

Public Abstract

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Title:OMISSION: A LOOK INTO THE PK-12 EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE LENS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Gathering perspectives from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender students (LGBT) on their PK-12 experiences has the potential to create a safe and equitable environment for students. To gather these experiences, 39 university students from the states of Missouri and Kansas were interviewed via focus group or telephone interview. They shared experiences with identity formation, peers, teachers, administrators, support, safety, and LGBT representation within the classroom, curriculum, and/or building. This research is qualitative in nature utilizing open coding and axial coding to identify themes and interpret responses. Data discovered that LGBT students' experiences were based on the student being openly LGBT or perceived as such. Students who were not out as LGBT reported less harassment and a higher degree of safety. Those who were out or perceived as LGBT spoke to different forms of harassment. In all cases participants indicated that LGBT discussion and representation were omitted from most, if not all, facets of their experience. If integrated, the information was incomplete, covered briefly, or was self-initiated. The basis behind the research is to gain the knowledge of LGBT individuals and their perceptions of the current public PK-12 setting. With this new found knowledge, it is hoped that current policies and procedures will be examined through a diversity/inclusion lens so districts can start to integrate, or continue to include the needs of LGBT people into the current practice.