

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL STUDENTS
LIVING IN THE RESIDENCE HALLS AT AN URBAN INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL STUDENTS LIVING IN THE RESIDENCE HALLS AT AN URBAN INSTITUTION

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Living in the residence halls can have a tremendous impact on students' involvement and persistence in college, yet there has been limited research on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students living in the residence halls. The purpose of the current study was to assess the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban institution that is racially/ethnically diverse. Using mixed methodology, it was hypothesized that LGBT students living in the residence halls would perceive the campus climate as unwelcoming due to a lack of visible support; and a significant amount of LGBT students would discuss the need to have LGBT-specific housing options. Since there were minimal responses from transgender students, the researcher decided to focus on the needs of LGB students recognizing that the needs of transgender students may be very different. Five key themes arose in relation to the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. These needs were: (1) living in an open, accepting environment; (2) support for the LGBT community; (3) safety against harassment and discrimination; (4) a physical space for

LGBT students; and (5) offering LGBT workshops and groups. It is recommended that student affairs professionals create interventions with these needs in mind.

Chapter One: Introduction to Thesis Study

College is a place of exploration, personal growth, and academic achievement opportunities. Living in the residence halls on a college campus is intended to help students develop and achieve these goals. According to Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling (1994), one of the most significant determiners of a student's level of involvement in social, cultural, and co-curricular activities is living in the residence halls. Astin (1999) found that students will have increased learning and personal development with increased involvement in their college experience. As a result, living in the residence halls could have a positive impact on a student's learning and personal development.

In addition to living in the residence halls, another determiner of a student's level of involvement is validation. Rendón (1994) believed that marginalized groups, such as lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students, particularly need validation to become involved and succeed in college. Through validation and involvement in the residence halls, students are more likely to remain at their university and persist in their academic programs (Tinto, 1993).

Living in the residence halls can be a negative experience for students if they do not receive support and validation. Robinson (1998) found that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) college students were facing discrimination and harassment in the very environment that was designed to support their transition into college. Fear of discrimination and victimization can cause many LGBT students to hide their sexuality and/or gender identity.

In a study of 1,000 LGBT college students, one in five students feared for their

physical safety because of their sexual and/or gender identities and over half the students concealed their sexual and/or gender identities to avoid intimidation. In addition, LGBT people of color were more likely to conceal their sexual orientation to avoid harassment than their White LGBT peers. Many LGBT students of color explained that they did not feel comfortable being out in predominantly straight communities of color, but also felt out of place at predominantly white LGBT settings (Rankin, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Living in the residence halls can have a tremendous impact on students' involvement and persistence in college, yet there is limited research on the experiences of LGB students living in the residence halls. At the time of this study, there was very little published research on the needs and experiences of ethnically/racially diverse LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. With minimal research on LGB students living in the residence halls, it is unknown what the needs and experiences of LGB students living in the residence halls are or if university residence halls are meeting those needs.

Purpose of Study

With limited research on LGB students living in the residence halls and no published research on LGB students of color living in the residence halls, the researcher set out to address these shortcomings. The purpose of the current study is to assess the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution that is racially/ethnically diverse. The following research questions guide this study:

1. What are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university?

2. What are LGBT students' perceptions of the campus climate in the residence halls at an urban institution?
3. How can student affairs professionals meet the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university?

With these questions in mind, it is hypothesized that:

1. LGBT students living in the residence halls would perceive the campus climate as unwelcoming due to a lack of visible support; and
2. a significant amount of LGBT students will discuss the need to have LGBT specific housing options.

This study took place at a large, diverse, urban, public Master's Comprehensive university in Southern California. At the time of the study, the university had a Queer Studies minor with one full-time faculty member devoted half-time to the Queer Studies Program. The campus had an LGBT student organization that advocating for an LGBT resource center. There was not an LGBT resource center or LGBT focused housing when the research was conducted..

Definition of Terms

There are many terms used in reference to LGBT topics, as well as specific terms used in residential life and student affairs. The following terms are defined to aid in the reader's understanding.

- *Campus Climate*: "A measure – real or perceived – of the campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions" (Mok, 2010, para. 6).
- *Coming Out*: Refers to the process by which an individual discloses to themselves

and/or others their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This is a lifelong continual process and there can be different degrees to which an individual is “out.” For example, an individual might be “out” to friends and family, but not “out” to coworkers (PFLAG, n.d.).

- *Freshman Interest Group (FIG)*: FIGs are freshman students grouped together, that usually live on the same floor/area in the residence halls, enroll in several general education classes together, and attend a Freshman Seminar together (Pike, 2002).
- *Living Learning Community (LLC)*: A floor or building in the residence halls usually grouped by specific majors or areas of interest. LLCs typically include: “classes taught in the residence halls, increased student-faculty contact, cultural events and faculty lectures in the residence halls, and LLC students taking a common course together” (Pascarella et al., 1994, p. 32).
- *LGBT*: Refers to individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. The focus of this study is on the needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) college students living in the residence halls.
- *People of Color (or Students of Color)*: This term refers to a group of non-White/Caucasian persons.
- *Queer*: Once a pejorative term used to describe LGBT individuals, queer is a term that has been reclaimed by some members of the LGBT community to describe their identity or community. This term is used by individuals whose sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is outside the “norm.” Some individuals identify with the word queer because it is seen as an act of defiance,

while others self-identify as queer because it resonates with their more fluid identities. Please note that queer should only be used when an individual self-identifies as such (GLSEN, 2008; PFLAG, n.d.).

- *Resident Advisor/Assistant (RA)*: Resident Advisors are trained students who live in the residence halls and have many different roles, including but not limited to, peer counselors, community builders, academic resource people, programmers, and administrators (CSUN, 2012).
- *Safe Zone Program/Ally Project*: A visibility campaign to show support for LGBT students. Students, faculty, and/or staff display buttons or stickers to show support of the LGBT community as well as alert LGBT students that they are an ally with whom to disclose LGBT issues. Some institutions require Safe Zone Allies to go through a diversity training, while others just require an individual to take a pledge to support LGBT individuals.

Summary and Transition to Chapter Two

The purpose of the current study is to assess the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution that is racially/ethnically diverse. The following chapter will review the literature. The literature review is separated into four main sections: the experiences of students living in the residence halls, LGB students, LGB students of color, and the experience of LGB students living in the residence halls.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Research studies specifically on the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students living in campus residence halls are very limited, with even fewer on the experiences of ethnically diverse LGB students living in the residence halls. The following literature review explores these experiences, and is organized into four main sections: the experiences of students living in the residence halls, LGB students, LGB students of color, and the experience of LGB students living in the residence halls.

The Experiences of Students Living in the Residence Halls

In comparison to specific populations such as LBG students, there is an ample amount of research addressing the impact of living in the residence halls on college students. Different universities have different types of residence halls, some of which include living learning communities (LLCs) and themed housing options. There are many perceived benefits to living in the residence halls. This section will discuss student development theories and research findings on the significance of living in the residence halls on students' overall college experience and their likelihood to persist towards graduation (Astin, 1999; LaNasa et al., 2007; Pike, 2002; Rendón, 1994; Tinto, 1975).

Student Development Theories

Alexander Astin's (1999) student involvement theory emphasized that students will have increased learning and personal development with increased involvement in their college experience. Students living in the residence halls are more immersed in the campus environment than non-residential students, which lead to increased involvement in both quality and quantity. Compared to students who commute to college, Astin found that living in the residence halls was positively linked with campus involvement in

such activities as participation in clubs and organizations, increased faculty-student interactions, and involvement in student government.

Laura Rendón's (1994) validation theory contributes to Astin's theory of student involvement. Rendón found that students succeed in an environment where they are validated and encouraged to thrive. Rendón describes validation as "an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development" (p. 44). Given their more marginalized experience, LGB students and students of color particularly need validation to become involved and succeed in college.

Tinto's (1975, 1993) also investigated the impact of involvement and validation to increase student retention. Tinto (1993) stated that "effective retention programs are committed to the development of supportive social and educational communities in which all students are integrated as competent members" (p. 147). Living in the residence halls can aid in student retention because students become actively engaged in the campus community and want to persist at the university. Retention theory primarily stresses the importance of having such programs during the student's first year at the university. When students feel connected to the campus early in their academic experience, they are more likely to remain at the university and persist in their academic programs.

Research Studies on the Impact of Residence Halls

Research also supports a positive correlation of increased involvement and openness to diversity for students who live in the residence halls. For example, LaNasa, Olson and Alleman (2007) studied the impact of students living in the residence halls has

on student engagement for both on campus and off campus residing students. This study explored student engagement in the residence halls at a public Midwest research intensive university in 2004 and compared the results to a study done a year later after the residence halls expanded by the construction of a 561 bed facility. The purpose was to examine if student engagement would increase with the creation of additional residence halls and if that increase would carry over to the entire campus community, including students living off campus.

A total of 731 students responded to the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE), which included 375 students in 2004 and 356 in 2005. Age, gender, and ethnicity served as control variables, but the specific numbers of participants in regards to background demographics were not discussed in the article. Through *t*-tests and variance analysis, LaNasa et al. found significant differences between student engagement for on-campus and off-campus students.

Comparing student engagement of on campus students and off campus students for both academic years (LaNasa, et al., 2007), the research indicated that students living on campus were significantly more likely to engage in co-curricular activities than students living off campus ($F = 18.251, p = .001$). The study suggested that simply increasing the number of students living on campus will not directly increase student engagement on campus. LaNasa et al. asserted that increase in student engagement requires further commitment for the entire university than simply expansion.

Since this survey was administered at one university, the results cannot be generalized to other universities. The research is mainly focused on the difference in student engagement from one year to another as a result of increased development and

occupancy in the residence halls. Although the study gathered information on the student's demographics, it did not utilize that information to do a comparison of student engagement based on gender, age or ethnicity, each of which might have played a role. Overall, the study suggested that students benefit from living in the residence halls, and have a different college experience than students that live off campus.

The benefits of living in the residences halls may not be limited to increased involvement. In a study of first-time freshman students at a large research university in the Midwest, Pike (2002) researched the relationship between living on campus and openness to diversity. With almost 80% of all freshman students living in the residence halls, the study focused on four different types of living arrangements: living in traditional residence halls (TRHs), living in Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) on campus, sponsored living communities (SLCs) on campus, and living off campus. The *College Student Experiences Questionnaire* (CSEQ) was mailed to approximately 1,700 first time freshmen in the winter 1999 semester, and had a response rate of 30 percent. The CSEQ was used to measure students' experiences with library usage, course learning, experiences with faculty, student acquaintances, and information discussed conversations. Possible responses on the questionnaire were: very often, often, seldom and never. Questions on the "outcome variable," openness to diversity, were on a five-item scale that measured students' openness to diverse ideas and diverse people.

Of the 502 students who completed the CSEQ, 33% lived in TRHs, 30% lived in FIGs, 23% lived in SLCs, and 14% lived off campus. Over 70% of the participants were female and 8% of all participants were members of a minority group. The researchers specified that the demographics of the participants were representative of the percentage

of women and minorities in the residence halls.

In analyzing the results, Pike focused on four main components: background characteristics, living arrangements, college experiences and openness to diversity. Students enter college with a set of background characteristics (i.e., academic scores and experiences from high school) that, combined with their college experiences and current living arrangements, appear to influence a student's openness to diversity. Pike found that living on campus is positively correlated to openness to diversity as compared to living off campus. There was no statistical difference between students who lived in a TRH, FIG, or SLC on campus. This suggests that it is beneficial for students to live on campus to expand their awareness and acceptance of diversity.

Although this study cannot be generalized to all university residence halls, it does add to the limited research on openness to diversity. Pike's (2002) findings can only be generalized to that specific university during the year the survey took place. Surveying the same university today could produce very different results. Another limitation of this study is that it does not examine openness to specific areas of diversity individually, such as race, religion, and sexual orientation.

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Students

Currently, there is no published, empirical research on the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. Accordingly, the following section will examine LGB identity development and the issues LGB students face.

LGB Identity Development

Vivienne Cass (1979, 1984) was one of the first to develop a theory focused on LGB identity development called the Homosexual Identity Formation Model. This

model consists of six stages: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. In this model, the individual begins by being confused about their sexuality and through turmoil, exploration, and support, the individual moves to identity synthesis. Identity synthesis is when the individual views their sexuality as part of their identity, but not their complete identity. Cass's model is linear and does not discuss possible regression to earlier stages. This model did not acknowledge the multiple identities of LGB individuals, such as ethnicity, religion, and ability. These multiple, sometimes contradictory, identities may negatively impact one's LGB identity formation.

Similar to Cass's model, Anthony D'Augelli (1994) believed that there are six processes involved in LGB identity development. D'Augelli took a human development perspective and looked at the influences of the individuals feelings about sexuality ("personal subjectivities and actions"), the individuals interactions with family/friends on topics of sexuality ("interactive intimacies"), and the social norms on sexuality in the community the individual lives ("sociohistorical connections"). D'Augelli's model is more fluid than Cass's and discusses different processes an individual goes through instead of linear stages. The six processes are: exiting heterosexual identity, developing a personal LGB identity status, developing a LGB social identity, becoming a LGB offspring, developing a LGB intimacy status, and entering a LGB community.

Like many theories, Cass's and D'Augelli's models cannot be used to classify *all* LGB students' identity formation. They do, however, provide good models for student affairs professionals to work with to better understand LGB students' development. The following section will describe some of the issues LGB college students face.

Key Issues for LGB Students

This section will focus on some key issues LGB students face in college, which include: campus climate, discrimination, and harassment. “Campus climate is a measure – real or perceived – of the campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions” (Mok, 2010, para. 6). When investigating the campus climate for LGB students, researchers focused primarily on safety (perceived and actual), discrimination, and harassment (Rankin, 2003; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer, 2010).

In a campus climate survey of 14 universities from 2000-2001 (Rankin, 2003), 36 percent of undergraduate LGBT students had experienced harassment in the past year, and 29 percent of respondents feared their physical safety. The institutions surveyed were considered more “LGBT-friendly” due to the fact that they had a LGBT center and/or provided LGBT-specific services. If a third of LGBT students experienced harassment at a “LGBT-friendly” institution, it could be argued that the numbers would likely to be higher at other universities.

Seven years later, Campus Pride published *2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People*, which expanded on the previous findings (Rankin et al., 2010). In this study, over 100 institutions were surveyed with over 5,000 respondents, including students, faculty and staff members. Rankin et al. (2010) found that LGB respondents experienced significantly greater harassment and discrimination than their heterosexual peers (23 percent versus 12 percent, respectively). In addition, over 60 percent of LGB respondents were targets of derogatory remarks. This discrimination and harassment has been shown to increase suicide ideation among

LGB youth (Almeida et al., 2009; Bagley & Tremblay, 2000).

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Students of Color

The above research focused on LGB identity development and the experiences of LGB students. There is more limited research that focuses on the development of LGB students of color and their needs. The following section reviews the literature on ethnic identity development, multiple minority identity development, and the issues LGB students of color face.

Ethnic Identity Development

Jean Phinney (1989, 1990) developed a three stage model of ethnic identity development model based commonalities amongst several racial and ethnic identity models. The three stages include: unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search/moratorium, and achieved ethnic identity. Similar to Cross's (1991) Nigrescence (black racial identity development) theory, the individual first identifies with mainstream White culture, and does not examine their own ethnic identity. To move to the next stage, ethnic identity search/moratorium, the individual experiences an encounter that forces them to look at their ethnic identity and become aware of ethnicity in general. This experience could be a positive interaction or an experience of racism. After learning about their own ethnic identity, the individual moves to achieved ethnic identity, where the individual is more informed about their ethnicity and has an appreciation for other ethnicities.

Phinney (1990) acknowledges that achieved ethnic identity can vary in different individuals and groups due to different historical experiences. Some groups may require coming to terms with the cultural differences between their ethnic background and

dominant culture as well as the disparities their ethnic group experiences in society. Some individuals may become highly involved with their ethnic identity's cultures, while others may embrace their identity in less visible forms.

Similar to other models, there are limitations to Phinney's ethnic identity development model. Phinney does not consider the intersections of identities, such as gender, sexual orientation and religion. In the next section, the concept of multiple minority identity development will be explored using Reynolds and Pope's (1991) Multidimensional Identity Model and Jones and McEwen's (2000) conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity.

Multiple Minority Identity Development

Reynolds and Pope (1991) took a different approach to identity development by focusing on multiple identities and multiple oppressions. The Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM) modified and expanded on Root's (1990) biracial identity development. Reynolds and Pope (1991) suggest four possible identity resolutions for individuals with multiple minority identities. The four possible identity resolutions are: passively identifying with one aspect of self that is assigned by society, consciously choosing to identify with one aspect of self, identifying with multiple aspects of self in a segmented way, and identifying with multiple identities (i.e., the intersection of identities). All resolutions are considered acceptable and can lead to positive self-esteem. This model was the first to focus on multiple minority identities, but simplifies the complexity of oppression on one's identity development.

Jones and McEwen (2000) went one step further by focusing on the individual's understanding of their own identity, their experiences of being different, and the

influence multiple dimensions have on the individual's evolving sense of self. Through interviewing 10 undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds, Jones and McEwen (2000) developed the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity. This model identifies two key components; one's core ("inner self") and the contextual influences on the development of one's identity ("outer self"). The core includes the individual's personal attributes, personal characteristics, and personal identity (how the individual sees themselves). The individual's core is the center of intersecting circles that represent the different dimensions of identity and the contextual influences that impact identity development. The different dimensions of identity are: gender, race, class, culture, sexual orientation, and religion. These dimensions intersect in the model because no one dimension can be understood in isolation of the other dimensions. The dimensions of identity become more or less salient through contextual influences, such as the individual's family background, socio-cultural conditions, current experiences, and career decisions and life planning. This model stresses the complexities of identity development and individual differences in one's own development. Using this model as a guide, student affairs professionals can ask questions and listen to the student's own narrative of identity as well as what dimensions they see are most salient.

Key Issues for LGB Students of Color

LGB students of color face multiple forms of oppression: racism, homophobia and heterosexism. High levels of internalized racism and internalized heterosexism are related to psychological distress and lower self-esteem. Szymanski and Gupta (2009) found that LGB African Americans had more psychological distress and lower self-esteem from heterosexism than racism. This can be explained because the risk of losing

one's racial/ethnic community and support to combat racism as a result of being LGB.

Some LGB people of color feel pressured to identify with only one part of their identity, having to choose between their racial/ethnic identities or their sexual identity. In a study of gay and lesbian Asian Americans, Chan (1989) found that one's identification with the Asian American community or LGB community was dependent on their perception of racism in the LGB community and their perception of homophobia in the Asian American community. Some individuals did not feel connected to either community.

When studying LGB Black Americans, Loiacano (1989) also observed the struggle to find validation in the LGB community and in the Black community. The visible LGB community was primarily White and the Black community was primarily heterosexual. In trying to integrate both identities, LGB Black Americans found comfort in being involved in or forming organizations specifically for LGB Black Americans.

Although LGB people of color face experience multiple oppressions, there is no significant difference in perceived heterosexist stigma and internalized homophobia LGB people of color and White LGB persons (Moradi et al., 2010). Moradi et. al (2010) compared levels of perceived heterosexist stigma, internalized homophobia, and the degree of sexual identity concealment among LGB people of color and White LGB people. Of the 178 participants, 50 percent identified as Caucasian or White, 20 percent as Hispanic or Latina/o, 16 percent as African American or Black, 8 percent as Asian American or Pacific Islander, and 6 percent multiracial or other. Eighty-five of the participants were women and 93 were men. The participants were recruited through LGB venues and organizations, racial/ethnic minority organizations, social media, and

snowball sampling techniques. The researchers used Herek and Glunt's (1995) 7 item measure developed to assess perceptions of heterosexist stigma, the Internalized Homophobia Scale (IHP), a 9 item self-report instrument, and the Outness Inventory, a 10 item measure that assesses the extent a participant has disclosed their sexual orientation to others. To compare LGB people of color and White LGB people, the researchers used a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). There was no significant difference on perceived heterosexist stigma, internalized homophobia or comfort with disclosure. The only significant difference was on degree of outness to family and religious community, where LGB participants of color reported lower outness than White LGB participants.

There is limited research comparing the experiences of LGB people of color and White LGB persons. Consolación, Russell, and Sue (2004) used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine the relationship between multiple minority statuses (i.e. racial and sexual minorities) and reports of suicidal thoughts, depression, and self-esteem among adolescents. The sample used in this study consisted of 13,205 adolescents (6,792 female and 6,413 male) between seventh and twelfth grade. The racial backgrounds of the participants were as follows: 55 percent White, 21 percent African American, 17 percent Hispanic/Latino/a, and 7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Of the participants, nine percent ($n = 1,188$) reported same or both sex attractions. African American and White same-sex attracted youth reported more suicidal thoughts than their opposite sex attracted peers in the same racial group. On the other hand, Hispanic/Latino/a and Asian/Pacific Islander same sex attracted youth reported no significant difference in suicidal thoughts when compared with their other sex attracted

peers in the same racial group. Compared to opposite sex attracted African American young men, same sex attracted African Americans reported higher levels of depression. Overall, the major differences Consolación, Russell and Sue (2004) found were among females experiencing a higher level of depression than males and heterosexual youth experiencing fewer suicidal thoughts, depression and higher self-esteem than their LGB peers. There was not a significant difference when comparing LGB adolescents of color and White LGB adolescents.

In examining racial differences in the coming out process, Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter (2004) interviewed 156 LGB youth between the ages of 14 to 21 years old. Forty nine percent of the participants were female, with a mean age of 18.3 years old. The participants' race/ethnicity were as follows: 37 percent Latino, 35 percent Black, 22 percent White, and 7 percent Asian and other backgrounds. Sixty-six percent of the youth identified as gay or lesbian, 31 percent as bisexual, and 3 percent as "other." This longitudinal study consisted of three structured interviews: one at baseline, another after six months, and the third after at 12 months. Each interview lasted approximately two to three hours. Eighty five percent of the youth ($n = 133$) participated in all interviews. The study measured sexual identity formation through psychosexual and sociosexual developmental milestones as well as sexual identity integration focusing on involvement in LGB activities, level of comfort with identity and disclosure to others.

Rosario, Schrimshaw and Hunter (2004) found that there was no significant difference in LGB developmental milestones among all racial/ethnic backgrounds. All reached out to the LGB community at similar ages, yet Black LGB youth were involved in fewer gay-related social activities than their White peers. The researchers speculate

that this may be due to racism in the LGB community. Consistent with Moradi et. al's (2010) findings, Black LGB youth were less comfortable with other's knowing about their sexual identity, and had disclosed to fewer individuals than their White peers.

Parks, Hughes, and Matthews (2004) studied 448 women focusing on the effects of race/ethnicity on sexual identity development of African American, White, and Latina lesbians. Forty-seven percent of participants identified as White, 29 percent African American, and 18 percent Latina. Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American and biracial participants were excluded from the analysis due to sample size. Overall, lesbians of color were younger when they began to question their sexuality, proceeded more slowly in self-identifying as a lesbian, and then disclosed their sexual orientation more quickly compared with White lesbians. In addition, Parks, Hughes, and Matthews (2004) found that lesbians of color were less likely to disclose their sexual identity to nonfamily groups (coworkers, classmates, healthcare providers, supervisors, and heterosexual friends) than White lesbians. Heterosexism and homophobia within racial/ethnic minority communities and racism in the LGB community may attribute to the differences in the level of disclosure among LGB people of color and White LGB persons.

In a study national study from 14 colleges and universities (four private and ten public), 1,669 LGBT college students ($n = 1,000$), faculty ($n = 150$) and staff/administrators ($n = 467$) responded to a survey assessing campus climate (Rankin, 2003). Of the participants, 290 identified as a person of color and 1379 as White. Due to respondent size, the researcher did not separate people of color by racial/ethnic background in analysis. Rankin (2003) found that LGBT people of color were more likely to conceal their sexual orientation to avoid harassment than their White LGBT

peers. Many LGBT students of color explained that they did not feel comfortable being out in predominantly straight communities of color, but also felt out of place at predominantly white LGBT settings.

In a study of 5,149 participants representing institutions in all 50 states and all Carnegie Basic Classification of Institutions in Higher Education, Rankin et. al (2010) surveyed 3,247 students, 498 faculty, 1,071 staff, and 333 administrators about campus climate for LGBT individuals. Of all participants, 4,194 identified as White and 1335 respondents identified as a person of color. LGB students of color were significantly more likely to observe harassment and less likely to feel comfortable in their classes than White LGB students. LGB students of color were more likely to attribute harassment due to racial identity than sexual orientation.

LGB college students of color face many of the same issues of harassment and discrimination as their White LGB peers, but experience racism in addition to homophobia and heterosexism. There is limited research on LGB students of color in a college setting and no published research focusing on LGB students of color living in the residence halls on a college campus.

LGB Experiences in the Residence Halls

Limited research is available on the experiences of LGB students living in the residence halls. To date, there has not been any published research on the experiences and needs of students with multiple minority identities (i.e., LGB student of color) living in the residence halls. This next section focuses in depth on four key studies focusing on LGB students living in the residence halls. This section is divided into four topics: the perceptions of campus climate for LGBT students, perceived benefits of LGBT-specific

housing, LGB students' perceptions of resident advisors, and experiences of "coming out" in the residence halls.

Perceptions of Campus Climate

There is limited research available on the perceptions of campus climate for LGBT students. Brown et al. (2004) used a multiple perspective approach to survey 605 students attending a Midwestern state research university on their perceptions of campus climate in regards to LGBT issues. The study focused on different campus community groups (LGBT students, "general" students (non-LGBT), Resident Advisors (RAs), faculty and student affairs staff) and their perceptions of campus climate for LGBT students.

Stratified random sampling was implemented for the "general students," and faculty from varied academic disciplines (Brown et al. 2004). All RAs were invited to participate in the study, as well as a random sample of student affairs staff, and a snowball sampling of LGBT students. Of the 605 survey responses received: 80 were LGBT students (41 male, 39 female), 253 "general" students (113 male, 140 female), 126 faculty members (77 male, 49 female), 41 student affairs staff members (21 male, 20 female), and 105 RAs (54 male, 51 female).

Three distinct surveys were distributed: one for RAs and "general" students, one for LGBT students, and one for faculty and student affairs staff. There was a general survey administered to everyone, and then additional different questions for each group related to that specific group. For example, faculty and student affairs staff members were asked about university policies and their department's mission.

The results of the survey were organized into five main groups: knowledge level,

interest level, involvement level, perceptions of anti-LGBT attitudes on campus, and graffiti sightings. Every group, except the LGBT students, was asked about their attitudes toward LGBT issues. The researchers omitted that question for LGBT students because it was assumed that their answers would be significantly different than the other groups. Additional categories were included for LGBT students, such as perceptions of unfair treatment, need to hide identity, and extent of being “out” (Brown et al., 2004).

As expected, LGBT students were the most involved, interested, and knowledgeable about LGBT issues (Brown et al., 2004). RAs and student affairs staff members reported more interest in LGBT history, issues, and culture than “general students” and faculty members. Student affairs staff expressed more interest in LGBT workshops and the relevance of LGBT topics than faculty. In addition, more student affairs staff members confronted a student who made derogatory comments than did faculty members. Faculty members in what the authors termed “soft sciences” (i.e., psychology, sociology, and education) reported more positive attitudes towards LGBT issues than those in “hard sciences” (i.e., math, chemistry, engineering, and physics).

The results suggest that different groups on campus perceive the campus climate differently for LGBT students, as well as have different attitudes, experiences, and behaviors related to LGBT individuals and issues. Personal characteristics were also a factor, such as sex, discipline of study for faculty, and academic class standing for students. LGBT students viewed the campus climate more negatively than any other group (Brown et al., 2004). The implications for this study are that student affairs staff members and RAs are more supportive of LGBT students than faculty and their non-LGBT peers. This may be due to the specific training RAs and student affairs staff

members receive on diversity issues.

Overall, the study identifies multiple perceptions at a university on campus climate. Since only one campus was studied, the results could not be generalized to all universities because each campus is different. The researchers omitted a question on the respondent's attitude on LGBT issues for LGBT respondents because they assumed that LGBT respondents would have a positive attitude on LGBT issues. Brown et al. (2004) did not take into account internalized homophobia and the impact that may have on LGBT students' perceptions. The study also lacked data on participants' race/ethnicity, which may significantly impact one's perceptions on LGBT issues. In addition, the study did not discuss the stage of sexual identity development of the LGBT students. A student who is more comfortable with their sexual orientation and more open to others might have a different perception of campus climate than a student who is not comfortable with their sexuality. Brown et. al (2004) also did not specify how many gay students, lesbian students, bisexual students, and transgender students were surveyed. A transgender student's perceptions may be very different from a lesbian or gay student's.

Benefits of LGBT-Specific Housing

With the limited research on LGBT college students living in the residence halls, Herbst and Malaney (1999) set out to research the possible benefits of having special interest housing on LGBT concerns. The main arguments in favor of LGBT special interest housing are to provide safety against discrimination, and to create community and support for LGBT students. The primary goal of this article was to provide other universities with information for a discussion on the LGBT concerns in residential life and possible LGBT specific housing (Herbst & Malaney, 1999).

The study consisted of 22 out of 32 (68.75%) student residents living in the special interest LGBT housing, “The 2-in-20 Special Interest Residential Program,” at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. All residents in the “2-in 20 floor” were invited to participate in this study and involvement was voluntary. There were 12 females, 7 males and 3 unidentified students. The sexual orientation of the students is as follows: 5 bisexuals, 5 gays, 6 lesbians, 1 transgender and 5 unidentified. Six staff members, previously or currently involved in the 2-in-20 program, were also interviewed to gain a different perspective for this study, which included the current RA and residence director, the first residence director, the first area director, and the GLBT program office coordinator (Herbst & Malaney, 1999).

The study was conducted at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1995. After discussing the research topic with the residents, Herbst and Malaney (1999) decided not to have the students participate in a focus group or interview because, after earlier discussions of research topic with program residents, the majority made it clear that they felt more comfortable disclosing their experiences in writing. Residents were asked about their experiences in the program as well as the sense of community and supportiveness of the other residents and staff. The staff members were interviewed individually and also asked to provide written information on the “2-in-20 program” and how it developed.

The researchers found that the reaction to the “2-in-20 program” was mainly positive. The majority of the residents commented on the need of having a safe space to call home where they could feel comfortable being “out.” Some residents said their self-esteem increased because of the program. The main area of improvement the students

commented on was to have more community building events and more staff focused on LGBT concerns. Several students also suggested educating the residents more on LGBT history and issues.

The staff responses were even more positive than the students. All of the staff members were passionate about their work and the importance of having special interest housing for LGBT residents. All respondents believed that more residential life staff is needed to enhance this program's success.

The study was only conducted at one university so the data cannot be generalized as the experiences of all students living in LGBT special interest housing. The study shows the success of one LGBT residential program, but further research is needed to support the need for LGBT residential programs at all universities, particularly as there were no other published studies found that have researched this topic. The data does suggest that other diverse populations could benefit from having special interest resident programs as well. The main argument against special interest housing based on race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation is that it could create an environment of separatism where students are not enriched with experiences of diversity (Herbst & Malaney, 1999).

LGB Students Perceptions of Resident Assistants

Resident Assistants (RAs) are an influential part of the residential campus community and can play a vital role in making a student's on campus experience a positive (or negative) experience. Evans, Reason, and Broido (2001) set out to research lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) student's perceptions of RAs. The researchers asked about the expectations LGB students have of RAs and recommendations on the selection and training of RAs. The purpose of this article is to provide residential life staff with

research and suggestions for RA selection and training on LGB issues.

This qualitative study (Evans, et al., 2001) consisted of 20 LGB students (10 female and 10 male), who attended a research university located in a rural area in the eastern United States that lacked visible LGB community. The researchers did not specify the specific area the study took place. Over twenty-five percent of the campus population assessed live on campus. Evans et al. (2001) recruited students to participate in this study through LGB student organizations, a class on sexual orientation, LGB online forums, referrals and personal contacts. All participants had lived on campus, identified as LGB and were undergraduate students. One student was Latino American, one student was Asian American, and the remaining 18 students were White. The students' class standing, degree of involvement in the LGB community, and their level of being "out" varied.

The LGB students participated in an individual audio-recorded interview that lasted 2 to 2.5 hours. The interviews were conducted by four graduate students in counseling or student affairs who had professional residence hall experience and were familiar with LGB issues. The participants were asked open-ended questions that focused on their experiences with and/or impressions of RAs, and recommendations for staff selection and training.

Evans et al. (2001) organized the results into three categories: expectations of RAs, the importance of LGB RAs, and suggestions for RA trainings. The students expected RAs to be open and accepting of all diversity, including sexual orientation, personally supportive, and work towards providing a welcoming environment for LGB students. Homophobic incidents involving RAs were more stressful for LGB students

because they held RAs in such high regard. Students expressed similar feelings of distress when RAs ignored homophobic incidents even if they did not participate.

The students viewed RAs as role models and were grateful when RAs displayed visible support of LGB students by displaying “safe zone” posters and LGB resources (Evans, et al., 2001). Students also spoke of the importance of RAs to educate and bring awareness of LGB issues in the residence halls. Hiring LGB RAs was seen as vital for creating support for LGB students because the RAs could be confidants, help connect LGB students with each other and resource, and create a positive inclusive impression of Residential Life.

The students gave several suggestions for Residential Life in terms of hiring and training RAs. They believed that RAs should be hired on their ability to be open and understanding of all diversity, including sexual orientation. They emphasized the importance of discussing LGB issues during trainings and other professional development activities to increase awareness, as well as have ongoing education on LGB struggles and resources. The trainings should be experiential and also involve exposure to LGB people. Overall, the students emphasized the importance of RAs being knowledgeable and supportive of LGB issues.

Since the study was only conducted at one university and had 20 participants, the data cannot be generalized as the impressions and experiences all LGB students have with RAs. However, the data could potentially be used to support the need for specific training for RAs on other areas of diversity, as well as the importance of hiring RAs from diverse backgrounds/ethnicities to create visibility and support for students within that population.

Coming Out in the Residence Halls

Students develop and grow through their college experiences, but research is limited on the coming out experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students in college. Since LGB students frequently come out during college, Evans and Broido (1999) studied college students' coming out experiences in the residence halls. The study consisted of 20 LGB undergraduate students (10 female and 10 male), who lived in the residence halls at the University Park campus of Pennsylvania State University (PSUP). PSUP is a rural campus located in a community that is politically conservative and lacks visible LGB community.

Evans and Broido (1999) recruited students' participation in this study through LGB student organizations, a course on sexual orientation issues, the campus's LGB listserv, recommendations from residential life professionals and snowball sampling where LGB students were asked to recommend others. Eighteen of the students were White, one was Asian American, and one was Latino American. Of the male participants, six identified themselves as gay, three as bisexual, and one as homosexual. Of the female participants, on the other hand, five identified themselves as lesbian and five as bisexual. Two of the students were British exchange students, eight were seniors, five were juniors, four were sophomores, and one was a freshman. The students also varied in their level of being "out," and in their college majors.

The LGB students participated in an individual audio-recorded interview that lasted two to two and one-half hours. The interviews were conducted by four graduate students (two female and two male), who had previous professional work experience in

residence life and were actively involved in educating others on LGB issues. The participants were asked open-ended questions from a structured interview protocol, in addition to follow up questions and exploration of issues participants raised during the interview.

Evans and Broido (1999) organized the results into 10 major themes, which included the different populations to whom one must come out, coming out to one's roommate, methods of coming out to others, being out as not an either/or process, perceptions of their identities and coming out, environmental effect on coming out, motivation of coming out, and the advantages/disadvantages of being out versus closeted. The researchers found that students identified three different populations an LGB person must come out to: oneself, other LGB people and heterosexuals, unlike previous literature reviewed by the researchers that identified only oneself and others. Another interesting finding was that students used a wide variety of methods to come out to other people, but mostly these methods were not explicit. Many students would just assume that others recognize them as LGB by displaying and/or wearing LGB symbols and paraphernalia, such as rainbows, pink triangles and freedom rings. This allowed students to be "out" without having to directly tell others.

The students also expressed that their degree of being out depended on their environment. The issues around being out were not an either-or process that students had to negotiate (Evans & Broido, 1999). The researchers found that students came out more freely in environments that they perceived as supportive of LGB students and/or had LGB role models. Many factors also discouraged students from being open about their sexuality, such as a lack of community in the residence halls, lack of support and/or

active hostility towards LGB students. Unfortunately, not all the participants had positive coming out experiences in the residence halls. One participant described his negative experiences by stating, “I faced a lot of direct and indirect homophobia- a lot of people who would make comments about the fact that all queers should be shot, or put on a desert island and nuked, or stuff along that line” (Evans & Broido, 1999, p. 663).

Evans and Broido (1999) found that coming out was not necessarily a stage in one’s developmental process, but instead an assessment of the environment in which the LGB student found themselves. Since campus environment played an impactful role on the participants, it is important for student affairs professionals to create an LGB inclusive environment. The researchers shared all their findings with residence life professionals at PSUP, with an emphasis on how these findings could impact their policies and training programs.

A college campus’s environment can play a significant role on an LGB students’ coming out experience as well as their comfort around whether or not to come out. In environments that are visibly hostile, many LGB students may opt not to be entirely out because of fear of persecution and/or physical harm. It is extremely important for student affairs professionals to create a welcoming environment for all students, including LGB students. Even though the finding cannot be generalized to all campuses, this study could be useful for other student affairs professionals to learn about possible coming out experiences of LGB college students in the residence halls.

Summary and Transition to Chapter Three

With limited research on LGB students living in the residence halls and no research on LGB students of color living in the residence halls, there is a need for

research on the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution that has an ethnically diverse student population. The following chapter will discuss the methodology used in this study to assess the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Subsequent to reviewing the literature, it became evident that there is limited published research on the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students living in residence halls and no published research on the needs of LGBT students of color living in the residence halls at an urban institution. The current study addresses these shortcomings. The following chapter will be divided into 6 sections, including: importance of student needs assessments, purpose, research setting/context, research design, data analysis, and limitations in the current study.

It should be noted that LGBT and LGB will be used throughout this study. LGBT will be used to refer to the entire community, such as in descriptions of support services and programs. To be consistent with the assessment and interview questions, LGBT will be used when discussing the questions asked. Due to limited responses from transgender students, the study focused on the needs of LGB students. LGB will be used throughout to describe the participants of this study.

Importance of Student Needs Assessments

According to the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I), the purpose of Housing and Residence Life programs is to provide an environment that supports student learning in its broadest sense and “strives to establish an open, diverse, and multicultural residential environment that promotes the appreciation, understanding and respect for differences” (2010, p. 15). Since there is limited research on the needs of LGB students of color living in the residence halls, how do we, as student affairs professionals, know that we are meeting their needs and creating an environment where they can thrive?

The purpose of performing student needs assessments is to discover what the specific needs of a student population are, and to determine if the university is meeting those needs. When creating a student needs assessment, it is important to approach the assessment from a multicultural framework and not assume an ethnocentric ideal that all students will have the same needs. By utilizing an inclusive assessment instrument, the assessor can gather a more accurate perception of student needs. Harris (1995) recommends that needs assessments consider the perspective of non-white students' culture and the university's culture because "needs are perceived through filters that are culturally mediated and individuals of different cultural backgrounds identify needs that are consistent with their values" (p. 39). With this in mind, the needs of White LGB students may be very different from the needs of LGB students of color living in the residence halls at urban institutions.

The following section will discuss the purpose of the study and guiding research questions.

Purpose

The purpose of the current study is to assess the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution that is racially/ethnically diverse. The following research questions guided this study:

4. What are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university?
5. What are LGBT students' perceptions of the campus climate in the residence halls at an urban institution?
6. How can student affairs professionals meet the needs of LGBT students living in

the residence halls at an urban university?

With these questions in mind, it was hypothesized that:

3. LGBT students living in the residence halls would perceive the campus climate as unwelcoming due to a lack of visible support; and
4. a significant amount of LGBT students will discuss the need to have LGBT specific housing options.

Research Setting/Context

This study took place at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) during the Spring 2011 semester. CSUN is a public, state controlled institution of higher education located in the San Fernando Valley (Greater Los Angeles area). CSUN qualifies as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), which is defined by the United States Department of Education (2011) as “an institution of higher education that: (A) is an eligible institution; and (B) has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application.”

Site Demographics

During the Fall 2010 semester, CSUN had 35, 272 students enrolled. Please note institutional research publishes enrollment characteristics annually for the Fall semesters. A very limited amount of new students are eligible to enroll for the Spring semesters. Fifty seven percent ($n = 20,249$) of the students were female and 43 percent ($n = 15,023$) of the students were male. The demographic information for class standing was as follows: 21 percent ($n = 7,218$) of students were freshman, 10 percent ($n = 3,605$) were sophomores, 24 percent ($n = 8,529$) were juniors, 30 percent ($n = 10,528$) were seniors

and 15 percent ($n = 5,392$) were graduate students. The demographic information for race/ethnicity was as follows: 31.4 percent ($n = 11,076$) identified as Latino/a; 30 percent ($n = 10,570$) identified as White; 13.1 percent ($n = 4,628$) identified as Other; 10.8 percent ($n = 3,807$) identified as Asian American; 7.3 percent ($n = 2,582$) identified as African American; 6.7 percent ($n = 2,355$) identified as International students; 0.5 percent ($n = 166$) identified as Pacific Islander; and 0.2 percent ($n = 88$) identified as Native American.

Housing Demographics

During the Spring 2011 semester, approximately eight percent ($n = 2,655$) of students lived in the residence halls at CSUN. Sixty one percent ($n = 1,631$) were female and 39 percent ($n = 1,024$) were male. The demographic information for class standing was as follows: 59 percent ($n = 1,574$) were freshman; 15 percent ($n = 385$) were sophomores; 13 percent ($n = 348$) were juniors; 12 percent ($n = 327$) were seniors; and less than 1 percent ($n = 21$) were graduate students. CSUN Student Housing and Conference Services office does not collect data on students' race/ethnicity living in the residence halls.

LGBT Support Services

When the study was conducted, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Alliance (LGBTQA) was the largest LGBT student organization on campus. CSUN Residential Life offered a program called Fostering Love and Inclusive Residential Education (FLAIRE), which was developed in 2009 by Franklin Ellis, CSUN Coordinator of Residential Student Success. The program was designed to be a living learning community within the CSUN residence halls, but due to limited support, the

program became a group to create community and provide support for LGBT students living in the residence halls. Other LGBT services at CSUN included an LGBT support group through University Counseling Services and a Queer Studies minor through the College of Humanities.

Research Design

This study utilized mixed methodology to gain a broader understanding of the campus climate for LGB students living in the residence halls through quantitative methods and understand the individual needs of LGB students through qualitative measures. The research methodology and data collection was approved by the CSUN Institutional Research Board. The following section will outline the instruments utilized to collect data.

Instrument

Two instruments were used in the data collection process. First, all students living in the residence halls were emailed a brief electronic survey asking their perceptions of campus climate for LGBT students. The survey was administered through an online campus data collection and assessment program called Student Voice™. As part of the survey, participants were asked to respond to the following questions, using a 5-point Likert-scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree:

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement – The residence halls at CSUN are a supportive environment for LGBT students;
2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement – It is safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN;

Using a 5-point Likert-scale, where 0 = Not Sure and 5 = Often, students were asked to

respond to the following statement:

3. I have heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN; and

Using a 3-point Likert-scale, where 1 = Yes and 3 = Not Sure, students were asked to respond to the following statement:

4. I have witnessed harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN.

After responding to the above questions, students were asked demographic information, which included: class standing, number of semesters lived in CSUN housing, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender. Students who self-identified as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or “other” were asked the following open ended questions:

1. What are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university?
2. What are your perceptions of the residential campus climate for LGBT students?
3. How can student affairs professionals (including Residential Life staff) meet the needs of LGBT students?

Following these questions, LGB students were asked if they would be willing to participate in an in person interview. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. Students who were interested provided their name, email address and/or phone number through the Student Voice™ survey.

The second part of the assessment consisted of semi-structured interviews of a select number of students. Participants for the interviews were solicited from the above

noted electronic survey sent to all students living in the residence halls at the time of the study. LGB students who expressed interest were emailed by the researcher to schedule an in-person interview. At the time of interview, participants were provided with an informed consent form, which was signed prior to the interview. Each participant was asked the following questions:

1. How long have you been living in the residence halls at CSUN?
2. What programs/support services does CSUN have for LGBT students?
3. Are you involved in the LGBT community at CSUN?
4. What do you think are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls?
5. What is your sexual orientation (and/or gender-identity)?
6. Are you “out” to your roommates? Friends? Family?
7. Have you felt uncomfortable or unwelcomed in the residence halls because of your sexual orientation?
8. Does your race/ethnic background impact your sexual orientation? If so, how?
9. Have you ever been harassed in the residence halls because of your sexual orientation?
10. What can residential life staff do to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBT students?
11. Is there anything else that I should know about LGBT students living in the residence halls that I have not asked?

Interviews took place in a locked unused lounge in the residence halls. If the participant

consented, the interview was audio recorded. Each interview was approximately one hour in length and then transcribed by the researcher. To protect each participant's identity, pseudonyms chosen by the participants were used in lieu of their real names.

Sample Selection

This study had different target populations for each phase of the assessment. For the quantitative portion, the target population was all students living in the residences halls at CSUN. The population was sampled by sending an email invitation to all students living in the residence halls to participate in the study. Students self-selected their involvement in the study.

Qualitative data was also collected by asking open ended questions through the electronic survey. However, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students were the target population for this phase. This was a convenience sample by asking additional questions to participants of the previous phase who identified as the target population.

The final phase of the assessment was in-person individual interviews. The sample was collected by requesting participation from respondents in the previous phase. The researcher contacted all students who expressed interest in being interviewed as part of the study, except students she supervised as a graduate student assistant. After being contacted, some students opted not to participate in the individual interviews. The researcher interviewed all LGB students from the previous sample who were available and interested in participating in the study.

Data Analysis

Recoding Data

To analyze the data through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

(SPSS), the following quantitative questions were recoded:

1. I have heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN;
2. I have witnessed harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN;
3. Gender;
4. Race/Ethnicity; and
5. Sexual Orientation.

In the first question on anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls, the responses “Not Sure” and “Never” were combined and recoded using a 4-point Likert-scale, where 0 = Not Sure/Never and 3 = Often. For the second question on harassment in the residence halls, the responses “Not Sure” and “No” were combined and recoded using a 2-point Likert-scale, where 0 = Not Sure/No and 1 = Yes.

In regards to gender, “other” was recoded as “male” as one participant selected “other” and self-identified as an intersex male. Gender was recoded into two categories, where 0 = Male and 1 = Female. Race/ethnicity was recoded into three categories, where 0 = White, 1 = Latino/a, and 2 = Other. Other includes all other ethnicities of respondents, except White and Latino/a. Sexual orientation was recoded into two categories, where 0 = Heterosexual and 1 = LGBTQ.

Quantitative Analysis Data

Descriptive statistics, using SPSS, was used to analyze the quantitative data. An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the answers of respondents by gender for each of the four quantitative questions listed below:

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement – The

- residence halls at CSUN are a supportive environment for LGBT students;
2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement – It is safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN;
 3. I have heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN; and
 4. I have witnessed harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN.

This process was repeated to compare the answers of respondents by sexual orientation.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the answers of respondents by race/ethnicity for each of the four quantitative questions listed above. A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of gender and sexual orientation on respondents’ answers to the above questions. Another two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation on respondents’ answers to the above questions.

Qualitative Data Analysis

A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the qualitative responses. “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomena it represents” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 23). Open coding was used to develop themes for the following questions:

1. What are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university?
2. What are your perceptions of the residential campus climate for LGBT students?

3. How can student affairs professionals (including Residential Life staff) meet the needs of LGBT students?

Limitations

This study had several limitations due to the research design, topic and sample size. Since only one institution was studied, one limitation is that this study cannot be generalized to other institutions. Given the nature of the study, the research instrument was not tested for reliability or validity. Another limitation is that a student may not have been comfortable with their sexuality, which may have resulted in the student answering “heterosexual” in the electronic survey or opting not to participate in the study at all. In addition, students who are not “out” may be less likely to participate in an interview. The results may not be able to be generalized to LGB students who are not “out” living in the residence halls at CSUN.

During the development of the quantitative research instrument, there was an error in the questions of sexual orientation and gender. When the quantitative questions were submitted to Student Voice™, the researcher did not notice that transgender was listed under sexual orientation and not gender. This may have resulted in transgender students not accurately being represented in the study. Additionally, since only one student disclosed being transgender, this study cannot be generalized to the needs of transgender students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. Another limitation was that respondent age and any other academic information was not collected.

The quantitative assessment questions did not separate students’ perceptions of sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual) and gender identity (transgender). As a result, students may have responded with their perceptions of campus climate for LGB students

and not take into account the campus climate for transgender students or vice versa.

Limitations were present during the in person individual interviews. One participant refused to be audio recorded, which could have resulted in the researcher missing key quotes from the interview. This was the researcher's first experience doing in-person individual interviews for a study and as a result, could have swayed students' responses. During the interviews, the researcher did not ask participants to further explain brief answers. Lastly, participants may have been uncomfortable or nervous, which could influence their comments. **Potential Researcher Bias**

The researcher identifies as a Jewish queer White woman, who, at the time of the study, was working as a graduate assistant for Residential Life at CSUN. During her undergraduate studies, the researcher lived in the residence halls and served as a resident advisor for two years at a different California State University. The researcher believed the needs of LGB students of color would be different from LGB White students. In addition, the researcher believed that the needs of transgender students are different from the needs of LGB students; as such the focus of the current study was on the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution.

Summary and Transition to Chapter Four

The purpose of this study was to discover the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. The following chapter will discuss the results from the methodology described above.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of the current study was to assess the perceived needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students living in the residence halls at an urban institution that is ethnically diverse. It was hypothesized that LGB students living in the residence halls would perceive the campus climate as unwelcoming due to a lack of visible support from the university; and a significant amount of LGB students would discuss the need to have LGBT-specific housing options at the university.

Demographic Characteristics for All Participants

Over ten percent of students ($N = 358$) living in the residence halls at the university studied agreed to participate in the electronic survey sent via email to all housing residents. Seventy percent ($n = 251$) of those surveyed identified as female and 30 percent ($n = 107$) identified as male. The demographic information for race/ethnicity was as follows: 33.5 percent ($n = 120$) identified as White/Caucasian of European descent; 28.2 percent ($n = 101$) identified as Chicano/a or Latino/a; 16.5 percent ($n = 59$) identified as Black, African or African American; 9.8 percent ($n = 35$) identified as Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander; 6.7 percent ($n = 24$) chose not to answer this question; 3.9 percent ($n = 14$) identified as other; 0.8 percent ($n = 3$) identified as Middle Eastern or Southern Eastern Asian; and 0.6 percent ($n = 2$) identified as Native American. Seventy-nine percent ($n = 284$) identified as heterosexual/straight and 21 percent ($n = 74$) identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or other. Fifty four percent ($n = 192$) of respondents were freshman, 22.91 percent ($n = 82$) were sophomores, 17.6 percent ($n = 63$) were juniors, 4.75 percent ($n = 17$) were seniors, and 1.12 percent ($n = 4$) were graduate students. Unfortunately, no other demographic information was collected,

including age or units of enrollment.

Descriptives for Survey Questions

As part of the survey, participants were asked to respond to four questions, using a Likert-scale, as noted below.

Question One: Residence Halls as Supportive

The first question asked, “Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The residence halls at CSUN are a supportive environment for LGBT students.” Using a 5-point Likert-scale, where 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”, the results were as follows: 20.1 percent ($n = 72$) answered “strongly agree”, 40.5 percent ($n = 145$) answered “agree”, 33.5 percent ($n = 120$) answered “neutral”, 3.6 percent ($n = 13$) answered “disagree” and 2.2 percent ($n = 8$) answered “strongly disagree” to the above statement. The mean score reported by participants was 3.73 ($SD = 0.90$).

Question Two: Safe to be “Out” in Residence Halls

The second question asked, “Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: It is safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN.” Using a 5-point Likert-scale, where 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”, the results were as follows: 27.7 percent ($n = 99$) answered “strongly agree”, 46.4 percent ($n = 166$) answered “agree”, 19.2 percent ($n = 69$) answered “neutral”, 4.2 percent ($n = 15$) answered “disagree” and 2.5 percent ($n = 9$) answered “strongly disagree” to the above statement. The mean score reported by participants was 3.92 ($SD = 0.93$).

Question Three: Anti-Gay Remarks in Residence Halls

The third question asked participants to respond to the following statement, “I have heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN.” Using a 4-point Likert-scale, where 0 = “not sure/never” and 3 = “often”, the results were as follows: 5 percent ($n = 18$) answered “often”, 17.6 percent ($n = 63$) answered “sometimes”, 24.3 percent ($n = 87$) answered “rarely”, 53.1 percent ($n = 190$) answered “never or “not sure” to the above statement. The mean score reported by participants was 0.75 ($SD = 0.92$).

Question Four: Harassment in Residence Halls

The fourth question asked participants to respond to the following statement, “I have witnessed harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN.” Using a 2-point Likert-scale, where 0 = “no/not sure” and 1= “yes”, the results were as follows: 4.5 percent ($n = 16$) answered “yes”, and 95.5 percent ($n = 342$) answered “no” or “not sure” to the above statement. The mean score reported by participants was 0.04 ($SD = 0.21$).

Effect of Gender on Perceptions of Residence Hall Climate

An independent-samples t -test was conducted to compare the answers of male and female respondents for each question above. For question one, there was not a significant effect of gender on perceptions of the residence halls as a supportive environment for LGBT students with male respondents ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.05$) and female respondents ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.82$); $t(163) = -1.71$, $p = 0.09$. These results suggest that male respondents and female respondents did not statistically differ from one another on their perception. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents generally found the residence halls at CSUN as a supportive environment for LGBT students.

For question two, there was not a significant effect of gender on perceptions of feeling safe to be “out” in the residence with male respondents ($M = 3.78, SD = 1.07$) and female respondents ($M = 3.99, SD = 0.86$); $t(167) = -1.82, p = 0.07$. These results suggest that male respondents and female respondents did not statistically differ from one another on question two. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents expressed that it was safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN. Notice should be taken that the results approached statistical significance, with female students expressing a more favorable impression for coming out.

For question three, there was not a significant effect of gender on anti-LGBT comments heard in the residence halls with male respondents ($M = 0.89, SD = 0.97$) and female respondents ($M = 0.69, SD = 0.90$); $t(356) = 1.92, p=0.06$. These results suggest that male and female respondents did not statistically differ in their responses to question three. Given the low scores, it appears that the majority of respondents rarely or never heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN. Notice should be taken that the results approached statistical significance, with male students hearing more anti-LGBT remarks.

For question four, there was a significant effect of gender on harassment of LGBT students witnessed in the residence halls with male respondents ($M = 0.06, SD = 0.23$) and female respondents ($M = 0.04, SD = 0.20$); $t(356) = 0.68, p = 0.05$. These results suggest that male respondents and female respondents differed statistically on question 4, where more male respondents seem to have witnessed higher degrees of harassment of an LGBT student, than female respondents. Although there was a statistically significant

difference in responses, the majority of respondents did not witness harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN.

Effect of Race/Ethnicity on Perceptions of the Residence Hall Climate

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the answers of respondents by race/ethnicity (White, Latino/a, and other) for each question above.

“Other” represents all other ethnicities of respondents, except White and Latino/a. For question one, there was not a significant effect of race/ethnicity on perceptions of the residence halls as supportive environments for LGBT students. White ($M = 3.80$; $SD = 0.88$), Latino/a ($M = 3.67$; $SD = 0.83$), and other respondents ($M = 3.70$; $SD = 0.97$), at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2, 355) = 0.63$, $p = 0.53$. These results suggest that White respondents, Latino/a respondents and respondents of other ethnicities did not statistically differ from one another on question one. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents found the residence halls at CSUN as a supportive environment for LGBT students.

For question two, there was not a significant effect of race/ethnicity on perceptions of feeling safe to be “out” in the residence halls. White ($M = 3.99$; $SD = 0.86$), Latino/a ($M = 3.92$; $SD = 0.89$), and other respondents ($M = 3.87$; $SD = 1.01$), at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2, 355) = 0.56$, $p = 0.57$. These results suggest that White respondents, Latino/a respondents and respondents of other ethnicities did not statistically differ from one another on question two. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents expressed that it was safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN.

For question three, there was not a significant effect of race/ethnicity on anti-

LGBT comments heard in the residence halls. White ($M = 0.75$; $SD = 0.87$), Latino/a ($M = 0.58$; $SD = 0.89$), and other respondents ($M = 0.86$; $SD = 0.97$), at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2, 355) = 2.67$, $p = 0.07$. These results suggest that White respondents, Latino/a respondents and respondents of other ethnicities did not statistically differ from one another on question three. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents rarely or never heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN.

For question four, there was not a significant effect of race/ethnicity on harassment of LGBT students witnessed in the residence halls. White ($M = 0.07$; $SD = 0.25$), Latino/a ($M = 0.03$; $SD = 0.17$), and other respondents ($M = 0.04$; $SD = 0.19$), at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2, 355) = 1.05$, $p = 0.35$. These results suggest that White respondents, Latino/a respondents and respondents of other ethnicities did not statistically differ from one another on question four. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents did not witness harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN.

Effect of Sexual Orientation on Perceptions of the Residence Hall Climate

An independent-samples t -test was conducted to compare the answers of heterosexual and LGB respondents for each question. For question one, there was not a significant effect of sexual orientation on perceptions of the residence halls as supportive environments for LGBT students with heterosexual respondents ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.86$) and LGBT respondents ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.04$); $t(101) = 1.79$, $p = 0.08$. These results suggest that heterosexual respondents and LGBT respondents did not statistically differ. The majority of respondents found the residence halls at CSUN as a supportive environment for LGBT students.

For question two, there was a significant effect of sexual orientation on perceptions of feeling safe to be “out” in the residence halls with heterosexual respondents ($M = 4.02, SD = 0.87$) and LGB respondents ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.06$); $t(100) = 3.37, p=0.001$. These results suggest that statistically, more LGB respondents answered “neutral,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” to the statement “It is safe for LGBT students to be ‘out’ in the residence halls at CSUN.” LGB respondents thought it was unsafe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN than heterosexual respondents.

For question three, there was a significant effect of sexual orientation on anti-LGBT remarks heard in the residence halls with heterosexual respondents ($M = 0.63, SD = 0.85$) and LGB respondents ($M = 1.2, SD = 1.02$); $t(101) = -4.47, p = 0.001$. These results suggest that LGB respondents tended to hear anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN with greater frequency than heterosexual respondents.

For question four, there was a significant effect of sexual orientation on harassment of LGBT students witnessed in the residence halls with heterosexual respondents ($M = 0.03, SD = 0.17$) and LGB respondents ($M = 0.11, SD = 0.31$); $t(84) = -2.12, p = 0.037$. These results suggest that statistically more LGB respondents witnessed harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN than heterosexual respondents.

Effect of Sexual Orientation and Gender on Perceptions of the Residence Hall

Climate

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of gender and sexual orientation on respondents’ perceptions of the support and safety of LGBT students living

in the residence halls at CSUN. For question one, there was not a significant interaction between the effects of gender and sexual orientation on perceptions of the residence halls as supportive environments for LGBT students; $F(1, 354) = 0.835, p = 0.36$.

Heterosexual males ($M = 3.61, SD = 0.99$), heterosexual females ($M = 3.84, SD = 0.79$), LGB males ($M = 3.54, SD = 1.23$) and LGB females ($M = 3.54, SD = 0.91$) did not statistically differ. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents found the residence halls at CSUN as a supportive environment for LGBT students. As previously reported, the main effects of both gender and sexual orientation were not statistically significant.

For question two, there was not a significant interaction between the effects of gender and sexual orientation on perceptions of feeling safe to be “out” in the residence halls; $F(1, 354) = 0.45, p = 0.51$. Heterosexual males ($M = 3.86, SD = 1.05$), heterosexual females ($M = 4.08, SD = 0.78$), LGB males ($M = 3.54, SD = 1.10$) and LGB females ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.05$) did not statistically differ. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents expressed that it was safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN. As previously reported, the main effects of both gender and sexual orientation were not statistically significant.

For question three, there was not a significant interaction between the effects of gender and sexual orientation on anti-LGBT remarks heard in the residence halls; $F(1, 354) = 0.56, p = 0.45$. Heterosexual males ($M = 0.77, SD = 0.93$), heterosexual females ($M = 0.57, SD = 0.82$), LGB males ($M = 1.21, SD = 1.00$) and LGB females ($M = 1.20, SD = 1.05$) did not statistically differ. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents rarely or never heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at

CSUN. As previously reported, the main effects of both gender and sexual orientation were not statistically significant.

For question four, there was not a significant interaction between the effects of gender and sexual orientation on harassment of LGBT students witnessed in the residence halls; $F(1, 354) = 0.73, p = 0.79$. Heterosexual males ($M = 0.04, SD = 0.19$), heterosexual females ($M = 0.02, SD = 0.16$), LGB males ($M = 0.11, SD = 0.32$) and LGB females ($M = 0.11, SD = 0.32$) did not statistically differ. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents did not witness harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN. As previously reported, the main effects of both gender and sexual orientation were not statistically significant.

Effect of Sexual Orientation and Race/Ethnicity on

Perceptions of the Residence Hall Climate

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation on respondents' perceptions of the support and safety of LGBT students living in the residence halls at CSUN. For question one, there was not a significant interaction between the effects of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation on perceptions of the residence halls as supportive environments for LGBT students; $F(2, 352) = 2.34, p = 0.10$. Heterosexual White respondents ($M = 3.79, SD = 0.87$), heterosexual Latino/a respondents ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.78$), heterosexual respondents of other ethnicities ($M = 3.80, SD = 0.90$), LGB White respondents ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.94$), LGB Latino/a respondents ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.95$) and LGB respondents of other ethnicities ($M = 3.24, SD = 1.16$) did not statistically differ. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents found the residence halls at CSUN as

a supportive environment for LGBT students. As previously reported, the main effects of both race/ethnicity and sexual orientation were not statistically significant.

For question two, there was not a significant interaction between the effects of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation on perceptions of feeling safe to be “out” in the residence halls; $F(2, 352) = 0.59, p = 0.55$. Heterosexual White respondents ($M = 4.05, SD = 0.78$), heterosexual Latino/a respondents ($M = 4.03, SD = 0.87$), heterosexual respondents of other ethnicities ($M = 3.98, SD = 0.94$), LGB White respondents ($M = 3.74, SD = 1.10$), LGB Latino/a respondents ($M = 3.62, SD = 0.90$) and LGB respondents of other ethnicities ($M = 3.36, SD = 1.19$) did not statistically differ. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents believed that it was safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN. As previously reported, the main effects of both race/ethnicity and sexual orientation were not statistically significant.

For question three, there was not a significant interaction between the effects of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation on anti-LGBT remarks heard in the residence halls; $F(2, 352) = 0.03, p = 0.97$. Heterosexual White respondents ($M = 0.63, SD = 0.81$), heterosexual Latino/a respondents ($M = 0.44, SD = 0.76$), heterosexual respondents of other ethnicities ($M = 0.75, SD = 0.94$), LGB White respondents ($M = 1.26, SD = 0.96$), LGB Latino/a respondents ($M = 1.00, SD = 1.10$) and LGB respondents of other ethnicities ($M = 1.36, SD = 1.00$) did not statistically differ. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents rarely or never heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN. As previously reported, the main effects of both race/ethnicity and sexual orientation were not statistically significant.

For question four, there was not a significant interaction between the effects of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation on harassment of LGBT students witnessed in the residence halls; $F(2, 352) = 0.46, p = 0.63$. Heterosexual White respondents ($M = 0.05, SD = 0.22$), heterosexual Latino/a respondents ($M = 0.00, SD = 0.00$), heterosexual respondents of other ethnicities ($M = 0.03, SD = 0.16$), LGB White respondents ($M = 0.13, SD = 0.34$), LGB Latino/a respondents ($M = 0.12, SD = 0.33$) and LGB respondents of other ethnicities ($M = 0.08, SD = 0.28$) did not statistically differ. Given the mean scores reported, it appears that the majority of respondents did not witness harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN. As previously reported, the main effects of both race/ethnicity and sexual orientation were not statistically significant.

Demographic Characteristics for Students Providing Qualitative Responses

Sixty two percent ($n = 28$) identified as female and 38 percent ($n = 17$) identified as male. The demographic information for race/ethnicity was as follows: 33.3 percent ($n = 15$) identified as White/Caucasian of European descent; 28.9 percent ($n = 13$) identified as Chicano/a or Latino/a; 8.9 percent ($n = 4$) identified as Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander; 8.9 percent ($n = 4$) chose not to answer this question; 6.7 percent ($n = 3$) identified as Black, African or African American; 6.7 percent ($n = 3$) identified as other; and 6.7 percent ($n = 3$) identified as Middle Eastern or Southern Eastern Asian.

As stated above, 21 percent ($n = 74$) of respondents identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or other. Of the 74 respondents, 61 percent ($n = 45$) responded to one or more of the open ended assessment questions. Demographic characteristics of the LGBT participants who responded to the open ended assessment questions follow.

The demographic information for sexual orientation was as follows: 51.1 percent ($n = 23$) identified as bisexual; 20 percent ($n = 9$) identified as lesbian; 15.6 percent ($n = 7$) identified as gay; 8.9 percent ($n = 4$) identified as queer; 2.2 percent ($n = 1$) identified as asexual; and 2.2 percent ($n = 1$) identified as transgender. Forty four percent ($n = 20$) of LGBT respondents were freshman, 27 percent ($n = 12$) were sophomores, 27 percent ($n = 12$) were juniors, and 2 percent ($n = 1$) were seniors.

Of the 45 respondents who provided qualitative responses, seven respondents took part in a semi-structured in-person interview. The demographic characteristics of each participant are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Interview Participants Basic Demographics

Pseudonym	Sexual Orientation	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Class Standing
Chase	Lesbian	Female	Decline to Answer	Freshman
Jake	Bisexual	Female	Asian	Sophomore
Shea	Bisexual	Female	White/ Caucasian	Sophomore
Sammy	Gay	Male	Middle Eastern	Junior
Sam	Bisexual	Male	South Eastern Asian	Freshman
Ashley	Lesbian	Female	Black/ African American	Sophomore
Borja	Gay	Male	Latino	Sophomore

In addition to the above demographic information asked through the online assessment, interview participants were asked about their involvement in the LGBT

community, if they were “out” to friends, family, and roommates, and their knowledge of LGBT services at CSUN. The interview participants’ responses are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Interview Participants’ LGBT Involvement, Outness, and Knowledge

Pseudonym	Involvement in LGBT Community	Level of Outness	Knowledge of LGBT Services
Chase	Involved	Completely Out	Very Knowledgeable
Jake	Minimal Involvement	Completely Out	Minimal Knowledge
Shea	Not Involved	Completely Out	Minimal Knowledge
Sammy	Minimal Involvement	Completely Out	Minimal Knowledge
Sam	Not Involved	Not Out	Minimal Knowledge
Ashley	Not Involved	Out to Friends/ Roommates	Knowledgeable
Borja	Involved	Completely Out	Very Knowledgeable

After analyzing the interview data, involvement in the LGBT community was separated into three categories: involved, minimal involvement, and not involved. Involvement refers to students attending LGBT meetings, events, clubs, et cetera either on campus or in the community. Involved meant that the student regularly participates in LGBT meetings or events. Minimal involvement means that the student has attended LGBT meetings or events, but does not attend regularly. Not involved means that the student has not participated in any LGBT events. Each interviewee was asked if they

were “out” to their friends, their family and their roommates. If the student said they were “out” to all three groups, they were categorized as “completely out.” If the student was only out to friends, family, or roommates, it was listed as such. If the student was only “out” to a couple individuals, the student was categorized as “not out.” Each interview participant was asked what programs or services CSUN had for LGBT students. At the time of the study, there were four LGBT support services at CSUN, which included: LGBTA, FLAIRE, Queer Studies Program, and University Counseling Services LGBT support group. Students who indicated knowing three or more programs/services were listed as “very knowledgeable.” Students who indicated knowing two programs/services were listed as “knowledgeable.” Students who indicated knowing one program/service were listed as “minimal knowledge.” All students were aware of the student club, LGBTA.

Perceived Needs of LGBT Students in the Residence Halls

The LGBT respondents were asked, “What are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban institution?” From their responses, six themes emerged related to an open, accepting environment; support for the LGBT community; safety; a physical space for LGBT students; offering LGBT workshops and trainings; and LGBT groups. Of the forty-five LGBT-identified respondents, it should be noted that some of the responses expressed multiple themes.

Open, Accepting Environment

Thirty six percent ($n = 16$) of respondents expressed a need for the residence halls to be an open, accepting environment. The following responses were collected through the anonymous online survey. A freshman student, who self-identified as a bisexual

White female, said, *“The ability to come out and not be berated when they bring over same-sex partners.”* Another freshman student, who self-identified as a bisexual Latina and Native American female, said, *“We need to feel as if we are welcome. There should be resources at hand and the faculty should make sure that one who is in the LGBT community should not dorm with people whom are homophobic or strictly against the LGBT community.”*

During an in person interview, Sam, who self-identified as a freshman South East Asian bisexual male, said:

People are indifferent now. What I read in the news a few years ago was that people were actually discriminating against LGBT students, but right now people are indifferent...we don't get included in groups, clichés for example...LGBT students are not getting included in groups. LGBT students are limited to groups of 2-3 students...2-3 friends, but the social interaction doesn't go much farther.

Support for LGBT Community

Twenty four percent ($n = 11$) of respondents expressed a need for support for the LGBT community. The following responses were collected through the anonymous online survey. A sophomore student, who self-identified as an African American lesbian female, said, *“Support from all other residents and staff living in (the) residence (halls).”* Another African American sophomore female student, who self-identified as bisexual, said *“The needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university are to be treated with respect, just as any other human being, have support from their peers as well as authority figures, and to feel secure.”* A freshman student, who self-identified as a White bisexual male, said, *“Support. I know they (housing staff) are reluctant to*

change people's rooms and if a person is in a bad environment changing their room might be the best and easiest thing to do.”

In regards to the needs of LGBT students, during an in-person interview, Borja, a self-described sophomore Latino gay male, explained, “*(We need) to be able to know there’s other gay people and I’m not the only one.*” In a separate interview, Ashley, a self-identified African American lesbian female sophomore student, said LGBT students need:

Someone to work in the dorms full time (8 a.m. -5 p.m.) to talk to about LGBT issues, such as roommate issues related to being an LGBT student. The person’s position should be specifically for LGBT students or at least have a LGBT focus.

During the in person interview, Sammy, a self-identified Middle Eastern gay male junior student, shared his coming out story and the effects it had on him. He said:

I kind of moved out because of the whole fact that I was gay and it didn’t work out with my parents. I actually lived on Reseda and Plummer so my actual apartment with my family is two minutes away, but it just go to the point that I couldn’t deal with it anymore and they couldn’t deal with it. They didn’t want me living under their roof with ‘that kind of problem,’ so I moved.

Later in the interview, Sammy shared why he decided to come out and said:

I don’t want to have my whole life to be based on how I don’t want to have to tell my parents. I’ve told them what I’ve had to tell them and if they don’t accept it, then I have to move on with my life and I have to survive on my own. I’d have to learn how to do it and I wasn’t ready...you know. I had very little resources, very little money when I moved to the dorms. There was a point when I was living on a

dollar a day, but I just had to make it work.

He continued to explain:

Last week was just really hard. I spoke to my parents a lot and you know, saw my mom because we both live in like the same area. I saw her in the 99 Cents store and she completely ignored me. So yeah...

At this point in the interview, Sammy became very quiet and solemn. He leaned forward, his eyes appeared watery and he shook his head. The researcher commented “*That’s hard*” to which Sammy replied “*Yeah, but umm...it’s just weird. It’s difficult.*” As Sammy’s story illustrated, not all LGBT students have the support of their family so additional support for LGBT students is needed in the residence halls.

Safety

Twenty two percent ($n = 10$) of respondents expressed a need for safety in the residence halls. The following responses were collected through the anonymous online survey. A freshman student, who self-identified as an Asian lesbian female said, “*Having a safe environment where they do not feel they’re in harm’s way due to their sexual preference or identity*” was important to have in the residence halls. A college junior, who self-identified as a White bisexual female, explained, “*A non-threatening and safe environment*”, was a need for LGBT students living in the residence halls.

During the in person interview, Sammy expressed that LGBT students need to:

Just not to have to second guess themselves living in their own home...you know. It’s their house! Why should they have to feel uncomfortable where they sleep? You know, why should they have to worry about how am I going to tell my roommates or anything?

Physical Space for LGBT Students

Twenty two percent ($n = 10$) of respondents expressed a need for a physical space for LGBT students. The following responses were collected through the anonymous online survey. One college junior, who self-identified as a Middle Eastern lesbian female, said students need *“a place where they can find like-minded people and socially gather. The only place like that is all the way in West Hollywood.”* A college senior, who self-identified as a Latina queer female explained that students need *“a safe space, like a floor, living room, or resource room where LGBT students can be free to be themselves around others in the same community.”*

During the in person interview, Chase, a self-described freshman lesbian female, explained:

There were two main things that would be just the best. One would be a floor, like a LLC (Living Learning Community) that's LGBT themed so like just an LGBT floor would be fantastic ...and then, gender neutral bathrooms would also be something that would really make housing just optimal for the LGBT community because I know I personally feel uncomfortable sometimes walking into a women's restroom. So yeah, I get weird looks. I've had security guards follow me in and say 'Sir, you're in the wrong restroom. You need to go to the other restroom.'

Researcher asked if the above situation occurred in the residence halls or on campus.

Chase noted *“No, not here (in housing), but on campus I've had faculty members who are male say 'Hey, you're walking into the wrong restroom' and I've gotten weird looks and you know, so a gender neutral bathroom would be nice.”*

LGBT Workshops and Groups

Twenty percent ($n = 9$) of respondents expressed a need for LGBT workshops and groups. The following responses were collected through the anonymous online survey.

A freshman student, who self-identified as a Latino bisexual male, expressed that students need “just to learn and be educated on the subject to create a more open environment.” During the in person interview, Chase explained a need was to:

Spread awareness around the housing community. Have maybe like LGBT workshops for housing. You know, things like that just to spread awareness and knowledge about the LGBT community because there are so many stereotypes and kind of like there's so much discrimination that's all based in ignorance...so the more the residents are educated, the less discrimination is going to happen.

A college junior, who self-identified as a White queer female, said “*Different options are important – a social group, a counseling center, diversity training for professionals.*”

During the in person interview, Jake, a self-identified sophomore Asian bisexual female, said:

I definitely appreciated FLAIRE. I didn't know too much about it...I didn't go to the meetings but what they were doing, like the National Coming Out Day. First of all, I didn't know there was such a thing and second of all, when I came out to go to class and there were balloons up, I was like 'what?' And then I found out what it was. They were having a talk and just chilling. It was nice to know that there's...it's not a secret. You know, that coming out day is about coming out and so it was very comforting to know that this campus supports for the most part.

[FLAIRE stood for “fostering love and inclusive residential education.” It was developed

to be a living learning community, but ended up being a discussion group for LGBT students in housing]

Perceptions of Residential Campus Climate for LGBT Students

The second question LGBT respondents were asked was, “*What are your perceptions of the residential campus climate for LGBT students?*” Of the 39 students who replied to this question, 21 percent ($n = 8$) of LGBT students expressed that the residential campus climate was open and accepting. A White bisexual female freshman student said, “*I feel like CSUN really embraces the LGBT community and supports them.*” During the in person interview, Shea, a self-described White bisexual female sophomore student, said “*My friends are usually really accepting and people on my floor are pretty open. I’ve never had a bad experience with someone who wasn’t accepting of it (being bisexual). I don’t think ever...*”

Another 21 percent ($n = 8$) of LGBT students explained that the residential campus climate was neutral. A freshman student, who self-identified as a White bisexual female, said “*As of now? It is ok. You really don’t know how the people around you feel about LGBT people until you live with them for awhile or even if they will feel uncomfortable knowing until too late.*” A sophomore student, who self-identified as a Latino gay male, said in regards to the campus climate, “*It’s alright. I’ve never been harassed, at least not to my face.*”

Eighteen percent ($n = 7$) of LGBT students surveyed believed that the residential campus climate was negative. A freshman student, who self-identified as a Latina, Native American bisexual woman, stated, “*I believe that the residents make passive anti-LGBT statements, such as ‘That’s so gay!’; but they also make active anti-LGBT*

statements by calling people ‘fags’ and making fun of those whom are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual.” An Asian lesbian female freshman student explained, *“From my personal experience, I feel it is not fully accepted and students do discriminate against those who are different than them.”* During the in person interview, Borja explain that *“one guy shouted like ‘GAY!’ to me and my avant-gardely dressed friend, but I was like ‘what was your first clue?’”* Later in the interview, Borja shared:

Last year someone shouted ‘FAGS!’ to me and my group of friends. Umm... actually, the drive-by shoutings are the only thing that has happened and that’s only happened like twice. But what can you do about that? Girls get cat-called all the time so there’s not much you can do.

Thirteen percent ($n = 5$) of LGBT students felt that the LGBT community was an invisible part of the residential campus climate. A freshman Latina lesbian student stated, *“I haven’t seen anything relating or engaging the LGBT community.”* A White lesbian female freshman student explained, *“I haven’t seen any problems, but then I haven’t encountered anyone being out about their sexuality.”* During an in person interview, Sam explained *“People are not getting harassed but they’re not being accepted...no one deserves to be ignored. So I know people who are here and they are being ignored and that doesn’t feel good.”*

The remaining 28 percent ($n = 11$) of LGBT students said they were unsure or felt the residential campus climate for LGBT students was mixed. A White queer male college junior said, *“That it is generally supportive but there are some people who are anything but supportive and do not respect or like LGBT people.”* Other students said, *“I don’t know”* or *“Not sure.”*

How Residential Life Staff Can Meet the Needs of LGBT Students

The third question LGBT students were asked was, “How can student affairs professionals (including Residential Life staff) meet the needs of LGBT students?” From the 44 responses, three themes emerged related to: more visibility and awareness of LGBT topics; provide support for LGBT students; and providing a physical space for LGBT students. About 20 percent ($n = 9$) of respondents did not have an opinion on how staff could meet the needs of LGBT students.

Visibility and Awareness

Thirty four percent ($n = 15$) of LGBT students expressed that student affairs staff could offer more LGBT events and create visibility by bringing awareness around LGBT topics. A sophomore student, who self-identified as an African American bisexual female, said “*Student affairs can meet the needs of LGBT students by having more LGBT events on campus, meetings, and possibly a LGBT-Straight Coalition among the students on campus.*” During the in person interview, Jake said:

Better development into FLAIRE would be good. Anything like that where you know faculty and other residents are there to support you, because right now, honestly, this topic isn't around housing other than when I saw your survey. And I think it's necessary that things are brought up and people can talk about it. Or get to know (LGBT issues) even they're not a member of the community.

At the end of each in-person individual interview, each participant was asked if CSUN should have a visible campaign with an awareness component, such as a “safe zone program” or “ally project.” All seven participants thought that LGBT students could benefit by having such program at CSUN.

Support

Twenty percent ($n = 9$) of LGBT students said that student affairs staff could provide support for LGBT students living in the residence halls. An African American lesbian female sophomore student said that student affairs professionals could meet the needs of LGBT student *“just by 'being on top of things.' It would be cool if we had a designated 'counselor' for those LGBT students who may have issues while living in the residential halls.”* During the in person interview, Chase said:

Maybe having counselors in housing for the LGBT community in housing. Something like that could also be helpful. That way, the LGBT students could have somebody to meet with and could discuss what's going on in their lives...kind of like a mentor...because I know, like the honor's students who come in, they all have their own mentor. I'm an honors student and I have my own mentor...and so, it'd be cool if the LGBT students who were interested got like a mentor to help them out along their way in college.

LGBT Physical Space

Eighteen percent ($n = 8$) of LGBT students expressed that student affairs professionals could provide a physical space for LGBT students to build community and find support. A freshman student, who self-identified as a White lesbian female said, *“I think a living learning community floor for LGBT students in housing would be a great way to create an inclusive atmosphere for LGBT students and allies.”* A sophomore student, who declined to state his race/ethnicity and self-identified as a transgender male, suggested that student affairs staff could start *“a section of gender-neutral housing specifically for LGBT students they can use to feel safe. Otherwise, it's pretty good*

already.”

During the in-person individual interviews, if a student did not mention the need for CSUN to have gender neutral housing or an LGBT living learning community, the researcher asked the student their thoughts on CSUN providing those options. Two students were opposed to having the above-noted housing options. Sam said that he believed having LGBT housing “*would further separate LGBT students from other students.*” Jake said:

I don't necessarily think so. No, I never thought of it [gender neutral housing] in terms of transsexuals, but I feel like that's too much like we're different, which we are not. I understand that we have Deaf housing here at CSUN because we have a big department and there are a lot of Deaf students here. I understand there's different amenities that they need, like the flashing of lights instead of a doorbell. Sometimes I don't even like that...they're not different from us. Like okay, they can't hear but they are not disabled. They're not different. You know...other Deaf [studies] majors are in that building and I wish I could go and hang out with them. I do have a few friends that are Deaf, but it's just like...it would be nice if your neighbor was Deaf and you could learn some sign language and learn more about their culture. And so I feel like segregating...well, not segregating necessarily, but separating them...like LGBTA...I don't think that's necessary. I think that it's better that we're just out and open with everyone and we just live in the same thing. We're not different. That's how I see it.

The remaining 20 percent ($n = 9$) of LGBT students said they did not know how student affairs professionals could meet the needs of LGBT students or that

LGBT students should be treated the same as everyone else. When asked what residential life staff could do to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBT students, Borja said:

I suppose advertise for gay things more, but I kind of feel a lot of it...it's not really their job. I mean to like make sure the students are safe, yeah...but like to make sure the student have a great time, like isn't really the staff's job...it's more the students themselves. I mean, if you're like locked in your room all day and you're gay...and you're not finding anyone. That's not the staff's fault. That's your own.

Impact of Race/Ethnicity on Sexual Orientation

During the individual interviews, each participant was asked “does your ethnic or cultural background impact your sexual orientation?” Two students of color believed that their ethnic or cultural background had an impact on their sexual orientation. Sammy explained:

If anything, it would make me kind of not want to be gay because I'm Muslim and Middle Eastern so that's like really extremely hard because I have a really traditional family. So for me, I'm the first person in my entire family, you know, on both my dad's side and my mom's side to ever say they are gay. I feel like I'm doing something big...definitely and I feel that I am taking a risk in just telling them instead of just hiding it and moving away like a lot of people choose to do... I feel like it does have an effect in terms of it makes me feel more motivated to succeed and not just show that my life is going to be a failure like a lot of my parents see.

Jake expressed similar sentiments. When asked if her cultural background had an impact on her sexual orientation, she said:

Yes. I mean, it's definitely harder to come out in an Asian family background. When I first got a girlfriend, I decided to tell my mom that I had a girlfriend and I thought that she'd be understanding...and generally she is very loving and compassionate in ways that Asian parents don't really show but I understood that she was compassionate. When I told her, she was ...she was very upset. To this day, that was like two or three years ago...to this day, nobody really talks about it. I went through that time where...once I told her, she was very upset telling me that I was not normal...this isn't good, this isn't normal. I don't want you to do this...blah, blah, blah. This isn't right...no! She wouldn't accept it and so then she told my sister and my brother who are both older than me, and they, having been raised here, understood more of my stand. My sister supported me...quietly. My brother was just whatever about it, but umm...she, my mom, would just cry and say 'oh what did I do wrong?' and along with that were a lot of family problems that came with it that came out. It was just a really bad time for my family. Yeah...even throughout the two years I was with my girlfriend she never really accepted her. I never really brought her over afterwards because...well before we were just friends and she would always come over, but after she became my girlfriend...I just...and I told my mom and then no. They started setting curfews. I never had a curfew before, but because she always assumed that I was out with her then she would want me home not doing anything, but wanted me home. It's definitely been much harder then say, like a more

Americanized family. Even if you were Asian, you know, if you were Americanized and say second or third generation, your parents would more likely accept I assume.

The majority of LGBT students interviewed ($n = 6$) expressed that their ethnic or cultural background did not have a significant impact on their sexual orientation. Borja said “*I personally don’t feel that. I’m ‘Mexican’ (said with hand quotes) but through generations so I feel...well people say I act White, which I guess through generations, people would. They’re very assimilated. I don’t really feel like that’s affected anything.*”

Shea stated:

Maybe a little bit. I was...my mom was a single mom with 2 kids so she wasn’t really around and it was...pretty much me and my sister pretty much raised ourselves, kind of and my mom was always really relaxed as long as we did what we were supposed to. We were free to do what we wanted and my parents are really young so, they’ve always been really open to anything I’ve done or said so I think that allowed me to explore it a little more.

Chase explained:

I think that culture does play a role in how accepting my family is about that sexual orientation, but I feel like sexual orientation is something that...it is what it is. It’s more of biological thing and it’s not influenced by other outside sources.

Summary and Transition to Chapter Five

The purpose of this study was to discover the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. The following chapter will discuss the results and provide recommendations for student affairs professionals.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

There is limited research on the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) college students living in the residence halls. At the time of study, there was no research on the needs of ethnically diverse LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. The current study sought to add to the limited research on LGBT students living in the residence halls and focused on assessing the needs of ethnically diverse LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university?
2. What are LGBT students' perceptions of the campus climate in the residence halls at an urban institution?
3. How can student affairs professionals meet the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university?

Using mixed methodology, it was hypothesized that LGBT students living in the residence halls would perceive the campus climate as unwelcoming due to a lack of visible support; and a significant amount of LGBT students would discuss the need to have LGBT specific housing options. The following section will discuss the results and provide recommendations for future studies.

Discussion

LGB Student Needs

This study sought to understand the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. Since there were minimal responses from

transgender students, the researcher decided to focus on the needs of LGB students recognizing that the needs of transgender students may be very different. From the qualitative questions asked in both the electronic survey and individual interviews, there were five key needs expressed by LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. These needs were:

1. Living in an open, accepting environment;
2. Support for the LGBT community;
3. Safety against harassment and discrimination;
4. A physical space for LGBT students; and
5. Offering LGBT workshops and groups.

As hypothesized, a significant amount of LGB students discussed the need to have a physical space for LGBT students, such as a living learning community, gender neutral housing and/or an LGBT resource center. The needs expressed by respondents were aligned with the key issues of safety, discrimination and harassment that Rankin (2003) and Rankin et al. (2010) found that LGBT students were facing across colleges. Fulfilling the needs listed above could help decrease discrimination and harassment of LGBT students as well as increase feelings of safety.

Perceived Campus Climate

In the current study, perceived campus climate was assessed through quantitative measures by having respondent answer the following questions about: if the residence halls at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) were a supportive environment for LGBT students; if it was safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls; if students heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls; and if students witnessed

harassment of LGBT students in the residence halls. LGBT students were asked an additional qualitative question, “What are your perceptions of the residential campus climate for LGBT students?”

Overall, the perceived campus climate for LGBT students living in the residence halls at CSUN was positive. The majority of students expressed that the CSUN residence halls were a supportive environment for LGBT students. When comparing responses of LGBT students and heterosexual students, more LGBT students perceived it was unsafe to be “out” in the residence halls to a statistically significant degree. Additionally, more LGBT students reported hearing anti-LGBT remarks and witnessed harassment of LGBT students than heterosexual students. These findings were consistent with the findings of Brown et al. (2004), where LGBT students viewed the campus climate more negatively than non-LGBT students.

When comparing LGBT students of color and LGBT White students, there was not a statistical difference in perceived campus climate. There was also no statistical difference in perceived campus climate when comparing LGBT female students and LGBT male students. When comparing all male respondents and female respondents, more male respondents seem to have witnessed a higher degree of harassment of an LGBT student than female respondents, to a statistically significant degree.

It was hypothesized that LGBT students living in the residence halls would perceive the campus climate as unwelcoming due to a lack of visible support. Eighteen percent of LGBT respondents expressed that the residential campus climate was negative for LGBT students. Thirteen percent of LGBT respondents reported that a negative campus climate for LGBT students decreased their visibility. Albeit, statistically

speaking, there was not a significant amount of LGBT students that perceived the campus climate as negative. In addition, these findings do not show a direct correlation between a negative perception of campus climate and a lack of visible support.

Impact of Race/Ethnicity on Sexual Orientation

During the individual interviews, each participant was asked “does your ethnic or cultural background impact your sexual orientation?” The majority of students replied that their ethnic or cultural background had no impact or very little impact on their sexual orientation. Two students of color said they believed that their culture did impact their sexual orientation. Specifically, these two students discussed how their culture influenced their coming out process and how their family viewed their sexual orientation.

Given the sample size, it cannot be concluded that ethnic or cultural background does not have an impact on sexual orientation, or how it may influence it. In addition, after reviewing the audio recordings from the interviews and reading the transcripts, the researcher came to believe that participants did not fully understand the question, as intended. This could have led to divergent results.

Suggested Practices for Residential Life Staff

This study sought to assess the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution that is ethnically and racially diverse. By discovering student needs, it was the researchers hope to guide future practices in supporting LGB students of color living in the residence halls at an urban institution. Through the electronic assessment and individual interviews, three suggestions emerged related to: (1) more visibility and awareness of LGBT topics; (2) provide support for LGBT students; and (3) providing a physical space for LGBT students.

Visibility

Residential Life staff can support LGB students by creating more visibility and awareness around LGBT topics in the residence halls. As Chase, a self-identified freshman lesbian female, mentioned during the interview, *“the more the residents are educated, the less discrimination is going to happen.”* According to the GSA Network (2010), more visibility of LGBT topics leads to less ignorance and thus safer schools for LGBT students.

One suggested practice for Residential Life staff to create more visibility and awareness of the LGBT community is through LGBT educational and social programs. In addition to educating the residential community on LGBT topics, these programs validate LGB students’ identity. According to Rendón’s (1994) validation theory, students succeed in an environment where they are validated and encouraged to thrive. It is also recommended that Residential Life staff provide a visible campaign to support LGBT students, such as a “safe zone program” or “ally project.” This program could bring further education and awareness of the LGBT community as well as validate LGBT students by providing visible support.

Support

The second suggested practice for Residential Life staff is to provide more support services for LGBT students. One recommendation is to offer an LGBT mentor program to provide LGB students additional support in the residence halls. The mentor could provide guidance and support for students who are struggling with coming out or being “out” in the residence halls. The researcher also recommends that resident advisors receive additional training and resources on supporting LGBT students.

Physical Space

The third suggested practice is for Residential Life staff to provide a physical space for LGB students, such as a resource center or LGBT living learning community. A physical space could provide additional support for LGB students and create more visibility. Through the survey, a self-identified freshman, White, lesbian shared that “a *living learning community floor for LGBT students in housing would be a great way to create an inclusive atmosphere for LGBT students and allies.*”

Not all students interviewed were in support of an LGBT living learning community. A couple students expressed that it would further separate the LGBT community from other students. The researcher recommends that housing offering an LGBT living learning community that is open to students who identify as members of the LGBT community as well as allies. An LGBT living learning community would bring visibility and support to LGB students that live within the community as well as residents in other residence halls.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided some insight into the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution that is ethnically and racially diverse. Due to the sample size and the nature of this study, it cannot be generalized to the experiences of other LGB students living in the residence halls nor can it be generalized to other institutions. Further research is needed on the experiences of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution.

It is recommended that future studies separate questions of sexual orientation and gender identity when asking about student needs and campus climate. In addition, further

research is needed on the needs LGB students of color living in the residence halls and whether these needs are different from White LGB students. Other questions that arose for the researcher are:

1. Does the degree to which a student is “out” have an effect on their perceptions of campus climate? Does the degree to which a student is “out” impact their needs living in the residence halls?
2. Are the needs of LGB student of color living in the residence halls at an ethnically/racially diverse urban institution different from the needs of LGB students of color at a primarily White rural institution? If they are different, what impacts the change in their needs?
3. Do students’ gender identity and/or gender expression impact their perception of campus climate? Do students’ gender identity and/or gender expression impact their needs living in the residence halls?

Researcher Reactions

The thoughts and experiences shared by each participant helped me gain a better understanding of the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. It was an honor and privilege to have these students provide their candid experiences on being LGB students living in the residence halls. Each story provided a different perspective and touched the researcher in different ways.

Sammy’s experiences had a tremendous impact on me. It was heartbreaking to hear how his family kicked him out of the house and does not acknowledge him when he runs into them at the store. After the interview, I sat with him for an hour discussing the challenges he had faced living away from home and resources available on campus to

support him.

After talking with Sammy, I went to my car and cried. I was devastated about how Sammy's family had treated him and grateful that I had a supportive family. As soon as I got home, I hugged my mother and thanked her for never kicking me out of the house for being gay.

Unfortunately, Sammy's story is not rare amongst LGB students. The residence halls can provide students with a home and support system away from their families. It is important for student affairs staff to understand the needs of LGB students and be able to support students like Sammy who had nowhere else to go.

Conclusion

At the time of the study, there was no published research on the experiences and needs of LGB students of color living in the residence halls at an urban institution. This study sought to contribute to the minimal research on the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls and publish the first study on the needs of LGB students of color living in the residence halls at an urban institution.

Throughout this study, five key themes arose in relation to the needs of LGB students living in the residence halls at an urban institution. These needs were: (1) living in an open, accepting environment; (2) support for the LGBT community; (3) safety against harassment and discrimination; (4) a physical space for LGBT students; and (5) offering LGBT workshops and groups. It is recommended that student affairs professionals create interventions with these needs in mind. Some suggested practices are to create more visibility, offer support services, and a physical space for LGBT students to connect with each other.

Although the result from this study cannot be generalized to other LGB students and other institutions, these findings likely reflect in some ways the myriad of experiences LGB students face on a daily basis across colleges and universities. The recommendations made above are consistent with the suggested best practices provided in the *2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People* (Campus Pride, 2010). The researcher hopes that further studies will be done to learn more about LGB students living in the residence halls and how we as student affairs professionals can support this population.

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Appendix A

Electronic Survey Email Invitation

Dear CSUN Student:

Please take a moment to complete the survey to help assess the campus climate for students living in the residence halls. This assessment conducted by Sarina Loeb is part of a graduate student thesis as part of the requirement for the Master of Science in Counseling, specialization in College Counseling/Student Services. This study will add to the limited research on specific groups of students living in the residence halls and will help student affairs professionals as well as residential life staff better understand the needs of this population.

The survey will take you less than five (5) minutes to complete. Approval to participate in this study is completely voluntary, and you may decline to participate or withdrawal from the study at any time without any penalty.

Any information that is collected in this study that can be identified specifically with the student will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your written permission. The cumulative results of the study will be published, but the names and identity of the subjects will not be made known. All data/documentation collected as part of this study will be maintained in an approved manner while the research is being conducted. All identifying information will be destroyed by the researcher at the conclusion of the study.

By participating in this survey, you are giving informed consent that you understand and agree to the conditions outlined for participation in the described study.

If you wish to voice a concern about the research, you may direct your question(s) to Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, and by phone at 818-677-2901. If you have specific questions about the study you may contact Dr. Merrill Simon, faculty advisor, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8265, and by phone at 818-677-2558.

If you have any specific questions about the study or would like participate in an interview on the topic, you may contact the researcher directly via email:

sarina.loeb.659@my.csun.edu

Thank you,

Sarina Loeb

Graduate Student

California State University, Northridge

Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling

Eisner College of Education

Emphasis College Counseling & Student Services

Appendix B

Student Voice™ Assessment Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study to help assess the campus climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT). Your answers are strictly voluntary and will be kept confidential. The survey will take you less than 5 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time and contribution to this study.

1. The residence halls at CSUN are a supportive environment for LGBT students.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

2. It is safe for LGBT students to be “out” in the residence halls at CSUN.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

3. I have heard anti-LGBT remarks in the residence halls at CSUN.
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
 - Not sure

4. I have witnessed harassment of an LGBT student in the residence halls at CSUN.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

5. How many semesters have you lived on campus at CSUN?
 - 5 or more semesters
 - 4 semesters
 - 3 semesters
 - 2 semesters
 - 1 semester

6. Class standing:
- Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Graduate student
7. Gender:
- Female
 - Male
 - Transgender
 - Other: _____
8. Race/Ethnicity:
- African American/Black
 - Caucasian/White
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Hispanic/Latino/a
 - Biracial/Multi-racial
 - Other: _____
9. Sexual Orientation:
- Heterosexual/Straight
 - Gay
 - Lesbian
 - Bisexual
 - Queer
 - Other: _____

If the student identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, transgender and/or other, the following open ended questions will be asked:

10. What are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls at an urban university?
11. What are your perceptions of the residential campus climate for LGBT students?
12. How can student affairs professionals (including Residential Life staff) meet the needs of LGBT students?

13. Would you be willing to participate in an interview? Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Your identity will be kept confidential.

Yes

No

14. If yes, please provide your first name and contact information.

First name: _____

Email address: _____

Phone number: _____

If participation in this study has led you to feel distressed and you would like to speak to someone about your thoughts, please contact:

- **CSUN UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES**

Bayramian Hall, Suite 520

18111 Nordhoff St.

Northridge, CA 91330-8217

Phone: (818) 677-2366

TTY: (818) 677-7834

E-mail: coun@csun.edu

Appendix C

Semi-structured Interview Questions for Thesis

1. How long have you been living in the residence halls at CSUN?
 - a. How have your experiences in housing been so far?
2. What programs/support services does CSUN have for LGBT students?
 - a. Have you heard of FLAIRE? LGBTA? Queer Studies Dept? LGBT Support group at UCS?
3. Are you involved in the LGBT community at CSUN?
 - a. If not, why?
4. What do you think are the needs of LGBT students living in the residence halls?
 - a. Are CSUN residence halls meeting those needs?
5. What is your sexual orientation (and/or gender-identity)?
6. Are you “out” to your roommates? Friends? Family?
 - a. (If “out”) Do you feel safe being “out” in the residence halls?
 - b. (If not “out”) Why aren’t you “out” to your roommates? Is safety an issue?
7. Have you felt uncomfortable or unwelcomed in the residence halls because of your sexual orientation?
8. Does your race/ethnic background impact your sexual orientation? If so, how?
9. Have you ever been harassed in the residence halls because of your sexual orientation?
10. What can residential life staff do to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBT students?

(If not already mentioned) Some universities have:

- gender-neutral floors/buildings in their residence halls. Do you think CSUN should implement gender-neutral housing options? What about an LGBT living learning community?
- a visual campaign of support for LGBT students, such as a Safe Zone or Ally Program. Would you want a stronger presence of visual support of LGBT students?

11. Thank you for participating. Is there anything else that I should know about LGBT students living in the residence halls that I have not asked?