

Pride in the Profession: A Qualitative Exploration of the Experiences of LGBTQIA+-identifying Higher Education and Student Affairs Professionals

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of LGBTQIA+-identifying higher education and student affairs professionals and how their sexuality shapes their practice

Guiding Research Questions

1. How do LGBTQIA+ HESA professionals experience their identity in the workplace?
2. What strategies do LGBTQIA+ HESA professionals use to manage their identity in the workplace?
3. How do LGBTQIA+ HESA professionals describe the influence of their identity on their professional practice?

Literature Review

- Current literature focuses on professionals in the role of "researcher", seeking to develop best practices for students rather than exist as objects of study
- Socialized heteronormativity continues to challenge members of the LGBTQIA+ community as they navigate identity disclosure, especially in the workplace (Muraco & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2016; Di Marco et al., 2021)

Methodology/Methods

Method

- Constructivist paradigm
- Qualitative research approach

Sample

- 5 HESA para/professional participants entering/currently working in the field of Higher Education and Student Affairs
- All participants identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community

Data Collection and Analysis Strategies

- Participants participated in 60 minute interviews during which they provided answers to a series of open-ended questions
- Utilized *inductive analysis* through *coding* as described in Creswell and Creswell's (2018) *data analysis process*.

Results

- LGBTQIA+ identity helped develop empathy for others
- Higher Education/Student Affairs field perception of LGBTQIA+ professionals
- LGBTQIA+ identity is a piece, not the whole

References

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Discussion

Connection to Existing Literature

- Individuals in leadership positions have the responsibility to create a culture of inclusivity (Bryant-Lees & Kite, 2020)
- Identity disclosure dependent on individual's comfortability (Pizer et al., 2012)
- Support from mentors/colleagues contribute to development of *sense of self* (Wright-Mair and Marine, 2021)

Limitations

- Decrease in expected participation led to smaller sample size
- Sample consisted of Student Affairs para/professionals; No Academic Affairs representation

Implications for Research

- Explore identity intersectionality in larger sample size
- Contain Academic Affairs representation

Implications for Practice

- Institutions should consistently seek opportunities to support LGBTQIA+-identifying students and faculty
- HESA field should re-evaluate systems of inequity that impact how LGBTQIA+-identifying professionals experience support