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Exploring the intersections of LGBTQ experience and social work education: a scoping review

Gita R. Mehrotra ^a, Kimberly D. Hudson ^b and Eli Hess^a

^aSocial work, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA; ^bSocial work, Fordham University, New York, NY, USA

ABSTRACT

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues, experiences, and theorizing have had limited representation within social work education. In recent years there has been an increase in the scholarly discourse regarding queer and trans issues and social work education, but little is known about the landscape of this body of published work. In this scoping review, we explored peer-reviewed literature regarding the intersections of social work education and queer and trans experience, issues, and theorizing. Utilizing major academic databases, we identified 54 articles published in social work literature from 2010 to 2020 that met inclusion criteria. Topical areas of study included: classroom experiences of queer and trans students/faculty, student/faculty attitudes toward LGBTQ people, integration of gender and sexuality content within social work curriculum, and pedagogical strategies. In addition, we analyzed rationales for the research presented, theoretical frameworks employed, representation of identities, engagement with race, authors' identity disclosure, and recommendations for social work education. We suggest that more scholarship is needed within social work education that centers the lived experiences of queer and trans people; asks a range of questions rooted in varied theories and epistemologies; and decenters whiteness and focuses on intersectionality within queer and trans communities.

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Even with visible, positive shifts in attitudes and beliefs about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people in society over the past several decades (such as increased media representation of LGBTQ¹ people, marriage equality gains in many countries, etc.), there is still consistent evidence that homophobia and transphobia are pervasive around the world and have direct impacts on LGBTQ people. Since 2015, political violence against LGBTQ people in the United States has included the rise of anti-trans and homophobic legislation that has significant and detrimental effects on queer and trans young people, families, and communities. In the 2023 legislative session alone, the ACLU is tracking hundreds of anti-LGBTQ bills in the U.S. including policy that could directly impact healthcare access, trans students' school experiences, free speech and expression, and anti-discrimination protections (American Civil Liberties Union,

CONTACT Gita R. Mehrotra  gmebrotra@pdx.edu  Social work, Portland State University, Portland, OR 97201, USA

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2023). In Texas, the facilitation or provision of gender-affirming medical treatment for minors has been determined child abuse under the Texas Family Code Governor. As such, Greg Abbott has instructed the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to investigate instances of youth receiving trans-affirmative care as (Harrell et al., 2023). While these are just a few examples, these oppressive assaults against LGBTQ communities are important social justice issues to address that have relevance for the social work profession. While social work education has still been relatively limited in its inclusion of LGBTQ content, over time social work education literature has increasingly started to examine the experiences of LGBTQ issues, experiences, and theorizing.

Despite greater attention to these issues, extant literature suggests that LGBTQ social work students often do not see themselves reflected in positive or affirming ways in course content or classroom practices (Austin et al., 2016; Chinell, 2011; Craig et al., 2017; Dentato et al., 2016; Hylton, 2005). Research also indicates that LGBTQ students can often experience the social work classroom as a cisnormative and heteronormative space that can require additional labor for queer and trans students who bring this content into classroom discussions (Atteberry-Ash et al., 2019; Dentato et al., 2016; Hylton, 2005). Regarding field education, studies have confirmed that many field instructors, agencies, and educators still lack knowledge about issues of gender and sexuality and are limited in their ability to support students' competency for working with LGBTQ people (Messinger, 2013; Messinger et al., 2020). In addition, research suggests that LGBTQ students face challenges in field settings including: navigating contexts, managing disclosure, and dealing with discrimination (Messinger et al., 2020). In order to ensure meaningful engagement with LGBTQ issues and communities in social work education, some research has emphasized the importance of pedagogical strategies (Hafford-Letchfield, 2010; Serpen et al., 2018; Vinjamuri, 2017; Wagaman et al., 2018), the utility of assessing practice readiness and competence for work with LGBTQ communities amongst social work students (Craig et al., 2016a; Dentato et al., 2018; Inch, 2017), and the need for inclusion of LGBTQ content in curriculum (Bragg et al., 2020; Byers et al., 2020; Gezinski, 2009; Levy et al., 2013). Literature on LGBTQ social work education has also documented challenges to teaching about queer and trans issues in the classroom (Dessel et al., 2019) and indicated that faculty members play a key role in the classroom experiences of LGBTQ students (Chinell, 2011; Linley et al., 2016). LGBTQ faculty have also reflected challenges in regard to the hetero-and-cisnormative norms of social work education (LaSala et al., 2008; Prock et al., 2019; J. Shelton & Dodd, 2020). To date, queer and trans theoretical perspectives have been somewhat limited in social work education. However, scholars have put forward several important calls to the field to integrate queer and trans theorizing into social work practice and curricula (Burdge, 2007; MacKinnon, 2011; McPhail, 2004; Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010; Rowntree, 2014; Wagaman et al., 2018).

National bodies such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in the U.S. emphasize that social workers are professionally mandated to practice effectively with all populations, challenge inequities, and promote social justice. CSWE's Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) specifically require that students demonstrate the ability to engage diversity and difference in practice and advance social justice (CSWE, 2015). In addition, in 2016, CSWE's Council on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (CSOGIE)

created guidelines to create and promote affirmative environments in social work education for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and questioning (LGBQQ) community (e.g. students, staff, faculty; Craig et al., 2016b) as well as a separate set of affirmative guidelines for members of the transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) community (Austin et al., 2016). Despite the existence of these professional and academic mandates and standards, queer and trans issues are still limited and even marginalized within social work education. At present, religious rationalizations are commonly used to exclude or discriminate against LGBTQ people in social work programs in North America (Dentato et al., 2016). In a recent study conducted by Prock et al. (2022), 40% of CSWE-accredited schools of social work within religiously affiliated institutions of higher education were found to have some element of anti-LGBTQ discrimination in their student handbook, faculty handbook, or both. Religious exemptions and ministerial exemptions make it possible for programs to gain CSWE accreditation despite being discriminatory against LGBTQ people, which is in direct conflict with professional mandates and ethics (Prock et al., 2022).

Current study

Perhaps due to greater visibility and social recognition of LGBTQ issues, and continued growth in social work scholarship across issues related to social justice, there has been a recent increase in the scholarly discourse and research regarding queer and trans issues, experiences, and theorizing within social work education. However, to date, little is known about this area of literature. As such, in this study we aimed to explore peer-reviewed articles on the intersections of queer and trans identities, experiences, and theories and social work education in order to better understand the landscape of this work. For the purposes of this study, we were interested in all aspects of social work education, including implicit curriculum, explicit curriculum and pedagogy, and field education. We also broadly defined LGBTQ issues, theorizing, and experience within social work education to reference a range of themes in the literature, including: LGBTQ faculty and student experiences, queer and trans theorizing, issues related to LGBTQ communities and practice. The objective of this review is to provide a snapshot of this body of literature to help inform future research related to the intersection of LGBTQ issues and social work education.

For this scoping review, we chose to examine the social work literature between 2010–2020. Our inquiry was guided by the following research questions: 1) What is the range and extent of the literature on LGBTQ issues, experiences, and theorizing and social work education in this timeframe? 2) What is the nature of this literature (e.g., topics, design/methods, theoretical frameworks, engagement with race, etc.) in this time period? 3) Based on the above, what are some of the emergent needs for future work at the intersection of queerness and social work education?

Methods

Scoping studies have become an increasingly common method of searching for and making meaning of the literature on a specific topic. Such reviews are useful for understanding areas of research or practice where limited knowledge exists in order to grow a solid foundation for future research (Colquhoun et al., 2014; Levac et al., 2010).

Daudt et al. (2013) suggest that ‘scoping studies aim to map the literature on a particular topic of research area and provide an opportunity to identify key concepts, gaps in the research, and types and sources of evidence to inform practice, policymaking, and research’ (p. 7). Arksey and O’Malley (2005) were among the first scholars to articulate a rationale and framework for scoping studies and their framework identifies four main reasons for conducting this type of a review: (1) to examine the extent, range, and nature of research activity; (2) to determine the value of undertaking a full systematic review; (3) to summarize and disseminate research findings; and (4) to identify research gaps in the existing literature. Our research team identified the first and fourth rationales as the most relevant for the review presented here as they allowed us to broadly explore LGBTQ-related content in social work education literature. We drew upon Arksey and O’Malley’s (2005) framework for conducting scoping reviews: identifying research questions, identifying relevant studies, study selection, charting the data, and collating, summarizing, and reporting the results. We also took Levac et al. (2010) recommendation to take an iterative, team approach to the scoping review to strengthen the study.

Data identification and selection

The review began with a systematic search of four major academic databases: Social Services Abstracts, psycINFO, LGBT Life, and Google Scholar. The research team used a wide range of search terms to identify articles published in the field of social work from 2010 to 2020, including social work education-related terms and queer and trans-related terms (see Table 1 for a full list of search terms and inclusion criteria). Return results were screened to ensure they fit within the scope of the study; specifically, the research team reviewed the article titles and/or abstracts of the first several hundred return results from each search and made a list of relevant articles. This step was repeated multiple times using various search conventions until no new relevant articles were returned.

Next, the team retrieved full-length articles and applied the inclusion criteria to determine eligibility. During this step, some articles that initially appeared to meet the criteria were ultimately excluded. For example, one article that mentioned both LGBT populations and implications for social work education in the abstract did not in fact discuss anything education-related in the body of the article, as so was therefore excluded. Each included article was reviewed and discussed by two or more members

Table 1. Databases, search terms, and inclusion criteria.

<i>Databases searched</i>	Social Services Abstracts psycINFO LGBT Life w/Full Text Google Scholar
<i>Search terms</i>	social work [AND] education [OR] curriculum [OR] pedagogy [OR] teaching [OR] instruction [AND] LGBTQ [OR] LGBT [OR] trans [OR] transgender [OR] queer [OR] sexualities [OR] sexual minority [OR] gender minority [OR] gay [OR] lesbian [OR] bisexual [OR] heterosexism [OR] homophobia [OR] cisnormativity
<i>Inclusion criteria</i>	Published between 2010–2020 and English language and Focus on social work education, curriculum, classroom experience, and/or pedagogy/ instruction and Focus on LGBTQ issues, experiences, and/or theorizing

of the research team to ensure it met inclusion criteria. Through this kind of iterative review, discussion, and application of our inclusion criteria, the final sample consisted of 54 articles (see Table 2 for full list of articles included in sample).

Table 2. Articles included in sample.

- Atteberry-Ash, B., Speer, S. R., Kattari, S. K., & Kinney, M. K. (2019). Does it get better? LGBTQ social work students and experiences with harmful discourse. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 31*(2), 223–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2019.1568337>
- Austin, A., Craig, S. L., & McInroy, L. B. (2016). Toward a transgender affirmative social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education, 52*(3), 297–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2016.1174637>
- Austin, A., Craig, S. L., Dentato, M. P., Roseman, S., & McInroy, L. (2019). Elucidating transgender students' experiences of microaggressions in social work programs: Next steps for creating inclusive educational contexts. *Social Work Education, 38*(7), 908–924. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2019.1575956>
- Bennet, B., & Gates, T. G. (2019). Teaching cultural humility for social workers serving LGBTQI Aboriginal communities in Australia. *Social Work Education, 38*(5), 604–617. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2019.1588872>
- Bragg, J. E., Nay, E. D. E., Miller-Cribbs, J., & Munoz, R. T. (2020). Implementing a graduate social work course concerning practice with sexual and gender minority populations. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 32*(1), 115–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2019.1654425>
- Bragg, J., Havig, K., & Muñoz, R. (2018). Absent in theory, invisible in practice: Queering HBSE for a more inclusive social work profession. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 28*(1), 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2017.1383959>
- Byers, D. S., McInroy, L. B., Craig, S. L., Slates, S., & Kattari, S. K. (2020). Naming and addressing homophobic and transphobic microaggressions in social work classrooms. *Journal of Social Work Education, 56*(3), 484–495. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1656688>
- Chinell, J. (2011). Three voices: Reflections on homophobia and heterosexism in social work education. *Social Work Education, 30*(7), 759–773. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2010.508088>
- Chonody, J. M., Woodford, M. R., Brennan, D. J., Newman, B., & Wang, D. (2014). Attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women among heterosexual social work faculty. *Journal of Social Work Education, 50*(1), 136–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2014.856239>
- Craig, S. L., Dentato, M. P., Messinger, L., & McInroy, L. B. (2016). Educational determinants of readiness to practise with LGBTQ clients: Social work students speak out. *British Journal of Social Work, 46*(1), 115–134. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcu107>
- Craig, S. L., Iacono, G., Pacey, M. S., Denato, M. P., & Boyle, E. H. K. (2017). Intersecting sexual, gender, and professional identities among social work students: The importance of identity integration. *Journal of Social Work Education, 53*(3), 466–479. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2016.1272516>
- De Jong, D. (2015). Transgender issues and BSW programs: Exploring faculty perceptions, practices, and attitudes. *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors, 20*(1), 199–218. <https://doi.org/10.18084/1084-7219.20.1.199>
- Dentato, M. P., Craig, S. L., Lloyd, M. R., Kelly, B. L., Wright, C., & Austin, A. (2016). Homophobia within schools of social work: The critical need for affirming classroom settings and effective preparation for service with the LGBTQ community. *Social Work Education, 35*(6), 672–692. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2016.1150452>
- Dentato, M. P., Craig, S. L., Messinger, L., Lloyd, M., & McInroy, L. B. (2013). Outness among LGBTs social work students in North America: The contribution of environmental supports and perceptions of comfort. *Social Work Education, 33*(4), 485–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2013.855193>
- Dentato, M. P., Kelly, B., Lloyd, M. R., & Busch, N. (2017). Preparing social workers for practice with LGBT populations affected by substance use: Perceptions from students, alumni and service providers. *Social Work Education, 37*(3), 294–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2017.1406467>
- Dessel, A., Levy, D. L., Lewis, T. O., McCarty-Caplan, D., Jacobsen, J., & Kaplan, L. (2019). Teaching note—Challenges in the classroom on LGBTQ topics and Christianity in social work. *Journal of Social Work Education, 55*(1), 202–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2018.1513879>
- Einbinder, S. D., Fiechter, S., Sheridan, D. A., & Miller, D. L. (2012). Social work educators' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians: A national assessment. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 24*(2), 173–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2012.669746>
- Fredricksen-Goldsen, K. I., Woodford, M. R., Luke, K. P., & Gutiérrez, L. (2011). Support of sexual orientation and gender identity content in social work education: Results from national surveys of U.S. and Anglophone Canadian faculty. *Journal of Social Work Education, 47*(1), 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2011.200900018>
- Gates, T. G. (2011). Coming out in the social work classroom: Reclaiming wholeness and finding the teacher within. *Social Work Education, 30*(1), 70–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615471003721202>
- Gates, T. G. (2016). Coming of age as an LGBTQ social work educator: Reflections on a personal and professional journey. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping, 22*(3), 5–11.

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

- Gates, T. G., Quinn, C. R., & Phillips, M. L., Jr. (2017). LGBTQ-affirmative teaching at Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Understanding program directors' views. *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 22, 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.18084/1084-7219.22.1.131>
- Hafford-Letchfield, T. (2010). A glimpse of the truth: Evaluating 'debate' and 'role play' as pedagogical tools for learning about sexuality issue on a law and ethics module. *Social Work Education*, 29(3), 244–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615470902984655>
- Inch, E. (2017). Are you ready? Qualifying social work students' perception of their preparedness to work competently with service users from sexual and gender minority communities. *Social Work Education*, 36(5), 557–574. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2016.1237628>
- Jaffee, K. D., Dessel, A. B., & Woodford, M. R. (2016). The nature of incoming graduate social work students' attitudes toward sexual minorities. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 28(4), 255–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2016.1224210>
- Johnson, L. M. (2014). Teaching Note—Heterosexism as experienced by LGBT social work educators. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 50(4), 748–751. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2014.947165>
- Joslin, J. Y., Dessel, A. B., & Woodford, M.R. (2016). Social work students' experiences in a Christianity and sexual minority intergroup dialogue. *Social Work Education*, 35(5), 547–559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2016.1178716>
- Kwok, D. K., Wu, J., & Shardlow, S. M. (2013). Attitudes toward lesbians and gay men among Hong Kong Chinese social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 49(2), 337–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2013.768493>
- Levy, D. L., Leedy, G., & Miller, G. (2013). Preparing students for research and for work with the transgender population: Exploring the results of an innovative course pairing. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 25(3), 306–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2013.806879>
- Logie, C. H., Bogo, M., & Katz, E. (2015). 'I didn't feel equipped': Social work students' reflections on a simulated client 'coming out'. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 51(2), 315–328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2015.1012946>
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- May, B. (2010). Social work faculty and GLBT diversity content: Findings from a national sample of social work faculty. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 22(3), 337–353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720903426453>
- McCarty-Caplan, D. (2018a). Seeing the same thing differently: Program director, faculty, and student perspectives of MSW LGBT competence. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 54(3), 448–463. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2018.1453904>
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- Papadaki, V., Plotnikof, K., & Papadaki, E. (2013). Social work students' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: The case of the social work department in Crete, Greece. *Social Work Education*, 32(4), 453–467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2012.687371>
- Prock, K. A., Berlin, S., Harold, R. D., & Groden, S. R. (2019). Stories from LGBTQ social work faculty: What is the impact of being 'out' in academia? *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 31(2), 182–201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2019.1584074>
- Rowntree, M. R. (2014). Making sexuality visible in Australian social work education. *Social Work Education*, 33(3), 353–364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2013.834885>
- Rutledge S. E., Siebert, D. C., Siebert, C., & Chonody, J. (2012). Attitudes toward gays and lesbians: A latent class analysis of university students. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 38(1), 18–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2011.598721>

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

- Serpen, A. S., Demirbilek, M., Duyan, V., & Megahead, H. A. (2018). Using movies to change homophobic attitudes of social work students: Turkish example. *Research on Social Work Practice, 28*(7), 876–881. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731516681850>
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Data analysis: coding, charting, and summarizing

In the data-charting phase, our team collaboratively developed a data table to track information from each article. The table used the following headings: author name/s, researcher and study location, publication year, article title, research design, focus of paper, search term used, and journal. We routinely met virtually to discuss our process and adjust our methods for alignment with the research questions. We developed and used templates to code for additional pieces of information from each article, including: study rationale; mentions of race; use of theory; author(s) identity disclosure; and recommendations and/or implications for social work education. These dimensions were determined by the research team through an iterative analytic process and were informed by the research questions, as well as the authors' commitments to intersectional antiracism and critical theorizing and methodologies in social work. Initially, this coding template was used by each of the authors to analyze a subset of the articles ($n = 5$). This allowed us to refine the areas of examination, discuss coding methods, and establish inter-rater reliability. We conducted this process three times, revisiting the coding schema, our understanding of the categories, codes, and norms for memoing at each round of analysis. Articles coded in the initial rounds were re-analyzed with the final coding schema.

Trustworthiness and reflexivity

The research team included three US-based social work academics; two with PhDs in social work, and one with an MSW degree. Two of the coauthors, a queer South Asian cisgender femme and a queer-mixed femme (respectively) are faculty members who have each taught across several institutions and conduct research about social work education. The third researcher is a white Jewish nonbinary queer person, who was a classroom instructor and MSW student during part of the research process. We approached our project from the perspective that the process of reflexivity includes reflection and action

through which the researcher continuously examines their influence upon the subject of study, while concurrently identifying the subject's impact upon the researcher (Probst, 2015). Thus, the research team regularly considered how our positionalities, experiences, and related assumptions shaped and were shaped by the research process. We used notes, team consultation, and consistent debriefing to establish trustworthiness and reduce bias in our analysis and interpretation of the data.

As a collaborative research team, we also approached our work utilizing principles of Slow scholarship. Slow scholarship is a praxis meant to reimagine time and resist expediency, productivity, and efficiency within compressed time frames that is most often rewarded in research processes within academia (see for example Mountz et al., 2015; Shahjahan, 2015). This intentional slowing down is meant to create space for relationships, thinking, and to allow time and space for the research process (Mountz et al., 2015, Shahjahan, 2015; Ulmer, 2017). This praxis of Slow scholarship was central to our entire research process which took approximately two years. Consistent with this approach, we valued and took time to build relationships, balanced multiple demands and disruptions in the research process, negotiated various dynamics of power in our research team, and navigated the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results

Date and location of study and researchers

Of the 54 articles in the study sample, 35 (65%) were published in three journals: *Social Work Education* ($n = 15$), *Journal of Social Work Education* ($n = 11$), and *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services* ($n = 9$). The majority of articles were US-based studies with US or US/Canada-based research teams ($n = 37$). Other research/researchers were based in Canada ($n = 4$, one with a US/Canada research team), the UK ($n = 4$), Australia ($n = 2$), Greece ($n = 3$ studies, one author), or were cross-national ($n = 4$). Publication dates of articles were relatively evenly distributed across the time frame included in the sample (2010–2020). The sample was not skewed toward the beginning or end of the decade: the median year of publication was 2015, suggesting no detectable increase or decrease in attention to this topic over time.

Research design and focus of the article

This body of work included a range of types of papers, including conceptual and empirical papers. The research designs of articles in our sample were distributed across conceptual ($n = 10$), qualitative ($n = 18$), quantitative ($n = 19$), mixed methods ($n = 7$) research designs (see Table 3). The majority of articles ($n = 45$) focused on attitudes, experiences, and/or readiness to serve/practice with LGBTQ populations among faculty, students, or administrators in social work education. Of these, 15 focused on students' attitudes toward LGBTQ populations and issues; eight focused on faculty attitudes toward LGBTQ populations and issues. Eleven articles focused on student experiences and six focused on faculty experiences. Eight articles focused on students' competence or readiness to work with LGBTQ populations, and three focused on faculty readiness to teach or otherwise address LGBTQ topics in the classroom or program. A focus on

Table 3. Descriptive results.

	N	%
<i>Research Design</i>		
Qualitative	18	33
Quantitative	19	35
Mixed methods	7	13
Conceptual/theoretical	10	19
<i>Study Focus</i>		
Attitudes	20	37
Experiences	16	30
Readiness	9	17
Faculty	14	26
Students	28	52
Curriculum/pedagogy	14	26
<i>Identities Represented</i>		
LGBT or LGBTQ umbrella	30	56
LGB or sexual minority	16	30
Transgender/Nonbinary	9	17
Gay men	5	9
Lesbian women	4	7
No identity-based frame	2	4
<i>Study Rationale</i>		
Values	40	74
Trends	40	74
Tensions	27	50
<i>Mentions Race</i>		
None	14	26
Once	14	26
Multiple	24	44
Other	2	4
Background	16	30
Methods	26	48
Findings	8	15
Discussion	12	22
Limitations	8	15
Implications	9	17
<i>Theory</i>		
Not explicit	29	54
Queer theory	9	17
Intersectionality	2	4
Antioppression	4	7
Teaching theory	5	9
Social-psych theory	6	11
Other theory	3	6
<i>Author Identity Disclosure</i>		
None	44	81
Gender/sexuality only	5	9
Gender/sexuality + race	2	4
Gender/sexuality + religion	2	4
Gender/sexuality + other	1	2
<i>Recommendations</i>		
Explicit curriculum/pedagogy	52	96
Implicit curriculum/climate	40	74
Program/school policies	14	26
Training/professional development	19	35

readiness for practice (competence) did not emerge until 2014 and has become more prevalent since. No other topical area had a detectable pattern across time. The curriculum and pedagogy focus area ($n = 14$) included articles that set out to explore, examine, or share a curricular innovation, teaching technique or perspectives, or program-level initiative related to LGBTQ experiences, issues, identities, or populations.

Identity representation

An analysis of gender and sexuality identities represented in each article was used to better understand which specific experiences/LGBTQ groups were centered in the research. The majority of our sample ($n = 30$) used the 'LGBT or LGBTQ' umbrella term to frame the study; 16 articles used an 'LGB or sexual minority' frame. Nine articles named a specific focus on transgender/nonbinary identities and experiences. Some studies focused on specific groups like 'gay men' ($n = 5$) or 'lesbian women' ($n = 4$), in most instances in addition to an umbrella frame. Two articles did not identify a focus on identity groups, rather a focus on structural oppression (i.e., cissexism, homophobia). No articles in our sample focused exclusively on bisexual, intersex, pansexual, or asexual identities or experiences.

Study rationale

In our analysis, we were interested in understanding how authors articulated the rationale for their research. We organized study rationale into three categories: value-based, trend-based, or the identification of ongoing tensions in social work education. Value-based rationales ($n = 40$) included arguments around the values of the social work profession, including references to the NASW Code of Ethics and professional mandates as a rationale for the topic of study and need for research in the area. Trend-based rationales ($n = 40$) pointed to the persistent negative experiences and oppression of LGBTQ people, reflecting research rationales from more of an 'evidence-based' approach. Tension-based rationales ($n = 27$) identified ongoing tensions in social work education, for example, persistent norms of heteronormativity in the classroom; these were more theory or 'lens'-based articles. Many articles combined one or more of these arguments in their rationale for the study; they were not mutually exclusive.

Mentions of race

As scholars committed to intersectional antiracism, we were invested in exploring how issues of race surfaced within this body of work. We looked at which section(s) of the article (e.g. background, methods, findings, discussion) explicitly mentioned race, and whether the article had one, multiple, or no mentions of race. It is important to note that 'mentions of race' did not capture actual engagement with racism, or intend to make meaning around race/racism as a site of inquiry or variable within the sample. Coding for 'mentions of race' did not assess for the depth of attention to race; limitations associated with this aspect of our analysis are discussed at further length in the discussion section that follows. Fourteen (26%) of the articles in the sample had no mention of race. Among the articles that did mention race ($n = 40$), the methods section had the most frequent mentions of race ($n = 26$). Fewer articles mentioned race or racism in the findings ($n = 8$), limitations ($n = 9$), or implications ($n = 8$) sections.

Mentions of race among our sample varied by research design: 28% of qualitative and 60% of conceptual articles did not mention race or racism. A greater number of quantitative articles (68%) had some mention of race, likely due in part to norms associated with the research design, for example reporting demographic variables in

the measures and sample description. Of the 19 quantitative articles, 16 mention race in the methods section, but only three of these studies mention race in the implications section.

Use of theory

In our inquiry, we were also interested in how scholars in this body of work utilized theory in their research. Less than half ($n = 26$) of the articles in the sample used an explicit guiding theory. The most commonly used theories were queer theory ($n = 9$), social-psychological theories ($n = 6$), and teaching theories ($n = 5$). Examples of social-psychological theories included attribution theory, developmental theories, minority stress theory, social contact theory, and critical consciousness. Examples of teaching theories included transformational and experiential learning theories. Queer theory was often used in conceptual or pedagogy-related papers.

Mixed methods and quantitative articles had the lowest frequency of explicit theory use (71% of mixed methods and 63% of quantitative articles had no explicit theory), but qualitative articles were not far behind (56%). Conceptual articles had the most use of any explicit theory (80%). No trends in the use of theory in general, or of any one theory specifically, were observed across publication year. Articles without an explicit guiding theory ($n = 29$) had the most ‘multiple mentions’ of race ($n = 16$ or 55%, 9 of which were quantitative articles). Articles that did not explicitly use theory were often quantitative studies which, as reported above, tended to have more mentions of race than other designs.

Author(s) identity disclosure

Given our own orientation toward researcher reflexivity, we made note of articles in which the author(s) disclosed any aspects of their social identities. The majority ($n = 44$) of the articles did not include any author identity disclosure; five articles had gender/sexuality identity disclosure only and five had gender/sexuality identity disclosure plus disclosure of additional social identities such as race or religion. Only two articles had racial identity disclosure in addition to gender/sexuality disclosure; these articles were published in the latter years of the time frame (2018 and 2019). Identity disclosure often happened in the methods section of the articles, in the discussion of researcher reflexivity and/or study rigor. Interestingly, qualitative studies had more author identity disclosure than quantitative articles, which suggests that the research paradigms and epistemologies of qualitative approaches attend to researcher positionality more explicitly than quantitative work. Eleven of the 18 (61%) qualitative studies, 7 out of 10 (70%) of conceptual, and 100% of the quantitative studies had no author identity disclosure.

Recommendations for social work education

All the articles in the sample made recommendations for social work education based on their analyses and findings. We identified themes across articles relative to the recommendations and implications the author(s) described in the article. These four themes

included: explicit curriculum and pedagogy; the implicit curriculum and climate; school and/or program policies; and professional development.

Explicit curriculum and pedagogy

Almost all articles in our sample ($n = 52$) included recommendations for social work curriculum and pedagogy. Examples of curricular and pedagogical recommendations include: integrating LGBTQ content into the curriculum (across courses) including course materials, building more curricular resources, utilizing LGBTQ guest speakers, creating relevant assignments; implementing teaching techniques such as critical reflection, dialogue, role play, and panels; and addressing homophobia, transphobia, and tokenization in the classroom. Because it is the signature pedagogy of social work yet often excluded from curricular discussions, we noted that only eight articles in our sample identified recommendations specific to field education.

Implicit curriculum and climate

Almost three-quarters ($n = 40$) of articles in our sample identified recommendations related to the implicit curriculum or institutional climate relative to LGBTQ issues, identities, populations, and/or experiences. Examples include: creating student groups, developing mentoring resources, crafting diversity statements, having clear signage for gender-neutral bathrooms, and regular inclusion of pronouns/names in the classroom.

Program/School policies

Just over one quarter ($n = 14$) of articles discussed program or school-level policies that could be implemented to support LGBTQ community members and/or otherwise affirm LGBTQ issues, identities, populations, or experiences. Many articles highlighted the need for these policies to specifically support transgender and nonbinary students, faculty, and staff. Most policies focused on nondiscrimination and included policies related to bathroom accessibility and the use of names and pronouns in administrative processes.

Training and professional development for faculty, staff, field instructors on lgbtq issues

Nineteen (35%) of the articles recommended training or other professional development for faculty, staff, and/or field instructors on LGBTQ issues. This included sponsorship of educational opportunities for faculty and staff to learn how to advocate for LGBTQ issues in and outside the classroom and school. These articles also focused on promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and safety for LGBTQ community members. Other goals of training included reducing negative attitudes, bias, and ignorance around LGBTQ issues; preventing microaggressions, and creating spaces for supportive dialogue for LGBTQ faculty and staff.

Discussion and implications

This study aimed to identify the range and extent of the literature related to LGBTQ issues, experiences, and theorizing and social work education between 2010 and 2020 in order to better understand this body of work and to identify emergent needs for future research in this domain. Findings in this study suggest that the research in this broad

landscape is primarily centered on: curriculum and pedagogy; experiences of queer students and faculty in the classroom; social work students, faculty, and administrators' attitudes about LGBTQ people; and assessing students' readiness for practice with queer and trans communities. One notable finding was that a substantial number of articles in our sample focused on measuring student and faculty attitudes toward LGBTQ people and competency to practice with LGBTQ communities. Some literature also explored how to integrate queer and trans-related content and theorizing into curriculum and pedagogy through conceptual papers and/or classroom/curricular examples.

Across articles, most centered LGBTQ communities/identities broadly and very few spoke about specific subgroups within the LGBTQ community such as queer students of color or trans people. While some published studies did include people of color as research participants, as a whole, this body of work did not engage deeply with race or intersectionality. Overwhelmingly, articles in the sample drew upon our professional mandates and/or EPAS as a rationale for the study and to justify the need for LGBTQ affirmative social work education. There were many articles that did not explicitly utilize theory as well as a handful of articles that were calling for more use of queer theorizing in social work education. Most articles in the sample provided concrete recommendations/implications for social work education and were quite consistent with their recommendations.

Our analysis of the existing literature in this area brought to the surface several key themes and emergent suggestions for this area(s) of scholarship: 1) disrupt othering and assumptions about who/what is LGBTQ; 2) expand theoretical and epistemological approaches, and 3) decenter whiteness and center intersectionality. As queer social work scholars and educators who are deeply invested in social work education-related research, we offer these perspectives as a way to move our research and scholarship forward in ways that can ultimately support more effective and liberatory research, teaching approaches, and affirmative practice with LGBTQ communities.

Disrupt othering and assumptions about who/what is LGBTQ

One of the key findings in this analysis was identifying the large percentage of articles that focus on social work students' and faculty members' beliefs and attitudes toward LGBTQ communities. We acknowledge that there is value in better understanding the beliefs and perspectives of social work students and educators in regard to queer and trans communities, particularly given potential conflicts between professional values of social justice and conservative and/or religiously-based beliefs that students may hold about LGBTQ people (and gender/sexuality more broadly). Developing self-awareness about these values, tensions, and how they will impact affirming practice efforts and skills is critically important. However, the focus on beliefs and attitudes toward LGBTQ communities as an area of study could point to an implicit assumption that social work students are mostly heterosexual and cisgender and need to learn about queer and trans communities (that are presumably unfamiliar to them). Further, situating religious beliefs in opposition to queer/trans experiences/identities has the potential to exacerbate these implicit othering assumptions, namely that LGBTQ people are not religious and/or that LGBTQ people do not grapple with conservative values themselves. This not only invisibilizes LGBTQ students and social

workers but also contributes to the construction of LGBTQ people (including students and faculty) as the 'Other' in this research while also having the potential to flatten the examination of values and identity-based experiences. This also does not take into account the need for LGBTQ students to engage with the unique complexities of practicing within and across communities they are a part of. This concern about dominant culture groups working with minoritized communities is in line with other critiques of social work's approach to cultural competency and humility that construct marginalized groups as an objectified 'Other' as opposed to centering those who have lived experience of marginalized identities (Mehrotra et al., 2019; Curtis et al., 2019; Pon, 2009).

In a discussion about social work pedagogy and queer theory, MacKinnon (2011) writes that the (most common) approach to teaching straight-identified social workers about queer communities assumes heterosexual practices are 'both normal and dominant, while positioning queer sexual practices and identities as requiring better understanding' (p. 140). The author further states that in this approach, queer sexualities can be 'reduced to subjects of investigation, presenting fetishistic opportunities for learning about the other' (p. 140). We would suggest that the overemphasis on studying attitudes, beliefs, and readiness for work with LGBTQ communities has the potential to reproduce this same problematic dynamic. We also found that in this literature, there were only a handful of papers in which researchers named their own social positionalities. While we recognize that meaningful reflexivity goes beyond a confessional declaration of identity, the lack of acknowledgment of the lens that a researcher may be working from could further the sense of queer people being objects of research. The issues present in this research mirror challenges that have been identified about queer and trans students' experiences within social work education: the centering of straight and cisgender students in education-related research is parallel to them being centered in the classroom and thus marginalizing LGBTQ students.

Destabilizing this dynamic can be supported by more research that moves away from simply teaching and/or researching (presumably straight and cisgender) students and faculty about queer and trans populations, and rather engages in more meaningful ways with queer and trans students and faculty lived experiences. This may, for example, mean exploring within-group diversity, values clarification, intersectionality, and internalized homophobia and how these impact all people, including LGBTQ social workers and students, when they are practicing within diverse queer and trans communities. In addition, this work could include examining gender and sexuality more broadly, developing inquiry regarding LGBTQ people and social work education that engages more with macro and mezzo-level issues, and potentially drawing from queer theorizing. Further, we recommend that journal editors and reviewers alike consider encouraging and supporting meaningful author reflexivity in research related to LGBTQ issues and social work education.

Expand theoretical and epistemological approaches

Within the sample, the majority of articles did not explicitly name any use of theory. When theory was overtly identified, it was most often queer theory, social-psychological theories, or teaching-related theories. The articles that utilized queer theory were generally

conceptual pieces that focused on the importance and potential of queer theory for social work education. McPhail (2004) importantly notes the potential that post-structuralist approaches to queer theory (Butler, 1999) hold for social work while also discussing the ways that social work's concern with material realities and lived experiences can be in tension with this theoretical approach. In her analysis McPhail (2004) writes: 'Bringing in a poststructuralist/queer theory influence into social work does not necessarily mean abolishing identity categories, but instead a problematization or denaturalization of the categories' (p. 17). Queer theory's post-structuralist epistemological foundation is in contrast to much of the dominant discourse in social work research that relies on post-positivist approaches. We take seriously both the potential and possible limits of post-structuralist/queer theory approaches for social work. However, we suggest that growing this body of research requires theoretical and epistemological diversity, dexterity, and creativity to conduct meaningful research in order to improve social work education by, for, and about LGBTQ people. Further work is needed to explore the use of different theoretical approaches, including queer and trans theorizing, for social work education and to guide social work education-related research and methodologies for this work. Developing and implementing research that asks a range of questions and is rooted in varied theories and epistemologies has the potential to expand the research questions being asked and methodologies being employed in this area of research. Ultimately, this can promote inquiry that addresses gender and sexuality in more robust and complex ways.

Decenter whiteness and center intersectionality

Scholars and activists alike have noted the ways that race is often unarticulated in LGBTQ spaces, hence whiteness becomes assumed as a 'normative and central condition of being queer' (Lim & Hewitt, 2018, p. 319) and queer and trans people of color are invisibilized in constructions of queerness. Across our sample, there was a very limited engagement with race as it intersects with LGBTQ issues in social work education. Overwhelmingly, when articles did have any explicit mention of race it was an inclusion of (usually a few) people of color in the study sample. There were a few articles that utilized measures that included race as a variable or noted the lack of engagement with racial diversity as a limitation or consideration for future work, but for the most part race was not included in research questions, theorizing, or study findings. Within this body of research that centers sexual orientation and/or gender identity in relation to social work education, there was little discussion of how those identities intersect with and are shaped in unique ways by race, class, ability, geographic context or other axes of oppression and identity and how such intersections impact social work education and practice. In general, the specific experiences, perspectives, and needs of LGBTQ people of color remain under-explored and largely undocumented in the social work education literature which erases the existence of LGBT social workers, students, and faculty of color. We concur with S. A. Shelton and Barnes (2016) who write: 'Refusing to acknowledge that sexuality and race are inseparable makes social justice in education impossible' (p. 167). Thus, drawing upon queer of color critique, critical race theory, intersectionality, and pursuing research questions that center queer and trans people of color would add dimension and important perspective to this body of literature with the ultimate goal of promoting social justice within social work education.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study, particularly given our scoping review methodology. Though we were diligent in our search terms and processes used to identify the sample, relevant sources may have been unintentionally left out. Relatedly, publications since the time of data collection were not included in our sample. This also means that scholarship that may address specific issues related to the pandemic (such as LGBTQ students' or faculty experiences of remote learning, etc.) were not part of this review. We also acknowledge that while our analysis did attend to the ways race showed up in the sample, we did not assess the literature for inclusion of other marginalized identities such as ability, immigration status, age, and other axes of oppression that intersect with LGBTQ experiences. Deeper engagement with various identities and intersections within LGBTQ communities is needed in future work. Given the ongoing growth of this body of research, more work is needed to continue to understand trends in this research over time. In this project, we chose to focus on published, peer-reviewed academic papers written in English which meant that we did not include books, book chapters, gray literature (including activist and student perspectives), papers published in other languages, or conference presentations that may be relevant to our research questions. Future research that includes a broader range of literature could provide additional insight on the landscape of discourse in this area. In addition, as noted by LaSala et al. (2008) the lack of research funding for the topics we are exploring here and limited support for publishing information related to queer and trans people/issues and social work education may also impact the quality and quantity of content that cannot be determined by this analysis. Further inquiry to better understand funding mechanisms and how they shape the research in this area is needed.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the range and extent of the literature related to LGBTQ issues, experiences, and theorizing and social work education over a ten-year period in order to better understand this body of work and to identify emergent directions for future research. It is apparent that this is a distinct body of literature that addresses several key topical areas with the largest group of articles focused on attitudes, experiences, and/or readiness to serve/practice with LGBTQ populations among faculty, students, and/or administrators in social work education. Our analysis suggests that there is a need for future research in this area that centers LGBTQ lived experiences; utilizes diverse theories, epistemologies and methods to ask new questions; and engages more deeply with intersectionality and race. More research is also needed to better understand institutional factors and structural oppression(s) and supports related to queer and trans issues in social work education. Continuing to grow and strengthen scholarship on these topical areas is paramount given social work's commitment to social justice and meeting the needs of diverse students and communities.

Note

1. We recognize that language in regard to gender and sexuality is continually evolving and expanding. In this paper we use the terms LGBTQ and ‘queer and trans’ interchangeably to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer identities and communities. In some places we used other language, most often to refer to and reflect the language used by other scholars.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Gita R. Mehrotra is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Portland State University School of Social Work. Her current research and teaching interests include: domestic violence in minoritized communities, queer people of color identities & wellness, race and racism in social work education, and critical and feminist theories and methodologies for social work.

Kimberly D. Hudson is an assistant professor at Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service. Kimberly's interests include health equity and access to care among LGBTQ+ communities with special attention to intersecting structural vulnerabilities and advocacy-oriented social work education.

Eli Hess is an Adjunct Instructor in the Child, Youth, and Family Studies Program at Portland State University. Their research and practice endeavors explore themes of social justice pedagogy, transformative justice, chosen families, and queerness in social work.

ORCID

Gita R. Mehrotra  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6885-4585>

Kimberly D. Hudson  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9231-8312>

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