significant reason for their choice

of school amongst most students. While this may have made the sample less

"representative" of the demographic distribution of these university populations (which

are overwhelmingly commuter), I believed that it would have better demonstrated the

myriad dynamic motivations of queer university students, considering that students who

choose to relocate for universities usually have very particular reasons why they do so

(Kumashiro, 2001). Throughout this research, I did find it difficult to pin down students who migrated to South Florida specifically to go to their respective university. As it is such a diverse city, many people had already migrated there at another point in their lives. For some, particularly students from Florida International University, attending that specific university made sense as it was the most cost effective and widely known university in the area. Similarly, for those attending Nova Southeastern University, many of those who I interviewed were older graduate students and were therefore already living in South Florida when they decided to attend the university. Although I did come across some students who came to South Florida universities specifically to explore their queer identities, the sample set of these students was not as large as I would like, and thus I do not feel like I can generalize on the migration patterns of queer students within this study. I do believe, however, that this would be a promising avenue for future research- particularly if also utilizing GIS mapping research methods.

In terms of sample composition, I cast a wide net for participants. The target population was LGBTQ+ students, aged 18-35 of various ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Interviewees were selected based upon their affiliation with the university and their identification as queer and/ or gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or another gender/sexual identity which they felt differs from the societal norm. For administrators, I reached out to anyone affiliated with the LGBTQ+ campus organizations, administrators that worked in student life organizations on campus and faculty members who either acted as mentors to students through LGBTQ+ mentorship programs or those who taught courses with some aspect of queer theory. At each university, I attempted to interview at least ten students and three administrators. I was

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contacted by more participants at Florida International University and the University of Miami, but I will say that those students who did contact me from Nova Southeastern University were very engaged and gave me the longest interviews for this study.

Prior to scheduling meetings with informants, I attempted to create a sample guidance table in order to organize my interviews and ensure engagement with a diverse range of queer individuals at each site. The idea was that the sampling model would be utilized as an organizational tool that would help to classify interviewees (by identifying which queer identities had participated in the research and which identities may still be absent), while still maintaining a flexible attitude towards recruitment. This table included identification data such age, gender/ sexual identity, ethnicity, class, race and country of origin. Although I aimed to include as many contextualities as possible within this study, it was impossible to predict which of these queer-identified participants would be willing to speak to me or if each identity within the LGBTIQ+ spectrum even existed at a given educational institution. Given the largely qualitative nature of this aspect of the study, the proposed research does not hinge on a pre-set range of diversity, but on overall the richness and diversity of the narratives collected. I will say that I spoke to a large range of individuals who identified uniquely on the spectrum, including those who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, genderqueer, asexual, queer and a few who did not prefer to identify under any named category at all. I believe, therefore, that I have adequately acquired a range of perspectives for my sample. Also, as per standard interview practice, I stopped recruiting once I had reached a response thematic saturation and themes began to repeat themselves.

Table 1: Student Interview Volunteers and Their Corresponding Identities

Identifies As	FIU	UM	NOVA
Asexual		1	
Bisexual	2	1	1
Gay	2	3	3
Genderqueer/ Nonbinary	1		
Queer	4	2	2
Transgender	2	1	1
No Preferred Label	2		

As previously stated, my aim was to interview at least three administrative professionals in each institution working in the LGBT resource offices, admissions, resident life/on campus housing, student activities and/or recruitment departments. Here there was no randomness in the sample – I deliberately targeted people with the most impact on the processes I sought to examine, who I identified by examining university administration charts. In my early interviews, I also asked informants who they saw as particularly impactful within their respective institutions' administrative structures and pursued those individuals accordingly. I spoke with eleven administrators- six from the University of Miami, four from Florida International University and one administrator from the University of South Florida who heard about my research from a participant and requested an interview. Though a very thoughtful and candid participant, and certainly assisting in providing additional background and context for universities in South Florida, his contributions will not be included in the findings of this dissertation as he was not from one of the targeted universities. I do believe, however, that there are several other universities in the greater South Florida region who have stories of their own and researchers could absolutely benefit from a larger comparative study.

Once completed, interviews were transcribed verbatim and stored along with

qualitative data collected from other sources. All pieces of data were read and sorted by

various themes that were not decided prior to sorting so that they could emerge

organically. Quotes were color coded according to recognized themes and a separate

word document was be made for those quotes that I considered important or poignant.

This was done after each interview to build the list and to identify thematic patterns

amongst the interviews. Repetition of particular themes such as the importance of

universities as sites of identity exploration, LGBTQ+ 'safe' spaces, othering within the

homonormative models on campus and within LGBTQ+ organizations as well as the

disconnect between university narratives and student experiences especially came to the

fore. An ongoing comparison of interviews did help to identify those larger, over-arching

themes as well as more subtle themes (themes, subthemes and metathemes). Some of

these included: identity erasure, family and kinship structures (both from 'home' and

created or chosen), visibility, safety (both in terms of perceived safety and physical

space) and passive versus proactive activism.

This research was done with the qualitative analysis style of intersectional

grounded theory (Asakura, 2016; Duran and Jones, 2020; Tillman-Kelley, 2015), where

in I allowed themes to emerge from the data, guided (but not confined) by themes from

previous key studies such as Natalie Oswin's critique of queer space in *Critical*

Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space (Oswin, 2008),

Dereka Rushbrook's commentary in *Cities, Queer Space and the Cosmopolitan Tourist*

(Rushbrook, 2002) and Susan Rankin's examination of LGBTQ+ students and how they

experience and navigate university spaces (Rankin, 2002, 2003, 2008; Rankin et al.,

2010). Beyond the data, though, the importance of the participants' lived experiences

was an essential component of this research and needed to ring true through the analysis.

While data compilation was valuable to gain an overall scope of the project, it became

evident due to the nature of this topic and the interviews that the real significance was the

intensity of the themes rather than their counts. It was very important to me to remain

true to the narratives of the participants and so I did note which themes held especially

more 'weight' as opposed to those that may have been brought up with more frequency.

It became obvious, through tone of voice, nuance or time spent on certain topics, that

some subjects held more importance for the research participants than other, perhaps

more universal themes. This flexibility and openness paired with a systematic approach

to identifying commonalities among research subjects helped to create a hierarchy of

themes in the research and to identify subtle themes that may have been previously

overlooked by other social scientists. This also helped to produce rich, thoughtful

analysis that ventured beyond common tropes often seen in Queer literature and opened

new pathways for discourse. I believe that this also aided in the avoidance of a 'self-

fulfilling prophecy' and overly investigator-centric research.

> ii.   **Participant Observation**

Active participant observation was a pivotal part of this research, of which I did

one hundred and fifty-six hours in total, with seventy-nine direct interactions (including

my interview subjects), and one hundred and eighty-six pages of notes. I was able to

establish rapport with research participants and others by demonstrating my knowledge

of the area (built on my preliminary research and having lived in South Florida for four

years) and explaining my dedication to queer communities (both in South Florida and my

previous home of Rochester, New York) that drove me to pursue this research. While

conducting this project, I frequently visited the higher educational spaces that are the

topic of this research as well as outlying areas such as South Beach and Wilton Manors to

increase my visibility and build relationships with potential informants. While I

personally enjoy being in such spaces and have dwelled in them even before this project,

I was sure to clarify that I was also there as a researcher in order to achieve a high level

of transparency. I did openly disclose that, although I do believe that we are all on the

spectrum and do not identify as *straight*, I am in a heteronormative presenting

relationship and am comfortable identifying as a cisgender female. I did not find that this

hindered any of my interactions within academic spaces, but in more social LGBTQ+

spaces in South Beach and Wilton Manors there were those who did not warm to me as

easily. Though often accompanied by members of the LGBTQ+ community and an

obvious ally, I did occasionally recognize the stigma that often accompanies "straight"

women in queer, typically male spaces in South Beach and Wilton Manors. Most

participants that I encountered, however, were very supportive and appreciative of the

research. Certainly not wanting to be an invasive presence, I only discussed my research

if a conversation opened to it and if the individual was receptive.

Simply by being present and engaged with the community, I was able to forge

relationships and gain access that might not have otherwise been possible. When invited

to attend special events and meetings by the LGBTQ organizations at FIU, UM and

Nova, I did so and I discovered that showing up often helped to build trust amongst

participants that might have normally been hesitant to talk. I did find that the student

leaders of the respective LGBTQ organizations were usually the first to reply and, after

having an open and genuine interview experience with me, often suggested to others that they speak with me and do formal interviews, themselves.

Understanding that context can be missed without organization, I kept reflexive journals and detailed field notes of my encounters and observations (Berg, 2009; Platt, 1983; Tedlock, 1991), documenting various demographics in certain spaces, body language and human interactions (both between queer subjects and with "outsiders"), as well as attributes of the spaces, particularly their accessibility and aesthetics. Here I was looking to see who was occupying certain spaces and who may have been absent. Were those who were present comfortable within the space or uneasy? Were they alone or in a group? Detached or present? Were there similarities in the ways that these groupings were dressed or how they carried themselves? What might have brought them to this space and why might they have come together? Similarly, what reasons would marginalized identities within homonormative structures potentially have to avoid these spaces or find them exclusionary?

By coordinating my journals and interview transcriptions in tandem with social media analysis, I was able to identify interesting patterns and subtexts that might have otherwise been missed. My goal was to uncover the interconnected relationships between queer students and administrators to their respective institutions and to the South Florida area: how they are individualized, how they are linked, how they are imagined and how they evolve. I wanted to discover how queerness is experienced, challenged, and made visible or invisible on campus spaces in comparison to known queer residential and commercial spaces. Participant observation enabled me to see a broader picture and gain access to a wide range of perspectives that clarified and substantiated this research.

iii.   Social Media Analysis

In addition to semi-structured interviews and participant observation, I also examined multiple forms of social media such as blogs, forums, social news and networking sites. I paid particular attention to how the universities utilized social media in order to promote LGBTQ students and events. The goal of this analysis was to determine how geographical imaginations are created and manipulated through individual and community user contributions. It was done in the style of intersectional grounded theory, similarly to how I found emergent themes in my semi-structured interviews (Asakura, 2016; Duran and Jones, 2020; Tillman-Kelley, 2015). I actively followed the university pages on online networking sites and media sharing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube to determine how the universities and their respective LGBTQ+ organizations were reaching out to students in cyberspaces and what kind of image they were facilitating. Online forums that specifically target higher education students, such as the *Pride Index* and *Stonewall University Guide* as well as less-topic-specific online forums (where a student might ask an open-ended question about the acceptance of queer students on a particular campus prior to making their decision to attend) were also explored to determine what criteria influential LGBTQ+ advocate groups and individual students deem necessary for campuses to be considered tolerant queer spaces. Additionally, LGBTQ+ news and community websites such as *The Advocate*, *Queerty*, *Out Magazine* and the *Huffpost Gay Voices* were monitored in reference to colleges and universities as queer spaces. Specifically for this project, social media analysis (beginning with the same key words listed above) was helpful in determining potential discrepancies between institutional marketing campaigns,

geographical imaginaries of South Florida (and local university spaces) and lived experiences of queer students.

Social media analysis was also utilized in order to determine how the contours of dominant homonormative discourses are being disseminated through media outlets and subsequently consumed by queer students.   Again, looking at the popular and globally accessible queer news sources such as *The Advocate*, *Out Magazine* and *Huffpost Gay Voices*, I was able to identify what stories are deemed "newsworthy" and how these articles are broadcasted; paying specific attention to who the articles are about, where they originate and who might be left out of the discourse. This enabled me to detect potential patterns in the kinds of queer voices and news stories that are being publicized and pointed to those voices who remain silenced. This analysis therefore highlights a number of dominant queer narratives that are propagated through social media and influence geographical imaginaries of queer spaces in the United States including its higher educational spaces.

Additionally, I aimed to determine if colleges and universities are making use of social media resources such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in order to promote themselves as gay-friendly spaces. I examined how and when these universities responded to significant events and legal reforms that affect the LGBTQ+ community. I also attempted to determine if and when colleges and universities utilize these platforms in order to advertise themselves as tolerant spaces for queer students. Finally, I took note of what these types of social media said about South Florida and my particularly my research sites. This kind of analysis sought to understand the dominant voices that

permeate queer social media and how universities create, maneuver within and capitalize upon these discourses.

IV.   Universities

The three universities that I chose as research sites were Florida International University, the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University. In this section I will explain how my data was gathered from each university, what kind of access to queer spaces and informants I was able to obtain and the identities that I was able to encounter and interview for this research. I will quantify my data sets to show my sample population for each university and will also explain the challenges that I encountered during my research at each site.

i.   Florida International University

Numerically speaking, I conducted interviews with thirteen students from Florida International University: four who identified as queer, two who identified as gay, two who identified as transgender, two who identified as bisexual, one who identified as genderqueer/ nonbinary and two who preferred not to be labeled at all. Most of the students were comfortable, however, with being identified under the 'queer' umbrella and made a point to tell me so. It should also be noted that there was not a student at FIU that relayed to me that they took issue with 'queer' as an identifier; a term that can sometimes be polarizing and viewed negatively by those within the LBGTQ+ community. In addition to one-on-one interviews, I also attended several meetings of the Stonewall Pride Alliance via an invitation from a research participant. These weekly meetings were usually attended by ten to fifteen students and one to two administrators who would

oversee the meeting agendas. I interacted with several students at these meetings and had conversations that did not result in formal interviews, but that were documented in my notes for this research. At the start of every session that I attended, students were introduced to me and given a copy of my IRB flyer letting them know about this project and that I was actively observing meetings.

In addition to one-on one-interviews with student participants, I also spoke to four university administrators. Three of the four administrators were faculty members- one helped to oversee the Stonewall Pride Alliance under the umbrella of the department of Multicultural Programs and Services. These interviews were markedly shorter and ranged from half an hour to an hour in length. Of the administrators who spoke with me, all considered themselves to be allies to LGBTQ+ students and most had attended a Safe Zone training on campus[4]. This is important to acknowledge as I am aware that I spoke to a specific kind of administrator- those who are aware and supportive of furthering LGBTQ+ diversity initiatives and policies. This is an important distinction in the context of this research as several students relayed to me that they felt specifically marginalized or misunderstood by FIU administrators. I do understand that by talking to a specific set of administrators, I might not be getting the whole story about LGBTQ+ campus life and may- in fact- be getting a very particular narrative. For the purpose of this study, though, I do feel that is a discovery in itself and assists in creating a broader scope of university queer spaces and the actors who exist within them.

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[4] Safe Zone trainings are awareness and ally trainings that educate participants about "…LGBTQ+ identities, gender and sexuality, and examine prejudice, assumptions, and privilege" (Safe Zone, 2021).

ii.   University of Miami

I completed eight formal interviews with students at the University of Miami: three who identified as gay, one who identified as bisexual, one who identified as asexual, one who identified as transgender and two who identified as queer. Though the University of Miami did have a prominent LGBTQ+ organization on campus, SpectrUM, I was not invited by the students to attend meetings and therefore did not pursue that avenue. I was invited, however, to their common area- a newly created space on campus specifically carved out for LGBTQ+ students. Located on the second floor of the student center, the office was situated in a small space on a generally empty floor. In the office was a couch, a desk, chair, small table and a bookshelf with pamphlets and some dated selections of literature. I held several interviews with students in this space, and others- once seeing what was happening- would often sit in or ask to join the conversation to give their insight. I offered to meet students wherever they would like on campus or in a more private location and most suggested this communal space either because it was the official LGBTQ+ space on campus or because they knew that it was a safe space where we could speak openly. If other students did enter while we were speaking of offered to join in the conversation, I always asked their permission beforehand as I was recording those conversations with the scheduled research participants. Though I had scheduled interviews with eight students, through these additional interactions I spoke with around fifteen.

Of all three of the universities, the administrators at UM were most responsive and receptive to speaking with me. I conducted five interviews with administrators at their respective offices on the UM campus and one via Skype. In contrast to the shorter interviews with administrators at FIU, interviews with UM administrators averaged an

hour and a half. One even lasted for two and a half hours- they had a lot to say. The range of administrators was also much more diverse. I spoke to two faculty members (both professors who were instrumental in the creation of an LGBT Task Force on campus), the advisor for SpectrUM, two administrators from the office of Student Affairs, and another who did not wish me to disclose any identifying information about them other than that they worked for the university.

Though open to speaking with me, the students and faculty had recently undergone some challenges on campus and the consequent fallout was apparent. Through the creation of the aforementioned LGBT Task Force of faculty, staff and students over a three-year time period, a campus climate survey was created and distributed at UM to gauge how the university LGBTQ+ community felt about the UM space. At the time that these interviews were being conducted, the survey had been completed and the administration was focused on the fourteen recommendations that resulted from its findings: they had carried out eleven and three were ongoing. A major point of contention, though, was that the students were not allowed to see the results of the survey or the subsequent report- they were only able to glean some of the findings based upon the published recommendations and interactions with administrators. This lack of transparency created a rift of mistrust between students and the greater university administration. Though steps were being taken to make LGBTQ+ students feel more accepted on campus with the creation of an LGBTQ student center (at that time, the small office) and a designated Director of LGBTQ Programs (a position that was being created and candidates were being interviewed), the divide between students and administrators was large and seemingly widening.

An unexpected result of this contentious relationship in terms of this research was that each side wanted to tell their story and wanted their voice to be louder than the other. The passionate interviews that I had with the students seemed in stark contrast to the reassuring narratives I received from most of the administrators (though the fervor of the students was certainly echoed by the two pivotal professors who headed up the LGBT Task Force). Unknowingly adding fuel to this fire, I was actually sent a copy of the report in question by one of the administrators to assist with this research. When word of this reached the students, it did create some additional dramatic discord. When one of the students asked me to share a copy of the report with them and I refused to do so, it seemed to lead to some estrangement and- coincidental or not- I no longer received any responses from students to my requests for interviews.

This power struggle that filtered into my research certainly put me into an ethically compromising position that I was not expecting and unsure of how to navigate. On the one hand, I was fervently trying to build rapport with students at a university where I had less access and an untested reputation. I had been working with them for months, gradually building trust- assuring them that their narratives were important and could create positive, meaningful change. Now I was withholding information from them; information that had been entrusted to me by a member of the administration and that I knew the students urgently wanted. Even though I knew that it could potentially damage my ability to build upon the relationships I had made at UM and could very well end the momentum that I had gained, I felt that I could not break the trust with the administration and act in any way that could be considered biased. Though the saying usually goes 'knowledge is power', in this case the knowledge that I was given almost

became an unspoken tit for tat: you give us the survey and we will give you more interviews. That my last interview was with an officer from SpectrUM who specifically asked about the report adds to my sentiment on the issue, but of course this is only conjecture. In weighing my options, I will say that I had thought that the quality relationships that I had built with the students would hold significant weight and give me further credibility. Though, at the time, I was less sure about where I was positioned on the LGBTQ+ spectrum (while understanding that I did not identify as "straight"), I was open about my identity and able to connect with several of the students about being a first-generation college student. Many of the students were international students or from racial or socioeconomic backgrounds where education is considered a privilege and not always attainable. Achieving this level of education is a very significant milestone for my family; one that carries with it a lot of pressure, expectations and- if you are someone like me who does not come from an affluent background- hard work. This story resonated with many of the students that I spoke with who were also first-generation college students and had experienced similar stresses and obstacles to get to this point that others may not have. I continued to develop relationships with students at FIU and Nova while paralleling a stale, one-sided connection with UM (though administrators did still agree to meet with me) and although I do feel that I could have potentially procured more interviews with students had I shared the report, I certainly do not regret my decision.

iii.   Nova Southeastern University

Though I had the smallest number of interviews with students at Nova Southeastern University, they were certainly the longest: they ranged from one hour to

three hours in length. I had seven interviews with students. Of those students, three

identified as gay, two identified as queer, one identified as bisexual and one identified as

transgender. As a university primarily dedicated to graduate and commuter students,

those that I interviewed were generally older and none of them lived on campus.

Interviews were all held on campus- most in a remote corner of a cafeteria space in the

main student center.

A striking difference on the Nova Southeastern campus space was the lack of a

prominent LGBTQ+ organization. Though there was an organization (PRISM) listed on

the Nova website and several students that I interviewed said that they were a part of a

listserv for LGBTQ+ students, all indicated that meetings were sparse and generally

unorganized. There was no on-campus office or personnel who were dedicated to

LGBTQ+ diversity initiatives. This issue was seemingly made more difficult by the

inconsistency of its 'members' on campus. Since many of the students were older

commuters with outside jobs, families and responsibilities, gathering all interested parties

for organized meetings and keeping them engaged as officers was very difficult. Though

all of the students I interviewed at Nova expressed the desire for a more structured

organization, several indicated that their requests to administrators were ignored. When

they did try to organize in a public space for campus events, students stated that they

were often placed on the margins of public space and sometimes not included at all.

There were no public events or organized meetings available for me to attend while I was

interviewing students over a six-month period. All interactions with students were one-

on-one and were direct responses to my IRB flyer that was distributed through the

listserv. One gatekeeper did direct me to several other students and professors but follow up was generally unreliable.

It should be noted that despite reaching out multiple times to various administrators and professors at Nova Southeastern University, and despite several students suggesting that these administrators speak with me, I received no responses to my requests for interviews. Whether intentional or not, I do believe that this lack of response and involvement is indicative of the environment at Nova and directly correlates to the experiences of the LGBTQ+ students that I spoke with in that space. A few of the students that I interviewed discussed their frustrations with the administration at Nova, indicating that they felt ignored, belittled and often insulted by the faculty and staff. Some explained that they had asked for a more LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum and were frankly told that those studies were not acceptable at Nova. Another student recalled when the supposed 'advisor' of their LGBTQ+ organization made homonormative remarks during a class session and stated the bisexuality was not "real". Though the smallest pool of interviews, those interactions with the students at Nova were some of the most telling and seemed to support the conclusion that university involvement and LGBTQ+ visibility on campus are inextricably linked and directly correlate to students' safety and happiness within that space.

V. Data Analysis

This queer intersectional analysis provides a multi-perspectival collection of data regarding the positionalities of LGBTQ+ students, their experiences within and around South Florida universities and the historical background, status, and offerings of the institutions themselves. This research therefore sheds light on how forms of

homonormativity are being reproduced, challenged, and/or reconfigured in these recognized queer spaces. The majority of the data collected is qualitative, focused on discourse and practice.   As such, the theoretical toolkit outlined earlier in this proposal will be a key part of my data analysis.

Data collected from semi-structured interviews, participant observation and social media analysis demonstrated how queer students perceived South Florida higher educational spaces prior to their admission and during their years as students.   In this data, imaginations and narratives will come much more to the fore. Attention has been paid to cultural and contextual nuances that are reflexive; keeping in mind theoretical undertones of the researcher as well as the ultimate message that participants are trying to convey- acknowledging that a narrative approach needs to account for multiple forms of storytelling, especially in a place as diverse as South Florida. As such, the queer analytical frameworks outlined by Foucault, Butler and the previously reviewed geographers have served as a guide in analyzing these texts but will have also been supplemented by emerging patterns as I saw them in the data. Particular emphasis has been placed upon utterances and practices that make multiple appearances across my data sources, concerning how people feel disciplined and liberated by particular spaces and practices; what type of performances get repeated and challenged most often; which axes of difference come to be the most salient in informants' own words, what couplings and binaries are "naturalized" or assumed to be beyond comment, and which are conspicuous by their absence.

Analysis has also drawn upon institutional documents, social media, mass and queer media imagery, pictures and advertising amongst other mediums. Overarching

themes that have emerged in this research include but are not limited to: homonormative inscriptions upon university space, Miami, institutional policies, curricula, queer bodies, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, trans-cultural encounters, differing categories of gender and sexuality, local vs. global, rural vs. urban, age, and socioeconomic background. Though I utilized a queer theoretical approach, I was not dismissive of those themes which do not typically fit the usual categories through which queer research is often filtered.

One major theme which recurs throughout the student narratives and within the existing body of work on queer space is power: how it is imagined and experienced within spaces. In the next chapter, I utilize a queer intersectional lens to discuss how my research sites reinforce heteronormative and homonormative power structures. I will first explore the concept and formation of queer safe spaces: what they are, where they are and who they are for. I will then examine how universities have gradually evolved (or are evolving) into queer 'safe' spaces and where they may fall short. To accomplish this, I will present a thoughtful theoretical and historical analysis interlaced with relevant participant testimony.

CHAPTER III: THE QUEER POWER PARADOX: HOW UNIVERSITY SPACES REINFORCE AND REBUKE NORMATIVE POWERS

In this chapter I utilize geographic and queer theoretical frameworks to examine how heteronormative and homonormative powers are created and sustained within spaces. I explain how spaces have been fought for and adopted by the `LGBTQ+ community as queer spaces and supposed safe spaces. I also explore how these spaces can become unsafe through normative inscriptions upon those spaces. Lastly, I examine universities as queer spaces and how they function as safe spaces (or not) for students and administrators. For this chapter, I draw on semi-structured interviews, participant observation and social media analysis to inform the discussion of queer spaces and how they are experienced by LGBTQ+ identities.

I.   Introduction

Spaces are complex, dynamic and always reconfiguring over time. It is important to remember, however, that they are also uniquely experienced and interpreted by the actors within them. Spaces are relative and absolute, transitory and permanent, safe and dangerous (Carrillo and Licona, 2005; Domosh, 1998; Luibhéid and Cantú Jr., 2005; Manalansan, 2005; Massey, 2005; Puar, 2006). For some, spaces are arguably considered neutral as their existence may be contingent upon certain set boundaries of time, geographical periphery and impartiality, but even within these neutral zones it is critical to recognize how positionality affects experience. This duality of spaces creates a challenging landscape for researchers as spaces are so comparative and therefore difficult to quantify in any definitive terms. The contribution of this research, though, is

not to present an authoritative conclusion of how spaces are or are not experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals, but rather to accept that spaces are fluid, to reflect on how people distinctively understand them and to further facilitate an open dialogue that maximizes this knowledge and improves university spaces for all.

For the purpose of this research, it is important to understand how university spaces are structured as institutions of power, how they are presented to students and how students actually experience them as queer or non-queer spaces. To tangibly examine these spaces, we must first understand overall concepts of spaces: how they are produced, who is occupying them, and what agendas lie within. The best tools with which to complete this examination are therefore both theoretical and empirical. When considering how spaces exist and are experienced by queer students, it is worthwhile to clarify how spaces are defined from geographical theoretical perspectives while also embracing an intersectional approach.

To see the 'big picture', it will be important to view each story shared by informants with a unique lens and to be aware of the multitude of variations and subtexts associated with that situation. This research is layered and multidimensional- the subjects and spaces that are discussed are not straightforward. There are no linear progressions here. It will be important to recognize emerging themes both independently as well as how they overlap with other disciplines. It is also crucial to recognize the unique experiences and positions of populations and how this influences their narratives and experiences. An open-minded stance toward both theme and theory will be key to this research. As David Harvey decidedly posited early in geography's critical turn:

"Different classes construct their sense of territory and community in radically different ways. This elemental fact is often overlooked by those theorists who presume a priori that there is some ideal-typical and universal tendency for all human beings to construct a human community of a roughly similar sort, no matter what the political or economic circumstances" (Harvey, 1969: 260). Spatial consciousness, then, involves not only method, but also historical analysis, social perspective and an interdisciplinary theoretical framework. It is imperative to identify creative and symbolic meanings of space and the physical and cultural implications of these subtexts. It is also critical to refrain from generalizations that might dilute cultural significance. As varied as the spaces and accounts are, though, patterns can be found by noting theoretical frameworks while allowing fluidity and hybridity. Expect blurred lines in this research.

From a geographical standpoint, spaces can be viewed as physical and imagined boundaries within landscapes or specific places: and are connected to other terms like territory, locality, spatial division of labor, processes of always becoming, and so on (Harvey, 2012; Massey, 2005; McFarlane, 1999). In the terms of this research, those salient spaces include Florida, South Florida, Miami, Fort Lauderdale, South Beach, the respective universities (Florida International University, Nova Southeastern University and the University of Miami), the campuses, classrooms etc.… (Cox, 2006). When thinking of the construction of space, it is imperative to think of who is occupying that space, how they have come to occupy it and how that occupation relates to 'everything else'. The 'who' in this research relates to who is occupying these spaces- the major players who are the students, administrators, faculty, and subsets- commuter students, residential students, graduate students, professors, office administrators, clerical staff and

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so on. When considering these populations, it is important to recognize the unique

positionality and agenda of each group and individual member as well as how these roles

may be shifting on university campuses. Each of these individuals is an actor who is

performing their unique roles- whether those roles be based on gender, ethnicity,

sexuality or class; their words and actions are based upon historical and current societal

influences and they need not be consistent in their actions or thoughts, because ultimately

no one is such (Butler, 1993; Driver, 2007; Gray, 2009; Valentine, 1993).

Like Harvey above, James Blaut stresses the fluidity and hybridity of cultural

meanings *Geographic Models of Imperialism*; reiterating that the same propositions may

hold distinctively different significance for different people. With so much variation, the

inability to pinpoint prevailing social standards may pose a challenge for some and make

meaningful social science research appear unachievable, but I choose to echo Blaut's

sentiment for this research: "…all things can be rationalized… cross cultural

communication is always difficult, always imperfect, but never truly impossible" (Blaut,

1970: 90). One's understanding of the world is certainly influenced by how information

is presented to them, whether in an educational setting, a social setting or from media

sources. Our knowledge of spaces or people that we have not experienced personally is

shaped by cultural and historical contexts. Maintaining awareness of these unavoidable

biases and positionalities when interpreting the subjects in this research and their

respective interviews should help to uphold perspective and objectivity.

A significant step towards understanding how geographies are imagined and

reproduced is to identify how power is created and maintained. Space is symbolic of

knowledge, culture, class hierarchy and economy.   Harvey asserts: "Those who have the power to command and produce space possess a vital instrumentality for the reproduction and enhancement of their own power. Any project to transform society must, therefore, grasp the complex nettle of the transformation of spatial processes" (Harvey, 1969: 255). Domination over space indicates a group's attempt to control how that space is utilized and the social and political contexts within that space. Space is reproduced through hegemonic structures and is a generator for capitalism, reinforcing class hierarchies and power struggles. What, then, is the primary vessel of power at the foundation of these constructions?

Feminist geographers argue that space is dominated by Western, heterosexual, masculinist constructions which reproduce these normative powers through cultural narratives and discourse (Johnson, 2018; Valentine, 2007; Wright, 2010). The current 'top-down' approach to social science, they contend, is lacking as it does not typically take into account aspects of religious, gendered, raced, classed or nationalist performances and methods of control over researchers and subjects. Feminist geographers, like queer geographers, emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to geography, recognizing the interconnected nature of culture, geography, political discourse and activism through various theoretical and methodological perspectives. In *Feminising the Economy: Metaphors, Strategies and Politics,* Jenny Cameron and J.K. Gibson-Graham discuss the feminist approach to economic activities: "Feminist thinkers interested in enlarging the scope of the economic have challenged these processes of exclusion and measurement head-on by proposing strategies for *adding on* and *counting in* activities that have been ignored or hidden" (Cameron and Gibson-Graham, 2010:

147). Contexts should therefore be seen not only as social boundaries but also as gateways. Consideration of these dynamics in queer intersectional theory leads to more thorough knowledge production, heightened attentiveness to related issues and the awareness of linked themes that may have been previously overlooked.

II.   A Brief Introduction to the Formation of LGBTQ+ Spaces

Similar to the ways in which social science approaches and discourse regarding queer identities have evolved, the creation and utilization of queer spaces continues to change. These spaces are often referred to as 'gay' spaces in general and early academic discourses. The reasoning for this is that the first group within the spectrum to actively congregate and become the most visible were white, gay affluent men (Abalos, 1999; Brown, 2009; Ghaziani, 2011; Hubbard, 2000; Rushbrook, 2002). This did establish a homonormative modeling and imaginary of queer spaces which continues to permeate the popular imaginations. As I am aware that these spaces contained many more identities than the over-simplified 'gay' space terminology implies, I will depart from generally referring to them as 'gay spaces' and instead describe them as LGBTQ+ spaces (or queer spaces depending upon the context).

Initially arising from necessity, LGBTQ+ spaces represented a safe haven from repressive heteronormative principles and violence directed towards sexual "others". These spaces were also seen as a way for LGBTQ+-identified individuals to communicate the need for social change. Phillip Hubbard explains: "…the appropriation and transgression of heterosexual spaces may be a potent means for lesbians, gays and bisexuals to destabilize and undermine processes of homophobic oppression, adopting a

variety of tactics in order to challenge the dominant production of space as 'straight'"

(Hubbard, 2000: 192). This is particularly evident in the post-Stonewall era as social and

political goals of LGBTQ+ neighborhoods centered on both safety and advocacy for

LGBTQ+ issues (Aldrich, 2004; Hanhardt, 2008; Hubbard, 2000, Manalansan, 1995).

These urban spaces and businesses presented sites of freedom; places where individuals

could realize their queer selves without social or legal prejudice.

LGBTQ+-identified individuals had historically remained 'closeted', unable to

congregate in open spaces for fear of persecution or violence. Open assemblage was seen

as dangerous and, consequently, establishments or meeting places for those in the

LGBTQ+ community were limited to areas that were markedly less visible. The first

'safe spaces' for these identities were mostly secret 'underground' locations like clubs,

bars and certain private meeting spaces within neighborhoods. Some of the most notable

early safe spaces, urban gay neighborhoods, were usually spread through word of mouth.

Typically located on the margins of cities in 'poorer and seamier' districts, LGBTQ+

residential and business neighborhoods gradually began to move inwards towards the city

center in the 1900's. This shift can be explained by several factors, perhaps most notably

the more immediate access to public transportation options and the level of aesthetic

appeal. Michael Sibalis explains that queer individuals tended to seek "…an attractive

and centrally located but rundown neighborhood ripe for gentrification draws in gays

who are not only responding to economic incentives…but also seeking to create a

territory which they can inhabit and control and where they can feel at home within a

self-contained community set apart from a world perceived as indifferent or even hostile"

(Sibalis, 2004: 1740). Urban LGBTQ+ spaces in large metropolitan cities such as New

York, San Francisco and London were some of the first to be recognized. Indeed, as John D'Emilio asserts in *Capitalism and Gay* Identity, gay and women's liberation movements greatly altered the urban landscape as what was once an underground subculture became increasingly visible and accepted in larger cities (D'Emilio, 2006). This influx of LGBTQ+ individuals was representative not only of social changes, but also of a larger shift in modern capitalism from a nuclear family structure to a more individualized labor system that enabled independence and sexual choice rather than the traditional system modeled after procreation and sustainability (D'Emilio, 2006).

Fueled by queer imaginaries of urban spaces and the desire to feel like they were not "the only one in the world", an increasing number of individuals began to embark on the "great gay migration" in the 1970's and 1980's (Weston, 1995). "For men earlier in life who were initiating a process of coming out, moving was more urgent, singularly focused act motivated by frustrations over "treading water," anxieties over "getting out," and desires to galvanize or realign life courses that felt stunted" (Lewis, 2014: 227). Though these districts did provide a refuge for some, they were primarily populated by white, gay men; a feature that continued on into the 1990's when these neighborhoods started to become more gentrified and consumer driven (Ghaziani, 2011, 2014; Jackson, 2009; Oswin, 2015, Rushbrook, 2002). Now, those who did not previously have access to these urban locations were priced out and left out.

Economic and real estate potential are common themes regarding the formation of the most prominent LGBTQ+ neighborhoods. Financially savvy business owners and prospective residents tend to find 'fixer-upper' spaces in attractive locations where rents

are low, but appeal is high – classic spaces of rent gap gentrification. "Historically, gay neighborhoods have had many of the institutional and business cornerstones of any other community- restaurants, cafes, churches, political groups, and theaters- and these institutions are critical public representations of gay life, especially given that, even in gay enclaves, gay men constitute a minority or the neighborhood population" (Carpiano, 2011: 75). In addition to an economically advantageous locality, LGBTQ+ neighborhoods form as a sort of 'social positioning' where residents seek refuge from intolerance and persecution. These places provide a sense of community, an acceptance of LGBTQ+ identity, a diversity of social and cultural activities and a base for emerging gay political platforms. Brad Ruting illustrates this phenomenon by citing Oxford Street in Sydney, Australia:

> "Typical of many gay districts, Oxford Street emerged in Sydney's inner city, with degraded but cheap housing stocks, proximity to the city centre and the need for spatially compact communities to provide protection from wider homophobic repression…such districts offered myriad social, political and economic opportunities to their gay residents, and became key territorial bases in the emergence of gay political movements and subcultures" (Ruting, 2008: 259).

These trends, though seemingly typical in many Global North societies, are sometimes lacking in other countries where homosexuality is not tolerated and, in some cases, deemed illegal. For these countries, where anonymity parallels safety, the formation of gay neighborhoods would seem a dangerous endeavor that may invite harassment and violence (Bhagat, 2018; Luibhéid and Cantú Jr., 2005; Warner, 1999).

The result is that those who wish to explore their 'gay identity' tend to migrate to Global North cities rather than attempting to create spaces within their own locales. Thus, for some, LGBTQ+ neighborhoods in Global North societies, then, become a kind of utopian destination of supposed queer culture and acceptance.

III.   LGBTQ+ 'Safe' Spaces

One notable benefit for those who seek out LGBTQ+ spaces is the sentiment of communal safety. Safe spaces are places where members of the LGBTQ+ community can (or hope to be able to) openly express themselves in dress, manner and in personal relationships without threat of discrimination or backlash. When one thinks of 'LGBTQ+ spaces', they often think of urban neighborhoods, one of the most ubiquitous and easily identifiable markers of queer safe spaces (Castells, 1983; Ghaziani, 2011, 2014; Gray, 2009; Rushbrook, 2002). This is usually because these areas have become easily locatable destinations that are often marked by queer symbology and marketed to the LGBTQ+ community (Ghaziani, 2011, 2014; Rushbrook, 2002; Ruting, 2008). Unlike some less tolerant countries or small towns where gays and lesbians may have had to hide their romantic inclinations and keep their identities secret, LGBTQ+ neighborhoods provide a safer space where the LGBTQ+ community can more openly show affection and congregate in mass without concern. Steven Kates, in his article *The Protean Quality of Subcultural Consumption: An Ethnographic Account of Gay Consumers* explains how gay subculture affects safety, friendships and leisure in urban spaces:

> "One category of meanings is the gay subculture's status as a safe
> Physical place and social space, bounded by certain agreed-upon
> urban streets and accepting ways. Within this area, informants

expressed the sentiment that they felt safe and secure to walk, talk, behave and consume in as open a way as they wished…given their judgment that no disapproving heterosexual family or friends would likely be present" (Kates, 2002: 387).

Another distinct draw to LGBTQ+ safe spaces is the impression of 'community' and belonging- an area where shared culture, values and goals can be realized. Members of these communities have the freedom to explore their queer selves without the pressure of feeling 'under the lens' of a restrictive heteronormative microscope. This community is connected by a common marginalized identity. This sense of community is further reinforced by media, journalism and technological resources (Cavalcante, 2019; Driver, 2007; Miller, 2017). 'Local' and 'community' newspapers, as well as the journalists who write in them and the subsequent audience, become a powerful collective who share common social and political interests. Print media can be especially influential and utilized as a tool of communal cohesion. Vincent Miller states: "…these papers and writers assume the role of interpretive authority because they try to define issues of importance for the communities to which they themselves belong" (Miller, 2005: 68). Specifically emphasized is how authors in these 'communities' call for readers to 'claim their neighborhoods' and to become more involved. Journalists, rather than addressing area topics objectively, write as if they are speaking to kin or family members by constantly referring to issues in terms of "our" or "we"- reaffirming the sense of an LGBTQ+ community. These mediums articulate the importance of establishing and maintaining the queer identity of their communities and even provide guidelines regarding how to reinforce solidarity. For example, Gareth Kirby, author and editor of

Vancouver's gay community magazine *Xtra!* provides the following suggestions to readers regarding how to preserve the gay identity of the Davie Street district:

 "Shop at gay-owned and gay-friendly establishments; Continue to reside in the area; Pressure City Hall about obstructing new bars; Demand City Hall revise plans for Davie Street to encourage the development of small businesses serving the gay and lesbian community; Help start a Davie Street business improvement association; Get involved with community policing" (Miller, 2005: 73).

Publications also emphasize political opportunities to claim or re-claim LGBTQ+ spaces by making readers aware of public hearings and political gatherings that are seen as significant to the gay community. Articles such as 'Here's Your Chance' encourage audiences to rally behind community members in public and legal settings; thereby showing support, strength and prominence of the gay community. Miller explains that the community media "…attempts to construct an intertextual narrative of collectivity among its readers, and to place that collectivity within an identifiable space. A diverse set of people and relationships are simplified into one voice, and complex sets of interactions, movements and realities are simplified into one spatial identity" (Miller, 2005: 75).

The presence of LGBTQ+-friendly businesses also permeates the community which gives residents the ability to consume and socialize exclusively within the safety of the neighborhood (Ghaziani, 2011, 2014; Kates, 2002). Many members of the LGBTQ+ community choose to find employment opportunities at the small businesses located within these districts in order to continue the sense of safety and comfort in their working environments. Residents also actively purchase goods and services within LGBTQ+

neighborhoods to promote solidarity and in the spirit of 'supporting their community'. Some research suggests that LGBTQ+ individuals are willing to accept a higher cost of living, increased rental prices and will pay more for items within these neighborhoods because of their affiliation with the queer community (Ghaziani, 2011, 2014; Kates, 2002; Miller, 2005; Ruting, 2008; Sibalis, 2004). "A 'pink' economy becomes established, along with gay shops and venues, as individuals come to imagine themselves as part of a wider LGBTQ+ neighborhood community" (Ruting, 2008: 262). Businesses also partake in the spirit of camaraderie by exhibiting LGBTQ+-friendly symbols and paraphernalia such as rainbow stickers and flags. One can find these emblems throughout the neighborhood in shops, clubs, houses and on lamp posts. "As widely accepted symbols officially signifying unity in diversity, the flag and its accessories serve as international and local marker goods" (Kates, 2002: 388).

Safety is maintained not only by the omnipresence of a dense LGBTQ+ population, but by the creation of street patrols who police the district in an effort to sustain and expand LGBTQ+ safety. In *Butterflies, Whistles, and Fists: Gay Safe Street Patrols and the New Gay Ghetto*, Christina Hanhardt explores the organization of street patrols in San Francisco and Greenwich Village in New York City with the goal of protecting against antigay violence, enforcing 'quality of life' laws and monitoring low-level offenses such as loitering and public drinking. She cites the 'Butterfly Brigade' in San Francisco as a street patrol who attempted to work with police officials to increase the understanding of urban violence in the LGBTQ+ community: "Members of the patrol were active in the push for a police reform campaign that would include increasing the number of lesbian and gay officers and the institutionalization of sensitivity training.

This was not only to stem police violence but also to make officers aware of the at-once general and specific needs of gay victims" (Hanhardt, 2008: 67). Other groups such as SMASH (the Society to Make America Safe for Homosexuals) in the Chelsea neighborhood in New York City also worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the tangible consequences of homophobia. The organization directed attention to the root of negative attitudes regarding the LGBTQ+ community and how fear of lesbians and gay men were at the foundation for acts of violence. "Such ideas about the causal dynamics of identity, violence, and neighborhood would influence, over time, the ensuing path of antiviolence activism and determine how the public perceived homophobia" (Hanhardt, 2008: 74). These structured efforts assisted in the formation and claiming of LGBTQ+ territories and have upheld the notion of the certain neighborhoods as 'safe spaces' for the LGBTQ+ populations.

The concept of a shared 'space' becomes essential in establishing identity and power. Vincent Miller, in his article *Intertextuality, the Referential Illusion and the Production of a Gay Ghetto* scrutinizes how the establishment of a recognized community space is essential to the production of political power, community action and cultural development. He contends that without a "…space of their own, gay men, lesbians and bisexuals…are doomed to operate tactically, at the margins" (Miller, 2006: 71). Miller further explores the Davie Street neighborhood in Vancouver, Canada as a gay area that is striving for recognition in order to achieve communal solidarity and a political voice.

> "…A marginalized community has gained access to power through a
> combination of several tactics: through residential concentration and a

'gay voting block'; through entrepreneurship and urban revitalization; through consumerism and the 'pink pound'; and through representation …the ultimate goal is formal recognition of Davie Street as a gay space by city council and planning authorities and some formal influence over the space by the gay community" (Miller, 2006: 66).

IV.   University Spaces as Queer Spaces and LGBTQ+ Safe Spaces

Imagine all of the institutions and dynamics above brought down to scale on a university campus. You have a university space- a space where LGBTQ+ students come from all over the country. Some are coming from around the world. You are dealing with a particular age set: 18- 25; many of whom are exploring their gender and sexuality away from home for the first time. Many of the same institutions listed above are still in place. Neighborhoods; residence halls. Safety patrols; security. Media; LGBTQ+ newsletters and publications. Economy; bookstore. Community; LGBTQ+ clubs and organizations. Each campus seemingly has its own (or the beginnings of its own) LGBTQ+ safe space; its own neighborhood on campus. But how are these spaces being interpreted by the students who interact with them? How are they being facilitated and how are they being obstructed? What heteronormative and homonormative powers are at work here they might be working differently than urban LGBTQ+ neighborhoods? What can we learn from these similarities and differences?

Universities have all of the makings of a LGBTQ+ safe space, but even within a space that promotes diversity and learning, they are still institutions where there are normative powers at work. On one hand, they are a space that allows for self- discovery; independent from families or communities that might not otherwise approve.

Universities are often spaces where diversity is highlighted, celebrated and often desired to make those spaces more attractive and marketable to young people looking for a place where they can not only 'fit in', but thrive socially and academically. In *Assessing LGBTQ Campus Climate and Creating Change*, Megan Yost and Stephanie Gilmore explain: "…as more and more Americans have gained access to formal education, irrespective of race, sex, and ability, college campuses have implemented policies affirming their institutional commitment to "diversity." This support is demonstrated through inclusive mission statements, open recruitment of diverse students and faculty, the formalization of academic departments dedicated to underrepresented people and minorities, and student groups that represent and ally with LGBTQ people" (Yost and Gilmore, 2011: 1331). Universities allow students to find and create their own communities and networks. Those people who attend and work at universities are also a group of educated individuals, ergo the hope is that they will be more open-minded to different kinds of people. Faculty and staff have the ability to (and often do) become mentors and confidants; some of these people are the first adults that young students will ever feel comfortable speaking with about exploring their gender and sexual identities that fall outside of the norm. Furthermore, for some students, universities may be the first places where they come into direct contact with other self-disclosed LGBTQ+ individuals. Whether they are migrating from other countries or other parts of their respective country where homosexuality is vilified, these new spaces offer immediate and overwhelming opportunities for LGBTQ+ students to find spaces that accept them and to make niches within those spaces (Bhagat, 2018; Bilimoria and Stewart, 2009; Jacobson et

al., 2017; Kane, 2013; O'Connell, 2004; Rankin, 2003, 2008, 2010; Woodford et al., 2012).

Universities are perhaps the first physical space where LGBTQ+ can find their *chosen family*, a concept very important in LGBTQ+ culture that describes "…family groups constructed by choice rather than by biological or legal (bio-legal) ties. Chosen family implies an alternative formulation that subverts, rejects, or overrides bio-legal classifications assumed to be definitive within an American paradigm of kinship" (Jackson Levin et al., 2020). Queer relationships often defy social norms of biology, procreation, and legal obligation thus they challenge heteronormative and often homonormative understandings of family structures. For the LGBTQ+ community, a chosen family often becomes paramount to one's biological or legal family in several ways. Your chosen family is the family that accepts you, supports you, sees you, knows you. Where your legal family may have failed you, your chosen family will take care of you- both physically and emotionally. They are your bridge to your new, true self. That is not to say that all LGBTQ+ individuals are estranged from their families- many who identify as LGBTQ+ have good and healthy relationships with their families- but there is a separation between a *chosen family* and a biological family. It is not always that the chosen family replaces the biological family, but that is complements it; LGBTQ+ individuals often relate more so with their chosen family as their primary kin network (Jackson Levin et al., 2020). Universities may provide the first meeting space for these new, incredibly important social networks and are therefore pivotal safe space markers for many LGBTQ+ youths.

Beyond the university structure, research often shows that the campus climate, though progressively moving forward, still has an undercurrent of homophobia or- at least- resistance to change (Bilimoria and Stewart, 2009; Dolan, 1998; Noack, 2004; Rankin, 2003, 2008; Yost et al. 2011). Campus climate refers to "…current attitudes, behaviors and standards, and practices of employees and students of an institution" (Rankin et al., 2008: 264). University campuses that promote diversity initiatives including LGBTQ+ organizations and have outwardly supportive faculty typically stimulate a more positive campus climate (Jacobson et al., 2017; Kane, 2013; Messinger, 2011). "A positive campus climate is important for student academic performance and productivity, social acclimation, development of interpersonal skills, personal and professional development, and academic retention" (Jacobson et al., 2017: 61). Like organizations that accept and promote diversity, policies, procedures and 'institutional commitments' that benefit marginalized students, including LGBTQ+ students, can also improve perceptions of campus the campus climate: "Examples of inclusive policies and benefits include the incorporation of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression written in diversity statements, equality of partner benefits, and availability of programs such as Safe Zone, Safe Space or Ally Program. Institutional commitments may be organizational in nature, such as availability of LGBT student organizations, or involve structural modifications, such as accessibility of gender-neutral/ single occupancy restrooms and inclusive living spaces" (Jacobson et al., 2017: 61).

On the other hand, universities are also institutions that are bound by a set of rules and bylaws that are often outdated and hinder progress for LGBTQ+ individuals which can make progress stagnant and gay safe spaces less ubiquitous than one might think they

would be (Ellis, 2008; Kane, 2013; Kumashiro, 2001; O'Connell, 2004; Rankin, 2008).

Even if there are students and staff who are willing to advocate for change, there are

usually barriers to policy change that hinder progress and create tensions. There is a

duality to these issues; often times there may be a political and emotional separation

between the students and faculty advocating for systemic change and those systems that

are maintaining the status quo. LGBTQ+ advocates may believe (and there may be some

truth to this belief) that resistance to change reflects their institutions' ignorance of

LGBTQ+ issues, homophobia, transphobia or opposition based on moral and religious

grounds. What is important to recognize, though, is that administrative decision makers

and governing boards are also bound by practical concerns regarding the financial and

political ramifications of LGBTQ+ policy changes. Converting bathrooms to gender

neutral bathrooms costs money. Creating physical LGBTQ+ safe spaces on campus costs

money. Hiring specialized staff takes time, funding and resources. While these may

seem to be enhancements that promote diversity initiatives and improve campus climate,

there can be limitations on how quickly certain policies can be changed while necessary

infrastructure is put in place due to budgetary restrictions and lacking resources. This

slow pace of policy change can create frustration and even an attitude of distrust within

the university spaces for students and administrators. In *Creating LGBTQ-Friendly*

Campuses, Lori Messinger explains: "Students, particularly, were impatient with the slow

pace of policy change; many would graduate before policies for which they had fought

were enacted. Some LGBTQ advocates and allies quit their home campuses, especially

those who felt unsupported or even attacked there. One advocate said that an openly gay

faculty member who had been at the forefront of policy discussions at the college was the

target of antigay slurs. He left the university just as the LGBTQ-supportive policy was enacted." (Messinger, 2009).

i.   Disconnects Between LGBTQ+ Universities and Students

Several of the students who I interviewed for this research were involved in LGBTQ+ organizations on campus and discussed their exasperation with stagnant policy changes at their respective institutions. At this point, an example from my informants would prove informative and would tangibly illustrate the points above. Brian, President of SpectrUM at the University of Miami, described himself as a white, Jewish, Queer, poly, non-binary person who would 'figure it all out when he had the time.' Brian has been 'fighting the good fight' at UM and trying to get a lot of changes implemented, but their organization was continually running into roadblocks. Outdated software and staff turnover were delaying their gender-inclusive housing initiative. Their most important order of business, though, was a designated LGBTQ Center and a specific staff member to run it. This was a common topic at UM and one that Brian articulated at length:

Brian: "SpectrUM is currently the only undergraduate LGBT organization at the University of Miami. We don't currently have an LGBTQ center. We are supposed to get one. The job is posted so they actually have to go through and find an individual and have it open with a dedicated space."

Faye: "Are you feeling confident about that?"

Brian: "I'm just…concerned."

Faye: "Why?"

Brian: "Because I love my university, but things take time here and I really want it to open in August, because I know if it opens even three weeks into the semester it's not going to be able to have the same impact it would have if it opens in the summer…I want to make sure it's done and its open and we have a great Director and a designated space that actually have things in it so it doesn't look like a bare office that opened yesterday."

Faye: "So, what are your hopes for the new Director?"

Brian: "We're hoping that they will be able to take on student staff…We had sort of a rough year last year and people have been asked to take on additional roles…I'm really hoping that person will have the experience that we wouldn't have as students aged 18-24. It's hard because we're expected to function as adults without having a crash course on what that means. So, when we have things like putting on an event or trying to negotiate funds for LGBTQ students…it's hard…I'm looking forward to someone who is dedicated to us full time."

Brian explains that as the only undergraduate LGBTQ+ organization on campus, SpectrUM has had to carry the burden of managing their organization in ways that young students generally should not be required to do. Aside from being their own advocates for LGBTQ+ policies on campus, their organization acts as event planners, advisors, and even counselors for students since other departments do not have bandwidth:

Brian: "The faculty, staff and administrators, who I know that are LGBTQ, love getting to promote that we are an LGBT friendly school because they love this university and they love how its accepted. Unfortunately, the reality for a lot of the students is that

they don't find the only resource on campus- which is currently SpectrUM. Right now, we are the only LGBT undergraduate org. We are the de facto go to organization. We are the ones who have the meeting about coming out, negotiating your identity…we're the ones who provide mixer events, condoms, a huge milieu of speakers. With the exception of Andrew [their faculty Advisor] …We are the end all and be all. Any organization works in a limited capacity and we don't reach all of the students that we need to be reaching. That's the unfortunate reality. And I know there are those students that end up hurting themselves and that's really rough because when I hear about it, I'm like- crap. I needed that student to be coming to our meetings. Now they're in a place where it takes a lot to get them to a better space, because instead of preventing the negativity you have to help them through it…our resources are lacking. It is what it is and I'm not afraid to say that."

Brian asserts that the University advertises itself as an LGBTQ+-friendly space but leaves the majority of the real 'work' to its students.   This overextension of the student organization creates a disproportionate amount of responsibility placed upon the students to self-govern and manage social issues in addition to their academic responsibilities by their university. The balance of power, however, remains in favor of the university any time that the students try to change policies or bylaws: each group works toward their own agenda and hope that they find parallels that leads to a general compromise amongst all parties.

Brian: "Diversity at our university is like a plate that you would get at the dining hall. You have a lot of different things on the plate, but they don't really touch."

ii.   Otherness Created Though Micro and Macro Aggressive Behaviors

Safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students are also frequently segregated, out of the way or an afterthought on university campuses. While many faculty and administrative staff are outwardly supportive, there are those who miss the mark- either through inadvertent ignorance or blatant disregard for social progress. There are LGBTQ+ curricula offered, but students argue much of this material only scratches the surface of what is widely available and is often outdated. At some universities (including all of those in this study), requests for additional, more in-depth LGBTQ+ courses from students are met with resistance from the university administration. While on campus, many LGBTQ+ students experience derogatory remarks, verbal harassment and even threats of physical violence which leads to a higher rate of depression, anxiety and substance abuse in comparison to students who identify as heterosexual (Ellis, 2008; Jacobson et al., 2017; Lapinski et al, 2014; Oswalt et al.). Though none of the students interviewed for this study indicated that any ongoing forms of harassment had taken place at their respective universities, all of them cited at least one instance where they experienced or witnessed firsthand LGBTQ+ discrimination or intolerance from students or staff. Several of them indicated that they were not "out" on campus or, at least, chose to downplay their LGBTQ+ visibility on campus to avoid unwanted negative attention and comments. One student even discussed being selectively visible on campus after experiencing derogatory slurs while walking through their main quad on the UM campus:

UM student: "We don't have any Pride merch[andise] at UM, so I was wearing this UM shirt in rainbow letters that I had made myself. I was feeling really good about

it; really happy. A few people walking by were pointing it out and asking where they could get one. Then a group of guys- probably frat guys- in a car drove by and shouted "FAG" at me really loudly and sped off laughing. I honestly can't even say if they were students at the school or not because they were in a car, but it was on campus. I just stopped. People stared for a second. No one said anything. I was just…I didn't want to be there anymore. I didn't wear my shirt for a while and sort or walked with my head down for a few weeks trying to be invisible. I haven't seen those guys again and after a while I was like… fuck it.   I started wearing my shirt again sometimes when I'm in the mood to deal with whatever could happen. So far it has all been positive… mostly people asking me where I got my shirt and stuff…but on those days I prepare myself for the looks or anything else that could happen."

Beyond the typical overt behaviors that one may typically associate as heterosexist, there are also subtle microaggressions which, when endured on a daily, constant basis, can create a difficult environment for LGBTQ+ students. Microagressions are brief, everyday events that convey negative messages about a marginalized group. They are "… the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (Sue, 2010:3). Microagressions are typically broken down into three main categories: microinsults, microassaults and microinvalidations. The way that these actions are distinguished is by the conscious (or unconscious) intention of the person committing the act and the gravity of the message that is conveyed (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2007). Microinsults are rude or insensitive comments (intentional or unintentional) that

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demean an affected party. In the case of university students, this could be something

like: "you're only gay on campus" or "this is a queer space- no bisexuals allowed" (both

of these were actually said to the students interviewed for this research). Even if said in a

tone that is meant to be joking in nature, there is still an undercurrent of homonormative

prejudice or mistrust- an accusatory tone that says 'something about you doesn't

belong'…and the LGBTQ+ students pick up on this Otherness. Whether the comments

are made by their peers, straight allies or other members of the faculty or student body,

LGBTQ+ students remember these microaggressions and hold on to them- so much so

that they made a point to tell me, an independent researcher who they had never met

before, about their experience and how it had impacted them.

Microassaults are violent verbal or nonverbal attacks that are deliberate and

usually rooted in prejudicial beliefs (Sue, 2010). These behaviors are explicit and

intentional, such as yelling anti-LGBTQ+ slurs. This could also mean engaging in

deliberately avoidant behavior, for example crossing the street to evade the path of

someone who presents on the LGBTQ+ spectrum or refusing to shake someone's hand.

There has much research that has determined that sexual minority students that witness

and endure anti-LGBTQ+ forms of discriminations at the micro and macro level on

campus can have their mental state seriously affected; causing anxiety, depression and

physical health problems [minority stress theory] (Rankin et al., 2010; Silverschanz et al.,

2008; Woodford et.al, 2012a; Woodford et al 2012b; Woodford and Kulick, 2015). Some

of this behavior has been found to stem less from overt hostility than from peer pressure

in a group setting to act 'more masculine' and to clearly define gender roles rather than

anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes (Franklin, 2000; Silverschanz et al., 2008). Regardless of the

origin or the intent behind it, this prioritization of a heterosexual hierarchy on campus

reinforces gender norms and highlights the Otherness of LGBTQ+ students on campus.

Similarly, homonormative power structures are reinforced through these

microaggressions when seemingly casual comments are made at the expense of bisexual

or transgender students (or any of those identities that are not typically featured in the

LGBTQ+ acronym). That these comments are regularly shrugged off as "jokes" or

"kidding around" further trivializes the seriousness of these microaggressions for

LGBTQ+ students and allows the issue to continue (Silverschanz et al., 2008). After all,

who wants to step in and have that conversation? What student- who may already feel

Othered- wants to stop the joke and say- that's not funny and here's why? In a system

where you're already on the outside looking in, where you're trying to find yourself,

trying to find your people, trying to learn, trying to find where you finally fit in- who

wants to make themselves the outsider because they can't get with the program that

everyone else seems to understand?

Microinvalidations are erasures and dismissals of the experiences and oppression

by marginalized groups. For example, comments such as: "We are all just people" and

"Your sexuality doesn't matter" said to someone who identifies as LGBTQ+ would be

illustrative of an invalidation or downplaying of the importance of their identity

(Woodford et al., 2015). In the case of this research, the most common occurrence of

microinvalidations came from the issue of pronouns and the refusal of faculty to use

LGBTQ+ students' preferred pronouns; sometimes opting instead to 'deadname' students

according to the university roster. Deadnaming refers to the use of a birth name or former

name of a gender non-binary person or transgender person that is used without their

consent. This act may be accidental or rooted in passive ignorance of gender politics but can also be used as an intentional, antagonistic and aggressive (subjectively micro or macroaggressive) dismissal of gender politics and identity.

To more clearly represent this point, I will refer to a conversation with another one of my informants. David, the President of the Stonewall Pride Alliance at Florida International University, explains how gender pronouns are invalidated due to a lack of clear policy and training at FIU. They also explain how difficult it can be to speak up about LGBTQ+ issues on campus and in a classroom setting:

Faye: "Do you know of anyone who has experienced anything negative on campus?"

David: "It definitely gets a lot more tricky for people who are a gender minority…the policy isn't there. A lot of it comes from professors…There's a very special dynamic there- and when a professor disrespects you and your gender identity, you can feel very like…what do I do? They won't respect pronouns. People who were designated a pronoun at birth- because we're all in our twenties and probably don't have the money or the resources to change it- haven't changed our official names or genders. These professors will see this person and on their name sheet it will say "Catherine" and will assume to call them "she", but the student prefers to use "he" pronouns despite their cisgender name. The professor is at complete liberty to decide whether or not to respect that student and their chosen name and their chosen pronouns… But if you want to go and explain to your professor like "hey, I would prefer to use this other pronoun" …

that's a very scary confrontation to have. In a second, you could feel like you're on the professors' bad side… People can be cruel."

David further explains the challenges that accompany identifying as a non-binary in academia since some administrators and faculty members do not respect or respond to modernized language:

David: "Getting a professor to comply to that with a different name is enough of a challenge, but…there is no gender-neutral pronoun in English that is universally accepted as a singular. We, as a community, have accepted "them" and "their", we have accepted "zer", "zem" and "zis"- pronouns with a "Z". They're invented and new. Language changes in forty years. To be open to language and open to change to better explain the society that we're in. But for a lot of people, and especially those in academia, they might feel a certain way about grammar and language. They might feel like- no, we can't use "they" that way because "they" is a plural pronoun. We're not plural people so I'm going to continue to use "he" or "she". I'm not going to use that other pronoun that you just made up because it's made up. And that could very easily happen. It's happened in "side" ways in classes that I've been in. Not towards a student, but towards the idea of pronouns. So, a student sitting there is like 'well, I guess I can't use the pronouns I like.'"

Faye: "Did the student bring it up to their professor?"

David: "I actually brought it up…It was actually two professors and they were talking aloud in a way where it doesn't really matter who the person is, but they were using he/she. And clearly- as we know- that's exclusive of a certain people. I asked the

question "why do you prefer to use he/she instead of "they"?" the answer back is always "*they*" is plural. I have a rebuttal to that, but I don't want to get into an argument with a professor in the middle of a lesson…*We* [meaning younger queer conscious students] know a different way to use it because we come from that social media age where we know a different way to use it. *Pronouns is a huge thing and it's a heartbeat of what professors know*."

The point is: the responsibility isn't completely theirs. It is a huge onus to put on a young student to have to educate their faculty and their peers about gender politics and LGBTQ+ visibility while they are trying to navigate their academic careers. Universities are a landscape that enable lasting, meaningful relationships to form and promote dynamic change. They are a catalyst for growth and ideas. They are also institutions that instill power structures upon young, impressionable and continually learning students. It is the responsibility of these institutions, therefore, to recognize their role as gatekeepers and guides. To identify their privilege and power; to know how these structures can (perhaps inadvertently) harm LGBTQ+ students, but then to also utilize their resources to make meaningful change. To do this, it is first important to appreciate how a university may act as an 'LGBTQ+ safe space'- something I have endeavored to do in this chapter.

To review: the major themes that emerged from this chapter are spaces as places of power, the emergence of queer spaces and universities as both queer safe spaces as well as sites of marginalization for LGBTQ+ identities. It is important to recognize how spaces have historically been sites of Western, heterosexualized and masculinist power structures as this helps us to identify how other identities can interpret and experience

these spaces. An appreciation for the significance of the radical, dynamic and somewhat historically recent changes to these spaces also enables a more reflective discourse regarding how far the LGBTQ+ community has come in a short time, but how there is also still much room for growth. Recognizing how universities have recently become queer sites of both progress and othering opens further dialogue regarding the duality of spaces, the importance of power and positionality within them and how context and perception affect experience.

What is now crucial to understand is the myriad LGBTQ+ identities within university spaces. In the next chapter, I will more thoroughly investigate the 'other' identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum and how these identities navigate heteronormative and homonormative power structures that are inscripted upon queer university spaces. I will first examine some of examples of well-documented marginalized identities within the LGBTQ+ community. I will then discuss some concrete examples of spaces within the larger imagined university spaces that are challenging to navigate for LGBTQ+ students. Finally, I explore how certain identities work together toward increased visibility and common goals on university campuses despite some underlying tensions in these pairings.

CHAPTER IV: NAVIGATING UNIVERSITY SPACES FROM THE OUTSIDE WHILE ON THE INSIDE

In this chapter I will discuss 'other' identities on the LGBTQ+ spectrum, how they are marginalized within the LGBTQ+ community, in queer spaces and- more specifically- in university spaces. By highlighting these homonormative power hierarchies and their effects, I will show how certain normative powers are reinforced by LGBTQ+ students and upheld by university administrators in campus spaces. Challenges faced by othered LGBTQ+ identities will be highlighted with accounts from several research participants who shared their personal experiences of feeling marginalized on their respective university campuses. Bisexual and Transgendered identities will be brought to the fore as examples of homonormative Othering due to the significant academic research that has been done on these identities and the parallel testimony given by informants for this research. For this chapter, I again draw on semi-structured interviews, participant observation and social media analysis to further develop my research, while paying particular attention to student narratives that highlighted these themes.

I.   Introduction

When thinking of queer spaces or how spaces are interpreted by those who identify as LGBTQ+, it is important to recognize how spaces are typically heteronormative and reproduced through a masculine perspective. As previously discussed, heteronormativity refers to an assumed societal norm regarding gender performativity, sexual identity, family structures revolving around a relationship between

one man and one woman (Butler, 1990, 1993; Fotopoulou, 2013; Hubbard, 2000, 2015; Sedgwick, 1990; Warner, 1999). In *Desire/disgust: Mapping the Moral Contours of Heterosexuality*, James Hubbard explains: "…it is also important to stress that the creation and recreation of heteronormativity relies on the construction of spatialized boundaries which distinguish between moral and immoral forms of heterosexuality" (Hubbard, 2000: 200). The rules for subsequent public social spaces therefore adhere to this "straight' modeling and are set up for this assumed heteronormativity.

This concept of homonormativity is not only based upon sexuality and gender, but also race and socioeconomic class. In *Dangerous Waters and Brave Space: A Critical Feminist Inquiry of Campus LGBTQ Centers,* Jen Self and Kimberly Hudson call this 'homonormative whiteness', describing it as "…the (re)production of U.S. sociopolitical discourse organized around mythical cultural standards aptly described by Lorde (1984), as "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, financially secure" (pg. 116) or in other words, the hegemonic gay…the regulating norms that constitute the dominant queer body as White and male, and center rather static and polar ideas of whiteness and masculinity as normal" (Self and Hudson, 2015: 218). These structures are assumed, normalized and reinforced through silence and acceptance by the LGBTQ+ community-even within their own 'safe spaces' (Duggan, 2003, Rushbrook, 2002; Self and Hudson, 2015). 'Other' identities therefore often feel marginalized and less safe as the obvious minority even within these supposed safe spaces- recognizing that something about their identity is not widely accepted in those spaces. This is the challenge of LGBTQ+ organizations on campus: "…although LGBTQ centers are grounded historically in political discourse resistant to heteronormativity and in the exclusionary practices of

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public institutions, such regulating norms continue to haunt LGBTQ organizations even as they shift toward practice models that consider homophobia and transphobia as complicit within an interlocking system of oppressions" (Self and Hudson, 2015: 219). Despite attempts to address homonormativities, socially produced, rooted binaries and hierarchies endure. Their persistence, though often recognized and unintentional, creates uncomfortable and sometimes unsafe spaces for marginalized LGBTQ+ identities on university campuses.

II.   Invisibility, Erasure and Othering of Identities

Homonormative identities are usually the most visible and active in LGBTQ+ organizations on university campuses. The interviewees for this research certainly seemed to parallel this prototype: 29% of the respondents identified as Gay, 29% of the respondents identified as Queer, 14% identified as Bisexual, 14% identified as Transgender, 8% preferred not to disclose, 3% identified as genderqueer and 3% identified as asexual. Oddly, (or perhaps at least of note) none of the participants that volunteered to be interviewed identified as Lesbians. Although it was my aim to speak with as many identities as possible, I did not set out with the intention of targeting specific identities for this research. My thought process was that the sample I did receive would be indicative of the kinds of students that were willing to speak with me about a project like this and also, perhaps, would show what the LGBTQ+ student body may look like at each university and the variation of identities there. Most of the informants who identified as women also identified as Queer or Bisexual. Of those in the minority categories, all of the respondents aside from those who chose not to disclose their identity

did reveal that they had felt like an 'Othered' or marginalized identity at some point on their university campus and within their respective organizations. In particular, those students who identified as bisexual and transgender felt very othered within these spaces, albeit for different reasons.

i.   Acronyms: Marginalization in Black and White

As the President of the Stonewall Pride Alliance, David relayed that he had often found it challenging for the organization to engage with certain LGBTQ+ demographics. For some, this was an unwillingness to self-disclose and a lack of desire to confirm to a specific identity, but for others it was a reticence to engage with the organization for fear of further marginalizations and Othering. Specifically, David explained that they have had difficulties engaging bisexual, transgender and intersex students. A recent issue that the Stonewall Pride Alliance had was with the acronym they used: LGBTQA. After feedback from a student indicating that this acronym could be exclusive to some identities, including bisexuals, the organization decided to change their Acronym the LGBTQAA:

David: "The way we identify the organization is…well based on the acronym. The office identifies it Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer and Allies. We as a student organization can kind of be more receptive and flexible. And so, we've been hearing from the discourse about Asexual identities and that Asexual people feel like…we're more entitled to be the "A" in LGBTQA than the allies are because we might actually be marginalized for your sexual orientation. So, we rewrote the constitution and

now its Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Asexual *and* Allies. So, its LGBTQAA."

Faye: "I have also seen LGBTQA and LGBTQA+. Is that helpful to you because it kind of encompasses everything?"

David: "We got a question this year from a student who is a freshman and she is like: "I'm highly involved in the queer theory and queer discourse of social media" …so like queer Twitter, queer Tumblr… She came in and she's clearly like of that circle and she perceives the acronym that we use as a problem because you're excluding intersex people, nonbinary genders because you're using the term transgender, you're excluding pansexuals, you're excluding asexuals and I sat over that message for a day because its important. It's a fair thing."

Faye: "Not everyone likes to be under the 'Queer' umbrella."

David: "What I ended up responding to her was that the acronyms and all of their iterations are ultimately referring to the same group of people. I broke down "bisexual"- the way we use it tends to be under the "multisexual" umbrella which includes polysexual, pansexual, multisexual…the transgender- the T in LGBTQA- we tend to include people who are gender plus, gender fluid, agender. We don't want to necessarily include intersex in there, but we don't want to say that we don't talk about intersex because October 26th is actually intersex awareness day and we have a meeting that day about intersex awareness and identity. So, regardless of the acronym, we are inclusive in our action. I told her that I invited her to join into these organizations and see for yourself. If you do perceive that we as Stonewall could be more flexible and open to

changing our position, then okay, but you need to participate. You can't just send me a run-off e-mail that tells me to change everything and then never come to a meeting. If you want to change it, do what I did and get involved, but I hear you and I promise we're inclusive."

ii.   Bisexuality: The Stigma of Sexual Ambiguity

Bisexuality as part of the LGBTQ+ spectrum is an identity that is often uniquely marginalized and openly maligned within the LGBTQ+ community. Bisexuals often experience "…unique stressors: disregard or dismissal of their sexual orientation, challenges with self-acceptance due to internalized and external homonegativity and binegativity, lack of acceptance from partners in mixed-orientation relationships, and isolation related to limited bisexual visibility and community" (Israel, 2018; see also Ross, Dobinson, and Eady, 2010). They endure a kind of "double stigma"; identifying with the LGBTQ+ community while also having the unique ability to 'pass' as straight or sometimes take on generally straight modeling relationships. This unique positionality offers both freedom and restrictions. There is the seemingly obvious sexual autonomy to have romantic and sexual relationships with multiple genders. For some in the LGBTQ+ community, though, dipping your toe into two pools does not qualify you as Queer. They want you to choose a side; either you *are* or you *aren't*. Sexual ambiguity is okay as long as you don't end up with the opposite sex- or as long as your relationship hits a certain number of Queer boxes. If someone seeks out a same-sex partner who presents too similarly to the opposite sex, they may not be in it for the long haul. If someone presents

too feminine or too masculine, this could also be cause for suspicion. They endure the stigma of being queer, but also not queer enough. Juana Maria Rodriguez explains:

> "Coming of age as a bisexual Latina femme in the 1980s, I was surrounded by lesbian-feminist communities and discourses that disparaged, dismissed, and vilified bisexuality. Those of us that enthusiastically embraced femininity or that actively sought out masculine presenting butches were deemed perpetually suspect. Femmes were imagined as being always on the verge of abandoning the lesbian-feminist communities that nurtured us for the respectability and privilege that heterosexual relations might afford. The label bisexuality, for those that dared to claim it, was viewed as the apolitical cop-out for those that were not radical enough to fully commit to the implied lesbian practice of feminist theory" (Rodriguez, 2016: 169).

While statistically there have been studies indicating a higher percentage of bisexuals than homosexuals (especially bisexual women), they are often left out or erased from the Queer discourse (Rodriguez, 2016; Self and Hudson, 2015; Serpe et al, 2020). Some would point to individuals identifying under the Queer umbrella as a cause for this erasure, while others argue that the reason is partly to do with emerging terminology to describe one's specific LGBTQ+ identity that extends beyond a 'bisexual' binary of being attracted to two genders. The issue then becomes that some bisexuals feel that their identity is being erased because they are not open enough in this modern LGBTQ+ world: "…while other terms such as pansexual, polysexual, ambisexual and fluid are also used to define sexual and romantic desires that exceed hetero or homosexuality, and are seen by some as being more inclusive, like "queer" these terms are often used to mask

certain sexual and social practices…" (Rodriguez, 2016: 175). Though part of the

LGBTQ+ acronym, bisexuals often claim that they are misunderstood, miscategorized,

belittled and excluded (Ciocca et al., 2018; Rodriguez, 2016; Self and Hudson, 2015).

"Once claimed openly, bisexual women are either castigated for failing to conform to

community standards of sexual behavior, or imagined to be privileged benefactors of

patriarchy, sucking precious resources from "The Community," while enjoying all of the

material and social benefits of heterosexuality, even if it is imagined that we only benefit

from them half the time" (Rodriguez, 2016: 175).

Then there are also those scholars who would argue that bisexuality is often a stop

on the way toward identifying fully as gay or lesbian. In *Diversity and Inclusivity at*

University: A Survey of the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT)

Students in the UK, Sonja Ellis reveals that the bisexual participants in her research study

were significantly more likely to feel comfortable being out on campus than their

homonormative gay or lesbian counterparts. She then states: "This is, however, not

entirely surprising in that bisexuality is commonly seen by young people as a 'safe'

alternative to a lesbian or gay identity. Many lesbian and gay youth initially identify as

bisexual as a way of averting the stigma of being labelled lesbian/gay, enabling them to

retreat into the closet should they feel the need" (Ellis, 2009: 733). I would argue that

this statement in itself makes the point of the scholars above as it fundamentally erases

bisexual identity and assumes that it is not a fixed point, but rather a stepping-stone to a

more clearly defined homonormative identity. The subsequent language of 'retreating'

into the closet implies that bisexuals do not have the political or social fortitude to stand

firmly in their identity for a definitive period of time. This statement was not

substantiated with any interviews or texts; it was a seemingly standalone declaration

hidden in the middle of a journal article. While this would probably go unnoticed by most

readers, those who identify as bisexual and who are in the LGBTQ+ community may

sense this nuance and see- in black and white- how bisexuals are marginalized in Queer

discourses and spaces.

David, a student at Florida International University, candidly discusses his

feelings with me about bisexuality at FIU and in general. David is the President of the

Stonewall Pride Alliance at FIU and identifies as a psysexual, demiromantic, gender-fluid

man. As the President of the most prominent LGBTQ+ organization on campus, he

interacts with most of the involved students, faculty and administration at the university

and has a unique knowledge of the campus climate. Echoing the voices of some of the

previously listed scholars, David explains that many of the bisexuals he has encountered

are 'invisible' because they are perceived to be straight or because they *choose* to present

that way:

David: "People are like…I don't want to have to explain my thing *all of the time*.

So, they don't self-disclose unless you make it clear that this is a safe space for them.

They are much more present than you would imagine. 'Bisexual' is actually the largest

community of LGBT, but a lot of them will be perceived to be either gay or straight. A

lot of bisexual women, men, anybody…if a bisexual woman is in a relationship with a

man- regardless of his sexuality- she is perceived as straight to anyone who is walking

by. You can't know unless that person is comfortable enough to tell you… You can see

two guys holding hands and you can say "hey, that's probably gay people". That's the

most widely perceived, but that's only because everyone else doesn't feel comfortable yet. I have a person who identifies as …their concept is pansexual, but they don't want to use the label. They're like: "I don't like labels; I just like people." Labels are ultimately meant to construct your self-identity."

Faye: "Because people like to put you in a box."

David: "The proverbial box is a big thing… When I looked up what demisexual is…even though it's a label, even though it's a box…it helped me to construct my self-image and my self-identity. I'll say that if a label- no matter what it means- ultimately does not help you do that, don't use it. You could be completely straight, but just don't want to label it that way. You don't have to. For straights, specifically, it's weird because there aren't any alternatives. For LGBT there are lots of alternatives, you can identify as gay, you can identify as queer, you can play around…"

Faye: "Right. If you're straight you can only choose one thing. I feel very boxed in and as someone who does a lot of studying of queer theory, gender and sexuality…and even though I've only dated men and am married to a man- knowing that gender and sexuality is fluid and things can change over time…I don't like to say "straight" because I just feel that it's not really representative of me. It's not that it's a lie, but it's not the whole picture."

David: "It happens to a lot of people. Someone will identify as bisexual within themselves, but never act on it, but that doesn't disqualify your identity. Even if you're a bisexual woman and you've only been with men and you're married to a man and you have children and you don't conceivably see yourself as having a relationship with a

woman and your relationship with your husband doesn't allow for that, you don't feel a need to be with other women because of the relationship that you're in- you're still a bisexual. You still have the capacity for that attraction, but you're not going to act on that because you're in a committed relationship. You have boundaries. You can't even judge based on action or behavior- you can literally only ask the person. And if they don't know then you don't need to know either. They're doing fine not knowing and its none of your business. I could talk endlessly about it."

As a result of the psychological stressors associated with being marginalized and Othered, many bisexuals experience impaired mental health and symptoms at a rate much higher than those who identify as heterosexual and homosexual (Ciocca et. al, 2018; Kerr, 2013; Ross et al, 2010; Serpe et al, 2020). In *Bisexuality Among a Cohort of University Students: Prevalence and Psychological Distress*, Giacomo Ciocca et al. explain that, comparatively, bisexuals have a higher rate of anxiety disorders and depression compared to their heterosexual and homosexual counterparts. Bisexual women are also more likely to have eating disorders. (Ciocca et al, 2018; Koh and Ross, 2006). They found that bisexuals also "… had significantly higher scores on all measures of suicidal behaviour than homosexuals; higher levels of depression and despair were reported to mediate the link between sexual orientation and suicidal behaviour" (Ciocca et al., 2018: 80; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2011). Due to chronic stress factors such as binegativity, identity concealment and microaggressions from the straight community and the LGBTQ+ community, bisexuals also tend to be at a greater risk for substance abuse (Green and Feinstein, 2012; McCabe et al., 2009; Serpe et al., 2020).

Christine Serpe et al. examine how mental health disparities experienced by bisexual women are reflected in statistical analysis of violence and victimization rates in *Bisexual Women: Experience and Coping with Objectification, Prejudice and Erasure:* "Lifetime sexual victimization (e.g., childhood sexual abuse, adult sexual victimization) rates vary between groups, with a greater percentage of bisexual women (78%) reporting victimization as compared to lesbian (66%) and straight (38%) women (Hughes et al., 2010). In addition, approximately half of the bisexual women included in the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NIVS) endorsed having been raped in their lifetimes (Walters et al., 2013). These numbers are consistent with reporting from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, which found bisexual women to experience higher incidents of lifetime rape, physical violence, or stalking (61%) as compared to lesbian (44%) and straight women (35%; Breiding et al., 2014). Bisexual individuals face unprecedented amounts of discrimination, and the effects of living within multiple marginalized identities (bisexual and person of color) might further point to heightened health disparities" (Serpe et al., 2020:457-458).

Understanding and recognizing how bisexuals are Othered and erased in the LGBTQ+ spectrum when considering Queer university spaces is crucial as these are the first spaces where bisexuals may be exploring their sexual identities as well as the spaces where the initial microaggressions, acts of violence and subsequent concealment may occur. It is vitally important, then, to educate faculty, staff, students and the LGBTQ+ organizations about the unique prejudices and challenges felt by bisexuals in university spaces so that they can find ways to best support them during this important time of self-

discovery and growth. With this knowledge and discourse, the campus climate could be improved for bisexuals and other marginalized identities which would potentially, in turn, reduce victimization rates, biphobia and related mental health issues.

In line with this scholarly discourse is the experience of one of my research informants, Chris, who felt that the lack of support that he received from his university as he was exploring his sexual identity led to feelings of depression and isolation. A twenty-six-year-old student at Nova Southeastern University, Chris explained that he had always sensed an attraction to men and women, but only felt comfortable normalizing his bisexuality after discussing it with his fiancée- a woman. When looking at graduate schools, Chris wanted to go somewhere that was a bit more open than Central Pennsylvania where he is from originally. After visiting Miami and meeting with an advisor at Nova, he decided that both the location and the culture were the new path forward that he was looking for and decided to make the move. He found the atmosphere at Wilton Manors- an LGBTQ+ area close to campus- to be especially warm and inviting. When he arrived at campus, though, he describes his first year as being a bit of a culture shock. The research that he decided to pursue- Risky Sex in the LGBTQ Community- was met with fierce, seemingly intentional criticism from his professors (not the advisor who he had initially met) in the Clinical Psychology Department. The LGBTQ organization run through the Clinical Psychology department was more lacking than he would have thought- primarily run by graduate commuter students 'looking for a CV boost'. Chris did not find the personal connections that he was hoping or expecting to make in Miami. The support system that he imagined he would have on campus was

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almost nonexistent and he found himself questioning whether or not he had made the right decision at a pivotal point in his life and identity:

Chris: "When I first moved down here, I was so depressed. I felt like I didn't have anybody…in undergrad, I did really well. The professors cared. Here…they just laughed at you. They would straight up tell you that you sucked…and in my program anything below a "B" is failing, so I just felt stupid. They were not supportive at all. I felt like they didn't like me for some *reason* and that was just awful. I switched programs and now it's much better, but it was hard. In grad school, we're professionals and we're trying to start our lives. We're transitioning. We need that support, you know?"

To summarize, LGBTQ+ identities who fall outside of the homonormative model of queerness experience this otherness in several ways including invisibility, stigma, microaggressions and violence. As a result of this marginalization, these identities often respond in kind via myriad forms of emotional distress and social isolation. Without the presence of a foundational support system in a supposed LGBTQ+ safe space, many LGBTQ+ students become disillusioned and reticent. Bisexual identities present a unique focus for this theme as they were one of the first recognized sexual outliers on the LGBTQ+ spectrum and, therefore, have a plethora of related scholarly commentary. More recently, non-binary genders and transgender identities have come to the fore in scholarly and mainstream discourses.

iii.   Beyond 'Othering': Lacking Basic Resources for LGBTQ+ Students

For transgender students, attending universities presents both opportunities and unique challenges that are increasingly difficult to navigate. Similarly to bisexual students and other marginalized LGBTQ+ students, Transgender students also have to deal with additional forms of social and physical provocations such as verbal/ physical harassment, social exclusion, violence and various forms of discrimination in addition to the normal stressors associate with attending college (Bilimoria and Stewart, 2009; Ciocca et al., 2008; Duran et al., 2020; Greathouse et al., 2013; Jacobson et al., 2017; Rankin, 2003, 2010; Silverschanz et al., 2008; Sue, 2010; Woodford et al., 2012). Like bisexuals, transgender identities are often seen as between worlds- even if they, themselves know their true gender and sexual identity. Added to this otherness is a physical transformation which can be both physically and medically challenging. Transgender students who are physically transitioning and notably have characteristics that are outside of gender norms or between genders may also experience nonverbal exclusion such as looks and stares on campus that create a feeling of isolation and uneasiness within that physical space (Rankin, 2003; Rankin et al., 2010). As a result, many transgender students, even without having experienced specific acts of aggression or prejudice, may view a campus climate as 'unwelcoming and unsupportive' (Greathouse et al., 2018; Rankin et al., 2010).

While transgender students aim to have a college experience as similar to their peers as possible, many of them find that the resources on campus for transgender students are severely lacking or not yet equipped to meet their growing needs (Greathouse et al., 2018). For this research, the most notable discrepancies for transgender students were insufficient counseling services for LGBTQ+ students, absence

of transgender-related medical care and lacking LGBTQ+ organizational programming and support on campus. This lack of seemingly basic resources that are provided to the majority of the student body made the transgender students that I spoke with feel as though their universities were 'behind the curve' and did not care about them, specifically, as a group of individuals. One student at Florida International University explained to me how difficult it was to try to transition while attending the university since the insurance provided by the school did not cover the transition process in any way:

Taylor: "Medically, the insurance doesn't cover transitions at all. There is no one in the student health center that is qualified to deal with it -with gender transitioning or counseling. In Florida, you have to get six months of counseling before you can start transitioning medically. They have no one [at FIU] that is qualified to do that or to prescribe hormones…and they can't administer it either."

Faye: "Where do you get your hormones?"

Taylor: "From a community center in South Beach."

Faye: "So, who you see here [for counseling] isn't to help you with our transitioning counseling? You have to go outside FIU."

Taylor: "Yeah, and I have to pay out of pocket, too. That's another issue. I basically had to stop transitioning last year because I couldn't afford it. And I'm not going to go and do sex work. Not that there is anything wrong with doing sex work- on a personal level- you can do whatever you want in my opinion. It just wasn't what I

wanted to do. And I can't get another job while I'm TA-ing because of the contracts that we sign."

Faye: "So, you get United Healthcare through FIU and they don't help with anything for transitioning at all?"

Taylor: "The drugs that I get prescribed would actually qualify under women's health issues- the drugs that cut down testosterone in the system or boost estrogen levels. One of the drugs just went from tier one- which costs about $10 a month to tier three which is a half coverage and costs me about $50 a month. And $300 to get the rest and I can't do that, so I had to stop taking all of my hormones. Not good. I tried to get the medicine transferred here so I didn't have to wait an hour to get it, but then I found out that they can't do that or they could give me one of the prescriptions, but I would still have to go to South Beach for the other one, so what was the point?...Dealing with all of the back and forth between the insurance and the health center…I just ended up breaking down more or less. Putting my life on hold for four or five months. I just wasted a lot of time. I should already have my masters, but I'm trying not to look at it from that perspective because it's such a negative way of thinking. I tried getting back into it this winter- started going to a counselor, getting back in touch and getting things done. Positive circles."

One of the most crucial themes that surfaced repeatedly in this research in relation to transgender students was an absence of safe spaces on university campuses and, specifically, how bathrooms had become symbolic of their otherness. These typically heteronormative spaces had become litmus tests for LGBTQ+ university progress.

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Bathrooms, a common and required resource for all students, had become sites of fear, violence and segregation for some members of the LGBTQ+ university community. How the universities acknowledged and addressed this problem, for the students, was often indicative of their commitment to diversity and inclusion on campus. It was also, however, an effective representation of societal progress as the issues brought up within university circles often mirrored public discourses. As such an important site of LGBTQ+ otherness on university campuses, I am going to address this theme in its own section with the support of informant testimony. I will then continue the discussion of transgender othering.

III.   The Importance of Bathrooms

One of the most notable examples of heteronormativity and homonormativity in university spaces is public restrooms- there are typically two restrooms, one for men and one for women. These spaces do not, however, allow for the presence of trans men or women or for those who are gender fluid. As such, these are often uncomfortable and, sometimes, unsafe spaces for those who identify as LGBTQ+ (Greathouse et al., 2018; Jacobson et al., 2017; Kane, 2013; Yost, 2011). While some strides have been taken to address these concerns, many of the transgender students who I spoke with during this research indicated to me that bathrooms were still a very large issue on university campuses. One FIU student explains the emotional toll that is taken when pronouns and gender identities are not respected in terms of public restrooms:

FIU student: "People don't realize how important bathrooms are. People will say 'Oh it's just a bathroom and you have to go pee.' If you identify as a woman and you're

told by everyone around you that you have to go into a bathroom that says "men" on it- it's going to send you into a crisis."

At the time of this interview in 2015, the first gender neutral bathroom had just been built at the Graham Center at the FIU Modesto Modique Campus. This is significant for several reasons. First, the location of the facility is in a very public area on campus. The Graham Center is a prime student meeting area and is very visible- it is the heart of the campus for student dining and activities. Queer visibility is a recurring theme throughout this research, often showing up in both obvious and very subtle ways via queer representation and geographies on campuses in South Florida. The students that I spoke to for this research seemed especially aware of their respective visibility on campus as well- often making it a point to let me know (beyond my line of questioning) where their queer-specific spaces were located on campus and if they were more public or private.

The second aspect of the installation of this gender-neutral bathroom was the fanfare around it. On December 4, 2014, the Miami Herald released an article entitled *LGBT Students Praise FIU for Readying Campus' First Gender-Neutral Bathroom* (Piccardo and Lorenzino, 2014). The project cost about $300,000 and was funded through the al Improvement Trust Fund, a state fund that is allocated for student facilities. The article highlights Gabriel 'Gaby' Benavente, a male to female transgender student who recognizes FIU as a safe space where she can represent herself as her true gender identity and confirms that bathrooms are a part of that saying: "If you choose the [bathroom] that you identify with, you could potentially be subject to ridicule, but if you

go to the other one, it almost feels like you're lying to yourself" (Piccardo and Lorenzino, 2014). The article also discusses how FIU was 'catching up' with other Florida state institutions that had been implementing gender-neutral bathrooms over the past five years- many with perceived success. In 2014, The University of Florida had about twenty-five; University of South Florida had fifty-six; University of Central Florida had seventeen; Florida State University had four; and Florida Atlantic University had twenty-two (Piccardo and Lorenzino, 2014). Many of these gender-neutral bathrooms were added strategically in tandem with new ADA regulations to serve a wider number of user groups on campuses. The article ends with a quote from Jaylon Hadley, President of the Gay-Straight Alliance at FIU after the authors mention the students indicate that this change has been 'a long time coming': "There needs to be a private place to use a restroom. There needs to be that option…There are still things we need to do for our trans community that has been lacking here" (Piccardo and Lorenzino, 2014). My point in discussing this article is not to give an overview of it, but rather to outline the facts detailed within, which are indeed interesting, and to also bring attention to the strategic title of the article. There was nowhere in this article, other than perhaps Gaby Benavente's recognition of FIU as a safer space than home to perform their true gender identity, that FIU students were noted as praising FIU. On the other hand, FIU was observed as being behind the curve and the president of the prominent LGBTQ alliance on campus outwardly spoke of their lacking resources for trans students. Aside from this article in the Miami Herald, FIU also published several different articles about the new gender-inclusive restroom on their campus news outlets, publicizing it for months before it was ever built.

On this particular topic of bathrooms, two students at UM also had a very interesting discourse with me and explained their view and experiences with the issue. Their names have been changed, but for the course of this excerpt, I will refer to them as Simon and Ryen. Simon, who identifies as an asexual queer male, had explained to me previously in our interview that he had felt unsafe as a queer student living at UM, particularly due to his housing situation and how the group dynamic of the men in his dorm led to a feeling of physical and emotional ostracization. After being forced to live in the freshman dorm his first year, Simon opted to move off campus and has a much safer and better experience as a queer commuter student. While I was interviewing him his friend, Ryen, who identifies as a transgender male, came into the LGBTQ lounge and sat with us. They are quiet for about fifteen minutes as we talk of other things. Then I ask Simon about what he would change to improve things for LGBTQ+ students in university spaces. He refers again to his difficulties with freshman housing and explains his desire for genderblind housing and facilities for all students. We don't grow up in gendered homes- why should this change as soon as we go to universities? Makes sense to me. I digress. He tells me that he was once so frustrated with the universities' gendered policy that he brought it up to an administrator and asked why they could not have gender neutral housing. She explained it was because of the bathrooms.

Faye: "The bathrooms? Why?"

Simon: "Well because if you allow both sexes to use the bathrooms together, then they will use them to have sex."

As if college students could not find enough other places on campus to have sex and were not already having sex in the gendered bathrooms. I smirked. Out of nowhere, the seemingly stoic Ryen let out a brief snort of a laugh and shook their head. They were interested and engaged.

Simon explains that at first this sounds like a reasonable argument, because if you're worried about sexual activity in these spaces then it stands to reason that you could be worried about sexual assault in these spaces. At the same time, though, it presents a very large double standard for LGBTQ+ students:

Simon: "This made me angry because it's holding me to a higher standard. They expect me to 'control myself' in these spaces when I am theoretically attracted to thirty-five other straight men. And I can do that with no issues. There have been no reports of LGBTQ students raping or sexually assaulting straight students on campus. They [straight men] should be able to control themselves in a space with thirty-five other men and women who they are attracted to. The fact that we have to pilot this and fund this and start this and find interest in this is so frustrating. It should already just be."

Like FIU, gender-neutral bathrooms at UM were in their infancy and they had just started being built or converted on campus, but in very specific locations. The call to action was made by the students at SpectrUM who then spoke with administrators at Student Life and Facilities to work through logistics. To start, it was decided that those restrooms on campus that were 'single occupancy,' or 'family' restrooms would now be named 'gender neutral' or 'gender-inclusive' restrooms. At first, this sounds like a good compromise. Several gender-neutral restrooms are created overnight which is a good

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start for the LGBTQ+ students and the administration, for now, has very minimal up-front costs. They were just changing a sign. But what sign were they really changing? And where were they changing them? Ryen is animated now. This issue is very important to them and they have things that they want me and anyone else who will listen to know:

Ryen: "They have promised us, eventually, one gender-neutral bathroom stall per building. That's terrible. Look at Dooly [Memorial Classroom Building]. We have one building that's super, super long. And on the very bottom floor, all the way on one side there is one gender-neutral bathroom, but a lot of times, I have classes on the third floor all the way on the opposite side of the building and it would take me ten minutes just to go, pee, and run back. I would run as fast as I could. It's an effort [for the administration], but it's a very minimal effort and it's kind of exclusionary because you're segregated over here to this little dark corner of a building."

Simon chimes in: "Also, [since its so far] you have to be like 'I'm going to the gender-neutral bathroom'. You have to be *that* person. You might have to let people know because you might be late to class. The whole point of the gender-neutral bathroom is not forcing you to sort yourself, but this literally forces you to sort yourself as far away as possible. It's a spectacle."

Ryen: "Right. So, you are voluntarily segregating yourself and they [the administration] get to say 'Look at us! We did this gender-neutral bathroom! We're so great!' They're making an effort, but it's a convenient effort that looks good for them."

Ryen continues and explains how changing the signs and giving the LGBTQ+ students a gender-neutral space may initially seem like a good compromise, but how it can also make those spaces less accessible for those other students for whom they were originally intended and who also need them:

Ryen: "Those restrooms [that the administration has converted] are the most accessed in terms of handicapped accessibility. That's what those bathrooms were originally intended for, so it's also creating more traffic in spaces that were supposed to be accessible spaces which- honestly- already get a lot of traffic from people who don't actually to use them."

I am confused and ask if they have modified these restrooms to put in an additional gender-neutral stall or anything in addition to the accessible stall for disabled students and faculty, but Simon and Ryen confirm that the only thing about the bathroom that was change was the signage, fueling their frustration further:

Ryen: "It's like: if you need a wheelchair, you can use this and if you're trans you can use this. Or if you're a trans person in a wheelchair then you're perfect."

Here we see several themes in queer intersectional theory coming together in a complex way to present how this heteronormative university space is being experienced, reimagined and restructured by LGBTQ+ students. The importance of queer visibility and geography are brought fervently to the fore as we see how, in sharp contrast to the bathroom installation at FIU, students are experiencing and discussing these restrooms. Hidden away, difficult to access and shared with others whose accessibility they do not wish to infringe upon. Though there are more of them, these gender-neutral bathrooms

seem to the students to be more of a convenient consideration and opportunity for positive press than real change. The experience in these spaces is a challenge, and the reimagining is one with plenty of push back. Simon talks about how he reimagines these spaces going forward:

Simon: "If I could, I would make all of the bathrooms on campus gender-neutral so we could all just go to the bathroom and be done with it, but it's a non- starter. It won't happen. For some people, it just bends their brain too much. But we did get the commitment from them [the administration] that whenever future bathrooms are built on campus, there will be a gender-neutral stall included- at least one per building."

Progress, but mitigated progress. It seems like such a simple change, but there are so many parties to please; so much red tape to get through. Beyond breaking down the heteronormative space itself and getting the university administration on board, you then have to fund it. Change can be expensive. Walls cost money. Stalls cost money. Even those little plaques can cost a surprising amount of money to a private institution that already deals with several high budget requests. Then you also have to deal with the parents. Simon reminds me that UM is a private institution with a high percentage of international students that come from more conservative countries- they are certainly not all going to be on board with his version of a genderblind utopia. He shrugs as if he understands this reality: progress is never going to catch up with his ideal queer imaginary. The wider population are always going to be a few steps behind where he might want them to be. He and Ryen give each other a knowing look, let out an uncannily timed heavy sigh and we move on.

IV: A Nexus of Othering: Transgender Experiences

Though universities are often seen as a more inviting and accepting place for LGBTQ+ students and identities to exist and explore themselves, there are still homonormative ideas and concepts of space that many marginalized identities within the spectrum must contend with. A theme that was continually repeated in interviews with students throughout this process, many of those on the spectrum that did not identify as cisgender, white gay men had experienced or witnessed inequity on campus and felt that queer spaces were unfairly balanced- sometimes even completely discriminatory. The reasons for this imbalance were explained to be both with the LGBTQ+ students on campus, but most often with the administration and their failure to enact policies that recognized the legitimacy of 'Other' identities in terms of legality and respect.

Again, homonormativity refers to the privileged lifestyle, culture and ideals often held by those on the spectrum who have the benefits and freedom to engage in that way of life: namely white, gay cisgender men. This group often marginalizes those on the spectrum who are unable to partake in widely circulated homonormative gay culture: those who are too poor to live in upscale, gentrified neighborhood; those who are unable to socially or politically assimilate to the universal mainstream because their skin color or ethnic background continues to keep them in the minority; those who aren't interested in consuming or living the mainstream queer narrative (Brown, 2009; Ghaziani, 2014; Kanai and Kenttamaa-Squires, 2015; Kates, 2002) . Though more attention has been paid to these issues as diversity sits at the forefront of our media and culture, there are still persons who firmly believe and propagate the segregation of queer spaces. There are also

those within these spaces that are allies, but only to a point. This gray area is where the danger lies for queer students who find themselves identifying as an "Other' letter on the LGBTQ+ spectrum in university spaces.

Universities are queer spaces but can also have different levels of queerness depending on who you ask, where you go and who you interact with. The social policy and formal policy are not always in sync and interactions with students and faculty members or administration can be wildly varied. Experiences that the students had within those spaces were so individualistic because they each had their own unique stories and experiences with their respective university space and the actors within it, but certain patterns did emerge. Within this research those students that identified as bisexual, transgender and queer did have markedly more negative experiences with university administration and faculty than those who identified as gay. In particular, transgender students and genderqueer students noted a significant level of discomfort on campus due to the deficient education or adherence to correct pronoun usage, lacking on-campus facilities and unwillingness of inaccessibility to certain medical and counseling services for transitioning students.

One of these students was Taylor, a graduate student at FIU who was transitioning from male to female, identified as queer and specifically genderqueer and who was having a more difficult time than they though they should be having at a place like FIU. Originally from South Carolina, Taylor described themself as "dirt poor" and from a "regressive" area. Having been to Miami a few times to visit a friend, they saw South Florida as a safe haven to explore their sexuality:

Faye: "What did you imagine about South Florida before you got here?"

Taylor: "Well South Carolina isn't very gay friendly for the most part and my visits to Miami were pleasant. I didn't see gay people getting "slurred at" or anything like that so that was cool…. I was so deeply closeted then. I was definitely bisexual…queer already in my activities but was really repressed. It's bright and pretty tolerant with a bunch of…attractive people. If I'm going to go to grad school, then I may as well do it in paradise. I wanted to get far away from my family and go to a place where I would be more or less free to express myself and not feel like I was getting too much judgement from society."

After attending a small private, liberal arts school close to home that was '90% White, 50% Greek', Taylor was looking for something that deviated from the 'norm':

Taylor: "It had its own patriarchal, heteronormative culture…it wasn't especially tolerant on a social level towards others. I wanted something away from that."

Not one to make a decision lightly, Taylor ultimately applied to over a dozen universities and finally settled on FIU after noting FIU's social media presence, number of student organizations and the percentage of students on campus that identified as LGBTQ+. Taylor admits, though, that although this was a large part of their decision to attend FIU, they are not involved in any university organizations on campus:

Faye: "Have you ever been to any of the Stonewall Pride Alliance meetings?"

Taylor: "No…I've been wanting to, but…no."

Faye: "There was a Transweek [Transgender Awareness Week] recently- did you go to any of those events?"

Taylor: "No, I was kind of staring at walls at the time. Depression and anxiety are fun…I didn't really feel comfortable expressing myself and didn't want to be 'out'."

Faye: "Really? How Come?"

Taylor: "There were no other trans people in the program that I knew of and I didn't really want to be the first. I like keeping inside my own bubble sometimes. I don't like being the center of attention. I managed to let that idea work into my brain and…percolate."

I talk with Taylor for a minute about how interesting their answer is and how it seems to resonate with students like them at the other campuses I am researching. I tell them how I have discussed this very issue with the students and faculty at the University of Miami- how they know that a lot of students who identify as transgender do not attend the LGBTQ+ organizational meetings. I tell Taylor how they set up an LGBTQ task force assigned with discovering the most pertinent LGBTQ+ issues on campus- what the students have and what they need- and that they have compiled statistical data to support their findings. One of the most shocking statistics is that 42% of the students that identify as LGBTQ+ indicated that they feel incredibly isolated. The campus organizations want to offer support and want the students to come to meetings, but those students who seems to feel the most isolated are those who do not attend. How can they bridge that gap?

Taylor: "I wish I had the answer."

Faye: "Is there anything that a program could do to make it more appealing for you?"

Taylor: [*Immediately and seriously*] "Safe spaces. Spaces where I could go to just be around other people who are LGBTQ. I feel like that would have really helped at times. That would have helped a lot. Gender-neutral single stall bathrooms would have helped as well. It's tough to get people to go to meetings because if you're feeling isolated- like a lot of trans people do- 40% of trans people commit or attempt suicide in their lives- that's a jarring statistic. I could totally understand why a lot of people feel socially isolated."

Faye: "Do you feel that FIU is a queer friendly space?"

Taylor: "Yes, for the most part. I've never been slurred against or anything. You can read into people as you're walking down the street and depending on how they react to you; you know how to act. You might get a double glance or a shocked look, but I've never experienced any sort of violence…Last semester when I was still transitioning and on hormones, I e-mailed my professor and asked them to use they/ them for me and talked to them about how I was transitioning and she was generally trying to be very good about that. Yeah, I feel safe."

Even though Taylor did feel that FIU was a safe space where they could more freely explore their gender and sexual identity, they still recognized those microaggressions on campus that could make students feel unwelcome or unsafe. Even

though they had found a space to explore, it was still limited in many ways where they had envisioned it would be much more progressive from the narrative displayed on social media and via FIU's LGBTQ+ organizations.

Taylor: "I don't feel like the campus does enough, I suppose, for LGBTQ outreach. They could do more. I wish they would. Like having more safe spaces. Like getting faster at making changes to the things that they said they would, because almost all of the gender-neutral bathrooms are in dormitories which doesn't really help if you're on campus, but don't live on campus. I'm not going to go to Everglades Hall to use the restroom. [There's one in GC] …and one in the student health center…those are the only two that I know about. That's it. There are fifteen that have been changed in the dormitories… the handicapped stalls that are isolated but separate."

Like Simon and Ryen at UM, Taylor discusses issues with associating gender neutral or transitioning identities with disabled peoples; how the grouping of these identities together for 'convenience' is a continuation of the marginalization and de-normalization of the trans community. Keeping literally disabled bodies and societally 'not-normal' bodies separate within public spaces and also carelessly (or perhaps decidedly) categorizing them together conveys a very specific message: these are the 'Other' bodies. What kind of message does this send to students in these spaces? What kind of narrative does this convey to a transgender person coming to terms with their gender and body? How might this be internalized? Even for students who do not identify on the LGBTQ+ spectrum- how might they view these symbolic spatial structures and what conclusions might they draw about trans bodies? Universities are

institutions of power with access to young, impressionable minds that are looking to grow and shape their world view. What kind of foundation is being laid with the grouping together of these narratives?

Taylor explains this further:

Taylor: "There is a definite overlap between the two [identities]. The LGBT group- the trans people in it specifically- had to cooperate with the disabilities group to get more gender-neutral bathrooms that were also handicap accessible, but at the same time both of them had issues cooperating because trans people don't want to be considered disabled because it goes into this whole negative movement. And disabled people don't want to be considered *freaks*. Genderqueer or transitioning. It creates issues, but we're working towards the same goal…"

Here we see a paradox within the University space: identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum vying for rights and visibility while being obviously and often uncomfortably Othered- sometimes by others within the LGBTQ+ spectrum- but still somewhat accepting of this Othering to achieve an end goal. It is a necessary, but uncomfortable alliance; imperfect and painfully flawed for those that it affects but seen as an overall win by administrators and many of those who identify on the homonormative spectrum. For some, this is the means to an end- even if the path is messy, the end result is gender-neutral bathrooms and a safe space for genderqueer and transgender students on campus. What those identities who exist outside of the heteronormative and homonormative structures see, though, is a false identity, the wrong kind of visibility, a thoughtless and willfully ignorant mission forward. The universities get their credit, publish their articles

and pat themselves on the back, while the students accept their small "win" and begrudgingly vent amongst themselves about how it *should* have been done. Again, it is progress, but mitigated progress.

The underlying point of all of this is to acknowledge that every letter of whichever LGBTQ+ acronym one ascribes to has individual value, challenges and positionality on the spectrum. There is not one singular model or discourse that applies universally to all LGBTQ+ identities and assuming that some identities would prefer to be grouped together is inherently false and limited. For those identities that are marginalized on the LGBTQ+ spectrum, it is imperative to recognize how they are being othered, what unique prejudices they endure and to identify ways to support them. Universities should also note that their respective LGBTQ+ students are taking note of their action and inaction regarding diversity issues on campus. In order to facilitate LGBTQ+ safe spaces, universities need to appreciate the individualized challenges and stressors faced by the distinct identities on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. It should also be understood that, though some identities are more visible and those voices may be louder, all LGBTQ+ students are deserving of recognition and the resources that they need to be successful students. For Universities, there is no downside to identifying ways to support these students: it creates a safer, better campus climate and advances the reputation of the school as a diversity leader- a title that could be both socially and economically advantageous. I will further discuss the benefits of establishing safer campus climates in Chapter 6.

To Review: the major themes that emerged from this chapter are the marginalization of 'Other' identities within homonormative power structures and how these hierarchies affect visibility, resources and experiences within spaces. Recognizing the disparities and differing experiences between different LGBTQ+ identities on the spectrum is important because it demonstrates how normative powers pervade spaces and the actors within them. It also illustrates how heteronormative and homonormative values are upheld as certain identities are notedly less visible and essential resources (such as bathroom facilities and medical care) are either unavailable or inadequate to meet the needs of certain individuals. This lack of attention to basic necessities seems to show a prioritization for certain identities over others or-at least- general apathy and neglect. Whether intentional or not, these actions and inactions send strong messages to LGBTQ+ students about what kind of queer space their university is, what the challenges may exist within that space and what steps may need to be taken to confront those obstacles with the administration and other students on campus.

In the following chapter, I will discuss in further detail LGBTQ+ student responses to dealing with inequalities in university spaces. I will present a historical overview of LGBTQ+ organizations on university campuses and how symbology, language and acronyms have adjusted to reflect modern attitudes and LGBTQ+ advocacy. I will then specifically discuss the universities chosen as sites for this research (the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University) and how they have responded to requests for action from their respective LGBTQ+ organizations. I do not focus on Florida International University in this section as they were not actively making any additional changes to their campus at the time of this research other than to update

bathrooms to gender-neutral bathrooms which I have covered here. I will cover FIU

more in depth in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER V: HAVENS OR BATTLEGROUNDS? CREATING AND CHALLENGING UNDERSTANDINGS OF LGBTQ+ SAFE SPACE AT UNIVERSITIES

In this chapter I will explore how LGBTQ+ students respond to discrimination in university spaces, how they create LGBTQ+ safe spaces and discourses and how those spaces have evolved over time. I will also discuss how university campuses answer LGBTQ+ student critiques. I will do this by first presenting a history of LGBTQ+ spaces at universities and then by explaining how progressing symbology and organization disrupt normative structures and create new opportunities for queer space and visibility. For this chapter, I again draw on semi-structured interviews, participant analysis and social media analysis to further explore LGBTQ+ responses to university spaces. In my research, I discovered that two of the universities that I investigated for this study, Nova Southeastern University and the University of Miami, approached LGBTQ+ student concerns on campus very differently. I will therefore present informant narratives at these research sites to show the distinct actions taken by the universities and how these actions subsequently affected LGBTQ+ student sentiment and campus climate.

I.   LGBTQ+ Organization on University Campuses: Foundations

There is certainly a history of universities being LGBTQ+ safe spaces, but these accounts are varied and difficult to chronologically pinpoint. Written histories were often scattered or deemed too dangerous to be kept. Though credit has been given to the Stonewall Riots and the important history of the gay and lesbian political movements of the 1960's and 1970's, much of the records prior to and during this time period are unknown or overlooked. Reports of universities seeking out and expelling faculty and

staff who were presumed to be homosexuals created campus climates of fear and repression (Nash and Silverman, 2015; Rankin, 2019; Wright, 2005). Organization by LGBTQ+ students on campuses was considered unsafe, politically charged and often kept secret or underground. Some queer scholars argue that the significance of activism at universities is ignored and acclaim is instead attributed to more well-known organizations: "..the importance of college groups to gay liberation has been largely overlooked by gay historians, who either assume that the movement was literally born overnight following the riots or give too much credit to the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, and other mainline homophile organizations, many of whose members were actually opposed to the greater militancy of Stonewall" (Beemyn, 2003: 205). Many of the first noted LGBTQ+ organizations of student activists were at well-known Ivy league institutions like Cornell, Columbia and Princeton and their student leaders would go on to create larger gay liberation groups in urban spaces and prominent LGBTQ+ neighborhoods.

One of the first of these groups was the Student Homophile League at Columbia University, created by Stephen Donaldson (originally born Robert Martin). A member of the Mattachine Society and a self-identified bisexual, Donaldson found himself isolated and unwelcome on campus after his suitemates complained of his known sexual preferences and was forced to move out of his residence hall by the university administration. Having not met any other students who identified as LGBTQ+ his first year on campus, Donaldson sought to find and help other students like him by creating a Mattachine-like student organization, later known as the Student Homophile League. The creation of this organization was a serious challenge. Though Donaldson and

another student were willing to represent the organization under pseudonyms, none of the

other members would participate unless they could remain completely anonymous. This

was an issue because, at the time, Columbia would not recognize any student

organization without a complete membership list- even if revealing their identities meant

risking the rights and safety of those students. As a result, the organization remained a

secret, 'underground' association in its first year and was unable to receive funding, hold

public events or widely recruit members. The following year, in 1967, Donaldson found

a loophole that allowed him to satisfy the administration's request without breaking the

anonymity of the members of the league by convincing the school's prominent student

leaders to become proforma members. Columbia officially chartered the Student

Homophile League as the country's first gay rights student group on April 19, 1967

(Beemyn, 2003: 206).

On April 27, 1967, an article by Charles Skoro entitled *Undergraduates Form

Group to Help Homosexual Students* under the heading "Adjustment Problems" was

released in the Columbia Daily Spectator announcing that the Student Homophile League

(SHL) had received official status as a campus group from the Committee of Student

Organizations. The article was succinct and matter of fact, without personal reflection or

commentary. Skoro explained how funding of the organization had been donated by

alumni of Columbia who heard about the SHL via advertisements in magazines for

homosexuals. The article also seemed to emphasize that the SHL's major function was

educational as opposed to social [since this was expressly forbidden] and indicated that

the organization planned to sponsor speeches and seminars to educate their peers and

general community about 'problems of the homosexual' and latest research on

homosexuality. They also planned to publish a newsletter. The organization wanted to

make some things especially clear via their 'spokesman', who for the purpose of the

article remained anonymous, but was likely Donaldson:

> "…the group emphasized that "It is not a purpose of this society
> to act as a social group or agency for personal introductions."
> Another function of the league will be to help individual homosexual
> students on campus to adjust to their environment, the spokesman
> stated. The counseling system at Columbia is inadequate, he said,
> for homosexual students because it is difficult for heterosexual
> advisors to understand the problems of homosexuals. He also stated
> that because of the social stigma attached to homosexuality, such
> students are afraid to make their situation known to the counselors.
> The membership of the group will remain confidential…because of
> social pressures, students will be reluctant to acknowledge their
> membership. The spokesman stated that the problems of recruiting
> members and enabling homosexual students to find adequate
> counseling without breaches of security are critical" (Skoro, 1967).

A week later, another article was published. On May 3, 1967, the New York

Times ran a front-page article about the granting of the charter that received both local

and national attention. A flood of outrage ensued. Letters were written; thought pieces

published. The Columbia Daily Spectator was filled with articles from fellow students,

faculty and administration criticizing the universities' decision. "The Dean of the college

called the SHL "quite unnecessary," and the director of the counseling service expressed

a concern that the group would promote "deviant behavior" among students" (Beemyn,

2003: 206). The league's advisor, university chaplain John D. Cannon, prevented

Columbia from revoking the charter completely, but they were forbidden from serving a

"…social function for fear that this would lead to violations of New York State's sodomy laws" (Shumach, 1967). Though it garnered plenty of negative attention, the publicity provided by the New York Times article did help the organization to grow and increase new members- mostly gay men. News of the SHL at Columbia began to spread to other large universities and gain traction with their student base. Encouraged by this, Donaldson was inspired to start new Student Homophile League chapters at other universities which eventually lead to another SHL chapter at Cornell in 1968. This increased visibility set in motion further educational initiatives on college campuses such as sponsored speeches, lectures and 'zaps'- informal sessions where members of the SHL would answer questions about homosexuality and the lives of LGBTQ+ people at classes, residence halls and Greek-Letter Organizations on campus (Beemyn, 2003).

As more and more students became educated on LGBTQ+ rights issues, the Student Homophile League was able to recruit more members and inevitably began socially and politically demonstrating on campus. Their size, structure and newfound clout gave them a voice that was getting noticed and striking a chord with other marginalized students. The SHL started connecting to Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Cornell's Afro-American Society and the Women's Liberation movement. In an effort to be more inclusive towards women and students of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, and to assert their resolute dedication to improving LGBTQ+ lives though political action, the organization changed their name to the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in 1970. The name change was representative of a major shift in the group; breaking away from a more conservative organization that worked in the shadows towards a progressive movement that was willing to be more visible, more confrontational and

perhaps a little more radical to accomplish their social and political objectives. Though the SHL had previously been mostly made up of gay, white men and failed to include black students or women, their new name and move toward more militant tactics attracted these other groups to gay politics and helped to form powerful alliances. The first significant show of solidarity between these factions was a protest at Morrie's bar, a previously known gay-friendly establishment that was 'outed' by a local newspaper and subsequently turned on their LGBTQ+ clientele. "Despite having less than a day's notice, several hundred people, many from SDS and the newly formed Cornell Women's Liberation movement, demonstrated in front of the bar as about fifty GLF members and supporters sat inside, refusing to buy drinks or leave. Angell [the bar owner] called the police, only to be told by the officer who arrived that "[y]ou can't insult these people. You can't just refuse to serve them." Faced with a large, vocal crowd and having no recourse to the law, Angell pledged not to discriminate, and the protest ended" (Beemyn, 2003; Roth, 1970). This was the first known gay student sit in and again received national attention, further spreading the discourse surrounding LGBTQ+ activism and bringing both students and outside allies to the cause.

For the purpose of this research, I attempted to create a historical account of the LGBTQ+ organizations on the campuses where my research was conducted but found much of this information to be unknown or difficult to pinpoint between students, staff and administration. Going to the respective libraries of these institutions and requesting records yielded no results. There were no historical documents related to the respective colleges or the formation of their LGBTQ+ organizations. There was not a timeline of events that could be easily followed like some of the more famous universities mentioned

previously in this chapter. Quizzically, at the start of this research I went to the library at

Nova Southeastern University and expected to find the *Harris L. Kimball Memorial*

Digital Archive of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Florida Legal

History, a collection that I expected would help me both with my archival research and

filling in some of the blanks about LGBTQ+ history at Nova Southeastern University.

This was something that was being actively promoted on the Nova Southeastern website

as a resource for LGBTQ+ students. When I arrived at the library on campus, however,

none of the librarians on site had ever heard of these archives and could not find record of

them on their databases. When I asked the Nova students about the archives, they were

not aware that they had ever existed and when I showed them where it was listed on the

Nova website, they were surprised. Within a few months, mention of this archive on

campus was removed from the website. I do not have any concrete theories about what

happened to this digital archive, however I do know that it did exist (or perhaps was

going to exist) at one point. Though only in one article, I was able to find mention of it in

a 2013 Nova Law Review entitled *Identity: Lesbian Lawyers in South Florida, An Oral*

History , a project through the Gay and Lesbian Legal Network at Nova: "In 2012, the

authors interviewed nine lesbian lawyers who practice in South Florida…videos were

transcribed and those transcriptions are currently part of the Harris L. Kimball Memorial

Digital Archive of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Florida Legal

History. The web link is: http://nsulaw.nova.edu/library/kimballarchive/" (Smith et al.,

2013). The link does not work. Through my work at Nova, I could posit that the site was

a project that never really gained momentum and got off the ground, or that perhaps it

was initially started by a few passionate students but not kept up by new cohorts or

advisors. The law review referenced above was written three years before I began

interviewing students and administrators- ample time for a project to lost steam and fall

off the map. That it has such a minimal digital footprint now in 2022 after it was

advertised so significantly on the Nova website at the time of my initial research into

Nova Southeastern University, though, is both fascinating and perplexing.

## II.	The Evolution and Importance of LGBTQ+ Symbology, Space and Visibility

As diversity has been more recently embraced and promoted on university

campuses, LGBTQ+ spaces in universities that were once kept secret have now become

prized and, at times, commodified. It has become important for universities to bolster

their reputations as diversity hubs in order to remain competitive in the post-secondary

education market (Rankin, 2019; Windmeyer, 2016). Similarly, this works to the benefit

of LGBTQ+ organizations looking to recruit more members to their respective

organizations.

### i.	The Evolution of Queer Symbology and Acronyms

In *Post-Gay Collective Identity Construction*- which is one of the most sustained

treatments of this topic- Amin Ghaziani describes how Princeton College in New Jersey

strategically altered their Queer campus alliance and recruitment strategies in order to

appeal to the global LGBTQ+ community; showing how the university had reinvented

itself and utilized imagery in order to reflect current sociopolitical contexts. Through in-

depth interviews and archival analysis of over one hundred supporting documents,

Ghaziani discovered that students, organization officers and university officials had

actively altered the name of their on-campus queer alliances to reflect relevant social and political changes. He explains: "Gay student organizing at Princeton encompasses a long history of infighting over social and political objectives; over whether to coalesce with other progressive causes; and over the role of straight students, all of which have incited factional splits" (Ghaziani, 2011: 111).

The progression of LGBTQ+ organizational acronyms over a forty- year span starting with The Gay Alliance of Princeton (GAP), to the more lesbian friendly Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALAP), to the progressive Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance (LGBA) and finally to the all-inclusive Pride Alliance (PA) shows a shifting in sexual and social attitudes and the modification of queer organizations to tactically present images of modernity and diversity. The final acronym, 'Pride Alliance', was left intentionally ambiguous with regard to sexual terminology and yet was an easily identifiable marker of the LGBTQ+ community with the use of the words 'pride' and 'alliance'. As such, the goal of the organization was to absorb factions which had previously broken off to support smaller LGBTQ+ activist groups and to promote campus diversity; thereby showing Princeton as a leader in the more inclusive queer social and political movements of the time.
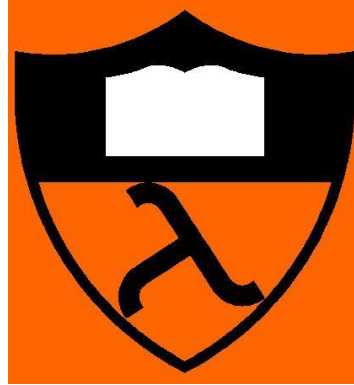
The Princeton queer alliance symbol has also changed over time to reflect transforming social contexts. By examining the evolution of the symbolic representation of the Princeton Pride Alliance, we can see how imagery morphed to facilitate the needs of these organizations: from a marker of unity to a marketing tool. Figure 1 shows the symbol for Princeton University: a shield in black and orange with Latin script: "The

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motto, "Dei Sub Numine Viget," translates as "Under the Protection of God She

Flourishes. The orange of the flag stands for William III of Orange, Prince of Nassau, and

King of England. Black was first used as Princeton's other color in 1867, when the

sophomore baseball team used black ink to write class numerals on their orange ribbons"

(Princeton, 2013). Although the main symbol of Princeton has remained unchanged, the

symbology of LGBTQ+ organizations on campus has certainly altered. Figure 2 shows

the Princeton LGBTQ+ organization symbol in the 1980's. Comparable to Princeton's

main symbol, the emblem maintains a similar color scheme and representative white

'scroll', indicating symbolic likeness to Princeton values. Figure 3 shows the current

Princeton Pride Alliance symbol which maintains the shape of the Princeton shield but

has transformed the 'school colors' into the global LGBTQ+ commercial 'rainbow'

symbology. This modern marker of queerness indicates a 'breaking off' from university

ties by making queer symbology the focal point, but also strategically links itself to

Princeton by keeping the imagery of the shield. In this way, the Pride Alliance has

strategically utilized queer symbology to its advantage by promoting itself as modern and

inclusive within the elite university setting.

(Figure 2: Princeton LGBA Crest (circa 1980's), Source: Princeton.edu, 2003)

(Figure 3: Current Princeton Pride Alliance Crest, Source: Princeton.edu, 2013)

Ghaziani also shows how Princeton and internal LGBTQ+ organizations attempt

to promote themselves to the queer community as a safe space by highlighting an alliance

with straight students. This strategic use of imagery showcases Princeton as both a queer

destination as well as a leader in LGBTQ+ diversity among U.S. universities. The 'Ally Project' was established in order to increase visibility of the queer community at Princeton and to highlight 'straight' participation with the Pride Alliance. Figure 4 shows the ALLY project sign that was made available to the entire campus community as a way to promote gay-straight alliances. "In the words of then-undergraduate student designer Andy Chen '09, the signs present a reimagining of the Princeton shield for the campus Ally project, which aims to unite straight allies with members of the LGBT community. The type [the two letter 'L's' of different colors] represents two individuals that are the same in all but one way, joined together in a common effort" (Ghaziani, 2011: 114). This imagery, as a widely distributed symbol of queer alliances and campus diversity, demonstrates the manipulation of imagery to serve a strategic agenda. Ghaziani continues by explaining the pressure put on the officers of Pride Alliance to become more "inclusive" and "mainstream" by emphasizing its alliance with straight students; going as far as to mandate an ALLY chair who acts as a liaison with the straight community on campus. Maintaining its shield symbology while erasing all other reference of Princeton as the organization backer, the ALLY sign serves as a sly representation of the University's 'dedication to diversity' while simultaneously opening itself up to popularized queer discourses. What this specific example illustrates is how it is important to recognize the positionality and agenda behind imagery; how these images are strategically manipulated to present particular geographical imaginations of space and ideologies.
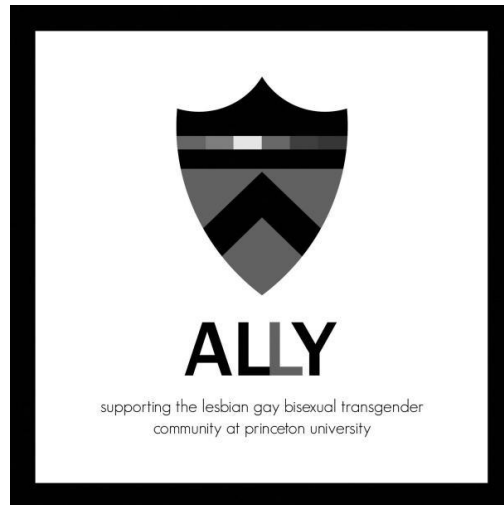
(Figure 4: The Ally Project. Source: Ghaziani, 2011)

ii.   Benchmarks: Addressing Patterns of Inequity and Homonormativity

Beyond altering names, acronyms and insignias to be more inclusive on university

campuses, having certain benchmarks indicating that a university supports diversity

initiatives has become ubiquitous (Beemyn, 2003; Duran et al., 2020; Ellis, 2008;

Jacobson et. al, 2017; Linley et al., 2016; Rankin, 2019; Self et. al, 2015; Windmeyer,

2016). Both students and universities are able to observe what resources are available at

which schools and how they compare to each other. Some universities, as admitted by

the University of Miami below, are also taking notes regarding other university programs

and resources and are adjusting their own programs so that they can 'measure up' to the

competition. Students are now able to research which colleges and universities are rated

as 'LGBTQ+- friendly' and which are not though resources like the LGBT-Friendly

Campus Pride Index. Though there is still not a national standard for measuring

LGBTQ+-friendly policy programs, practices or polices at universities, the Campus Pride

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Index is an initial step that universities can take toward the self-assessment of their respective schools.

Partnering with notable Queer scholars Brett Genny Beemyn, Susan R. Rankin, and Shane L. Windmeyer, the Campus Pride Index measures campus climate based on eight important factors for LGBTQ+ students: "LGBTQ Policy Inclusion, LGBTQ Support & Institutional Commitment, LGBTQ Academic Life, LGBTQ Student Life, LGBTQ Housing, LGBTQ Campus Safety, LGBTQ Counseling & Health and LGBTQ Recruitment and Retention Efforts" (Campus Pride Index, 2021). This tool is free for universities to utilize and may be updated annually so that they can measure their progress on diversity initiatives. The survey, however, is self-administered by a campus administrator and only available to four-year institutions. With these limitations, the Pride Index acknowledges that it is a snapshot, but not a complete picture of LGBTQ+ campus climate on university campuses: "The LGBTQ-Friendly Campus Pride Index is not a replacement or substitute for Campus Pride research which examines more holistically campus attitudes/perceptions of LGBTQ and ally campus life. Instead, the index provides a solid foundation to further examine LGBTQ issues and, most importantly, to improve LGBTQ-friendly policies, programs and practices" (Campus Pride Index, 2021).

The universities are given a score out of five and receive a check mark for every program or service that they office under each of the eight headings. Florida International University is currently ranked as a 3/5 and The University of Miami is currently ranked as a 4/5. Nova Southeastern University is not a four-year school and

therefore is not eligible to be ranked. FIU averaged 3/5 due to some very high and very low scores in the eight categories. Notably, they scored 4.5/5 in both LGBTQ Support and Institutional Commitment and LGBTQ Student Life, but only a 2.5/5 in LGBTQ Counseling in Health and a 1/5 in LGBTQ Campus Safety. Regarding LGBTQ counseling and health, the discrepancies reflected their lacking transgender health insurance policies. Their poor score in LGBTQ Campus Safety was due to an absence of training of campus police regarding gender expression and sexual orientation issues. The report also specified that FIU does not have concrete policies in place to support victims of LGBTQ sexual violence and does not actively reach out to their LGBTQ students or organizations (Campus Pride Index, 2021). The University of Miami, however, ranked 3 stars or above in every category. Their highest category, LGBTQ Student Life, ranked 5/5 stars. Their lowest categories, LGBTQ Policy and Inclusion/ LGBTQ Recruitment and Retention Efforts and LGBTQ Campus Safety ranked 3.5/5 and 3/5 stars, respectively. UM scored lower in these categories as they do not yet allow LGBTQ+ students to self-identify their gender identity or change their name on university documents. They are also not actively recruiting or reaching out to LGBTQ+ students via scholarships, admission fairs or though the administration on campus (Campus Pride Index, 2021). Again, it should be noted that these surveys are self-reported by the universities and not by the students; whether some of the boxes on the report should have been checked -or not checked- may be debated. I will say that these rankings do seem to reflect the overall sentiment of the students at these respective universities regarding the LGBTQ+ campus climate per my observations in this research.

As progressively more universities formed their respective LGBTQ+ organizations and were less concerned with anonymity, students have begun to desire and demand their own autonomous space on university campuses. Within university systems, students are living within their own versions of society with their respective social structures and varying sets of rules and laws to follow. These become especially complex when coming to terms with one's sexual and gender identity in a new space. Sue Rankin explains: "Postsecondary institutions are dynamic systems with nested ecological structures… students' experiences are a result of the interaction between unique environmental systems in which they live and interact, emphasizing peer culture and student environments. These environments are conceptualized in terms of nested systems, and include microsystems (i.e., influential groups in which students belong), mesosystems (i.e., interactions of students' microsystems), exosystems (i.e., laws, policies, and structures), macrosystems (i.e., pervasive cultural norms and systems), and the chronosystem (i.e., historical conditions and events) (Rankin, 2019: 440; Renn and Arnold, 2003). Campus centers have "…emerged from an historical call for queer spaces of resistance, safety, and privacy" (Self and Hudson, 2015: 221). In Self and Hudson's study of Campus LGBTQ Centers, nearly all participants of their research noted that the "…primary function of the center space was to create and provide respite/safety from heterosexism and cissexism, to substantiate legitimacy for their centers and in so doing for non-binary genders, sexual orientations, and queer people on campus, and to advocate for the concerns of their constituencies" (Self and Hudson, 2015: 228). Despite the homonormative undertones and imperfect structure, LGBTQ centers still provide pivotal

spaces for support, safety, legitimacy, advocacy and socialization (Self and Hudson, 2015).

Despite the development of LGBTQ+ university campus centers and the evolution of their respective symbols and language, some scholars argue that normative powers still permeate that space and need to be addressed. In *LGBTQ Centers: A Queering of Gender-Aware Practice*, Chase James Catalano and T.J Jourian discuss their roles as Student Affairs professionals in LGBTQ+ centers and the resistance they repeatedly encountered when advocating for programming and curricula that was outside of the homonormative scope: "…At times we experienced resistance with campus partners articulating how including queer and trans identities overly complicated and obfuscated goals of a training or workshop. Other times, we struggled to communicate historical significance of in-community events consumed by largely cisgender (non-trans) heterosexual (cishetero) audiences" (Catalano and Jourian, 2018: 42). Though LGBTQ+ centers include gender in the discourse, they often fail to acknowledge the homonormative powers at work there: who staffs them, what programs they offer, which students they cater to and, perhaps inadvertently, exclude. In *Identity, Visibility & Measurement: How University LGBTQ Centers Engage and Advocate for Today's LGBTQ Student*, Dean Mundy describes how students are identifying restrictive norms and demanding change; thereby forcing universities to adjust their programming: "Students are the ones raising the bar. They are entering college out, expecting to have up-to-date resources. . . including transgender students who reflect a range of stages of transition…many of these identities bring with them specific mental and physical health

resource needs…university-level resources often are inadequate or even uninformed, which requires center administrators to be sources of expertise" (Mundy, 2018: 249).

Beyond LGBTQ+ Resource Centers, current research and much student focus has rested on restrictive housing based on gender binaries. For queer and transgender students living on campus, these seemingly outdated, sometimes unsafe housing assignments can make students feel unwanted or unthought of on campus: "…oppressive gendered contexts of housing have negative implications for queer- and trans-spectrum students because these individuals encounter discrimination within residence life. Specifically, trans-spectrum students suffer heterogendered housing practices and policies that force them to either live by themselves or leave campus (Bilodeau, 2009; Kortegast, 2017; Nicolazzo and Marine, 2015; Pryor et al., 2016; Rankin, 2019). By not creating inclusive, safe spaces for these students on campus, universities are prioritizing heteronormative rules and straight students. They are allowing, or perhaps forcing, these students to be othered and to experience college life as a commuter student off campus. Students who live off-campus tend to experience more social isolation than their peers and have less on-demand access to on-campus resources, thus their university experience is dramatically altered (Mayhew et al., 2016). Several of the students that I interviewed for this research described their desire for gender inclusive housing since a great deal of the discrimination that they had faced had taken place in the college dorms. Though this progressive step is still in the early stages for many universities, it is an emergent and recurrent theme for LGBTQ+ students.

Another significant university space where LGBTQ+ students experience perceived intolerance or negativity is in their respective academic disciplines. "On the one hand, certain disciplines may be chilly and uninviting for queer- and trans-spectrum students, including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) majors. On the other hand, other disciplines like the social sciences and humanities are typically more welcoming of LGBTQ people" (Brown et al., 2004; Patridge et al., 2014; Rankin, 2019). These experiences may make LGBTQ+ students feel disconnected from their classroom and their university as they do not see their identities or experiences represented in the curriculum: "Gay, lesbian, and bisexual students are acutely aware of the myriad ways in which pedagogy and curriculum collude to force their silence" (Connolly, 1999: 113). In *Engaging in Inclusion: Cultivating LGBTQ Students' Sense of Belonging Through a Critical Place-Based Curriculum*, Kathryn Jaekel explains that due to LGBTQ+ student positionality as a minority population that experiences a higher rate of discrimination, harassment, and isolation, educators and administrators should be equipping them with the academic tools to identify and navigate systems of power at play. One concrete way to empower students and to recognize their identity is through the university curriculum: "Given the challenges LGBTQ students face and the lack of inclusion in curricula and classrooms, it is clear that explicit attention to the cultivation of space and inclusion is necessary so that they can not only participate but also succeed in their education" (Jeakel, 2017: 134). Beyond participating, inclusion and visibility in the curriculum cultivated a sense of belonging, social support and acceptance on campus (Strayhorn, 2012).

Now that I have set the stage for how LGBTQ+ spaces on university campuses were created, how they have evolved and how they are still changing, I will turn to individual examples of university responses to LGBTQ+ student concerns. I will first examine Nova Southeastern University and how their reticence to engage with LGBTQ+ students on campus, limited resources and lacking visibility led to feelings of isolation and mistrust. I will then discuss the University of Miami and how, despite certain disputes regarding transparency, they had taken a more proactive approach in making their campus a LGBTQ+-inclusive space. I am not including an example from Florida International University here, but I will be discussing them more in depth in the last chapter.

III.   Nova Southeastern University: Passive Invisibility and Reflexive Marginalization of LGBTQ+ Students

The feeling of disconnection described in the previous section was especially prevalent at Nova Southeastern University, but it was rooted in much more than an inadequate LGBTQ+ curriculum. The second person that I interviewed for this research was 22-year-old Jade, a Queer, female, multicultural student from Trinidad and India. Jade had spent her undergraduate years in Toronto and had come to Nova Southeastern University to study Conflict Analysis and Resolution. She describes her experience coming to terms with her sexuality as a somewhat detached experience:

Jade: "Growing up in Trinidad and being Gay is something kind of mystical. I would only hear a word of it in whispers. People would talk about it in a way that was very…secretive. Only adults were allowed to talk about it. They would say things like

"Oh this person in the community is gay, so they went to live somewhere else like England or Canada or the U.S. where its… I guess… accepted. It felt like it wasn't real. People who were gay weren't people who were real. That's what it felt like when I was growing up as a kid. At the same time, I was kissing girls in the bathroom in Trinidad in 5th grade. I wouldn't really think about myself as gay, but that was something I as doing. And then when I moved to Florida, all my friends were straight and there was this kind of expectation for you to like boys at that age. I did, but I was also attracted to girls- I never really invested anything in that when I was at that age because that [liking boys] was the norm."

As someone who identified as Queer and who already had to be very secretive at home, Jade was hopeful that NSU would be a more open space, but had found it to be very isolating and frustrating:

Jade: "I identify as Queer. I don't exist in either space- whether it's in the Queer space or the straight world. It's not to say that its separated, but I don't feel like I can connect to other people who are gay. I feel like everyone around me is straight…and I'm like- how? This is impossible. And then I feel like I'm the odd one out… I've been to PRISM and a graduate Gay Straight Alliance meeting. It still felt like I was in a space where I was the only one who was Queer. And that wasn't the case- everyone identified as different parts of the alphabet. I just felt so out of place. I haven't made an effort to go back there because I don't like that feeling of being out of place. There's nothing else that's gay friendly or gay-centered or Queer-centered and if there is then I'm not aware of it."

Furthering this sense of otherness on campus, Jade described feeling that the faculty were purposefully leaving out certain aspects of LGBTQ+ topics at academic events and in the curriculum:

Jade: "I was at a psychology event and they were talking about different therapies and how you need a different approach when dealing with Queer students…and he [the professor running the meeting] said: "We're not dealing with the "T" today because that's a completely different topic." And I just felt that that was exclusionary. How can you come to an event and talk about the LGBTQ spectrum and leave out the "T"? That rubbed me the wrong way. I felt like the professor was gay himself, but I felt like there was a lack of commitment to the LGBTQ spectrum and for it to be fully inclusive. I felt like if you can exclude the "T", then where do I fit in? If you're excluding anybody then I don't want to be a part of it. I'm not a psychology student and the event wasn't for me, but I felt like I should go."

Faye: "Did anyone else look uncomfortable?"

Jade: "No, I think they were mostly straight."

Faye: "Do they talk about LGBTQ issues in your program?"

Jade: "No. To them, *I'm* interested in it, so *I* should study it. But then how do I apply these old theories to the research that I want to do in the LGBTA+Q realm? It's such a huge disconnect between what I want to research and the information that I'm *expected* to use. It's up to me to be the person to make that connection and I haven't found anyone that is willing to go there with me [a professor/ advisor]."

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Faye: "What's your research?"

Jade: "I haven't researched LGBTQ issues until this semester because it hasn't come up in classes. Right now, I'm doing a topic on LGBTQ violence in the Caribbean and then my other topic is broader, but it comes from my personal lens of being a queer Caribbean woman within the program. Assessing the Queer diversity within the conflict resolution program. There are no classes that are offered that talk about LGBTQ issues, there are no professors that bring up examples of it, there are no speakers that come in that talk about it. Nothing. Other programs would obviously have different experiences- this is within my program."

Faye: "Have you brought it to the administration's attention at all?"

Jade: "I've expressed my opinions to a few professors, but there's this kind of push back of saying- you can't expect everything to go how you want it to go. Everyone can't expect all parts of their identity to be reflected in the curriculum. There's also the push back of me feeling like the only outspoken Queer person in my program and people are annoyed because I won't shut up about it. There's only so far that I feel like I can voice my issues without people having that visceral response. *Why won't she shut up?*"

Echoing some of Jade's sentiments, Chris, another graduate student at Nova Southeastern University, described a campus climate that was disjointed and an LGBTQ+ organizational structure that was at best disorganized and at worst, exclusionary. After feeling like he finally had the academic support that he needed at his program at NSU, Chris was now feeling the need for some social support. Desiring to engage with the bisexual part of his identity, Chris decided to become involved with other like-minded

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students on campus, assuming that there would be an on-campus organization that he could partake in. It was Miami, after all, and although he did not do any previous research about organizations on campus, he felt confident that he could find a group to connect with. Luckily, there were four. He became the President of PRISM, the LGBTQ organization through the Clinical Psychology department, but found it to be too restricting as it would only allow other Clinical Psychology majors to join. He then joined another organization on campus through the medical school: the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association. He also took part in the South Florida HIV and AIDS Network apart from Nova. The four different organizations on campus were an undergraduate organization and three separate organizations through the law school, medical school and psychology program. He expressed sincere frustration that none of these organizations worked together and that any efforts that he had made to unify them were met with resistance by the students in those organizations.

Chris: "Before I came to Nova, I had this whole idea in my head that I would meet all of these people like me and that we could organize to do something, but it's not like that. Now that I'm here, I know…one…two [counts to himself] …four gay people in my medical school. And that's only because they're openly gay…I tried to get the organizations together to do the AIDS walk because I figured…they would definitely do the AIDS walk. Not one organization would do it. The *AIDS* walk."

Faye: "Not one?"

Chris: "Not one. They didn't do Pride. They won't do Stonewall. I'll be there, but the organizations won't go. Unfortunately."

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Asked if Nova was a safe space for LGBTQ students, Chris said "not really- I'd say maybe a 2."

Chris: "The undergrads tried to do a table a year ago out in the main area. One of the more religious organizations got involved and made it so their table [the LGBTQ organization] was put in the corner which voided their ability to show themselves and really represent their organization. That's a major issue. That's literally marginalizing the students…I reached out to the President of the undergrad organization about it and was like- if this did happen, we need to know about it so we can make sure this never happens again. We had the legal organization ready to go to the administration about it and everything…because that's a serious thing…but I never heard back."

This segregation of the organizations, he felt, was a disservice to the students at Nova and allowed those who might already feel 'Othered' on campus to remain isolated. Chris also indicated that faculty members were welcome to come to these meetings and while some of them did come to the Safe Zone trainings and the Transgender Health Competency certification workshop that was organized by the Gay and Lesbian Medical association, much of the faculty remained "secluded" and "uninvolved".

I explained that I also had difficulties getting responses from any administrators or faculty at Nova for this research and found that strange, considering the topic and that I had been referred by several students. Chris was not surprised and indicated that this appears to be a pattern of behavior at Nova. Mostly, it appeared that there weren't actually any faculty or administrators involved in the LGBTQ+ organizations at the

university- they were run completely by the students without any real university appointed advisors.

Chris: "I was the President of a GLA at Nova and had the previous President's information and I could never get a hold of her. I can't get a hold of anyone to do anything. It's a little disheartening, but that's just how it is. The programs are really run by grad students and they're all busy and they use the orgs as a CV boost. It looks good on paper, but the amount of work that they actually do is…limited."

When asked about an LGBTQ+ curriculum at Nova, Chris reaffirmed some of Jade's feelings and experiences. Adjusting the curriculum was met with criticism and ultimately diminished by faculty and staff as the students' individual problem, but not something that the university should address:

Chris: "Our previous President did push for some things because he actually experienced some negative things when he asked for PREP at our clinic [at NSU]. Questions that were *really offensive*. Like, "oh, so you bareback?" When instead you can take PREP with a condom and it's super effective because God forbid the condom breaks. They were just kind of assuming that he was engaging in risky sex. To him, as a patient, he was like: if this is how I'm going to get treated by my physician and these are the questions I'm getting asked then I don't even want the pill. He was just there to get something to be safe. So, he was trying to push a more LGBT-friendly agenda to be taught into the curriculum at the medical school. Unfortunately, he was told by the medical director that he has a bias and that wasn't the right way to get the curriculum adjusted and that he might not have been the best person to bring it up…but it should be a

topic that we are able to discuss. We should be able to talk about these minority health issues. We don't consider sexual minorities an important factor when really, they are a huge demographic down here [in Miami]. They don't value it."

What these accounts demonstrate about Nova Southeastern University is a pattern of disorganization, invisibility and the consequent marginalization of LGBTQ+ students. The lack of structure, resources and advisement for LGBTQ+ students left many feeling isolated and suppressed. As a result, it seemed that there was a cyclical structure of interested or involved students who stopped participating and showing up to organized meetings, so nothing could get off the ground. Similarly, with voices raised for LGBTQ+ projects and additions to the curriculum being continually silenced by faculty and administration, morale was at a constant low. As a graduate university, the shorter duration of the programs compounded with less time on campus and an ongoing negative campus climate left LGBTQ+ organization in a stagnant cycle. Without active administrative involvement, the trajectory for this university looked bleak.

The University of Miami, on the other hand, was actively working to make their campus a safer and better space for LGBTQ+ students with a coordinated effort from the administration, faculty and students. Though not a faultless roadmap, this school had identified their shortcomings and had identified both short-term and long-term solutions to address their deficiencies. The case study below shows how a university has listened, learned and changed to reflect inequalities experienced by LGBTQ+ students on campus.

IV.   The University of Miami: Addressing LGBTQ+ Inequalities Through Activism and Action

Though the administration at the University of Miami was by far the most cooperative, this university still lacked a concrete history of its LGTBQ+ activism. One administrator at the University of Miami advised me that she did not know where any of that information could be found and was not aware of a record existing on campus but offered to perhaps put me in touch with a retired professor who might have some information tucked away in a stack of old filing boxes in an abandoned trailer on his land in the Everglades. I politely declined. Another administrator and the University of Miami, Andrew Wiemer, the three-year advisor for SpectrUM and Co-leader of the recently implemented LGBTQ Task Force, said that he was also unaware of a historical account existing as no concrete records of the organization had been kept. To his knowledge, the formal organization of an LGBTQ organization started in the 90's (likely around 1997) and was initially called the GLBC- the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Club. Over time, the organization name was altered to reflect a greater diversity of the LGBTQ+ community and diverse identities. For one year the name was changed to UPride but was immediately reverted back to SpectrUM after much heated debate from the students.

Though the University of Miami does not ask about LGBTQ+ status in the admissions process due to confidentiality concerns, they are aware that there is a significant LGBTQ+ population on campus. The organizations on campus and the administrators that serve them aim to assist all the students to the best of their ability, but they are aware that there are some areas where they are falling short. Dr. Weimer

explains that the campus resources that they need are really dependent upon the individual student and their positionality within the spectrum:

Dr. Weimer: "I think it depends on where the individual is with their "coming out" process- if they are still uncomfortable with identity, there are a lot of questions about the needing of support and needing that mode of being able for us to help them as an institution. Other individuals who are already very much "out", they don't necessarily need that level of support, but they need guidance in general life, but they also have a component of caring that they have an identity that is different from others on campus… It's just all across the board. Right now, we've had in the past couple years, more conversations taking place within the LGBT community- specifically the trans community. Lots of students who are either struggling with their identity in terms of being a trans student or one of the resources in terms of an institution that we are providing for our trans students, hearing from the students what we need to do better in order to support our trans community on campus. I think that is not just here. But there are also other issues with students who are struggling with not just their identity as an LGBT identified person, but also a person of color. Different intersectionalities of students who are identifying in different forms. We also have students who are not "out" because of that- maybe because of their culture within the Latin community…I've heard that in the past. It happens all of the time."

When asked about whether or not the University of Miami was a safe space for LGBTQ+ students, Dr. Weimer indicates again that this is based upon individual experiences on campus. Though U of M has endeavored to be a safe space, the U of M

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administration acknowledged that many LGBTQ+ students were struggling with various challenges on campus and had experienced various forms of aggression and intolerance by their peers. Paralleling these experiences to other diversity-related issues on campus, Dr. Weimer indicated that the U of M campus was taking considerable note of racially charged confrontations resulting from the Black Lives Matter Movement that appeared to- at times- overlap with negative behaviors experienced by LGBTQ+ students:

    Dr. Weimer: "The campus is like our own society where we have a very large difference of thought and interaction between those areas [referring to LGBTQ+ and racial diversity issues] …and we have that not just with our LGBT students, but also within the Black Lives Matter Movement. Issues on campus where people were saying derogatory comments, racial slurs and things… Society has changed in the past couple of years. But it's also reverting in certain places through bills and legislation.   So, we have same sex marriage now- which is something that ten years ago we didn't have and that, of course, affects students and people's perceptions of things. We also have states like North Carolina and Mississippi and Tennessee who passed a bill that is anti- LGBT legislation.   So, it's still there, but we are in a city that is very open, but also have a student population that is coming from all over the world and there are going to be struggles with the conversations that are taking place. It's getting…better, but it's not ideally where the administration would like to see it. The students would say that there are definitely places that are not in their ideal world…what they would want them to be. It is in my mind, better than some places throughout the country…for a college campus. It's all about where you're at. These students- right now- are living here. And anything negative that is being perceived will be very difficult for them. Whether we like it or not,

we're one of the most diverse campuses in the country, but at the same time- how are those conversations taking place?"

The general political and social climate was influencing the campus climate in pretty significant ways and the University of Miami was having difficulty immediately addressing the student wants and needs created by these new dynamics. At the time of these interviews, U of M had a small room set of as an organization space for SpectrUM tucked away on the empty second floor of their student center, but they did not have a full LGBTQ resource center or any dedicated staff. They were also actively seeking a Director of Programs of the LGBTQ student resource center; a position that was being heavily scrutinized by both administration and students for its vital role in the forward momentum of the LGBTQ programs on campus. Dr. Weimer insisted that though there had not been formal LGBTQ+ organizations on campus through the administration, the students and faculty had contributed to the campus climate themselves by creating their own groups:

Dr. Weimer: "I've seen it change a lot over the past three years. We now have a faculty and staff support system that we didn't have. I started that network with my colleague from the career center. We created that on our own and said that we would have that. Then the university decides that they want to create an employer resource group and lo and behold, we had already created it ourselves and had it in place a year before they even thought about it. *We* did it. That faculty network has been very positive for the faculty and staff community along with the LGBT community. We have used that network to help gain mentors for our students and now they know who some of the

LGBT faculty and staff are. We have participated in PRIDE for the past three years and I

made sure that our university was doing that. That wasn't happening before. The

students wanted to do it, but no one was taking the lead. I was like- we *have* to do this.

I'm co-chair of this task force, we're doing it. So, we did. This year we had around 100

people- a great number of faculty, students and staff that came out.   It is phenomenal to

be represented and to know that there is support there from students all over the

campus… the students are excited. They're always thrilled and very thankful. We just

had the PRIDE parade and they were genuinely happy that we are participating. They

really want to do these things. We're doing the Lavender celebration for the second year.

They say great things about that event and the mentorship program. We've been able to

help to support students in ways that we didn't even know that we could support them.

Or we wouldn't have known that a student was struggling without that support system.

There are 90 people on our listserv and that's just from word of mouth.   That's from

them e-mailing me to add them to the list serv. And there's more out there. Every time

we have an event, more and more people are coming out. I hear a lot of people from the

students, faculty and staff say: "thank you for the visibility.""

On June 10, 2013, Dr Patricia Whitley, Vice President of Student Affairs, created

the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Task Force

to address the changing campus climate at the University of Miami and to provide

direction on future programs and services for LGBTQ students. The task force was co-

chaired by Dr. Weimer and Gail Cole-Avent and comprised of administrators, faculty,

undergraduate students and graduate students. A questionnaire was designed and

distributed to 4,500 undergraduate, graduate, medical and law students at the University

of Miami via social media, email distribution lists and as an extra credit assignment by several university professors. The goal was to obtain qualitative data, demographic information and insights into student experiences and perceptions on campus. I was given a copy of the results of this questionnaire that were provided to President Donna E. Shalala in the Spring of 2014 by Dr. Steven Butterman, a professor at UM and a member of Dr. Weimer's LGBT faculty network. Of the 1,218 students who responded to the questionnaire, 997 completed the form entirely. Of those respondents, 1069 were undergraduates (191 freshman, 262 sophomore, 291 junior, 310 senior), 85 were graduate students, 34 were law students and 30 were medical school students. 206 students (17%) indicated that they identified as lesbian, gay male, bisexual, transgender or another sexual identity. 25% of the respondents indicated that they were unaware of LGBTQ-specific services on the UM campus. 23% of the respondents indicated that they felt that they did not belong at the university and 7% of the students clarified that this was in the classroom setting. The majority of the respondents, though, 70.39% declared that they felt safe at UM due to their perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity. 30% of the respondents indicated that they had witnessed intolerance toward the LGBT community on the UM campus (22.69% were neutral). Almost all of those who participated in the questionnaire, 94.18%, answered that they agreed or strongly agreed to the statement "It is important to me that the campus environment is accepting of diversity" (2013 SACS Report Findings).

For those participants who identified as LGBTQ+, the questionnaire also measured what kinds of intolerant behavior and negative experiences they had experienced because they were LGBTQ+ on the UM campus. These incidents included:

Offensive language or humor (49.5%); Feeling isolated or unwelcomed (43.07%); Discrimination (40%); Negative or insulting comments (35.15%); Not being taken seriously (28.71%); Harassment- speech, stalking etc. (11.39%) and Physical/ sexual assault (.5%) (2013 SACS Report Findings). Students indicated that these incidents mostly occurred in social areas (47.03%) and on-campus (46.53%). Aside from common areas on campus, the most prominent area for microaggressions and acts of intolerance to be experienced by LGBTQ students were the on-campus dormitories (31.68%) and the classroom setting (20.79%). Though a significant percentage of these incidents were perpetrated by faculty and staff (13.37%), the vast majority of negative experiences had by LGBTQ students on the UM students occurred with other students on campus (62.87%) (2013 SACS Report Findings).

This data demonstrated to the administration at UM that some serious, tangible changes needed to be made on campus in order to make them the diverse, LGBTQ+-friendly campus that they were aiming to be. Based on their own campus climate survey, the Campus Pride Index and benchmarking other known LGBTQ+ friendly institutions as a models of diversity and inclusion, the LGBTQ Task force presented fourteen recommendations to President Shalala to make the University of Miami a safer space for LGBTQ students: The five institution-wide changes included: designating gender-neutral bathrooms; including gender and LGBTQ+ identities on the admissions application and other institutional forms; incorporating LGBTQ inclusive language in University communication and marketing materials; designating professional staff to provide programming oversight and support to the LGBTQ student community and targeting fundraising and development efforts to support LGBTQ initiatives (University

of Miami, 2021). The University also released nine programmatic changes. They planned to: develop a standing committee to manage the Institution's engagement and support of the LGBTQ community; implement a peer mentor program for LGBTQ students; provide program sessions to discuss LGBTQ campus services during new student orientation; provide support to create more inclusive communities for the LGBTQ students within Housing and Residential Life; promote LGBTQ inclusive programming; implement a campus-wide Safe Zone/Ally Training for students, faculty, and staff; host an annual Lavender Graduation; provide education and support for members of the athletic and Greek communities and designate a space for LGBTQ students that embraces and supports sexuality/gender identity (University of Miami, 2021).

Dr. Weimer indicated to me that the task force thought that these fourteen recommendations, *at the time*, were what were most necessary to be supportive of the students and that this initiative did help the UM campus to get into a better space, but it was still only a jumping off point. Over that following summer and fall they were able to convert eighteen bathrooms on campus to gender neutral bathrooms. They had plans to create the LGBTQ resource center and to hire an LGBTQ Programs Director; two initiatives that would hopefully help to repair a somewhat tenuous alliance between students and the administration.

Dr. Weimer: "We met with the president with the task force originally who said we can work on all of these things and continue working on the other two- we can get 80% of this done by the end of the year. And we did…Now, is that enough? *Not really…*we need to keep doing this and keep identifying places and ways for not just the

community but for everybody to feel comfortable in these spaces… I think we need to start talking more about different intersectionalities of areas of not just LGBTQ but religion and race and having more conversations around these topics. I think that the new Director will be able to devote more time to these areas and these conversations. Whether it's doing talks or having speakers or getting them engaged throughout different programming weeks throughout the year. Advocacy at the state level and local level could potentially increase. We need to make sure that we're at the forefront of all of that."

Though the administrators generally had positive things to say about the LGBTQ Task Force and the subsequent work that followed, several students at UM were less confident in the process and the resulting recommendations. Brian, the President of SpectrUM, indicated that the report was a serious point of contention between the students and administration at UM.

Brian: "I don't mind saying this even if I get in trouble: whatever was in the Task Force [document] was so bad that the students don't get to see it. Basically, it was a climate survey and they got an amazing number of responses…whatever the students said was so bad that- as someone who serves on the task force as President- I only saw the recommendations. I have not seen the actual document."

Brian further revealed that all student requests to review the document in its entirety were denied. This lack of transparency between the administration and the students had created a disparity in trust and had fostered ongoing resentment between the students and the university administration. As a result, even though the students were

involved in the LGBTQ task force and in the creation of the touted recommendations to the university President, they felt as though they were not full partners in the process and that there were things that the university was 'hiding' from them. Furthermore, they felt that by denying them full access to this information, they were also denying them the ability to make fully informed decisions that could help their own student population. The students felt that the university cared a bit more about 'saving face' and trying to benchmark themselves against other diverse institutions rather than what was really the best course of action for their students.

At the time of this interview, the LGBTQ Task Force had, indeed, accomplished eleven of the fourteen tasks that they had set out to do. The remaining items on the list were what Dr. Weimer called the "big ticket" items- those that required a larger budget and involved physical campus space. Dr. Weimer explained that, though it was known that there would be a new LGBTQ student center, what was not widely known is that this center would be located in the student center complex which is in the heart of the UM campus. This building is the main student hub of UM with new space that has been recently built out on the second floor; the center would be located right above the Starbucks, a prime gathering spot for UM students, faculty and visitors to the campus. The visibility of this space and placement of the LGBTQ Center is intentional. It is meant to bring the campus LGBTQ+ student organization and UM's commitment to diversity initiatives to the forefront.

The Director of Programs, too, was actively being recruited during this time with a full committee of faculty, administration and three members of the LGBTQ student

organization as a part of the hiring process. In speaking with students, faculty and

administrators at UM, it became very clear that the person desired to fill this role would

need to be a lot of things to a lot of people. I was able to obtain a copy of the official job

posting and it was five pages long, with full sections dedicated to student support,

LGBTQ community involvement and grant experience on top of their prime directive-

establishing and developing programming for the University of Miami's inaugural

LGBTQ Resource Center. Based on feedback from the campus survey and from the

students at UM, there was a lot of pressure to get this decision right and to check a certain

number of boxes, both socially and professionally. One administrator told me:

UM administrator: "They can't be just anyone. The students would crucify

us… We have to get it right."

When asking Dr. Weimer what he was hoping for with a new Director, he says:

Dr. Weimer: "What we hope to see is someone who will develop support for our

LGBTQ students. I think they're going to have to be an individual that comes in and

creates a new space for the office and programming and who will continue to develop

what we have on campus now and in the future…they need to determine what the needs

are for this campus. Hopefully someone who is an expert in the field. A lot of us are

volunteering our time. I'm an expert in service and engagement and leadership

development, but my expertise is not the LGBTQ area."

Still, some of the students remained skeptical. As was discussed earlier in this

dissertation, Brian, the President of SpectrUM, was concerned about whether or not the

timeline the administration had outlined to complete the final three recommendations-

including hiring a new Director and opening a new LGBTQ student center- was feasible. For him, the recommendations and implementation of those recommendations are a foundation- a baseline that acknowledged where the university was, where it wants to be and where it is going:

Brian: "I consider these first steps…To me the director and the physical space is the capstone of this task force. It's the floor of the next level and from there we can build up. I don't know what that next floor looks like in its completion phase, but I do know that we need to start building it up…. I want to see a campus where every single person in our Canes family feels like they belong. That they are included and deserve and do fit in here…and belong here for who they are. That's my vision."

The university has made concrete steps towards making their campus climate a safer and better place for university students. During our conversation, I explained to Dr. Wiemer how difficult it had been to create a chronological account of the history of LGBTQ+ organization efforts on the UM campus and how there was a need for this kind of recordkeeping. Though I cannot confirm whether this research was a catalyst for change on this effort, there is now a historical reference page of the University of Miami LGBTQ+ organizations on campus. Though it only documents from 2013 onward and it is known that organizational efforts were made prior to 2013, this is a significant first step in documenting concrete LGBTQ+ histories on university campuses. The University has filled the position of the Director of Programs at the LGBTQ Resource Center- a post that is currently held, perhaps unsurprisingly, by Florida International University alum Dr. Gisela Vega.

Faye: "Do you think that UM advertises to Queer students in any way?"

Dr. Weimer: "Well, they do now."

V.   Conclusion

What is notable about the history of LGBTQ+ organizations is both how much and how little has changed since 1967. Much of their reasoning for existence still remains true today for many of the students who identify as LGBTQ+. The first LGBTQ organizations on university campuses paved the way for the important conversations and the creation of safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students on university campuses today. They were created because the students over fifty years ago experienced intolerance on campus, realized that there were inadequate resources for LGBTQ+ students and wanted to find other like-minded individuals to create a support system for each other. These organizations gained traction because they resonated deeply with those LGBTQ+ identities that were always present, but afraid to step forward and openly and acknowledge their identities for fear of backlash. Their message was able to unite other marginalized identities that did not fit the heteronormative or homonormative model of university student life because these students also felt multiple layers of oppression and otherness. They also felt intolerance, segregation, stigma and the inherent danger that can accompany being different in a space that is not built for you. These are not old problems- they are not dated and out of context. These issues have not been solved. One could argue that the discourse surrounding them has been heightened and certain aspects have been normalized to an extent, but steadfast intolerance towards the LGBTQ+ community pervasively remains.

The students and administration that I spoke to for this research at these select schools echoed the same themes: lack of safe space, fear of disclosing identity, marginalization within the LGBTQ+ community and lacking resources at their respective institutions. Even though these early foundations had been laid, progress was staggered and individualized; seemingly dependent upon student involvement and the consequent dedication of the administration to addressing inequalities and resources on campus. A recurring theme throughout this research was that universities were relying on the students to lift the load: to be advisors, counselors, advocates and political representatives without a firm structure to buttress their cause. One student at FIU described how faculty and administration did not have "the teeth" to deal with intolerance or microaggressions on campus and mostly suggest facilitating open dialogue about LGBTQ+ issues:

FIU student: "There have been administrators who have said that they would go to bat for me if I ever wanted to come forward with an official complaint and talk about anyone who made me feel unsafe then I would, but unless they physically hurt me or committed a crime, there is nothing they can really do. Those kinds of administrative tools won't change the campus culture. You can't fix ignorance with probation."

Faye: "So, what did they recommend that you do?"

FIU student: "This. Trying to work through changing peoples' beliefs and opinions and educating them."

For many students, though, the trope that discourse will heal all wounds and 'show people the light' had been overplayed, and they are ready for more concrete solutions.

To review: the main themes outlined in this chapter were how queer spaces have

evolved over time, how universities have paralleled these changes and how LGBTQ+ students have navigated these shifts. Similarly, this chapter examined the varied responses from universities to queer social change and how they vary significantly; from altering their acronyms, symbology and imagery to fit a more mass-produced (and widely consumed) model to the opposite end of the spectrum and the choice to remain markedly less visible and inclusive. This is important because it shows how university spaces are not the same type of queer space for all students. Though these spaces have come a long way since the 1960's, there are still significant obstacles to overcome. That universities now have the ability to grade themselves on a rubric based on their LGBTQ+ inclusivity and can benchmark themselves against other institutions is a promising step towards increasing awareness about LGBTQ+ issues on university campuses and reducing that large gap between student experiences from one university to another, but it is only one step of many that need to be taken.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will outline my recommendations for actionable measures that universities can take to enhance their campus climate and make their spaces safer and better for LGBTQ+ students: mandatory and enhanced diversity training, increased campus resources, updated university bylaws and improving LGBTQ+ course curricula. These goals, though certainly attainable, are only achievable with the dedication and compliance of university administration and staff. I support these suggestions by explaining how expanding LGBTQ+ resources benefits both students and universities as diversity-inclusive programming becomes more desirable and therefore marketable.

CHAPTER VI: AWARENESS AND ACTION: HOW TO TANGIBLY FOSTER SAFE QUEER SPACES

Where does this leave us?   Despite some progress, there is still much work to do. But there are people, most likely people like you, whoever you might be that has actually taken the time to read this dissertation, that sincerely care and want to make things safer and better for LGBTQ+ students. These students are courageous, they are brave, and they are ready to do the work, but they are already dealing with so much and they cannot do it alone. They need the support of their respective university administrations, their faculty, their fellow students and allies who are educated and willing to facilitate these challenging but necessary discourses.

For my part, I will admit that at the end of this research I was determined to become a part of the solution by working at a university in an LGBTQ+ or Diversity Resource office. I applied to well over one hundred universities over the course of a year. Many positions were being newly designed. Like UM, universities and colleges around the country were seeing the need for this kind of office and position and were actually creating them. I was encouraged to see that level of progress, but also not hearing from most of them. From those universities that I did receive a response and from those where I got close enough to have interviews from the students who were there at the time, my feedback was always the same: we see you, we appreciate you, we love you, but you cannot represent us. Not now; not yet. Maybe in fifteen to twenty years, but not yet. We still have too much work to do, too many walls to break down. What they needed and wanted was someone with a well-defined queer identity who could

strongly take the helm and be the face of that organization, boldly spearheading them forward. My positionality as a cisgender woman who is in a relationship with a man and who does not identify as queer or as straight was too ambivalent, too passable as heteronormative. I understand, fully and completely. At the start of this research, I don't think that I would have, but I do now.

I may not be able to stand on that platform (at the moment), but I can advocate loudly from the sidelines as an active ally. I can speak out, speak up and step in when asked or needed. I can educate and consult. I can propagate necessary discourses about queerness, inclusivity and visibility in a sincere and impactful way. That may seem like a small thing, but it is not. As social scientists, a common reason to embark on research is to advance this ambiguous *discourse*; it is so ubiquitous in articles and texts that it is easy to acknowledge it as a general rule but overlook its actual importance. Those dialogues build and grow and gain momentum. Their vibrations have effects on the most unlikely of places and can touch lives in ways that you may not immediately understand but become clearer much later. Conversations lead to individualized ideas and introspection and awakenings. They stir movements. They reunite families. They build bridges. They break down barriers. They raise questions. They inspire change. None of the changes that have happened at these universities would have happened if everyone had quietly sat in their rooms and kept their thoughts to themselves.

I can also offer several tangible suggestions on how to make university campuses safer and better for students and faculty right now. From my visits to these campuses, my observations and my interviews there, four main themes recurred over and over again in

one way or another: diversity training, campus resources, updated university bylaws and increasing LGBTQ+ course curricula.

I.   Diversity Training

Mandatory diversity training for faculty and administration is one easy, tangible step that universities can take to make their spaces safer and better for LGBTQ+ students. These trainings come in several known iterations such as Safe Zone, Safe Space, Safe Harbor, SAFE on Campus, Trans Inclusion Training and Allies training programs. Individual universities are now also creating their own LGBTQ+ training programs and curricula though their respective resource centers that are available to the rest of the campus. Though the programs may differ, the goals are generally very similar: increase awareness of LGBTQ+ issues, improve campus climate, encourage thoughtful and constructive discourse and provide a safe space to LGBTQ+ students and allies to educate and "confront homophobia, transphobia, biphobia or heterosexism" (Poynter and Tubbs, 2008: 123). Safe Zone trainings were mentioned at FIU, UM and NSU, but as optional training that is available to faculty and students on a volunteer basis. The issue with this policy is that those who choose to attend the training tend to be those who are allies already. Those who are more resistant to the training are often those who could use it the most. When I say those who are resistant, I mean those who would choose not to go voluntarily; those faculty or administrators who students have claimed continue to refuse to use more current pronouns or who deadname trans students. David from FIU explains:

David: "We hold the Safe Zone training and whoever wants to come comes. Typically, it's people who have come in the past and want an update. When you complete the training, you get a Safe Zone sticker for your office door… it's a rainbow triangle so students know you've been trained... Advisors tend to be the types of people that will come. Professors who are in gender studies and the arts, professors who are already queer themselves and want to let other students know that they're "cool" or "on the level", or counselors and advisors that know that they need that training and if they don't get it through Safe Zone then they get it from somewhere else… That professor is literally trained by *us* on topics of LGBTQ issues and how to be sensitive to students and their identities. But it's not mandatory."

I ask him why not.

David: [shrugs and sarcastically jokes] "*What a good question!* I feel that making that mandatory [Safe Zone training] should not only be for professors, but also for advisors. If the student comes to you with a problem, then you should be able to handle that problem no matter what it could be…My personal mission is to raise awareness of our organization, get a following, in the fall get all of our ducks in line and then in the spring we should do it. I don't think I'm going to get a big push back for saying we need to advocate for transgender students because we're already building bathrooms, but what they may not know is by doing that they're giving me the ace in the hole against these people who don't want to use "they" singularly."

Faye: "It seems like such an obvious change that would benefit everybody. Even if you did receive push back, I feel like that would look…"

David: "Bad. It would look bad."

That interview was in 2016 and five years later, it seems as though David did not

achieve his goal of having Safe Zone training be made mandatory for faculty and

administrators at Florida International University. The course is much more visible

online, however, with an informational web page, a list of Safe Zone participants that

students can connect with on campus, a participant packet and several available training

dates. At the time of this initial research, only one training date per year was offered.

These trainings are now also counted as a professional development credit for FIU

administration and staff- the university currently requires twenty total hours. The

program has continued to evolve at FIU as the needs of the students and faculty have

shifted. The stickers, too, have seemingly had a bit of a makeover.   Figure 5 shows

updated Safe Zone stickers that were released in 2020. Unlike the rainbow triangle that

David described in the 2016 interview, the new Safe Zone stickers are a sleek design with

a rainbow star and "FIU" front and center.

(Figure 5, FIU Safe Zone Advocate Sticker. Source: Facebook, 2020)

The release of the new stickers was paired with a message in January of 2020 that was posted on the *Lgbtqa Initiatives at Florida International University* Facebook page regarding further updates to Safe Zone Training on campus:

> "It's time for a 2020 glo-up! Check out our new Safe Zone training stickers! Previously a single two-hour professional development training for faculty and staff, we are evolving this into a multi-part, multi-faceted series that will allow FIU staff to engage in continuous learning so that they can better serve and support our LGBTQA Panthers. STUDENTS- if you see this sticker on someone's office or digital signage, know that you can exist authentically in that space with someone who has begun training with our office in order to support you. FACULTY/STAFF- if you have received our safe zone training since August 2019, please reach out to us to collect your new sticker or sign up for our training on the HR Professional Development website!"
> (Lgbtqa Initiatives at Florida International University, 2020)

Though these changes are certainly on the right track, I argue that the next step would be to make diversity training mandatory for administration and staff as opposed to voluntary. ALLY trainings that focus on the support LGBTQ+ communities generally provide "…information and discussion about LGBTQ+ communities (including terminology); gender, sex, sexuality, inequities, and misconceptions experienced by LGBT communities; and privilege" (Rivers and Swank, 2017: 21). This does not necessarily have to be 'Safe Zone' training, but it is a viable, well-known option.   The 'Safe Zone Project' is a free online resource that provides an uncopyrighted curriculum with unlimited access to articles, activities and other resources. There is a readily available two-hour course and training packet online, but that training can also be

adjusted to include a full day of coursework if desired. The information is accessible and

the trainers are volunteers. With little to no cost to the university, it is a win-win for both

the administration and the students. The students are able to feel more of a sense of

community with their university as they literally teach the administration about LGBTQ+

safety and identity issues. The university benefits by being able to foster a safer

atmosphere for its students while also propelling itself forward as an inclusive, forward-

thinking space.

In his interview, Chris from Nova Southeastern University also indicated that the

trainings they were able to organize represented a very large step forward for LGBTQ+

students and administrators on campus. The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association at

Nova Southeastern University were able to organize multiple trainings for students,

faculty and staff including Safe Zone training and a certification in Transgender Health

Competency. They also had two doctors come to meetings to discuss gender

reassignment surgery and vaginoplasty. Aside from being medically pertinent to the

students and staff, Chris indicated that this kind of training was incredibly illuminating as

these procedures have not only medical implications, but also emotional and social

repercussions as well. Removing the stigma is an important step towards normalizing

transgender rights and access to social and health services on campuses. As there had

seemed to be a lot of misinformation, detachment and hesitancy towards LGBTQ+ issues

on the NSU campus, these trainings helped to close that gap in an educational and real

way that students needed and that faculty could 'wrap their head around.'

This is not to say that all members of the administration or faculty would have to become allies. An ally is a very specific kind of person. Washington and Evans describe an ally as "…a person who is a member of the dominant or majority group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate with and for, the oppressed population" (Washington and Evans, 1991: 195). An ally uses their privilege to help those Other marginalized identities to find their space. For some administrators and professors, the diversity training could be an academic awakening of current LGBTQ+ issues and best practices on campus- what you should and should not do to support students and also what behaviors could be viewed as problematic. These discourses are, after all, dynamic and constantly changing. What was considered acceptable and status quo ten years ago is not the case today. Terminology has changed, identities have changed, LGBTQ+ communities have changed. The training may therefore also be enough to course correct some inappropriate behaviors and create a safer campus space for LGBTQ+ students in classrooms and in other campus spaces.

For others, though, these trainings and acceptance as an official ALLY could be both educational and transformative. Recent research has shown that identifying and creating allies to the LGBTQ+ community in university spaces can adjust the behavior profiles of students, thereby improving the campus climate (Bowen and Bourgeois, 2001; Worthington et. al, 2002). In *Safe Zones: Creating LGBT Safe Space Ally Programs*, Kerry John Poynter and Nancy Jean Tubbs explain that: "…young adults are likely to believe that their peers hold negative attitudes about LGBT people, resulting in adjustment of behavior to emulate this misperception. Heterosexual males, in particular,

often feel the need to fit in and be accepted by others that hold negative attitudes about LGBT people thus emulating their peers. The public identification of heterosexual allies through a LGBT Safe Space Ally Program can help to alleviate previously held misperceptions, encourage affirming group identification, and encourage others to participate hence creating a more accepting campus" (Poynter and Tubbs, 2008: 122)

II. Dedicated LGBTQ+ Space, Staff and Resources

A recurring theme in this research was the need for a permanent safe space for LGBTQ+ students and staff on campus that was visible, sanctioned by the administration and accessible any time it was needed. For each of these universities, safe space was something that was coveted and created in small pockets on campus. Each of the three universities that I observed appeared to be in different stages of their LGBTQ+ safe space journey and a significant part of this was tied to their physical space or lack thereof. There was an absolute correlation between how much visibility and how many resources a university campus had and how the LGBTQ+ students felt about that campus climate and its classification as a 'safe space'.

On the lowest end of the spectrum was Nova Southeastern University. At Nova, there was no specific LGBTQ+ space and those spaces that were carved out by students were often infringed upon by other organizations or made invisible by the administration. This lacking access to a permanent space made the campus space feel unwelcoming and, at times, hostile for LGBTQ+ students at NSU. Unlike FIU and UM, there was no shared office space to meet, no student lounge and no advisor's office. There was no common ground on campus that any of the LGBTQ+ students felt like they shared. There were

also no representations of any of their organizations within the campus space; no signs, banners or flyers.

At Florida International University, the Stonewall Pride Alliance met in the Office of Multicultural Programs and Services (now the Office of Social Justice & Inclusion), an office that is shared with several other campus groups including the Black Female Development Circle and the UN Women's Club. The organization was meeting once or twice a week to have group forums on various topics such as queer representation in children's media, an introduction to pronouns and an overview of queer history. These meetings were well attended, often attracting between ten to fifteen students depending on the topic. Though the students were thankful for the space when they were able to have it, they were somewhat disheartened that they could not truly make it theirs. At the Stonewall Pride Alliance meetings that I attended, several students explained to me that, though they understood the need for all organizations to have access to that space and that they were all equally important in their own right, LGBTQ+ students really did need to have a designated safe space on campus with a staff that was equipped to handle their needs. Though they expressed a sincere understanding for these other groups to have their time and space, members of the Stonewall Pride Alliance felt that they deserved their own moment on campus and that they had enough of a campus presence (and percentage of the student body) to warrant their own physical office space or lounge.

Compared to the other schools in my study,, the University of Miami had the most available LGBTQ+ resources and a concrete plan moving forward to improve the campus climate for LGBTQ+ students. The students and faculty had made their case for years

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that an LGBTQ+ campus center was essential to the growth and development of queer student life and programs at UM. Ultimately established in 2016, the LGBTQ student center reports to the Division of Student Affairs and is run by two dedicated staff: the Director of Programs and an Administrative Assistant. Their stated mission is to foster the "…inclusion and support of University of Miami students, faculty, staff, and alumni inclusive of all genders, orientations, and expressions, and…on education and outreach, programming, intergroup engagement, empowerment, and advocacy for increased visibility in the university community" (University of Miami, 2021). The students and administrators at UM were certainly highly involved in this research and felt the most visible on campus in comparison to the other two universities. The implementation of a Campus Center and a Director of Programs was seen by students and administrators to make UM a leader in LGBTQ+ programming in South Florida. Although this university had certainly endured some difficult critiques from the students after the release of the LGBTQ Task Force summary, most were hopeful that these changes were putting UM on the right track and were creating a better campus climate for future students.

My informants repeatedly reiterated the importance of having a designated safe space on campus for LGBTQ+ students with a trained professional staff equipped to handle their unique needs. Based upon these recurring requisites, I would sincerely and adamantly recommend that every university invest in their own respective LGBTQ+ campus resource center with at least one (but preferably three) trained professionals to staff it full time. I would also suggest having gender-neutral or LGBTQ+ inclusive bathrooms within the resource center or adjacent to it. As Kyla Bender-Baird describes in *Peeing Under Surveillance: Bathrooms, Gender Policing, and Hate Violence*,

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bathrooms are sites of surveillance, performance and sometimes violence for LGBTQ+

people. In order to circumvent these uncomfortable situations, she says, many

transgender or genderqueer individuals try to avoid these spaces in public: "… a

technique of evading gender policing in public bathrooms is to avoid them all together. A

genderqueer friend of mine only feels comfortable in gender-neutral bathrooms and has

to be reminded to use the bathroom; otherwise, they forget because it's such an ordeal to

access a space that does not recognize their gender. After experiencing harassment,

threats, or violence in a public restroom, it is not surprising that some trans and gender

non-conforming people change their routine in order to avoid these encounters" (Bender-

Baird, 2016: 986). Having the LGBTQ+ inclusive restroom within or in close proximity

to the center ensures that students always have safe access to a restroom that fits their

needs and is within a designated safe space for LGBTQ+ students. Regardless of the

various types of intolerance and microaggressions that may occur at other supposed

gender-neutral or inclusive restrooms on campus, a restroom in such close proximity to a

staffed, visible campus center would be far less likely to be exposed to potentially unsafe

or intolerant behaviors than a shared space.   The combination of the resource center and

the restroom could also serve as a visible, accessible, safe beacon on campus for

LGBTQ+ students. It is, frankly, a missed opportunity for universities to not have an

LGBTQ+ resource center on campus.

As of 2021, there are 277 confirmed LGBTQ+ Campus Resource Centers

(Campus LGBTQ Center Directory, 2021), but 2,679 degree-granting postsecondary

institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Those numbers represent a

huge gap in the number of colleges and universities that currently have LGBTQ+

Resource Centers on campus and why there is so much room for growth. As of now, roughly 10% of colleges and universities have an LGBTQ+ Resource Center- why not be ahead of the curve? Research and discourse suggest that diversity is becoming more and more marketable: "…in the deeply corporatized university of the twenty-first century, diversity accompanies excellence, transferable skills, and accountability as markers communicating that "we are competitive players"" (Morrish and O'Mara, 2011: 976). The issue is that LGBTQ+ students have often been left out of university discourses of equity and inclusion that have instead focused on 'measurable' forms of social identity such as race, gender, disability and nationality (Morrish and O'Mara, 2011: 987). There could be many different potential reasons for this marginalization: that certain identity categories are actually some of the largest minority groups and therefore were the first to receive attention; that LGBTQ+ students are difficult to categorize and therefore more challenging to create general diversity initiatives for; or perhaps that LGBTQ+ identities have, to this point, not been seen as a marketable population for universities (Garvey et al., 2017; Morrish and O'Mara, 2011).

Though often previously ignored, LGBTQ+ students represent a significant part of the student body and are a marker of institutional diversity that can be both symbolic and marketable (Einhaus et. al, 2008; Garvey et. al, 2017). Students are smart, savvy and seeking spaces that have the resources they need. As discussed in the previous chapter, universities are also benchmarking their resources and progress against each other through reporting sites like the Campus Pride Index. By being proactive instead of reactive, universities have an opportunity to gain the market advantage on other universities that may not have yet identified LGBTQ+ students as a valuable diversity

population. Rather than responding to potential LGBTQ+ student complaints in the future about lacking resources or an unwelcoming campus climate, universities have an opportunity to build their own narratives, create marketable programs and promote themselves as LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces.

A similar argument could be made for gender-neutral bathrooms. These facilities are a very real, tangible resource that LGBTQ+ students need and want. A forward-thinking institution with a map of gender-neutral bathrooms in accessible locations on campus (not just in the dormitories) would be very sought after for transgender and non-binary students. While several scholars have acknowledged that adding gender-neutral restrooms to campuses would be beneficial and would make campuses more inclusive for LGBTQ+ students (Beemyn, 2003; Bender-Baird, 2016; Bilodeau, 2009; Jacobson et. al, 2017; Nicolazzo and Marine, 2015; Pryor et al., 2016), there is very little research done about the marketability of gender-neutral restrooms on university campuses as it is such a new development.

Gender-neutral restrooms are listed as a category on the Campus Pride Index, but only in regard to campus housing and residence life, implying that the index only measures gender-inclusive restrooms for undergraduate students who live on campus (Campus Pride Index, 2021). Per my informants, I would take this a step further and ensure that restrooms were made available not only in campus dormitories, but also in common areas and academic buildings. This way, commuters and students who wished to use the facilities during the day (and do not want to walk all the way back to their residence halls to do so) would have accessible, safe spaces. As a resource that was

repeatedly discussed by my informants as necessary for safe LGBTQ+ spaces, I would highly recommend creating more of them on university campuses and then highlighting not only that they have been created, but also where they are. Accessibility and visibility are key.

Another major issue at each of these universities was a lack of long-term infrastructure and a trained support staff to carry out organizational goals. Many of those faculty advisors and students who had taken on the role of campus leaders were filling a gap and learning as they went but were not specifically trained to handle the myriad social, political and deeply personal emotional challenges facing LGBTQ+ students and staff within university spaces. Several faculty members and student advisors who I spoke with for this research agreed to assist with the LGBTQ+ organizations because they had a deep passion for helping LGBTQ+ students or because they, themselves, identified on the spectrum and therefore felt they had some firsthand knowledge and mentoring experience that wanted to impart. Most admitted, though, to not having any actual LGBTQ+ counseling experience, or an in-depth understanding of the LGBTQ+ history or communities that were communicating with and advocating for. They were learning, too. And while they were very glad to learn and grow with the students, many fully admitted that they were not, perhaps, the most qualified or equipped to help and handle all of the issues at hand. They were also volunteering in their free time. While this is an incredibly noble undertaking, as academics we can certainly understand how limited 'free time' can be at certain points during the semester. Several of the students that I spoke with had indicated to me that organization advisors were available sporadically and not often in times of crisis which, for students, can happen at any time

on campus. Volunteer advisors also are not trained to counsel students who may be

dealing with serious home issues or even thoughts of self-harm as they struggle with their

LGBTQ+ identities. As a result, many of the students in the organizations described

taking on the role of counselors or impromptu therapists for their peers going through

critical situations. One student at UM described their experience trying to help a fellow

student through a difficult time coming to terms with their LGBTQ+ identity:

UM Student: "There are no LGBT counselors in the office that I know of and

even if there are some that have that experience, they aren't really around when we need

them. They're not on call at 2 a.m. when those thoughts come into play. So, there was

this one kid who was going through a really tough time coming to terms with his

sexuality. He couldn't be honest at home about it and was feeling really bad about it at

school. It was to the point where he was like…suicidal. And we [the students] are giving

him our numbers and are like trying to save him. He's calling us at all hours of the night

and we're trying to talk him through it because of course we care and we want to be there

for him…but at the same time we're not really equipped to handle that. We're all going

through our own things and it started to get really overwhelming…really dark. But

there's no one else that he feels comfortable going to, so the students are just taking that

on. It was so exhausting. We thought we could handle it, but realized it was just too

much. We need someone who knows how to talk someone through those things and we

just don't have that person."

Yes, there absolutely need to be LGBTQ+ centers on campus, but they also need

to be staffed full-time by people who have a background in LGBTQ+ diversity issues and

history. These are not passive advisory jobs; they require a level of comprehension, empathy and discernment.   I also do not believe that this is a one-person job. Will someone who works at an LGBTQ+ center have to wear many hats? Probably- it is a very intersectional role with significant visibility and many social and political layers to consider and navigate. One person, however, cannot be everything to everyone and they should not be expected to be.   Though universities may be at the preliminary stages of planning for these LGBTQ+ centers and only initially intending to hire one person to staff them, I would suggest that they plan for a long-term team that will be more strategically effective at accomplishing their long-term goals. As a foundational team, I would recommend a Program Director, a Counselor with experience in LGBTQ+ diversity advising and an Administrator or Event Coordinator within their LGBTQ+ resource center as committed full-time staff. This structure serves as a tangible baseline to ensure that the major aspects of running this kind of office are covered and quells concerns for both the students and administration.

The Program Director serves as the face of the center: spearheading policy changes, strategically planning events and training initiatives and seeking out new funding opportunities. They are also the connection between the university and the community; representing the LGBTQ+ Resource Center at local events, in partnership with other local universities and as the regional, national and international representative and authority on LGBTQ+ university program administration. Furthermore, a staff counselor is an essential component of the team. Though LGBTQ+ counselors are specific and perhaps difficult to find, a counseling professional with a master's degree focused on LGBTQ+ counseling or degrees with concentrations in human sexuality or

social work and experience in LGBTQ+ advising could serve as a go-to person for students as they navigate their LGBTQ+ identities within their university space. They could also act as mediators for the university administrations and the students if issues were to arise with faculty members and students or other administrators on campus. They could recommend trainings based upon the student populations at their respective universities and, perhaps, based upon their observed campus climate. They may also potentially administer Safe Zone and other diversity trainings rather putting the onus on the students. This would take significant stress away from the LGBTQ+ students and would let them know that they had a professional within their safe space on campus that was readily available and well versed in LGBTQ+ issues. Finally, the administrative assistant or events coordinator would help to make sure that the LGBTQ+ center runs smoothly and that all of the logistics are taken care of. They could help the student run organizations to coordinate their meetings, events, and trainings and could occasionally act as a liaison between the students and the Program Director. They are the person 'on the ground' who is building relationships with students, faculty and administrators and who makes these big picture goals a reality. These three positions would alleviate significant stress and responsibilities for students and faculty that are currently shouldering the full weight of organizing and maintaining all aspects of LGBTQ+ organizations at their respective universities. With the main framework taken care of, students can focus on why they are at their university in the first place: to pursue their academic goals, explore their identities and to find like-minded comrades to support and share their journey.

III.   Updating University By-laws and Constitutions to Reflect LGBTQ+ Diversity Issues

Mandatory diversity training and a full-time staffed LGBTQ+ resource center are both significant first steps toward increasing LGBTQ+ visibility and safe spaces on university campuses, but without written by-laws, students remain unprotected and subject to discrimination that can go unchecked and unpunished. Constitutions and by-laws provide structure, rules, a mission and a vision for an organization. These documents represent the values and integrity of an institution and provide a framework with which to build and develop. These establishments can be very important for LGBTQ+ students both symbolically and in practice. A recurring theme in this research was that students felt unheard by the administration and did not feel that any tangible LGBTQ+ policies were reflected in their university documents. If an incident occurred on campus, there was nothing to reference or to update. University constitutions and by-laws were organization-specific. Florida International University, for example, has by-laws for their Board of Trustees and additional sets of by-laws for their External Advisory Council of FIU Embrace (a health and wellness organization for adults with disabilities), their Research Foundation and individual sets of by-laws under distinct academic programs. LGBTQ+ students, however, are not mentioned in these general university by-laws. They are referenced in the faculty handbook under Student Resources, and the Multicultural Programs and Services subheading with a brief blurb about what kinds of LGBTQ+ programming FIU offers:

"Multicultural Programs and Services (MPAS) LGBTQA initiatives at FIU strive to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on both campuses through education, advocacy and awareness. The program contributes to an open campus climate that is safe and accepting for all members of the University community regardless of sexual orientation. LGBT initiatives include LGBT 101 presentations, a program designed to educate students about and sensitize students to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/sexual individuals." (FIU Faculty Handbook 2020-2021: 59).

There are two additional brief paragraphs that discuss the LGBTQA Mentorship program and Safe Zone training, but there is nothing in the handbook that examines how to address intolerance or microaggressions on campus. There is also no direction on how to navigate complex LGBTQ+ issues such as pronouns in the classroom, suggested curriculum adjustments, gender-inclusive restrooms and housing, medical coverage and programs for LGBTQ+ students, discrimination, violence or LGBTQ+ specific resources on campus. It was a similar case for the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University: both had various department or organization-specific by-laws but nothing precisely from the university that outlines their policies and procedures regarding LGBTQ+ students. The UM website now houses a webpage dedicated to LGBTQ+ resources through the LGBTQ Student Center that outlines health services, gender-inclusive housing on campus, locations of gender inclusive restrooms and a Trans Resource Guide (University of Miami, 2021), but there is not a link to any university document that confirms UM's stance on LGBTQ+ issues on campus.

Again, based upon the discussions with my informants, I would highly recommend that universities create and update their LGBTQ+ by-laws annually in conference with their LGBTQ+ resource center staff and representatives from their respective student organizations. I would suggest having this annual meeting be a known event that students can prepare for throughout the year within their organization and then present recommended updates to the university by-laws to the administration. The reasoning for this is two-fold: first, students will know concretely that they will have an opportunity to speak with administrators about their observations and concerns regarding what is happening on campus. They will have a voice that can make a significant difference in the policies and procedures of their university. This forum could break down imagined walls between students and the administration, increase visibility and create real changes that the students absolutely want. Secondly, it would compel the students to remain engaged with current discourses, events and legislation. Though students who are active within these organization are generally already involved and maintain a firm grasp of current events, knowing that there was a capstone event where these issues could be presented and listened to could further engage students within and on the periphery of these organizations.

For the administration, a meeting like this would be a straightforward way to gauge LGBTQ+ campus climate, to have an open forum with their students and to have research and recommendations brought directly to them. I also firmly believe that when writing policies and procedures about a group of individuals, the university should discuss those policies and any potential changes with the people that are directly affected. Though administrators may not institute all requests from these organizations, this open

discussion between groups will facilitate collaboration and transparency.

Communication and cooperation are crucial to building ongoing trust between students

and the administration at universities. By instituting clearly outlined and continually

updated by-laws regarding LGBTQ+ policies and procedures, universities ensure that

they are regularly updated on contemporary issues and legal guidelines. It also creates

another level of safety for LGBTQ+ students as a written document published and

disseminated through the university is a contract between the administration and the

students; it implies accountability and cause for action.

IV.   Expand LGBTQ+ Course Curricula

Now that we have a firm foundation in place for the development of the university

as an LGBTQ+ safe space, the next logical step is to increase educational opportunities

for faculty and students regarding Queer studies and discourses. A recurring theme

echoed by the students in this research was that there were not enough courses related to

LGBTQ+ topics and that those that were available were mostly introductory courses that

only scratched the surface of LGBTQ+ subjects and theory. When additions to the

course curriculum were requested, they were often met with resistance from faculty and

administration; stating that students could write papers about their own interests, but

entire courses did not need to be created on particular LGBTQ+ topics. This dismissal of

the requests and ideas of LGBTQ+ students creates a space where students feel that their

stories, lives and histories are not important to the university.

With so many other course offerings on the table, why can space not be made for

LGBTQ+ courses and programs? If students are passionately requesting these courses,

then there is an obvious need. Ignoring that need is unwise. Whether intentionally or not, universities and their administrators are creating a demoralizing and unwelcoming space for LGBTQ+ students. A refusal to develop the course curriculum is a refusal to develop and grow. At Nova Southeastern University, there were no LGBTQ+ or queer course listings in the undergraduate catalog or the any of the graduate catalogs including the College of Education and Criminal Justice, the College of Psychology, the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Law. Remembering Jade and Chris's interviews, both had specifically requested to add courses to the curriculum in their respective disciplines. Though they were in completely different academic fields, both saw the complete lack of education about queer lives and stories in their discipline and tried to change it. Both were met with staunch resistance. Both became discouraged and disillusioned with Nova.

While it is certainly understood that a course cannot be created for every single theme, it should be noted that LGBTQ+ students want to see their lives, interests and histories reflected in the curriculum. Especially if they are navigating their identities, educating themselves on LGBTQ+ themes and topics becomes pivotally important and holds distinct significance. These courses could be the catalyst that ignites their personal awakening or simply their desire to learn more about queer people and communities. In either case, the classroom space provides a structured, university sanctioned LGBTQ+ safe space to discuss queer issues. The more LGBTQ+ courses offered in the course catalog, the more visible the curriculum is and the more opportunity there is to facilitate meaningful discourse. These courses also provide additional opportunities to educate those not already familiar with LGBTQ+ topics and theory. Creating more LGBTQ+

educational opportunities that are accessible to heterosexual- identified students increases the likelihood that these students will become engaged in the material, recognize prejudices and facilitate safer spaces for LGBTQ+ students. This will help universities to better the campus climate for LGBTQ+ students.

The major themes discussed in this chapter were the concrete ways in which university spaces could be made safer and better for university students: diversity training, dedicated staff and resources, updated university by-laws and expanded course curricula. These preliminary suggestions are- I believe- a comprehensive roadmap that could be utilized by any and all universities to build safer spaces for LGBTQ+ students. If things on this list already exist on a university campus, expanding existing programs and implementing those that are missing will certainly develop a more inclusive campus climate. It is important to recognize where a university may fall on the spectrum for both students and administrators so that they can better gauge and understand their own experiences and build a path forward. Furthermore, universities not only improve their image by increasing their LGBTQ+ resources, they also make themselves more marketable to potential LGBTQ+ students in comparison to other institutions that have not yet developed their own campus resources. Cultivating a more diverse, equitable and inclusive campus climate is therefore advantageous for both LGBTQ+ students and university administrators as it both creates a better environment for the student body and offers universities the potential to capitalize on their social investment.

V. Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to analyze how homonormativities- the social and political powers that create, maintain and restrict hegemonic manifestations of queerness (Duggan, 2002; Ferguson, 2005; Ghaziani, 2011; Morgensen, 2010; Petchesky, 2009; Puar, 2007; Yep, 2002)- are produced, felt, imagined and challenged through the migration of diverse students to colleges and universities, as well as the environments fostered by those institutions. Specifically focusing on a case study set in South Florida and three unique universities- Florida International University, the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University- this research explored how LGBTQ+ students experienced and challenged inequalities within their respective university spaces. It also examined how university spaces were queered, how LGBTQ+ spaces were created and what students want and need from those spaces on university campuses.

The first chapter focused on the foundational concepts and subsequent literature at the base of this dissertation: an overview of homonormativities and productions of identity. Also discussed was a historical summary of the formation of universities and the power structures that underpin them. The second chapter addressed the queer methodological perspective and methods employed to execute this research: semi-structured interviews, participant observation and social media analysis. In the third chapter, I further explored my first research question: *What are the practices, ideals and discourses of power that inform the production of queer higher educational spaces and experiences?* I discussed how LGBTQ+ safe spaces are formed and, subsequently, how

universities can become LGBTQ+ spaces. In Chapter 4, I examined my second research question: *How are homonormative imaginations of queer identities and spaces disseminated to, reproduced by, and resisted by diverse queer student populations?* This chapter looked more closely at homonormativity and 'other' identities on the LGBTQ+ spectrum; how they are marginalized within the queer community and within university spaces. In Chapter 5, I concentrated on my third research question (Or, rather, a set of questions): *How are inequalities identified within university spaces? What measures are being taken to address these inequalities? What actions are not being taken? How can universities improve?* I discussed how students responded to discrimination in university spaces and, in turn, how universities addressed those critiques. Specifically, I highlighted informant narratives from Nova Southeastern University and the University of Miami to show two different responses to student concerns and the affect that is has on student attitudes and subsequent campus climate. Finally, this chapter has been a synchronization of informant testimony, participant observation, queer theoretical theory and scholarly discourse. From this body of work, I have made four tangible recommendations that I feel would be beneficial to LGBTQ+ students and universities: diversity training, campus resources, updated university bylaws and increasing LGBTQ+ course curricula.

The most important thing to do as scholars, administrators, staff and allies to make university spaces safer and better for LGBTQ+ students is to listen, to learn and to take action. Creating LGBTQ+ safe spaces requires open communication, collaboration and dedication to the visibility of LGBTQ+ students and organizations on campus. It also requires significant compliance from administration and staff. The expansion of

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faculty and student mentoring programs that have continued to develop and grow at

Florida International University and the University of Miami are promising, but it is now

time to get some of the less involved faculty and staff members on board and trained. As

stated earlier, not everyone has to be an ally, but they should be made aware of current

issues, best practices and where the university stands on these issues. In line with this,

universities need to take the time to put their stance in their written guidelines. LGBTQ+

students need to know that their university will protect them; that there will be

consequences for known acts of intolerance on campus. They need to know that their

university sees them, respects them and will no longer accept outward prejudice or

passive microaggressions. To facilitate a safe space, universities need to actively *be* a

safe space. This requires work and change, but it is important work and necessary

change.

There is also a need to take the intersectionality of queerness seriously and to

recognize just how varied positionalities, identities and lived experiences truly are.

Especially when considering South Florida- these institutions do not have a monolithic

student body. Issues of race, class and citizenship status loom large. What may be a

successful model at a university in the Northeastern United States may not necessarily

work everywhere; just like the largely graduate student body of Nova and the more

working-class FIU have different needs than the more affluent students of UM. The

themes drawn out by my research- universities as spaces of Western, heterosexualized

and homosexualized, masculinist powers that are consistently reinforced through

dominant narratives; marginalization of 'Other' identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum

and the invisibility/ erasure of certain identities; the evolution and resistance within

queer spaces- are not localized to a place like South Florida, but the contexts and positionalities associated with students within that type of space are certainly unique. South Florida, and Miami especially, represents a distinctive queer imaginary that is known throughout the world. For those who live in the area, or who may have migrated there from other countries, there are several more layers added to South Florida as a queer space that involve family, culture, gender roles, class hierarchies and so on. It was very obvious when interviewing the students that those participants who had lived in Miami their whole lives were having a much different experience than, say, a student who originally lived in Boston and was coming to Miami to study, but not to stay. The point here is to acknowledge that these experiences are not universal, they are layered, contextual, evolving and unique to space, place and time. If universities want to make a sincere and significant impact, they need to be thoughtful about what changes would be truly representative of their students as individuals and as a larger student body.

Furthermore, there are virtually no downsides to making these changes. As more and more universities add diversity centers and resource offices, this is clearly the direction that university systems are moving toward in the future. Why would a university want to stay behind the curve? To be seen as less diverse? Spend the capital and create the resources, which both improves the lives of actual students and allows the university to market itself as a forward-thinking LGBTQ+ safe space. It is an investment that will not only give universities a solid foundation for the future as they develop diversity initiatives and programs, but it will also help the students that need those resources and spaces right now.

University spaces are such an important cornerstone for LGBTQ+ youth; they are a place for self-discovery, education, friends, new families, awakenings, harsh realities and pushing boundaries. They are perhaps the first place away from home where students are finding their voice and learning who they truly are. While universities are continual spaces for some (like faculty, staff and community members), they are a sliver of time for LGBTQ+ students. A very important, life-shaping sliver. If I have learned anything from this research, it is that no matter what progress is being made there is always more to do. Not one student, faculty member or administrator said that their university was the perfect LGBTQ+ safe space. Every participant had suggestions for improvement. Every participant had witnessed, experienced or heard about acts of prejudice and intolerance on campus. Every participant wanted their university to do more.

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APPENDIX A: Student Interview Questions

1. How old are you?

2. Do you identify with any particular gender/ sexual identities? If so, what?

3. With which races, ethnicities and/or nationalities do you identify?

4. Which college or university in South Florida do you attend?

5. How long have you attended this institution?

6. What is your major area of study?

7. Do you identify with a particular socioeconomic class? Do you receive any kind of funding or scholarships to attend your school?

8. Were you a South Florida resident before enrolling? If not, what do you consider to be your home state/ city/ country?

9. What area of South Florida do you currently live in?

10. Is there a particular reason why you live in this area?

11. Have you lived in other areas of South Florida? If so, where?

12. [If not a local resident] Why did you relocate to South Florida?

13. What did you imagine about South Florida before you moved here?

14. Did you research South Florida online before you moved here? If so, what sorts of sites did you look at?

15. Did social media play a factor? Friends and family? Anyone or anything else?

16. Did you imagine South Florida to be a "gay-friendly" space? Did this influence your decision to relocate? If so, why?

17. What did you imagine to be your "ideal" college or university? Has this changed since attending your current institution?

18. Did you check to see if there were any on campus resources available on campus to LGBTIQA students prior to choosing your university? How much did this factor into your decision?

19. Did any faculty at your current institution or at your high school help you to make your decision? Anyone else acting in an official capacity? If so, how?

20. Are you involved in any LGBTIQA student or university organizations? Or in LGBTIQA organizations in South Florida?

21. Do you feel that your university is a "queer-friendly" space? Why or why not? How much does this matter to you?

22. Do you feel that your university actively promotes itself as a "queer-friendly" space? How or how not?

23. Do you feel that queer students are visible on campus?

24. How would you describe the queer community on your campus? Would you describe it as diverse or not? Are there certain varieties of queer students who seem more prevalent than others?

25. Do you feel that there are adequate resources for queer students on campus? What resources do you know of?

26. Do you feel safe on campus? Why or why not?

27. What kinds of positive or negative experiences have you had as a "queer" student on campus? In South Florida?

28. Have you ever made your experiences or opinions known to administrators on campus? Why or why not? If so, what happened?

29. Is there anything you feel could make your university a more safe or inclusive space for LGBTIQA students?

30. Knowing what you know now, would you still choose to attend your current university? Why or why not?

31. If not, where would you have chosen to go? Why?

32. What would you say to other queer students looking at universities? Would you have any advice for them?

33. What do you plan to do once you finish your degree? Do you plan to stay in South Florida or to relocate? If you are planning to stay, why?

34. If you are relocating, where might you be looking to go? What attracts you about that space? How is it different from (or similar to) South Florida?

APPENDIX B: Administrator Interview Questions

1. What institution do you work for? In which department?

2. What is your position/ job title?

3. How long have you worked at here? Have you previously worked at any other educational institutions? If so, which ones and in what capacity?

4. What led you to your current job?

5. Do you an estimate of how many queer students attend your institution?

6. Do you have significant interactions with LGBTIQA students? If so, how?

7. In your interactions with queer students, are there any topics that are consistently brought up? Any questions that are often asked or concerns that are made known?

8. Do you feel that your university is a "gay-friendly" space? Why or why not?

9. What resources are you aware of that are available to queer students?

10. What future resources would you like to see be made available to LGBTIQA students?

11. Do you know of any negative incidents that have affected queer students on campus? What did the institution do remedy the issue?

12. Have you heard from any queer students about positive experiences on campus? If so, what are some examples?

13. Are the faculty involved with queer student and university organizations? If so, how?

14. Is there a time when you noticed more attention paid by the university towards queer students? What this a gradual change or a more rapid change?

15. Does the university advertise to queer students in any way? If so, how?

16. Does the university promote itself as a "gay-friendly" space? Does it promote South Florida as a "gay-friendly" space?

17. Are there any incentives that you know of for your institutions to promote itself as "gay-friendly", in terms of publicity, funding, alumni relations, or other areas?

18. Have you noticed an increase in the attendance of queer students? If so, why do you think this might be?

19. Do you know if these students are coming from particular geographical locations? Are these local or international students?

20. Has your university conducted any research concerning your queer student populations?

21. Do you know of any ways that the university accommodates queer students? (on-campus organizations, residential housing, counseling services etc…)

22. Are there any financial incentives or scholarships available exclusively for queer students?

23. Does the university partner with any local LGBTIQA organizations? With other universities?

24. Is the university involved in any South Florida PRIDE events? If so, how?

25. Are university LGBTIQA organizations active in social media?

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